

What Do You See?

An Invitation to the Valley

Foreword

The Valleys Teach Us to See

Stories are the life-giving food that instructs current and future generations. Stories emerge from day-to-day life events: the good, the bad and the ugly. The key is, are we willing to learn? To hear? To see? Today I want to broaden your mind to consider learning through the words, the stories written many decades earlier than our personal existence, and to extract from them a life-giving lesson. The passage I would like for you to consider comes from an ancient and somewhat familiar text we know as the book of Ezekiel. Keep in mind, there are ancient passages that we read, and there are passages that eventually read us. For me, Ezekiel 37 has become one of those revolutionary passages. I first encountered this passage as a biblical story: a prophet, a valley, dry bones, a miraculous restoration.

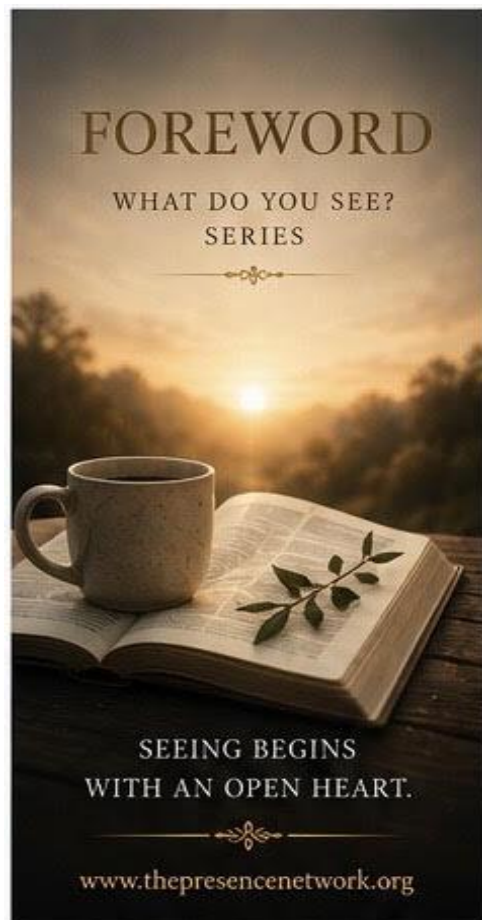
Over the years, as life unfolded, I discovered that “Ezekiel’s valley” was not simply a place in Scripture, it became a place I recognized, a place I visited, a place I accompanied others through, and at times, a place I found myself standing within.

Life has a way of introducing us to valleys we never expected to enter.

As a pastor, counselor, juvenile probation officer, psych hospital manager, hospice chaplain, bereavement coordinator, husband, father, grandfather, and fellow traveler, I have had the privilege of sitting with people during some of the most sacred and painful moments of human life.

I have stood beside hospital beds, sat with grieving families, listened to stories of heartbreak and witnessed addiction, trauma, estrangement, loneliness, regret, and loss. I have watched people ask questions that have no easy answers: questions about suffering and faith, questions about purpose, whether life could ever feel whole again, and if I am honest, I have asked many of those same challenging questions myself.

Marriages are not exempt from valleys; chaplains are not exempt from valleys; pastors are not exempt from valleys; caregivers are not exempt from valleys, none of us are. We all encounter seasons where something precious is lost, when hope feels fragile. We all encounter circumstances that seem beyond repair.



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Some valleys arrive suddenly; others develop slowly over time. Some valleys are visible to everyone; others remain hidden beneath *smiles* and *responsibilities*, yet regardless of how they arrive, valleys tend to cause us to ask the same question: “What now?”

For my wife Amy and I, one of our deepest valleys was the loss of our son, Anthony. There are wounds that change people forever, the death of a child is one of them, no parent imagines such a journey, no parent prepares for it.

There are moments in grief when words fail, moments when explanations feel inadequate, and all that remains is silence, and yet even there, in the midst of profound sorrow, we discovered something that has become central to our life and our work: Presence. Not answers, not formulas, not certainty, simply: Presence. *Presence, the quiet assurance that we are not abandoned in our suffering, the realization that something Eternal meets us, encounters us, not beyond our pain but within it.* This conviction eventually became part of what inspired The Presence Network, a ministry expression dedicated to supporting individuals and families navigating grief, caregiving, relational challenges, spiritual questions, and life’s many transitions. At the heart of our work is a simple belief: ***Presence is the quiet gift we offer when words are not enough.***

The more I reflected upon Ezekiel 37, the more I realized that the story was not primarily about bones, it was about perception. In this account, the people believed their story was over, they said: “*Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone.*” Those recorded in this account saw only dismal endings, but God saw emerging possibility. They saw death, but God saw life; they saw exile, but God saw restoration; they saw a valley, but God saw a future, and somewhere between those two perspectives lies the journey this book hopes to explore.

I am not writing as someone who has mastered suffering; I am writing as someone who has walked through it. I am not writing as someone who possesses all the answers; I am writing as someone who continues asking questions. I am not writing as someone who has never stood among dry bones; I am writing as someone who has learned that dry bones do not get the final word.

The chapters that follow are not intended to provide quick solutions; life is rarely that simple, instead, they are intended to offer companionship, reflection, perspective, and perhaps most importantly, hope; not the fragile hope that depends upon circumstances, but the deeper hope that emerges when we discover that something “Eternal”, some “One” *is still present in the valley.*

As you read, you may find yourself recognizing your own story, your own losses, your own questions, your own dry bones. When this awakening occurs, I encourage you to resist the temptation to rush: move slowly; reflect honestly; engage the questions, and complete the journal exercises.

Allow yourself to sit with what arises. This is not merely a book to be read, it is an invitation to be experienced, and before we begin, I would like to leave you with one thought. Throughout this journey, you will encounter many themes: Grief. Identity. Hope. Purpose. Reconciliation. Presence. Beneath all of these themes is a single question, the same question God asked Ezekiel, and the same question that continues echoing through every valley we encounter. The question is

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NOT: “Can you fix the bones?” The question is NOT: “Can you control the outcome?” The question is NOT: “Can you guarantee the future?” The question IS far simpler, and far deeper.

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May the pages that follow help you discover that the Eternal One’s vision is often larger than our despair, greater than our fear, and more hopeful than our conclusions.

And may you discover, as I have, that no valley is beyond the reach of The Presence.

Carlo Griseta

Founder, The Presence Network