

Valley Living – part five
“The Valley of Dry Bones”
Pastor Dale Campfield – Eastgate Community Church
July 19th, 2009

Intro:

Matt 28:19 “Go and make disciples of all nations...”

ECC Process of Discipleship: Making an IMPACT...To Love...To Grow...To Serve

We have 3 priorities – To love...which is expressed in our Sunday morning celebration. To grow...which is expressed in our Connection Groups. To serve...which is expressed in our daily lives in the places we live, work and play; as well as through the local church. The vision of E.C.C. is to gather together weekly for corporate worship, loving God and each other; then to come together in small Connection Groups for discipleship and fellowship, and are regularly involved in reaching out to others with the love, acceptance, and forgiveness of Jesus Christ through community outreach. To Love...To Grow...To Serve!

Sermon Series Title: Valley Living

Series Synopsis: We’ve RESET our assumptions of Jesus Christ; climbed the mountain learning about the teaching of Jesus Christ; now...we’ll deal with the place we live the most..... The Valley. It’s in the valley that we learn the lessons we need to learn that enable us to climb that next mountain. It’s in the valley experiences of life that God meets us in ways we need Him the most. It’s in the valleys of life that Jesus Christ truly becomes personal to us. Without the valley, there would be no mountain to climb.

Without the valley, there would be no mountain to climb.

Part Four: “Giant Killing in the Valley” Thanks to Butch for speaking... Great job!

Part Five: “The Valley of Dry Bones”

We’ve all read the story in the Bible about Ezekiel’s Valley of Dry Bones

Ezekiel 37:1-14

Ezekiel lived in the 6th century BC and was a prophet of the exile under the Babylonians, which had begun under King Nebuchadnezzar, between 598 and 586 BC. He was the son of Buzi and his ministry spans some twenty two years, starting in about 593 BC. He was a priest and so would have been familiar with the temple and its precincts.

As a young man he would have seen the effects of King Josiah’s reforms, and their coming to nothing after his death. He would also have met the high ranking officials of his day, in all probability the King as well.

He was married and it would seem that his wife died when Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Jerusalem. He had great faith

in the leadership of the nation, even though all did not seem well. So the fall of Jerusalem would have been a great shock to him. He would still have been in mourning for his wife, when the armies of Babylon finally marched in to the city, in 587/6 BC. He was then soon march with many others, off to exile in Babylon.

Just about everything was going wrong in his life, he was quite possibly wondering where the promise of God's blessing was fitting into all of this.

One day though, God speaks to him. He was feeling down and wondering what was going to happen next. God showed him a valley of dry bones. They were dry because they had laid exposed in a dry place for some considerable time. This could well have been the debris of a battle.

God said to him; (Ezekiel 37:3) "Son of man, can these bones live?"

"Ezekiel, can this carnage of death, this expanse of waste, can it be reversed. Can those who are laying disjointed and without life, can these victims of this catastrophe be brought back to life? Can they live, Ezekiel?"

This is very much a picture of our nation today and in particular so many churches of today. There are people who have gone to church and made some form of commitment, and when trouble comes, they have at first struggled, then just laid down for a rest, but they never got up again.

From here they started to dry up, as they had run out of go, lost their first love along with their drive in their Christian walk. Some lost direction and wandered into the desert, only to pay a very high price.

Here we find God speaking to a very down cast and dejected Ezekiel, saying to him; "Can these casualties be brought to life? Can they once again have life restored to them? Can that first love be set alight once again? Can they be revived Ezekiel?"

At a first glance the damage seemed irreversible. This was a valley of bones. Not one of the bones was in its correct position to make a skeleton, yet alone any sinew of flesh and blood. Just dry bones, mile upon mile of lifeless, parched, bleached bones. They were so dry, that not even a dog would take one, just too tough to chew.

Ezekiel knew not to answer too quickly, even in his state, he knew better. Yet the more he looked, the scene just did not change.

(Ezekiel 37:3) "O LORD God, You know." "You know everything Lord. I cannot do anything; I know the task is too big for me. If I were able to match these bones, all that I would have is skeletons. You know Lord, I don't."

For years people have struggled on in their own way, trying everything they can get some life. Yet all has come to little or nothing. But when God speaks, what a difference!

(Ezekiel 37:4) "Prophesy to these bones..." "Ezekiel, speak the words that I will give you, do as I say, go when I say go and these bone will live." Ezekiel did as he was told to do and something very remarkable happened.

(Ezekiel 37:7+8) "So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and suddenly a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to bone. Indeed, as I looked, the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them over; but there was no breath in them."

Notice that this was not just any movement, not just any old bone joining to another. Each bone came to the correct skeleton, in the correct place and order.

For years God has been shaking up His church. The noises of the rattling of bones for revival have been getting louder. God has been calling out His church and raising up His body to be at one. Often we have taken the first step, with the result that we end up with all the ingredients for life, everything in its right place and covered with all that it needs, yet there is still no life. The revival actually starts when the breath of God comes upon the bodies.

"Ezekiel, PROPHECY TO THE BREATH."

That word "BREATH" has the meaning of the "WIND", the "ENERGY OF LIFE," the "IMPARTER OF WARLIKE ENERGY." The "SPIRIT OF GOD."

In our prayers we need to move on from "DRY BONES, HEAR THE WORDS OF THE LORD." We need to be

proclaiming; "COME FROM THE FOUR WINDS, O BREATH, AND BREATHE ON THESE SLAIN, THAT THEY MAY LIVE."

Dead bones are dry and thirsty. They need life. They need nourishment. So do we as Christians, when we go through the valley, depression, dark days, facing giants, etc. we've got to have LIFE in our bones. How do we get that kind of life? The text here says to "breathe" upon those dry bones. We need to allow the Holy Spirit to breathe life upon us today.

Humans need oxygen to live. Fire needs oxygen to live. A human can be alive, his natural body is alive, but his spirit man is dead, because there is no fire in his bones. Thus, the bones need a dose of oxygen – so that the fire can burn in those bones.

Dry Bones can also reflect Dead Dreams

Ezekiel, in our Old Testament lesson, stands on the battlefield. The battle is over, and his side lost. The battle has been over long enough for the smoke to have cleared and the vultures to have done their work.

All that is left is a valley full of bones. Dry bones.

It is a scene of hopelessness and despair and failure. Israel is a nation that has been defeated and its people live in exile. There is no hope left for that nation, and all that is left to be seen of Israel's army is a battlefield of defeat long past, and a valley of dry bones.

You know, there is nothing quite like a dream that has died.

In Ezekiel, the dream that has died is that Israel would be a nation, free from exile. All that is left of the dream is dry bone. Or as the old spiritual would say, "DEM bones, dem bones, dem dry bones."

I can't remember all of the words of that old spiritual, but you probably recall the one I am talking about. "Dem bones dem bones dem dry bones, so sing the word of the Lord."

Illus: The dead cat – so we thought – ran over it, dead – stood over it – alive!

Many Christians have “Dry Bone-itis”

How do you know your bones are dry? How do you know if you have Dry Bone-itis?

SYMPTOMS OF DRY BONE-ITIS

- You hardly ever read your bible.
- You fall asleep at night in the middle of your prayer.
- You never talk to anyone about your relationship with Christ.
- You are not involved in any type of community service. (it's all about you and your pay check and your job and your family and your needs, not others)
- You rarely participate in the giving of your tithes and offerings.
- You hardly ever go to church.
- You go to church and just sit there; and that's it.
- You are always talking negatively about everything.
- You find yourself being critical of everyone.
- You don't listen to any “Godly” music.

- You have a passion for the world that outweighs your passion for God.

SOME CHURCHES ARE FULL OF CHRISTIANS WITH DRY BONE-ITIS

Have you ever walked through a graveyard at night? It is a quiet place. It is a place of reflection and fear. It is a place that we avoid at night. We do because of all the dead bodies in the ground. You are reminded of the silence voice of the dead. You cannot hear it but it screeches in your ears. The message is loud and repeated. The message is what keeps us away from graveyards at night. The message is “you will die too.”

Have you ever walked through a dead church on Sunday morning? It is a quiet place. It is a place of reflection and fear. It is a place that we avoid on Sunday morning, but not because of dead bodies in the ground, but spiritual dead bodies in the pews. In the church building, you are reminded of the silence of the voice of the dead. You can hear it in your ears. The message is loud and repeated. The message is what keeps you out of dead churches. The message is “you will die too”. If you are like me you want nothing to do with a dead church. Dead churches are all round this nation. I have been in them. I have preached in them. And I have seen congregations die. And to be part of a dead church is to be part of dying yourself. In certain congregations you get the sense that a church is dead or not. There is this feeling in the church. It is an atmosphere in the building when you go to worship. We might be at the Norlyn Manor, but the church is the people and when we gather together I love the excitement and the lack of Dry Bone-itis in this place. But, in reality, it exists with some of us here too!

Do you have a passion? The creative force behind all great art, all great music, all great architecture, all great drama, all great literature is passion. Passion is what creates greatness. Nothing great is ever accomplished without passion. Nothing great is ever sustained without passion. Passion is what mobilizes armies into battle. It’s what drives scientists to find cures for new diseases. Passion is what drives explorers to uncover new territories. It’s what motivates ordinary people to become extraordinary people. It causes athletes to achieve all kinds of records. It all happens with passion. - Passion is what energizes life. It turns the impossible into possible. In fact if you don’t have any passion in your life you’re boring. Your life is dull, routine, monotonous. I’ll go so far as say if you don’t have passion in your life you are not living. You are existing. If your life is dealing with “Dry Boneitis”, then you’ll not have the passion that you need to make a true IMPACT in your life. - God made you to live a passionate life. A passionate life! God wants you to live with vitality. With vibrancy. With passion. With energy. With enthusiasm. He wants you to have this in your life. It is not His desire that you have Dry Bones – dry boneitis if you will.

John 10:10

Jesus said *“My purpose is to give life in all its fullness.”*

God says I want you to live a full life, a fulfilling life. A life with significance and vitality and energy. If that’s true that’s the kind of life God meant for us to live life is meant to be enjoyed, not merely endured. So why don’t most people enjoy life? Why don’t most people live a life of passion? Why do people have “dry boneitis”? They just live ta-dum, ta-dum, same thing, same place. “How you doing?” I’ve been better. Under the circumstances. *What are you doing under the circumstances? You should be on top of them!* There’s a whole lot of things that God wants to do in your life. He wants to bring adventure to your life. Even in the valley – He wants you to make an IMPACT.

Illus: Helium Balloons

Some helium balloons got loose and went to the ceiling one day. I couldn’t get them down, it was too tall. Someone said, “Don’t worry about them. They’ll be down in the morning.” And of course they were. They were down in the morning. They lost a lot of their altitude. The fizz started to come out and they came down within reach.

I thought that’s a parable of life. A lot of people are like that. They start out so full of energy, so full of excitement. Their bones are full of life! You probably remember the day you graduated from high school. You thought, “Man! The world is before me. I’m ready to go. This is the apple and I’m taking a big bite out of it.”

Illus: Losing your zip from your zippity do dah.

After a while the zip went out of your do-dah. You kind of lost it. All of a sudden your dreams shrunk, your ambitions shrunk, your drive shrunk. A lot of things. Until you're going, "What happened? Where's the passion? Where's the vitality?" Why do we lose our zip?

I've talked to lots of people. I'm discovering a lot of people die before they die. Inside they just lose it. And for the rest of their life they just kind of muddle by. They get by. That's not the kind of life God meant for you to live. He meant for you to live a life of passion and adventure and energy.

Why do I not have the passions for life that I used to have? Why have I lost that zip, that enthusiasm? What is the cause of this dissipation in my life? Where did I get this Dry Bone-itis disease?

8 Possible Causes of Dry Bone-itis

Today I'm going to give you a checklist of eight possible causes of dry bone-itis; eight passion killers from the Bible, from God's word. There are a lot of things that can kill your passion for life. There are physical causes. I can't do anything about that. You probably need to go see a doctor. Get a checkup. But there are physical causes that cause you to lose your passion in life. But there are also emotional causes. And there are relational causes. And there are spiritual causes that can cause you to lose your passion for life. We're going to look at each of those in our service today.

I. Emotional Causes II. Relational Causes III. Spiritual Causes

I. Emotional Causes for Dry Bone-itis

1. AN UNCLEAR PURPOSE

The first thing that kills passion in life is an unclear purpose.

When you don't know the purpose of your life that's a sure-fire way of killing your passion and getting dry bone-itis. Because without a purpose for life why bother. Why get up in the morning? Why make the effort? Why get out of bed? When you forget or you don't know God's purpose for your life you're going to drift toward apathy and lethargy. You're going to just drift through life. Rather than going through life by design you go through life by default. You have no purpose in life. You're just kind of going through life. You end up like Isaiah felt in...

Isaiah 49:4

"I've labored to no purpose at all. I've spent my strength in vain, for nothing."

Passion and purpose go together. The more drive you have for purpose, the more you know your purpose in life, the more passionate you become because purpose creates passion. If the whole purpose for your life is just to live for yourself, you've got a pretty dinky purpose. If the whole goal of your life is to be comfortable, it's no wonder you've got no passion. You were made for more than yourself. You were made for a greater cause, for a greater vision, for a greater purpose. God put you on this planet for a reason and if the reason you think you're alive is just to have fun, just to be happy, just to be comfortable, just to live for yourself, that's a pretty puny purpose. There's no wonder you're not going to have any passion in your life. You need something bigger than yourself to pull you out of yourself to give you energy and vitality.

The more you understand God's purpose for your life the more passionate you're going to be about life. Brent Hobbs defines passion this way: "Passion is waking up in the morning wherever you are and bounding out of bed because you know there's something out there that you love to do, that you believe in and that you're good at. Something that's bigger than you are and you can hardly wait to get at it again. It's something you'd rather be doing than anything else. You wouldn't give it up for money because it means more to you than money." That's what you need – passion in your life so that when you get up in the morning you're going, "Good morning, Lord!" rather than, "Good Lord, it's morning!" That's the difference between the passionate and the non-passionate person.

Nothing matters more than knowing God's purpose for your life and nothing can compensate it. Not money, not fame, not sex, or all kinds of other things. If you don't know what on earth you're here for you're not going to have any passion because without a purpose, life is motion without meaning, it's activity without direction, it's trivial, it's petty and it's pointless.

2. AN UNBALANCED SCHEDULE

If you're overworked you're going to lose your passion. If you get tired you're going to lose your passion and take on dry-boneitis. Vince Lombardi the great football coach said, "Fatigue makes cowards of all of us." When you get tired you lose your zip, you lose your passion. Fatigue drains your energy.

We all need a balance between rest and work, between input and between output. The Bible tells us that there is a rhythm to life, there is time and purpose for everything, a time to work and a time to rest; a time to strive, a time to have fun. If you have no fun in your life you're going to burn out. If you have no rest in your life you're going to burn out. If you have nothing but constant work from morning till night and you're a workaholic you're going to lose your passion very, very quickly.

Some of you you're always giving out. You're always serving, you're always sharing, you're always caring, you're always giving, you're always thinking of others, you're always care giving and you never take time to recharge. That's a bad thing. You need fun time in your life; you need rest in your life in order to keep your passion maintained.

This is so important. I worry about it here in our church as your pastor was we move more and more into Making an IMPACT. As we go out and serve in different places in the world and our community it's very important that you have down time. Meaning and significance comes from service but if you don't have down time you're going to get what's commonly called *compassion fatigue*. Compassion fatigue means you stop caring because you've cared so much. Pretty soon you don't care about God. You don't care about other people. You don't even care about you anymore. You become apathetic. You have to balance your schedule of work and play.

Psalm 127:2

"It is senseless for you to work so hard from early morning until late at night fearing you'll starve to death for God wants His loved ones to get their proper rest."

II. Relational Causes for Dry Bone-itis

1. AN UNRESOLVED CONFLICT

When you've got a conflict with somebody and it's not settled it just steals the passion out of you. It can do it immediately. Have you ever had one of those days you get up, you're heading out the door and everything in you feels like "This is going to be a great day!" And on the way out the door you have a fight with your husband or wife. It's just like that sound when a tire goes flat. Your attitude immediately goes flat when you have a conflict with somebody in your life. That's the way it happens. It happens with Butch and I sometimes when we're going to church! I'm exciting and pumped about the

message and suddenly we'll have some type of conflict and ZAP... the wind comes out of my sails.

And some of you you're in constant conflict right now. Maybe somebody at home or maybe a work situation, maybe at school. Because of that conflict passion is just steadily leaking out of your life. You're losing passion, taking on dry boneitis because of the conflict that's in your life. No wonder. It obviously going to happen to any of our lives. If you want to keep your passion alive you've got to keep your relationships healthy.

Some of you I know recently, even this last week, made a new commitment to Jesus Christ. You have a passionate love for Him. You need to know that He taught us that is tied for our love for other people. He taught us, "*Love God with all your heart,*" but also you've got to "*Love your neighbor as yourself.*" You've got to realize those two are tied together. If I want a passionate love for God it means I've got to keep my relationships with other people healthy. God says that's the way it works. That's the way we work.

Job 5:2, 18:4

"Resentment destroys the fool and jealousy kills the simple.... You're only hurting yourself with your anger."

Circle "resentment" and "jealousy." Those are two passion killers bringing dry boneitis. Resentment is allowing somebody to continue to hurt you over something that's long in your past. They may be out of the picture. They may be even dead. But they're still hurting you because you're still resenting it. You're still thinking about it again and again and again.

They don't even know that you're angry at them. They don't know that you're staying up nights still revolving it again and again in your mind.

If you're going to keep your relationships healthy then you and I when there's a conflict have to go to the person and try to solve the conflict. That's the first step. But what do you do if they won't let you solve it? What do you do if they won't let go? What do you do if they're gone and you can't go to them and solve that relational conflict?

This is why forgiveness is so important. This is why we have to make the step of saying, "God, I put it in Your hands and take it out of my hands." Forgiveness is not saying they were right. Forgiveness is not saying that God's not going to judge them for what they did that was wrong. It's saying, "I'm taking it out of my hands, God. I forgive them. It's in Your hands. I can't hold it in my heart because if I do that resentment is going to destroy me and steal passion from me every single day of my life. You have to forgive. Ask God's strength to let it go. Some of you right now, God brought you here today to give you the opportunity right now to say, "God, give me the strength. I forgive them." You're going to have to say that, if you're like me, a hundred times during the next week. I forgive them. I remind myself once again that I forgive them. It's going to come to your mind again and again. But as you do that you'll feel the passion begin to be

strengthened in your life and your bones will begin to be refreshed. Because an unresolved conflict always kills our passion.

2. AN UNSUPPORTED LIFESTYLE

Unsupported by relationships with other people because we were all made to live in relationships with other people. We were made to need others. That's why one of the most cruel imprisonments is solitary confinement. You put somebody all by themselves, they think of it as a torture. Why? Because we were made to live with other people. We've all seen what happens to a spouse when the other spouse dies and they all of a sudden begin to feel like, why should I even go on? What is there worth living for? There's plenty worth living for. God still has a purpose of your life. But you begin to feel because that person isn't there that life isn't worth living. The passion has gone from life.

Sometimes you lose passion because you're not getting any fellowship with other believers. You might be doing a lot. You might be at a lot of entertainment events. But you're not getting any relationship time that increased and restores passion.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10

“Two are better than one. Because if one falls down his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up.”

I love the Bible! It's such a simple, practical book. If you fall down it's really good to have somebody there to help you up. Some of you there's nobody around to help you up. So when you fall down you have to struggle up all by yourself all the time. The Bible is saying get somebody around you who can help you. It helps you to keep the strength and passion that you and I need for everyday life.

I've been a pastor for a lot of years now. I've seen a lot of people who wanted to have a passion for God. I could see it in their eyes. Yet they couldn't sustain it. I can tell you without a shadow of a doubt where that passion began to fall off. The first step is always the same first step. They stopped being around God's people. They stopped coming to church. They stopped hanging around other people who had the same passion. It's like, “It's after Easter. The big show is over. Summer's coming. I won't come as often.” It's like that old picture of if you take a coal out of a fire and put it off to itself it gets cold. You put it back in the fire, it warms up again. God made us all like that. We need other people in our lives in order to sustain the passion in our lives.

Hebrews 10:24-25 *“Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together but let us encourage one another.”*

Who do you need to encourage and who needs to encourage you? If we're going to sustain passion we need other people in our lives. That's one of the reasons why it is so

important for you to be involved in one of our Connection Groups here at Eastgate. These groups are designed to help you stay connected and fresh! Not allowing dry-boneitis to creep in.

III. Spiritual Causes for Dry Bone-itis

1. AN UNEXAMINED LIFE

Socrates said “An unexamined life is not worthy living.” Before Socrates said that there were works that came from the Bible...

Lamentations 3:40

“Let us look closely at our ways and examine them and then return to the Lord.”

It’s a good practice regularly in your life to pull aside, to stop long enough, to be still long enough to ask yourself the question, How am I doing? Where am I going? Is my life on track of where I think God wants me to go?

Here in Cincinnati we’re not too far from the Indianapolis 500 race. I know many of you have been there. If you were to watch the cars go round and round the track over 200 miles an hour *wide open*. But three or four times during the race those cars will pull in and come to a complete stop and take a pit stop.

You need the same thing. You need a time in your life when you pull back from the pace and the speed of life to just let God speak to you and be open to what God wants to say to you. One of the things that’s going to happen as you take time to examine your heart and be still and let God speak to you, one of the things that’s going to happen is God’s going to replenish your soul. But something else is going to happen. God is going to pinpoint areas in your life that need to be dealt with. He’s going to reveal areas in your life that need to be resolved and sin that needs to be confessed. When sin is undealt with in your life it will destroy the spiritual passion of your life and bring on dry-boneitis. It’s not something to be dismissed or rationalized away or ignored. Because it will destroy your passion and fire making it almost impossible to make an IMPACT.

Psalm 38 *“My guilt has overwhelmed me like a burden too heavy to bear. I am bowed down and brought low.”* You cannot feel passion and guilt at the same time. They will not co-exist. But here’s the good news. You don’t have to live with unconfessed sin in your life. God says “If you just confess your sins, if you will just come before Me honestly, admit it and acknowledge it I’ll forgive you. Not only will I forgive you but I’ll clean you up from the inside out.” That’s what happens when we take the time to examine our lives and confess sin that God reveals to us.

1 Corinthians 11:31 *“If we examine ourselves we will not be examined by God and judged in this way.”* Here’s what that verse means. If you’ll take the time to examine your own heart, open it up before God and deal with the issues that He reveals He won’t have to discipline you and He won’t have to send other people in your life to point out those areas that need to be dealt with. So one of the most important practices that we develop is regularly taking an inventory of our own hearts and lives.

2 Corinthians 13:5

“Test yourselves to make sure you’re solid in the faith. Don’t drift along taking everything for granted. Give yourselves regular checkups.”

And the thing is... unless you're intentional about it, unless you plan for it and put it in your schedule it's likely you won't do it.

2. AN UNDERNOURISHED SOUL

When your soul doesn't get the strength that it needs.

Deuteronomy 8:3

"People need more than bread in their life. Real life comes by feeding on every word of God."

What would you call a person who ate only once a week? Not a super model – that's not where I'm going with this! You'd call them starving. A lot of Americans are starving spiritually because we're not nourishing our soul. Our soul needs to be nourished because every day of our life there are circumstances that conspire against every one of us to shrink our spirit and shrivel our soul. Every day you're facing distractions and disappointments. Every day you've got problems and pressures. You've got conflicts, confusion. Every day you've got frustration and failure and fatigue. They're coming at our lives. Every one of us. Because these happen in our lives you and I have to decide to intentionally feed our soul or else we're going to lose our passion – without a shadow of a doubt. That's just the reality of life. Dry-boneitis will set in if I don't do this regularly.

What do you feed your soul with? How do you counter all those circumstances that come our way? You feed your soul with God's word. This is the bread the Bible's talking about. God's word feeds our soul.

You can spend five or ten minutes at the beginning of every day reading five or ten verses in the Bible. Start with a book like Philippians and just read through it five or ten verses at a time. It's a book all about joy. That's not a bad place to start. You'd be amazed at how God would feed your souls through that experience. Honestly some of you came here today and the truth is you're worn out. If I asked you to raise your hand this morning you'd say "I don't have the strength to raise my hand! That's how worn out I am."

Proverbs 3:22

"God's principles will fill you with living energy."

Does that sound good to anybody? Wouldn't you like some living energy? The Bible, God's principles as a habit in our everyday life can nourish our soul and give us that living energy. If you want to stay energized about life you've got to plug into God's word daily.

The Bible says in...

Romans 12:11

"Don't burn out. Keep yourselves fueled and aflame."

See the words "keep yourself." This is an intentional decision. It's not going to happen automatically. I have to decide. It's something that's a decision as part of everyday life to keep my spiritual passion. I think every one of us, we look at our lives and say, "I'd like to live my life with a little bit more faith. I don't want to live just sort of buffeted around by the circumstances or just living with the routine, the mundane. I don't want to live under my temptations or under my worries or my anxieties. I'd like to live with some more faith. How can I do that?"

The Bible has this to say in Romans 10:17 *“Faith comes from hearing the word of God.”* When I make God’s word a part of my life it nourishes my soul so I can have passion for everyday life.

Here are some extra notes for you that I didn’t preach on Sunday...

An unapplied truth will also give you dry-boneitis.

It’s when you know the right thing to do but you keep putting it off. You keep procrastinating. You’re going to lose your passion. One of the biggest mistakes that we make is confusing knowing with doing. We think because we *know* something we’ve mastered it. We have not. You may know it. You may understand it. You may explain it. You may share it with others. But if you haven’t done it it’s not really inside of you. There’s lots of things in this book that I know but I don’t really know them until I do them. I don’t know it until I do it. I don’t really know it until I do it. Until I practice it. I apply it. I act on it. I obey it. I put it into practice. I don’t really know a spiritual truth until I actually act on it and apply it in my life. There’s four parts to applying it in my life. I’ve got to change the way I think, the way I feel, the way I act, and the way I relate. These things have to change in my life before I really know it.

God warns over and over again in the Bible about the worthlessness of knowing truth without doing anything about it, without practicing it and obeying it.

2 Peter says *“Make every effort to apply the benefits of God’s promises in your life. Then your faith will produce a life of moral excellence which leads to knowing God better.”* You want to have a life of character? You want to get to know God better? Here’s the key: Make every effort to apply. Circle “make every effort.” It takes effort.

What you’re doing right now doesn’t take any effort at all. Listening to truth takes no effort. You can come in here. You can sit down. You can listen to me. You can listen to Pastor John. You can listen to Pastor Gerson. It doesn’t take any effort at all to listen to truth. The hard part is am I going to do anything about this? Am I going to go home and work on clearing up my purpose, balancing my schedule, resolving conflict, getting my life support. Am I going to do anything about it? It’s not the knowledge that changes you. It’s the doing it that changes you. If you don’t do it and you know to do it you lose your passion. The Bible is very clear about this.

James 1 *“Anyone who listens to the word and takes no action is like some nobody who looks at himself in a mirror and then goes off and immediately forgets it. But anyone who puts it in practice [that’s applying the truth] will be blessed in every undertaking.”*

If I ask how many of you would like God to bless every single thing you undertake in life, how many of you would like God’s blessing? All of us. I would love to have God’s blessing on everything I do. It’s not rocket science. Over a hundred times in scripture God says “If you want Me to bless everything you do just do what I tell you. If you’ll just do what I tell you to do I will bless everything you do. I’ll bless your career. I’ll bless your relationships. I’ll bless your finances. I’ll bless your health. I’ll bless your future. I will bless it all if you’ll just do what I have told you to do.” It’s easy.

The blessing does not come from listening – hearing the truth. The blessing comes from doing the truth, applied truth. *“Remember. It is a message to obey not just to listen to. If you don’t obey it you’re only fooling yourselves.”* We’re deceiving ourselves. We can go to church, hear these great sermons, these teachings, these spiritual truths, if you go out and don’t do anything about it, you’re just kidding yourself. Fooling yourself. You’re not growing. You think you’re growing spiritually but you’re not. The way you grow is by doing it, by practicing it. By putting it in to action.

Some of you, you are always learning. You’re always going to seminars. You’re going to classes. You listen to motivational tapes. You go to Bible studies. You’re in a small group. You do all these things. Learning, learning, learning. But you never put it into practice.

I’m going to say something that’s going to shock you. Bible study without service is actually harmful to your life. *What??* Bible study, if you don’t put it into practice, actually increases your responsibility. Because the more you know the more God holds you accountable for. If you know the right thing to do and you don’t do it....

James 4:17 *“Anyone who knows the right thing to do and doesn’t do it is sinning.”* We think sin is dosing bad things. No actually sin can actually be not doing the thing you know to do. When you know the right thing to do, God’s told you and you’re clear about it, but you keep putting it off you’re actually increasing your responsibility. You’re skating on thin ice! What happens is you lose your passion. That’s why if you go into the typical church, it’s filled with people who have no passion at all. People who have dry-boneitis. Why? Because they’ve been hearing, hearing, hearing, learning, learning, learning for years and never putting it into practice. That causes you to lose your passion. You have to act on it.

Jesus said this in Luke 8 *“My mother and My brothers are those who hear the word of God and action it.”* What does He mean? He means if you want to know if you’re in God’s family, the proof that you’re in God’s family is you act on what you know. When you hear spiritual truth you practice it. You do it. You apply it to your life. Don’t just listen to it. How do I know I’m in the family of God? How do I know I’m going to heaven? How do I know that I’m one of God’s children? You do what God tells you to do. That’s the proof. So an unapplied truth will cause you to lose your passion and bring forth dry-boneitis.

An unexpressed faith will also give you dry-boneitis.

An unexpressed faith will cause you to lose your vitality, your passion, your energy for life. Ephesians 4:15 says *“Let our lives lovingly express truth in all things speaking truly, dealing truly, living truly.”* He says you were made to express truth, express faith. Did you know that God has a message that He wants to say to the world through you. It is a unique message that I only you can share because it’s through you. It’s called your life message. If you’re alive and your heart is beating God has a life message He wants to say through you to the entire world. If you don’t share that message, if you don’t express it, two very sad things happen.

One, the world gets cheated. Because if you don’t share your life message nobody else is going to share it. Only you can. It’s what God wants to say to the world through you. The world gets cheated. It’s our loss because your message isn’t shared.

Two, you will lose your passion and get dry-boneitis. Because you were made for more than just taking in. God made you to give out. God made you to express.

It goes back to that old illustration of the two famous lakes in Israel. In the nation of Israel there are two large lakes. One is in the northern part of Israel called the Sea of Galilee and there's one in the southern part of Israel called the Dead Sea. They are as different as night and day. The Sea of Galilee is a fully alive lake. It literally is teeming with life. They still do commercial fishing there. It's a gorgeous lake and there's lots of life and it's alive.

Then you go to the Dead Sea. The Dead Sea in the southern part of Israel is literally dead. Nothing can live there. There are no fish in it. It's full of salt and brine and chemicals. It's so thick that if you try to swim in it, which I have, you float on top. When you get out your skin is crusted with this very bitter kind of stuff. It's an ugly, ugly desert dead sea.

What is the difference between the living Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea? The Sea of Galilee takes in many, many different tributaries from Lebanon and around. The water flows in, giving it input. But it also gives out. There's a famous river that comes out of the Sea of Galilee called the Jordan River. The Jordan River drains out of the Sea of Galilee comes all the way south and empties into the Dead Sea. The Dead Sea takes in but it does not give out. So it's stagnant. It stinks. It is dead.

That is a parallel of life. If you want to be alive you have to take in and you have to give out. If all you do is take in, take in, take in, you're going to be a Dead Sea person. Your life is going to go stagnant. You were made for more than taking in. You were made to give out.

You say, God didn't design me that way. I say it like this: Impression without expression leads to depression. If you come to Eastgate Community Church and you learn all these truths but you don't act on them, you don't apply them and you don't pass them on to somebody else, express them to somebody else – you're going to go stagnant – dry boneitis.

If you want to stay fresh, if you want to stay vital, if you want to stay alive in your life let me give you a little habit to develop. Psalm 96:2 *"Each day tell someone that He saves."* That's it. Tell somebody about God. The happiest most joyful people I know are always talking about God, what a difference He's made in my life. They're sharing with other people. They're sharing the love of God with others. They're inviting people to church. They're talking with people. They're not hammering people with the Bible. They're just saying, this is what God is doing in my life. They share, they express their faith.

Let me ask you a very important question. How long has it been since you talked with anybody about Jesus Christ? How long has it been since you told anybody about what God has done for you? Have you *ever* done that? Have you ever expressed it to anybody else? If not, you're just taking in and you're not giving out. You're going to go stagnant. The happiest people I know are always sharing their love of God with other people. Bringing friends to Christ, telling them about the Lord, inviting them to church.

The Bible says this in 1 Peter *"You are God's instrument to do His work and speak out for Him to tell others the night and day difference He made for you."* You don't have to be a theologian. You don't have to be a Bible expert. You say, here's the difference He's done for me. This is what I'm learning right now. The stuff I'm telling you today, you could pass this on to somebody else. Say, "You know the other day my pastor was talking about having dry-boneitis, things that kill our passion. Are you interested?" And you share some of them. Pull out of your routine and share it with somebody.

We call this key to staying energized the Pass It On principle. The more I give out the more God gives to me. The more I bless others, the more God blesses me. God is looking for distribution channels. He's looking for distribution centers. People say, "Why does God bless your life?" Simple. I'm helping a lot of people. The more people I help the more God blesses me. It's like being a straw. God says I'm looking for people that would be a funnel that I could bless other people with. God wants to do that in your life.

2 Timothy 2 *"I want you to tell these same things to other people who can be trusted to tell others."* Paul says I tell you, you tell other people and they tell other people. That's the Pass It On principle. God says, if you want to stay vibrant, if you want to stay alive, don't just be a dead sea. Take in but give it out. Share what you're learning with other people.

Conclusion:

Let me get real frank with you. How serious are you about getting your passion back? How serious are you about re-energizing your life? How serious are you about dealing with the dry bones in the valley of life? How serious are you in your desire to make an IMPACT for the Kingdom of God? It doesn't just happen automatically. It takes effort.

1 Timothy 4:?

"Take the time and trouble to keep yourself spiritually fit."

Are you spiritually fit? It take time and trouble.

It's time to get rid of dry-boneitis and make a true IMPACT for the Kingdom of God; starting with our own lives first!

And as you do...

You watch... You wait... You'll See!