

Coach House Church

BEACONS

BONES

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Here are some interesting facts about bones. The human body has a skeleton made up of 206 bones. These bones have a number of functions: providing a scaffold for our bodies, protection for our vital organs, and enabling movement along with tendons and muscles.

Did you also know that bones store minerals: calcium and phosphorous as well as fats. The spongy interior of the bone is called bone marrow. There is red bone marrow which houses stem cells and is responsible for making around 2 million red blood cells every second. In here it also produces white blood cells which are involved with our immune systems, fighting infections. There is also yellow bone marrow where fats are stored for energy.

The spongy interior, made up of lots of holes, like a honeycomb, allows nerves and blood vessels to travel along. The outside of the bone is hardened by calcium phosphates to give it strength. So, bones are both rigid and light.

You will probably know these facts already. The biggest bone is found in the leg- the thigh bone or femur. The smallest bones are found in the middle ear cavity- the ossicles. At only 3mm long you could think they are not important, however, but if they don't function properly then a normal speaking voice is heard as a quiet whisper.

All bones are vital to our health and wellbeing. Bones help to keep our PH levels in balance, not too acidic and not too alkaline. Bones can repair and remodel if they are damaged.

Our bodies are designed with precision and purpose. For most of the time we take our bones, and also our bodies, for granted and it is only when parts are damaged or broken do we really take notice.

The writer of Psalm 139 says:

'I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made.'

So we know what healthy bones should be like. So let's look at a story in the bible that is in great contrast to this.

Ezekiel who was a prophet and a priest was shown a vision by God- a valley full of hundreds of dry bones. This can be found in Ezekiel chapter 37. The bones he was shown were dry, lifeless, disconnected and not functioning as they were intended.

Ezekiel 37 says:

The hand of the Lord was on me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the Lord and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. 2 He led me back and forth among them, and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry. 3 He asked me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" I said, "Sovereign Lord, you alone know."

The background story to this is that Ezekiel has been exiled along with thousands of others, taken from their home land of Judah into Babylon. He was a priest who was called by God to deliver His messages- and not easy messages by any stretch of the imagination. God gave him visions to illustrate the messages and Ezekiel had to relay them to the exiled people. Sounds straight forward enough- pass the message on – but what a message!

This one wasn't the first message he'd had to deliver either. He had already had to confront the Israelites about their sinful actions, the fact that they were to become exiles and now, in this vision, they were being described as dry lifeless bones- as a people who had lost their connection to their life -giver, Almighty God. And of course, nobody wants to hear bad news, doom and gloom or sometimes not even the truth of the situation.

Ezekiel 37: 11 Then the Lord said to Ezekiel, "Son of man, these dry bones are the people of Israel. They seem to be lost, and dead, and without hope.

The messages Ezekiel delivered were 'to the point' with no messing about, no polite diplomacy skills. Sovereign God had an urgent message for his people.

Ezekiel 3:17 "Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear a word from My mouth, give them a warning from Me. There is good news though - While the people had generally forgotten God, God had not forgotten them. This wasn't a matter of God punishing people for their mistakes and bad choices, it was an opportunity for them to reconsider their attitudes and actions, to show humility and accept that humans need help and support through life. The whole point of a warning is to halt the expected disaster, to give someone the chance to make a different choice and to reconsider their position and opportunities. Isn't it good that God gives us warnings and opportunities to turn around and change.

The exiled community had already been in captivity for 5 years before Ezekiel delivered this message. They had lived in their own strength relying on their own resources and had forgotten it was God who, way back, had protected and delivered the people out of Egypt into their own promised land. Throughout the history of the Israelites they had great times when they praised God for his protection and provision, recognising their need of a Holy God. Then, as fickle as human beings tend to be, they forgot God, making their own decisions and choices which led to disaster and ruin, ultimately ending with captivity. Are we any different? How quickly we can forget God's care and love for us, and then remember him especially when life gets a little tougher.

But God's message through Ezekiel didn't just end there.

Chapter 37 goes on: 4 Then he said to me, "Prophecy to these bones and say to them, 'Dry bones, hear the word of the Lord! 5 This is what the Sovereign Lord says to these bones: I will make breath[a] enter you, and you will come to life. 6 I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the Lord.'"

The chapter continues to describe how, as Ezekiel prophesies, the bones start to rattle like thunder, coming together, bone by bone, joined by muscle and tendon... eventually standing tall like an army, full of the breath of God. It must have been an amazing sight-possibly a bit scary!

But God continued with a message of hope.

Verse 14: But they shall live again, for I, the Lord, will put life into them; and they shall go back to their own land, and be a people once more. I, the Lord, have

spoken to it, and I will do it."

When Ezekiel told the captive people this vision their hearts were lifted up with a new hope that they should see their own land again.

This story tells us about the very nature of our Father God who never leaves us without Hope. Even in the darkest days, in the middle of untold upsets and disasters, God, the life-giver is always there. God gives us his Holy Spirit, the breath of God to live in us, to comfort and strengthen. God does not want us to be dry bones – lifeless, disconnected and without any hope. Instead he offers to guide and help us on life's journey. Let's finish with Proverbs chapter 3 which tells us to put our trust in the Sovereign God who knows everything about us and wants the best for us.

Proverbs 3

My child,[a] never forget the things I have taught you, Store my commands in your heart. 2 If you do this, you will live many years, and your life will be satisfying. 3 Never let loyalty and kindness leave you! Tie them around your neck as a reminder. Write them deep within your heart. 4 Then you will find favour with both God and people, and you will earn a good reputation. 5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. 6 Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take. 7 Don't be impressed with your own wisdom. Instead, fear the Lord and turn away from evil. 8 Then you will have healing for your body and strength for your bones.
Amen



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