



21 DAY DEVOTIONAL

DAY ONE

“New Year, New Me”

Scripture: Ezekiel 37:1-14

It is normal with the start of a new year to consider what our goals will be; what changes we want to make or improve in our current circumstances. This can be across our marriage, family, ministry, work and friends. However, with that challenge to “improve” – there can often be a self-focus – a striving.

In this passage, Ezekiel is given a vision of what scholars believe is the aftermath of a battle – a valley of dry bones – death has come, time has passed and by the time your bones are dry – life has certainly passed. Ain’t no coming back from those dry bones!

BUT! The Lord (Yahweh) says to Ezekiel to “speak a prophetic message” (v4,9 NLT). Speak is the verb -the instruction - to use his own “God-given” breath, the (fresh) air that was within him, to prophesy to the dry bones!

Interestingly, the prophetic message was also about breath. The Hebrew word in this passage is “ruakh,” which can mean “breath”, “wind” or “Spirit” depending on the context. In Ezekiel 37:14 God promises to put His Spirit in His people.

After the first prophetic message that the breath of the Lord would come to the bones, there was rattling and movement as they clamored together. The skeletons formed, the muscles formed, and the skin covered the body but they still were dead bodies lying on the ground.

There was a second prophetic message needed to again bring the breath of the Lord to the bodies. Now we had action! It was a great army – giving us the picture of health, vitality, strength, and united purpose for the greater good.

“This was a work of revival; restoring life to something that at one time had life. This was not the creation of life from nothing; it was the restoration of life to something that had been long dead.” David Guzik

When considering this New Year, don't strive to “be better.” True life fulfillment comes through our relationship with God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son and The Holy Spirit. Let the ‘New Year, New Me’ be about speaking to those dry parts of your life - that the Holy Spirit will come in and not just give you the shell of what your life should look like, but keep asking the Holy Spirit to be in all aspects of your life so you are living a fully engaged, purpose driven, life giving, God fearing walk.

Prayer: Lord, where I feel my life has perished away or is dry with Your Spirit, I again ask the Holy Spirit to come and breathe in these areas. Let 2019 not be a year of striving or just surviving, but of walking in Your favour and grace.

DAY TWO

Did Someone Say Boom?

Scripture: Genesis 1

If you went to a New Year's Eve party this season, there would have no doubt been that one person you could hear from all parts of that party balcony. Their laugh is louder by 30 decibels! Whether they are telling the jokes or not, they become the funny one just because of their contagious laugh. Love them or hate them (depending on your extrovert tolerance that day), they fill the “space” in the party, they create an environment.

Our chapter of scripture today shows us the power of speech from God Almighty: The Omnipotent, All Powerful One. Verse after verse, it talks about how God said, and something happened.

(NIV version):

v3 And God said, “Let there be light” and there was light. BOOM

v6 And God said, "Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water....and it was so. BOOM

v9 And God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear." And it was so. BOOM

v11 And God said, "Let the land produce vegetation..." And it was so. BOOM

Are you getting the picture?

"He spoke to nothing, and it became *something*. Chaos heard it and became order; darkness heard it and became light. "And God said - and *it* was so." These twin phrases, as cause and effect, occur throughout the Genesis story of the creation. The *said* accounts for the *so*. The *so* is the *said* put into the continuous present." A.W. Tozer

Let us be reminded of the power of God's spoken word. He is the Alpha (beginning) and the Omega (end). God does not change (Malachi 3:6) and will always do what He says He will do (Numbers 23:19). So those promises that are in His word carry the same power that was needed to create the earth, sun, moon, stars, ecosystem, human kind, and DNA...BOOM!

Prayer: Lord, I praise you as the Almighty One. I am reminded today of your power and your consistency. I am simply in awe of You, Your creation and Your love for each one of us.

DAY THREE

He Knows It All

Scripture: Psalm 139

This chapter is one of the most well-known Bible chapters. The middle section is the most crocheted on cushions, pillowcases and the occasional wall hanging! It's for good reason it is so celebrated and recited. It is a song that describes the omniscience (knowing of everything) and omnipresence of God.

The chapter carries a depth of intimacy and transparency. Adam and Eve felt exposed in the garden through the knowledge of their sin. In this Psalm, David takes this exposure and celebrates it! He acknowledges that there is no hiding from God, whether it's his thoughts or his wanderings – God sees it and knows it. God was in the most intimate parts of your existence at the privacy of conception and the minute details of your formation (v15).

There's a relatively new song from within INC called "Have It All" (Elevation Youth). It has this line in it "There's no other King, that would relentlessly, chase after me, over and over again". This is the heartbeat of Psalm 139.

"How precious are your thoughts about me, O God" (v17 NLT). It blows your mind.

"If we are marvelously wrought upon even before we are born, what shall we say of the Lord's dealings with us after we quit his secret workshop, and he directs our pathway through the pilgrimage of life? What shall we not say of that new birth which is even more mysterious than the first, and exhibits even more the love and wisdom of the Lord?" Charles H. Spurgeon

Prayer: Lord, your thoughts to me are precious and precise. I surrender to you again in 2019. You know my failings, my fears, but also my future. Holy Spirit work in and through me, and lead me along the path of everlasting life (v24).

Reflection: (Song "Have it All" Elevation Youth)

DAY FOUR

Creating Your Daily Declarations

Scriptures: John 1:12-13, 3:16, 8:32,10:28-29; Romans 6:11, 8:1,37; Galatians 3:26, 5:22-23.

Those New Year resolutions you talked about just a matter of days ago... how are they holding up? How are you going battling the thoughts of failure already this early into 2019? Never forget that this Christian walk is a relationship with Christ where you can do nothing more or nothing less to earn the grace and love of God. Sometimes we need to lead our heart with our mouth – our breath – that God-given breath! Use your breath to declare what the Bible (the Holy Scriptures) say about you!

Reflection:

As part of today's reflections, set your daily declarations for 2019. Use the scriptures from today's devotional to form these.

DAY FIVE

Holler A Hallelujah!

Scripture: Psalm 150

Psalm 150 is the final chapter of Psalms – the book that is filled with praise and worship throughout. Verse 6 says, “Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord!” (NKJV). This final verse is the culmination of all the Psalms. There is a resounding call to praise if you have breath, to give thanks to the one who gave you breath – who gave you fresh air! No reason was given at this point of the Psalms, it’s a simple call to just do it!

The one condition of praise is that you possess breath and then the rest can flow. There are no special rules to praising God. No special words. It doesn’t even have to be sung!

The Hebrew word used for praise here is “Hallah.” The meaning is to boast, brag or rave about God, even to the point of appearing foolish. It is also the most common Hebrew word for praise used throughout scripture.

Reflection: How can I increase my level of raving about God? How can I use my breath from Him, to acknowledge and praise Him?

DAY SIX

Changing Your Care Factor

Scripture: 1 Peter 5:7

As we meditated yesterday on the reminder to use a Selah time to consider our praise, today we look at the benefits of using our God-given breath to actually lead our body in casting our cares and anxieties on God. “Cast all your cares on Him because He cares for you” (NIV)

Have you noticed that when you are about to endure some pain, whether a medical procedure or exertion in exercise, the professional’s advice is to breathe in and then breathe out for the painful part – reducing the intensity of the moment? How incredible is it that God has built in these mechanisms that are available for us to manage and reduce our discomfort!

Intentional breathing and improving breathing techniques is a focus of many professionals, particularly with psychologists to reduce anxiety and stress. The process of taking slower and deeper breaths reduces the rate of the heartbeat, blood pressure and stress hormones.

We can actually use our breathing to cast away our cares. Breathe in His Spirit – slowly and deeply - and breathe out those cares that are keeping you awake at night. Worrying about what might happen will not actually change whether it will happen or not. Our Care Factor has to be in line with His. He cares for us much more than He cares for our circumstance.

Reflection: (Song Elevation Youth: “No Pressure”) How can I deliberately breathe and cast my cares?

DAY SEVEN

Crave

Scripture: Hebrews 1:3

By this point of the prayer and fasting, if you let your mind go towards what you are fasting, oh the flood of cravings that are going to fill your mind – SO DON'T DO IT!!! Sorry to even introduce the topic to take you there!

That is how powerful our minds are. Mere thoughts can turn into obsessions = CRAVINGS! Our thoughts are that powerful!

This scripture shows how we are sustained by His powerful word. Cravings are normal but are we craving the radiance of God's glory? Are we craving to know Him deeper? Are we craving His presence when we come together to worship? Are we craving to live our lives being Holy Spirit led? Are we craving to share this news of salvation that brings peace and love to our lives to those around us?

Reflection: Let the fast lead you to a focus on craving God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit 24/7. Stir this feeling of craving food to a passion to crave your God.

DAY EIGHT

It's A Trust Issue

Scripture: Psalm 62

This Psalm is considered to be written by David – King David, 'powerful ruler' David, 'great wealth to his name' David, 'armies at his call' David, 'more wives than is worth the work' David!

This is a great reminder from King David to not let your wealth, responsibilities or enemies rob your trust in the Lord. David talks about his soul silently waiting for God. Ever heard those people that are saying they are waiting for the Lord, but they don't stop telling everyone else about the issue and problem? David is talking here about surrendered silence.

This is a powerful picture of trust. Waiting.....silently.....for the Lord.

Reflection: During this period of prayer and fasting, you have created space. Are you waiting silently for the Lord to move?

DAY NINE

Is Your Air Fresh?

Scripture: Isaiah 12:4, 45:22, Ezekiel 38:23

Remember the Good News version of the Bible? What a great concept that the full story and depth of the God-breathed scriptures be titled "Good News." And it is! Evangelism is simply sharing this Good News.

No matter what season you feel you are in right now, if you are moving through this devotional, you have devotion towards the Lord. Do you remember a time when you didn't have that devotion? The air probably didn't seem so fresh without His presence. Before knowing the Lord, there is no hope, trust or confidence that there is a purpose for our lives and the trials we face.

Your neighbours, your friends, your family, your uni classmates, and your work colleagues are going through the motions of life possibly not even aware that there is another option to their tired, stressed and unfulfilling life.

Is the air around you fresh enough for others to look at you and wonder why it is so fresh? Why you can face the harshness of life with a smile, why you can ride the wave of the ups and downs of life with a smooth resolve, why you can consistently bring good words about those around you and why you are “lucky” in life!? Our lives should exude the goodness of God, the faith and hope of things to come, and His favour in our circumstances.

While our actions are powerful, we should also be compelled to use our breath to bring fresh air to all! Good news to all! Leave others feeling great from their time with you – encouraged, inspired and free!

DAY TEN

Fresh Air Over Australia

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 7:14

Our country is phenomenal! If you have travelled overseas, remember that sense of the first 24 hours back in Australia – the fresh air, the blue skies, the calm that you know the currency, know the food and know your way around. It is the most comforting feeling to be home! We are truly blessed to live in this great country.

And this country right now is not the best it has ever been! There is a general sense of political unrest and a swing away from the moral values that were once considered by many to be the foundations of the society that we have built and relied on. There is a disturbance in the air over Australia. In many respects, Australia is not what it used to be. So what will our response be?

This scripture prompts us to take personal engagement and active responsibility for our land.

- Humble ourselves – don’t think that we as Christians know it all and can always out-argue. Humble does not mean to be walked over. It is not passive and non-active, but present and humble!
- Pray – not just through this season of prayer and fasting, but continuously.
- Seek His face – above all – seek Him – not things, not earthly relationships, and not position. Our first pursuit must be to seek Him.
- Turn from our own wicked ways – if you know something is wicked/wrong, stop it! Turn from it! Seek Him instead of this wrong. Let the Holy Spirit help and guide you through.

Moral authority comes when we are not duplicitous in our living. Don't talk one way and live another.

Reflection: 2019 – Australia needs some healing – will I play my part in bringing healing to this great country?

DAY ELEVEN

Whale of A Time

Scripture: Jonah 1-4

Yes – read the whole book of Jonah! Come on – you can do it!!

What a truly unique part of history! It's famous due to the kid's story version of Jonah and the whale. In the midst of the amazing concept of Jonah living in a whale for three days, children have been left thinking more about the logistics of living in a whale and the concept of a God who let Jonah be swallowed, rather than the grace and compassion of God, which is the true message in this book.

God was truly compassionate to Jonah who was deliberate in his disobedience – he ran the other direction! And he was a prophet! Fear ruled Jonah's reaction and he deliberately ignored what God had told him to do. Jonah's thoughts and control of the situation meant he did not trust God's plan. There was no way he was going to participate in God's plan for Nineveh.

Yet in Jonah's state of exile, God has compassion to grab him and give him an all-inclusive trip straight to his destination. God saved Jonah from his rebellion. He saved him from himself! This was a compassionate act to free him from torment for the rest of his days.

It was also a compassionate act for the people of Nineveh – to whom salvation came! The result was so powerful that Nineveh had a city wide fast. There was a revival! But Jonah gets ticked! After experiencing God's miraculous hand, he throws a full grown tantrum and goes and sulks. God shows compassion on him by bringing shade which pleases Jonah. Yet he flips back into a sulk when the shady plant dies overnight. God is trying to show Jonah through

his tantrums that HE cared for those in Nineveh and responded to them with compassion rather than a justice bent to fulfill the prophecy regardless.

Reflection: How often do we seek justice at the expense of compassion for those who don't yet know wrong from right? How can we develop eyes of compassion?

DAY TWELVE

How Fresh Is My Breath?

Scripture: Proverbs 18:21

Our focus in this season of Fresh Air is to let God's Spirit reveal and renew within us. We only have control over ourselves. But we live in community – with family, friends and neighbours.

This scripture shows how powerful our speech is. We have all experienced the deathly nature of words spoken about us or to us. They can literally drain the life out of someone.

So the challenge is to use our breath to bring the freshest, life giving, inspiring, loving and edifying talk to everyone we are in contact with.

Reflection: How are your words a reflection of the God-breathed life given to me? Let your words be clean, fresh and pure, for the edification of each other. May they bring life not death, bring joy not disharmony, bring encouragement not fear.

DAY THIRTEEN

Pray Boldly

Scripture: James 5:16

Prayer is powerful and makes a difference. You will have seen changes in this season of prayer and fasting. Changes in the atmosphere around you. Changes in your focus and alertness to the things of the Spirit. Changes in your tolerance for others.

Our role is to pray. It's God's role to decide how and when our prayers are answered.

God wants you to pray boldly - for our own benefit! A bold prayer highlights that we trust that God is willing and able. Again we need to remind ourselves that the how and when is God's business. The asking is our role. A bold prayer arrests us out of that place of stale air, and promotes us to a space of fresh air of potential, faith, possibility and the wonder of our God who is creator of everything. Bold prayers ignite fire within us.

Bold prayers won't manipulate God. Bold prayers will position our soul to really pursue Jesus in our walk with Him.

Reflection: Write your bold prayers for 2019 and speak them out until they ignite a passion within.

DAY FOURTEEN

Look Up

Scripture Genesis 15:1-6

Abram at this point in scripture is between the promise of an heir and evidence of the miracle. Both Abram and Sarah were aged – things were not looking close to fulfilment. Abram knew it. Sarah knew it. His servants knew it. Abram had tried to resolve the miracle himself with a maid servant. Trying to settle the deal and bring it to fruition.

Then God calls Abram out of his tent. The tent was constraining his vision. He could not be reminded of the promise and be given an even greater promise of the fullness of the heirs to come while he was in the familiar constraints of his tent; while he was with his own thoughts and 'what ifs' and the 'what could have been' scenarios. God called him into the wide, open space to let him feel and experience the greatness of God.

Walking around a city, we can get a false sense of the impressiveness of man's creations: from bridges to towers. Yes, they are amazing. Yet, stand on top of a mountain and see the grandeur

of the heavens and land and oceans for as far as the eye can see. The diversity of the animals contained within. The extremes of weather. The force of wind that traces our country. The vision of the stars, the planets and the sun. This is creative genius.

God wants us to take time to absorb His greatness and creativity. Let it help you to lift your eyes! Trust that the promises He has for you are still in the pipeline. Don't let your created world (tent) restrict your vision of what the Lord sees.

Reflection: What dreams and visions do I need to resurrect in 2019? In what areas do I need to look up and see, and take the constraints off my belief?