
Yes, These Bones Can Live

(Ezekiel 37:3)

Practical Applications

Where Do We Go From Here?

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YES, THESE BONES CAN LIVE!

**WHERE DO WE GO
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The *Yes, These Bones Can Live Pilot Program* has two parts. Part one is the “training and equipping” for clergy and congregations to develop the skills necessary to address the challenges they are facing. The majority of our teachings are accompanied by “practicum’s” to strengthen the instruction through ministry experience. We know that information without application bears little fruit. It has been noted that we remember about 30 % of what we hear; 50% of what we read; 80% of what we see and 100% of what we do. Jesus modeled this way of discipleship. He taught (hearing); He demonstrated (seeing); then He commissioned us to go and do. Ultimately it is the doing that expands the Kingdom of God.

We are now ready to begin the second phase of the Pilot Program. Part two is all about applying what was learned.

Listed below are twenty-three practical “tasks” that we believe will put into motion what you have been learning through the three training weekends. We further believe that you will know where to begin and which tasks should be tackled first. Because each church is different and has different needs you can best determine what comes first in order of priority. The tasks listed below are all important and relevant to addressing the challenges facing your congregation. Your job is to begin the process of taking what you have learned and applying it to congregational life.

As a strategy we suggest the following approach. First, answer the following questions:

1. Which tasks are short-term – able to be done NOW, quickly and easily?
2. Which tasks require more training, learning and experience – medium term.
3. Which tasks require significant time to incorporate into the life of the parish? Long- Term.
4. Which tasks are already in place? – Evaluate them for effectiveness or any changes necessary as a result of what you have learned.

Once you have broken the list into short, medium and long-term tasks begin to create a timeline for accomplishing each task on the list.

For each task you determine what needs to be done, when it will be done, who will do it and how will you know when the task is completed. Remember the S.M.A.R.T formula:

S	Specific
M	Measurable
A	Attainable
R	Results Oriented
T	Time Phased

Don't be overwhelmed. Take them one at a time and keep a record of how you are doing. Share the joy of accomplishment and this will motivate you to continue. Seeing results is a good thing.

Also remember – this is a FAITH thing. Without Jesus we can do nothing (*John 15*). We are cooperating with God the Holy Spirit, relying on His Word and His Power. He has determined to use us to do His work. With that in mind there is no failure.

The tasks listed below are not in order of most important to least, but simply means to bring the training to bear on your church life. Go for it!

1. Establish A Day Of Intercession And Fasting

We talked about this as a divine strategy taught to Israel by the Prophet Joel. If you remember, Joel spoke during a time of crisis (locust plague) and called the people to a life style of prayer, fasting, solemn assemblies and crying out to God. The model we suggest is a corporate model (for the entire congregation to participate). Pick one day a week to fast, gather, pray and cry out to God. It would be ideal to conclude the fast with a Eucharist followed by potluck at the church. We suggested the fast be Tuesday lunch though Wednesday dinner. We modeled the “crying out to God” for you on the Friday night session at Our Lady of the Snows. There were three parts – confession, intercession, and praise.

2. Six To Ten Names To Pray For

One of our practicums for church growth was praying for people you know in your family, neighborhood, work place and social circles. Write the names on a three by five card, place them on the altar and offer prayers for the names every time you gather. This list could be used during the “crying out to God” time or for times of extended prayer. Remember, you are asking for God to open the door for you to ask, “Can I pray for you?” Or would you like to join me for a particular activity. Keep a list of all those who God touches because of your prayers.

3. Visible Outreach To The Community

We believe you should do something to better the community where you live. Outreach means “for others”. Look for something you can do together that is visible in your community. The possibilities are endless. You may want to adapt a struggling family. You may want to clean up a play yard. You may want to paint a fence. You may want to collect food or clothes. Contact a social worker and find out who needs help and be the helping hand. Depending on your size of congregation you may want to do this quarterly (once every three months).

4. Assessment Of Your Buildings

Assess the condition of your building/s inside and out. What do they look like? Do they look loved, cared for, clean, painted, neat, and tidy? Are the grounds mowed, flowerbeds weeded, shrubs trimmed leaves raked, sidewalks edged? Inside the church - is there clutter? Is it clean? What are the rooms like? Are the bathrooms clean? Is the bulletin board up to date? Do you have good signage from the street? Can people find the office, restroom, nursery, etc. when they enter? Really evaluate you facilities in light of what others see and how welcoming they are. You may need to have some parish clean up days.

5. Yellow Pages Ad

Believe it or not, people still look in the Yellow Pages to find you. The time of services is helpful, address, website address, etc. If you can afford it, a small map or directions are very helpful. Make sure when someone calls; you have a person on the other end of the line or an answering machine with some basic information. If your clergy has a cell phone that number can be added to the recording.

6. Website And Cyber World

As a rule, the church is normally 7 to 10 years behind the technology curve. We lagged behind with becoming computer savvy and have been catching up on all the Internet technology. Software, hardware, DVD's, cell phones and the web are now just a part of our culture. We cannot afford to simply ignore this reality. Having a website is becoming mandatory, not optional. In every diocese or community you will have people who are very good at the techno stuff and they need to be identified and sought out if you need help. Most churches need a minimal website that is more informational than interactive. Get on the web and look up churches that have a website and see which ones you like and why. Design one that works for you, your people and those in cyberspace looking for you. The advantages are huge for communication in your church. Calendar of events, changes, updates, pictures, newsletters, and announcements can all be posted on the site as well.

7. Yes, These Bones Can Live Training Manuals

The three training manuals that you have are yours to copy and teach from. We want you to use them to train and equip your people. Look through the manuals and determine what teaching and practicum you can use for sermons, Sunday school, and retreats. They are a gold mine of information and designed for you to adapt for you setting. It would be criminal to place these manuals on the shelf! Some of the material is for the clergy, some is for the leadership and some is for all the people. We cannot urge you strongly enough to begin using these materials to develop the ministries in your church. We have given you tons of practical information to help you cooperate with the Lord in transitioning your church into vibrant centers of life giving Christianity. Think back on all we have covered with you. Get to work and start teaching this material to your people.

8. Membership Criteria

We strongly encourage you to review this teaching and begin to make these seven criteria the norm in your church. If you remember, they are based on the baptismal covenant and the church canons for a Communicant in Good Standing. This should be the lowest common denominator in the life of your church. Remember, the standard you set will become normative over time and you will begin to attract people who are looking for this type of clarity of belief and behavior.

9. Vision And Mission Statements

During the course of our time together we learned that most of you had a vision or mission statement, however, most of you did not know what it actually said, nor did it really impact the life of your congregations. If you have a Vision Statement and like it, simply revive it and begin to apply it in the life of your church. If you don't have one or the one you have is not working, begin the process of developing a new one. They usually take more time than you think. Pray a lot and be patient for the Spirit of God to speak into your hearts.

10. New Comer Assimilation

Believe it or not, God will start sending you people. When they come, are you ready for them? We spent several sessions in the second training manual teaching you how to greet, incorporate and assimilate people into the community of faith. If you don't have a formalized game plan then you should get about the business of developing this type of program in your church. Evaluate what you are currently doing in light of what we were teaching and make any necessary adjustments.

11. Establish A Healing Ministry

One of our main emphases in this pilot program is to reclaim the ministry of divine healing and make this normative in the life of every congregation. We have noted several times the direct connection between healing and evangelism stating that 70% of the public ministry of Jesus was healing the sick and 100% of the time it produced evangelism. We are convinced this is one of the cornerstones of the gospel message and when the church ministers in this manner it attracts hurting and broken people. This will be a significant development in the life of your church. It will require more study, training, time than some of the other tasks, however, we believe it will produce the greatest fruit. The recommended resource to get started is the training materials from Christian Healing Ministries. Hopefully by the end of the first year you are up and running with a ministry that is actually seeing people healed.

12. Field Trips And Training Conferences

Most of us learn by seeing and doing. We are strong advocates of taking trips where people are doing what you want to do so you can watch and learn how to bring it home to your church. If you want to learn more about healing for example, go to healing conferences or churches where this ministry is

offered. Watch and participate in the ministry to learn. There are also many training conferences that focus on some of the things you want to do. Find out where they are and go. Invest in your people. Take them with you. Learn together. They are fun and great opportunities to fellowship. There is something about a good ole' road trip that builds memories.

13. Alternative Worship Styles

You may be able to develop an alternative worship service that is more contemporary or user friendly for those unfamiliar with liturgical worship. We are not talking about the "text" of the liturgy, but mostly style (informal) and contemporary music (non-organ). There are many ways to do this and one size will not fit all. However, if you put some energy into this it has a huge potential to attract people. We do have some challenges for the new comer. We have insider language, code words and a complicated service. Booklets may be helpful as well as LCD projection to help people follow along. Again, take field trips and see how others in our tradition are offering this type of service.

14. The Alpha Course

This ministry tool is still of value and continues to be used of the Lord to bring people in. Alpha offers a good overview of the Christian faith and allows for people to be touched by God the Holy Spirit. It requires significant effort but it is worth in. You will need some training. You will need to purchase some materials. And you will need lots of help, but in the end you will have a place for the unchurched and the dechurched to find the living God. For Alpha to be effective you must be comfortable with the ministry of the Holy Spirit and the healing ministry for both are part of the course. Don't be intimidated by this, we have given you enough training on both subjects to get started.

15. Felt Needs

One of the ways we can be a blessing to our communities is to meet a "felt need". In the training manuals we talked about this as a strategy. If you can host or organize a ministry in your building that touches lives in a meaningful way, people will come to know you and often join you. Felt needs come in all shapes and sizes. The Mother's Morning Out programs for young mothers are often a good place to begin. After school care for the latch key kids can be another way to meet a 'felt need'. You might consider teaching English to Hispanics; hosting a luncheon for elderly from a nursing home that want to get out and about; or offering the marriage enrichment classes put out by the same group that does the Alpha Program.

16. Small Groups For The Parish

This was not fully developed in the training materials; however, we believe this should be a central part of you congregational life. Small groups are intended to accomplish pastor care, prayer, study, and a place for new people to enter socially. Pastorally it gives people a place to plug in, be needed, help others and share concerns with others. It also provides a regular place to pray with others as well as the

very critical issue of accountability. Bible study should be included and part of the time-shared together. It is ideal to meet weekly throughout the year with appropriate breaks.

17. Crown Ministry

This is a course we strongly recommend to develop biblical stewardship in the life of your congregation. It is a 10-week course with homework, memory verse and practical applications. Although it is very demanding it is enormously fruitful. People really are educated and converted in their pocketbook. The emphasis is not on giving but understanding God's economy and how He works in this realm. The church has historically fallen short of faithful stewardship. We have ignored or been ignorant of God's wisdom in this area, consequently the church struggles for resources and the kingdom of God suffers. This course will be a valuable addition to the life of your congregation. All the information you need is at www.crown.org. It requires training and materials.

18. Every Member A Minister

We believe God has given all of us a measure of His Holy Spirit to gift us and enable us to be a blessing to the body of Christ. All of us have something unique to offer. Remember the Parable of the Talents in *Matthew 25: 14-30*. The one who buried the talent was called wicked and lazy. The point is we are to use what God has given us to edify the body. Ministry is one of the seven membership criteria and should be elevated as normal in the life of your church. Remember the simple teaching on how to determine your gifts:

- a. you will like it
- b. it will be a natural extension of who you are
- c. it will bear fruit
- d. it will be affirmed by others

We also recommend a strategy of have a "every member canvas" from Easter through Pentecost, having all members make their "ministry" commitments on Pentecost Sunday.

19. Quarterly Church Activities To Invite The Community

Periodically you should have events in the life of the congregation where your people can invite neighbors, friends, and co-workers to join you. These are normally non-threatening, social in nature and without pressure. Golfing, movie night at the church, going to a ball game, attending a play, white water rafting, a trip to the "big city" to go on a tour, shopping and the like are all opportunities for others to "check you out". It also provides an opportunity to have the laity "invite" people to participate.

20. Bible Studies For Every Member

Again, this is one of the seven criteria for membership. We are to continue in the “apostles teaching”. There are numerous basic studies from prominent ministries and individuals worth considering. Allow people to choose what they want to study and help them find good resources. Most people need the basics, so try to avoid the “deep” stuff. The point is to challenge all your people to be growing in the faith through the study of God’s Word. Often it is better to offer studies that go for six to eight weeks and break in between. This allows people to benefit from a short-term commitment, take a break and come back in later in the year.

21. Ministry To The Poor

One of the hallmarks of the Christian faith is attention to the “least of these”. When the church blesses the poor in the name of Jesus, it expresses a dignity and worth toward humanity that is beyond social strata or position. The poor are in need of more than a hand out. They need God to smile on their lives through us. Sometimes this can be a corporate effort with other churches in the community. Sometimes this can be through a social agency that needs us to volunteer. Sometimes it is something you can do yourselves. We believe if you give of yourself to the poor it is greatly honored by God. Ask the Lord to show you how, when, where and with who.

22. Spiritual Warfare And Intercession

Understanding we have an enemy who opposes us is important. We discussed this in the final training session and it should not go ignored. Praying protection and interceding for God’s help is critical to any success. There will be resistance, oppression, temptation, accusation, deception and harassment. It was in the life of Jesus, the early church and is the normal experience of Christians in this world. We have been given weapons for our warfare and we need to use them. Faith, sacraments, the word of God, forgiveness, angels, prayer, agreement, etc. are all given to us so we might overcome and be victorious for the Lord. He is with us. He will help us. We are called to fight the good fight and not be ignorant of the schemes of the devil. We suggest a regular time devoted to specific intercession to break every work of darkness that has been purposed against you. Especially we urge you to pray for your clergy and leaders.

23. Writing Out Your Testimony

One of the Practicum’s in Training Curriculum II dealt with the challenge of being able to share your testimony in a brief and concise manner. If you recall there was a short version of approximately five minutes in length and a longer version that could take up to 30 minutes or more. In the exercise we ask you to answer three questions: What was your life like before you came to Christ? How did you come to Christ?; What has happened in your life since you became a follower of Jesus Christ? We believe that every member of your parish should be able to “bear witness” to the faith that is in them.

Concluding Thoughts

There are probably many more things that we could address in the months and years to come, but we have got to begin somewhere. The tasks listed above are designed to help you apply the teachings we have given. As we move forward together we expect some things to catch on better than others and some of these tasks will be more fruitful than others. At the end of the day we want to stand before our Lord Jesus and hear Him say, “Well done, good and faithful servant....” We endeavor to offer to Him our best and watch Him do the rest.

The Task Force will be offering two and possibly three Training Conferences in 2007. We want to gather with the clergy on January 24-27, 2007 to get feedback, to encourage and to fine tune any area where the most help is needed. From the input at that gathering, we will offer a full-scale conference to address the felt needs, on March 23-24, 2007, for all to attend. This conference will be designed to bring everybody in the church to get blessed, encouraged, trained and empowered. The details for the above should be nailed down soon.

We started off with the question, “Can these bones live?” and we ended up saying, “Yes, they can!” And why not? God can breathe on the Diocese of Springfield. He can bring revival to our churches. He can, He can, He can! Our prayer and wildest dream is to see the Almighty one come in power and show us His Glory. Remember, with God all things are possible if we only believe.

The Rt. Rev. Peter Beckwith
The Rev. Mike Flynn
The Rev. Alan W. Hansen
The Ven. Shawn W. Denney
The Rev. Donald R. Perschall
The Most Rev. Robert Munday
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