

# Can These Bones Live?

by Carter Conlon

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*God can raise people from the dead and give them new strength, new breath, and new life, and this is the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

**Duration:** 36:24

**Scripture:** Proverbs 3:5-6, Jeremiah 32:27, Ezekiel 37:1-14, Matthew 18:10, Luke 15:7, John 3:16, Romans 8:11

**Topics:** "Hopeless"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes that God's ways and plans are beyond human understanding. He highlights God's strength, mercy, and willingness to forgive and give strength to those who are burdened by their past. The preacher encourages the audience to accept Jesus as their savior and invites them to receive a copy of the Gospel of John and get connected to a good church. He concludes by urging everyone to rejoice in the salvation of sinners and reminds them of God's love demonstrated through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross.

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## Transcript

Father, I thank you Lord for your love. God, your inexplicable depth of love for every person that's here tonight. And Lord, you will reach us no matter how you have to do it, you'll reach us.

Thank you Lord for the moments that all of us had to experience of sorrow and loss, because it opened our eyes to something we weren't willing to consider when we felt strong in ourselves. I thank you Lord for tonight you're going to open prison doors and give sight to those that are spiritually blind. You're going to heal the bruised at heart.

You're going to receive to yourself people who never thought ever that God would ever be interested in them. You're going to reveal the incredible depth of your love for all people created in your image in spite of our failure. Father, I thank you for it with all my heart.

In Jesus' name. In the Old Testament, God took a man whose name was Ezekiel, and he took him to an impossible place. Now it was a place described as a valley, and the valley was filled with death, bones.

Matter of fact, the death had come to the place where there was no flesh, there was no blood, there was no muscle, there was no strength, there was nothing. It was just bones, and there were very many of them, and they were very dry. It was a place that humanity gets to when we all set out in our own strength

to pursue our own goals, our own objectives.

We push aside in our youth especially the thoughts of God. As we heard this evening, God was after several of our people who gave their testimonies, but they're not interested at a certain point in their life in hearing about him, for various reasons. Some of it's simply ambition.

We head out in our natural strength in our youth. We think we have the world by the tail. We feel that we can achieve, we can accomplish, we can find happiness and satisfaction apart from a relationship with God.

If your mind is like mine was, I thought that people who went to church were just simply weak. It was generally reserved for little old ladies with hats with flowers on them. They went to church because they didn't know what else to do or had nothing else to go to.

It was just a social club, and sad to say I suppose that is the case in some places. Others are heading out and they're driven by pain of past experience. They're driven by not wanting to be like somebody else.

I'm going to be different than my father was. I'm going to be different than my mother was. I'm going to be different than those people were.

And they head out to be different than somebody else, only to find out in most cases they become exactly like the person they hated. You know there's a principle in the direction that you're looking, even if it's behind you, that's the direction you're actually going to eventually go in. Other people head out just full of ideas, trying to escape the past, full of hope for the future, confident and strong, but as time goes on and as we get older, we start to get weaker.

And we realize the things that we thought were going to satisfy us are not satisfying us. And by God's grace we finally get the courage to admit, and I believe that's why some are here this evening, that maybe the way I thought things are is not fully correct. Maybe I've missed something really important in life.

This valley was full of bones that once had strength, and elsewhere in the scripture it tells us that they died around their altars. It died around something that they decided to worship, whether it was human effort or ingenuity or fame or lust or power or money, whatever it was, they died there. Some may have even created an altar of vengeance and they died in this place as well.

And now it was impossible. They just laid down in what was their former hope and they died. And in some cases it had been a long time because the flesh had passed away from the bones and the blood was gone and the hope of ever standing again had left.

And some people are sitting here tonight and you say, man that is my life. There was a season in my life where I felt I had strength and now I don't have anything. I don't even know why I came here tonight.

Somebody invited me here. I didn't even really want to be here. But I find my heart strangely warmed and I'm not sure how to respond to this.

What do I do? Is this just another religious pipe dream? Is this real? And if it is real, is there any chance I can lay hold of it? Can it be mine? Is it destined to be everybody else's? Is it only a few that get up and walk out of this place? Is there hope for me to get up and get out of here as well? And Ezekiel is looking at this as much as as God calls me and others who preach from this pulpit and others around the country to

stand and to look out into places that in the natural they are hopeless. In the natural there is no getting up again. Some people are just so down.

There's no amount of counseling. There's no amount of self help. There's no medication.

There's nothing that's ever going to pick them out of the place that they're in. The wounds are too deep. The depression is too strong.

The memories are too powerful. The pain is too great. There is nothing known to man that will pick them up.

In the case of Nikki Cruz, many of you know one of the very first converts of the man who founded this ministry, David Wilkerson. He was diagnosed by psychiatrists as unredeemable. That means a person who could never make any kind of a valid or normal contribution to society as long as he lives.

That is the diagnosis the world gave him. But God saved him and God's Holy Spirit came on him. Nikki Cruz is a normal man, a wonderful man, a lovable man.

Travels still all over the world. Has preached to multiples of millions of people about the saving power of Jesus Christ. Married a lovely lady.

All his children are living for God. Can these bones live? And God said to Ezekiel, speak to them. Tell them what God says.

Today God wants you to know that he sent his son 2,000 years ago. God became a man and walked this earth for 33 years. Became familiar with our struggles and took all of our pain, took all of our wrong, took all of our filth, took all of our vileness and took it on himself on a cross that was made for him.

Was nailed there, was wounded, was beaten, was spit on, was mocked, cast down and criticized and he did it all because he loved you. He did it all because you would need something of him. It was the only thing that could ever bring you and I back to life again and get us back in right relationship with the one who created us.

He died and went into the grave and on the third day he rose again from the dead. And he promised the same power to everyone who would trust in him for the forgiveness of their sins. That means the wrong things that we have done, the things that we've done to violate the way God says that we should live.

He said, if you trust in the sacrifice of my son, if you'll trust that he paid the price for the wrong that you have done, if you will identify with him in his death, you will then become partaker of what brought him back to life. The Jesus Christ back again from the grave. And the scripture says in the New Testament, if the spirit of God that raised Christ from the dead be in you, he shall also quicken your mortal body.

God says it might be impossible to man but it's not impossible to God. Speak to them Ezekiel these words. And when Ezekiel began to speak these words, hope began to stir within this valley of death.

And bones began to come together. Hope began to return into the heart. Pieces of lives that had fallen into the dust began to come together.

Memories of when you were a child and God really did speak to you about something in your future begin to come back and flood your mind again. He said I'm going to give you new strength. I'm going to give you

a new covering.

And I'm going to put breath in you. And I'm going to do it in a way that will cause you to know that I'm God. Like our brother testified here tonight, putting a gun to his head and hearing a voice speak to him.

After all these years and after getting to a place of total hopelessness in the natural, God did in one day what could not be done. In year after year after year after year of planning and trying. I will do it, God says, in a way that you will know that I am God.

Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good. My father was a World War II veteran. And he was a good baseball player.

As a matter of fact, some people said he had a future in it. He also longed to go to university because there was a high level of education in his family. And education was put at a premium.

But World War II came along and took it all away. And in his generation they didn't understand post-traumatic stress disorder. So most of the soldiers that lived came back and they just drank for years and years and years and years.

And they formed clubs where they would go on Friday and Saturday night and sit at tables and drink and cry. It was the only therapy that was available because nobody was allowed to talk about what really had happened in this war. I remember from time to time he would look out the window and his eyes would fill with tears.

And he would just go to some faraway place. And after he died, I asked my mother, I said, what was it that would come over dad at those moments? And he would stare out the window sometimes for four or five minutes in a row. And just his eyes would fill with tears.

She said, Carter, he could never forgive himself. He flew in a B-52 bomber from England. And at the end of the war they carpet bombed Germany.

He was the guy that pressed the button and dropped the bombs. And he said, Kay, we bombed schools. We bombed hospitals.

We just carpet bombed cities. It was a retaliatory response to what was happening in England at the time. England was being carpet bombed.

And so they responded in like kind. And he could never forgive himself for what he had done, even though it was war. And he came back and he began to work after the war.

And when he was in the war, he sent all his paychecks home only to find out the people he sent them to spent them all. So his chance at college now was gone. His chance at playing ball was gone.

His chance at college was gone. He took a job working in a mine and began to save all his money to put his firstborn son through school. I was going to be the next lawyer in the family.

I remember the disappointment in his life the day I came home and told him that I was going to be a police officer. After going through three years of university, getting an undergraduate degree, I remember how hugely disappointed he was. But he didn't know that God was about to do something miraculous in his life.

He had no idea. The Lord will do what he has to do to reach somebody that can't be reached any other way. I remember him telling me that, you know, in our hometown, if you could walk and chew gum at the same time, you could be a cop.

That was more or less sad to say. I think that was fairly true at the time. Policing had become a little more complicated than that over the years, and he didn't seem to understand that.

But I began to prosper in the job that I was in, and I began to advance up the success side of it. And then he began to be proud of his son, who was actually achieving something in the world of policing. And until I resigned one day to pastor 17 people in a hotel.

It was at that point he thought I had lost my mind, literally. He was brokenhearted over the direction his firstborn son was taking. But he didn't know that God's ways are not our ways.

That the Lord was about to meet him one day. I didn't know until after he died, that after coming to New York City and beginning to pastor in this church, that he was listening to messages from this church virtually every week. Although he could never admit it.

He was too proud to admit that he was actually doing this. He was doing it. And all of his friends from the mine went to his funeral and said, oh you're the son that he would brag about all the time.

He's very stubborn man, very strong man, very disappointed man. Life, life had really hurt him. Let him down at every turn.

He ended up getting cancer by the mercy of God. And it was a very, very difficult cancer, very painful cancer. And I remember coming home and he had a colostomy put on his side where the excrement from inside your intestines goes into this bag and then you have to empty it yourself.

And he wouldn't deal with it. He just would not empty it. He was stubborn as a mule.

And I remember coming home. I flew there several times from New York and I sat him down. I got him out of his bed and I sat him down in front of the toilet.

And they, they had the nurse practitioners that said you have to take a mask. It was a certain kind of cancer that it smelled so bad that it was almost indescribable. And you have to put on rubber gloves.

You have to put a mask on with the spray in it. Otherwise you'll, you'll vomit from the smell of it. I sat him down in front of the toilet.

I would not wear a mask and I didn't wear gloves. And I emptied this thing and I had everything all over my hands and the smell was, and I, when he saw that, it started to melt his heart. I remember putting him back in his bed and I said, Dad, I want to talk to you one more time about what it means to be a Christian and I want you to listen to me.

And for three to five minutes I shared with him the way to salvation. And I knew with him not to press it and I just let it go after I'd shared with him. And I flew back to New York.

It was only a short time later the Holy Spirit came on my heart very strongly to go back again. So I flew back and I was going to go see him in the evening. And my brother called from the hospital, which was very unusual.

And he said, are you not coming? We're waiting for you. So I went to the hospital room and when I walked in the hospital room, he was sitting inside the door and I looked at him. And the first, instead of saying hi, it just came out of my mouth.

I said, Dad, have you been praying? Have you been praying? And he said, I've been, I've been praying all week. And I said, are you ready to pray that prayer with me now? And he said, I'm ready. I'm ready to pray that prayer.

Now folks, I want to tell you something. I led him in a sinner's prayer from Genesis to Revelation. I wanted to be sure that this was, I made him repeat after me.

I am a sinner. I cannot save myself. I deserve to go to hell.

God sent his son to a cross. My brother, who is a drug addict, he's now serving God. He was a drug addict at the time.

Backed into the wall and started to cry. He called me up. He went after that moment in the hospital.

He went home and stayed in bed for three days. He wouldn't get out of bed. He said, he called me later.

He said, that had to be God. You know, Dad, he would never have prayed that with you if that wasn't God. I said, I know it was God.

And then in the last conscious hour of his life, after leading him to Christ, we had the most wonderful conversation. I had a father now that I had never known all my life. A man who was speaking from his heart.

A man who seemed to be different than the man that I had known for 81 years. Well, I hadn't known him for 81 years, but I mean, he was 81 years old. The man that I had known who was 81 years old, this was a different man than the man I had known.

He was suddenly released. He told me he loved me. He talked about heaven.

We talked about forgiveness. We talked about what it's going to be like when we get there. The last thing he said to me in the hospital before I left and went home for supper is, when you get there, I'll be waiting for you.

Now, here's my point. Somewhere along the line, my father's hopes died. Somewhere along the line, all of his plans failed.

Somewhere along the line that he ended up just bones in the valley. But it was in that place of hopelessness, that place of despair, that place of loss, that place of maybe in his own mind thinking, what has my life been all about? Has it been worthwhile? What has it amounted to? It was in that last moment, that last hour, I didn't know he was going to go into unconsciousness and die shortly after. I was so excited when I went home.

I thought, my father is saved. I'm gonna go back tonight. We're gonna continue our conversation.

When I went back, he'd slipped into a coma. He never came out of the coma. He died shortly after.

But it was in that last hour I saw the transforming power of God. I saw him become what God had intended him to be from his youth. Now, I realize his salvation was a belly slide under the garage door before it came down, but it counts, folks.

It counts. God's ways are not our ways. God's plans are not our plans.

God's strength is so far beyond our strength. God's mercy is beyond our comprehension. He's willing to forgive us when we can't forgive ourselves.

He's willing to give us strength to escape the wounds of the past and the things that have dominated our thinking and our lives and taken away our hope. He's able to break these chains and set us free. He's able to give us life and a future.

Even if our season on the earth is short, he gives us a future because when you've come to Christ, eternity has just begun in your life. In case you don't understand the definition of that, eternity means forever. It never ends.

I'll see my father again one day. I'll tell you, it makes heaven sweet when you know that people are there that you want to see again. Thank God.

We will have those conversations. We will have those times to talk. So no matter what you've come with here tonight, what kind of wounds, what kind of disappointments, what kind of hurts, what kind of hopelessness is in your life, I tell you Jesus Christ is able to raise you from the dead.

Jesus Christ can give you strength. Jesus Christ can change your heart. Jesus Christ can change your conversation.

Jesus Christ can give you hope when there's no more hope. Jesus Christ can give you victory. Jesus Christ can give you the power to tell people in your family that you love them.

Jesus Christ can cause you to love your enemies. Jesus Christ can heal the wounds in your heart from what's been done to you in the early years of your life. Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

You were created by God in the image of God and for fellowship with God. Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He is the way, the truth, and the life, and nobody can come to God except through him.

Jesus Christ extends a hand of mercy. He says, I know your struggle. I know your trial.

I see where you died. I know your loss of strength, but I don't need your strength to do this. It is my strength that won the victory.

It is my strength that'll raise you from the dead, and you will not be a testimony about yourself. You'll be a testimony about the God who has the power to raise people from the dead, and give them new strength, and give them new breath, and give them new hope, and give them new life, and give them a new mind, and give them a new future, and give them new gifts, and give them new callings, and give them new direction. This is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

This is what God does. We're not talking about a religion with a bunch of rules. That's what man does.

Jesus gives life, and he gives it more abundantly. Hallelujah to the Lamb of God. Thank you, Lord.

Thank you, God. Thank you, God. I'm going to heaven one day soon, sooner than some of you, maybe.

Meet me there. Meet me there, folks. Don't miss it for this world.

Meet me there. Don't miss it because you feel unworthy. It's not about your worthiness.

It's about the worthiness of the one who went to the cross for you. It's not about you. It's about him.

Don't miss heaven because of wounds, and desires, and inability, and addictions, and all the rest of these things. You do not have to clean yourself up to come to God. Come to God with your mess.

Come to God with your dryness. Come to God with your powerlessness. Come to God the way you are, and let him raise you from the dead.

Hallelujah to the Lamb of God. Lord Jesus Christ, saved to the uttermost. My God, don't die in your sin when you can have life.

Don't live in stubbornness when you can be free. Don't live in arguments that only keep you paralyzed when God's Word rises above all of these arguments and promises that he will cleanse you, and cover you, and strengthen you, and give you breath, and hope for the future, new vision for your eyes, new thoughts for your mind. He'll give you giftings you never believed were possible.

He'll give you hope. You find yourself saying things and doing things. Remember when I was a cop, and I first got saved, I gave somebody a ticket for speeding, and I've actually felt bad about it one day.

Strange, because in your mind you think it all has sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Lord, help me to be merciful. If you gave me a ticket for everything I did, I'd be doomed.

Oh God, I have seen so many people spiritually speaking raised from the dead. I have seen so many miracles in my lifetime. Can you imagine Ezekiel after this moment? How would he ever doubt God again? When you see bones come together, hopelessness given life, powerlessness given strength, lost dreams coming back with a greater force than ever, but they're now God's dreams.

They're not ours, they're his for us. If you can hear his voice, don't harden your heart. The bones had to get up, and they had to move towards God, the voice of God, the voice that was calling them from the grave.

And they had to be given this breath of God so they could live. The scripture says they stood on their feet an exceeding great army, a people who could glorify God for what he had done. I hope tonight that you can feel how much God loves you.

I hope you can understand that he didn't die for you because he had some judicial obligation to redeem you. He died because he loves you. That's not even debatable.

God so loved the world. That's not even debatable. He loves you.

He loves you in your mess. He loves you in your sin. He loves you in your struggle.

He's not gonna leave you there, but he loves you there. He'll change you, cleanse you. I've said this before, and I want to say it again just one time, but I can lead you to some of the finest restaurants in New York City.

You and I could leave here tonight, and we could go there. And I'll take you to a restaurant that maybe I've been to, or somebody has taken me as a guest, and I'll show you the menu in the window, and I'll tell you how good everything tastes. And that's nice, but until you taste it yourself, you really don't know how good it really is.

David the Psalmist, the king of Israel, he said, Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good. Open your heart. I don't have to prove it to you.

Let God prove it to you. If this is true, what we've said to you tonight, if these testimonies are real, if what I'm telling you is right, then open your heart and let God prove it to you. He will.

When I came to Jesus Christ, I prayed a simple prayer, and I said, Lord, if this is true, and it was a sincere if. I wasn't sure, but I said, if what my friend, another cop, is telling me is true, if it's true, then I want you to be my Lord and my Savior. And look where this journey has led.

Oh, it's true, my friend. It's true. Tonight, if you want to give your life to Jesus Christ, would you just raise your hand, wherever you are.

God bless you. Just raise your hand. Anybody here? God bless you.

Thank you. And for those who should have done so, I'm going to ask us to stand in just a moment, and I'm going to invite those who want to receive Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior to come to this, the front of this auditorium. And for those who brought somebody with them, or maybe you just don't even know the person beside you, I want to ask you as we stand to turn to the person beside you, and just say, if you think and feel that you'd like to give your life to Jesus Christ, I'll go with you.

I'll walk down with you. Sometimes it's just hard to do something like this alone, but if you have a friend that'll walk, seems this aisle is short, but sometimes it can seem like a hundred miles to get from where you are to right here. But you can turn and talk to somebody and say, look, do you think this thing is real? And if you do, do you want to go down? We'll go together.

And as we stand in just a moment, I'm going to ask those who did raise their hand, and those who do want Christ to slip out, and those who need to come to give their lives to Jesus Christ, would you just turn, talk to one another, then slip out of your seat, come, and we'll just lead you in a prayer tonight. That's all that's going to happen at this, the front of this auditorium. Don't be afraid of it.

We don't do stupid things here. We won't be asking you to do foolish things. We're going to lead you in a prayer tonight, and you open your heart and let God prove to you that what you've heard this evening is real.

Could you please stand, and those who do want to receive Christ, slip out of your seat, please, and join this young lady who's coming, and others, and please make your way down to the front of this auditorium. We'll wait for you here. Meet me here.

Thank God. Thank you. God bless you.

God bless you. Just come. Just come.

Folks that need to leave, will you let the people come, please? Please don't get in the aisles and get in the way of people who are trying to get down here. Thank you, Jesus. Thank you, Lord.

Be in prayer. Thank God. God bless you.

Turn, talk to your friends. Please do it now. Don't be afraid.

Talk to the person beside you, and say, do you want to go down? I don't know who you are, but if you want to go down there, I'll go with you. Just do that. Come, please come.

Give your life to Jesus. Thank you, Jesus. I want to delay just for one moment, because there's somebody else here.

Make that, make that decision. You know you can feel God pulling at your heart right now. You know this is the right thing to do.

Don't worry about what other people are going to think, and don't feel like it's a loss of anything. It's the gain of everything. We'll sing it one more time, and just slip out, please, please, I plead with you in Christ's name, just slip out.

If you need to be down here, you need to be giving your life to Jesus Christ tonight. Please, please, you never know what tomorrow is going to hold. Please, please, for somebody here tonight, have the courage, step out, and come to Christ.

You might have had a belly full of religion, but never a real relationship with God. Please, please, don't put this off. I feel this burden of my heart for somebody.

Just come, come, come. We'll sing it one more time. God bless you.

Jesus, Jesus, Jesus. Jesus. Jesus.

For those that have come tonight, this is the beginning of a new life. Those are your children. God bless you.

Thank you for coming. Praise God. Bless the Lord.

Ah, your kids are going to get a new mom and dad tonight. It's going to be awesome. You'd be amazed what God has for you.

You'd be amazed for you. You'd be amazed, yeah. You'd be amazed what God has for you.

Stay with it. Stay with it. Praise God.

Pray this simple prayer with me. Lord Jesus Christ, thank you for loving me. Thank you for forgiving me and for calling me in my hopelessness, my despair, my weakness.

Yet you want me to call me your own. Tonight, Jesus Christ, Son of God, I open my heart to you and I invite you to come into my life, to be my Savior and my God. Guide me, lead me, teach me and show me the life that you have for me.

Set me free from all that captivates me and from the pain of my past. Give me strength to walk with you and to learn about you and to sing about you and to live a life that will bring honor to you. I thank you, God, that it's your strength that will make this happen in my life because I've not come to you with any strength of my own.

Thank you for receiving me and for loving me and for calling me your own. I will follow you for the rest of my life. In Jesus' name, amen.

Hallelujah. Thank you, God. Now listen to me.

For those that are here at the front, there are people downstairs in the lower lobby that will give you a copy of the Gospel of John, one of the books of the New Testament. You can take it home. They'll tell you how to get plugged into a good church, good fellowship, and they'll pray for you.

And it might be good just to tell somebody what you did tonight. Folks, can we thank God for these people who have come to listen? God bless you. Go for it.

Go for it. Come on, guys. Go for it.

Walk with God. Don't quit. Hallelujah.

One more time. Let's give God glory tonight. We're going to go with a song.

We've got to rejoice. The Bible says the angels in heaven are rejoicing over one sinner that gets saved. How much more should we be joining with them and rejoicing? What a day this has been in the house of God.

This has been an awesome day. Let's give Him a shout of glory before we go tonight. Thank you, Lord.

Thank you, God.

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