

SUMMER FRIENDSHIP GATHERINGS

2025 SUMMER FRIENDSHIP GATHERING

LARGE GROUP LESSON, DAY 1

- Summer Friendship Gathering events last three evenings and each evening is divided into three parts: fellowship meal, worship time with a large group lesson, and small group discussion. On the last evening there is a closing worship service, which replaces the Large Group Bible Lesson and Small Group Discussion time.
- As you start preparing your lesson a good place to start is to pray asking the Holy Spirit to give you insight and direction.
- You will find an illustrated sample video for this Day 1 Bible Lesson “RISE UP and Hope”, along with the other Summer Friendship Gathering training videos. You are encouraged to watch this video as you plan your lesson.
- The theme for this year’s Summer Friendship Gathering is “Rise Up.” Over these next three days we will be learning how God raised up His people to new life with just speaking His Word. God wants to raise us up to new life in Jesus when we hope, believe, and live for Him.

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2025 SUMMER FRIENDSHIP GATHERING

LARGE GROUP LESSON, DAY 1 CONTINUED

- We will be looking at a story in the Old Testament about a prophet named Ezekiel and a vision God showed him. It was a huge valley of dry bones.
- In the New Testament we will study the story of Jesus raising up Lazarus after he had been dead for four days!
- On the last day we will look at the resurrection of Jesus Christ. We will journey with the two men who walked with Jesus after He rose from the dead on the road to the village of Emmaus. Jesus wants to walk with us on our road as we rise up and live for Him.
- Our Bible verse for this week is ***Ephesians 2:6***

“God raised us up with Christ...That’s because we belong to Christ Jesus.”

- **Our Bible verse for Day 1 comes from Ezekiel 37:13,14**

“Then you will know that I am the Lord. You are my people. I will put my Spirit in you. And you will live again.”

- Have you ever tried to create something out of nothing? I am not talking about putting together a puzzle or painting a picture. I am talking about creating something out of absolutely nothing.
- This is what God did when he created the world. He spoke and the world was created. When the Word of God is spoken, it brings with it the power of God.

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2025 SUMMER FRIENDSHIP GATHERING

LARGE GROUP LESSON, DAY 1 CONTINUED

- The Bible tells us in the beginning how God created Adam, the first man. He made him out of the dust of the ground. God breathed the breath of life into him. And he became a living person.
- We are going to learn in this lesson how God told the prophet Ezekiel to speak His Words to a valley of dry bones. When Ezekiel spoke God's words flesh appeared on the dry bones. God breathed His Holy Spirit on them and they stood to make a huge army.
- After many years of disobeying God and worshiping other gods, God allowed his people, the Israelites, to be taken captive by the evil king of Babylon. This was a dark and hopeless time for God's people. Their land, temple and nation had been destroyed. Now they were slaves in Babylon. They became people who had lost all hope. They felt God had left them.
- It was during this hopeless time that God chose to give the prophet Ezekiel a vision. Our story begins in the Bible in the book of Ezekiel chapter 37
- *The power of the Lord came on me (Ezekiel). His Spirit brought me away from my home. He put me down in the middle of a valley. It was full of bones. He led me back and forth among them. I saw a huge number of bones in the valley. The bones were very dry.*
- What a strange vision God showed Ezekiel. Then God continued with His vision. He said to Ezekiel, *"Prophecy to these bones. Tell them, 'Dry bones, listen to the Lord's message. The Lord and King speaks to you.' He says, 'I will put breath in you. Then you will come to life again. I will attach tendons to you. I will put flesh on you. I will cover you with skin... Then you will know that I am the Lord.'"*

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2025 SUMMER FRIENDSHIP GATHERING

LARGE GROUP LESSON, DAY 1 CONTINUED

- Can you imagine? Ezekiel was to speak the words that God told him to this huge valley of dry bones. Ezekiel obeyed God; He spoke to the bones all that God said. And listen to what happened next.
- *So I prophesied just as the Lord commanded me to. As I was prophesying, I heard a noise. It was a rattling sound. The bones came together. One bone connected itself to another. I saw tendons and flesh appear on them. Skin covered them...Then they came to life again. They stood up on their feet. They were like a huge army.*
- Wow! Do you see that when God's Word is proclaimed, it brings God's power? Only God has the power to bring dead things back to life again.
- *"Then the Lord said to me, "Son of man, these bones stand for all the people of Israel. The people say, 'Our bones are dried up. We've lost all hope. We are destroyed.' So prophesy. Tell them, 'The Lord and King says, "My people, I am going to open up your graves. I am going to raise you out of them. I will take you back to the land of Israel.... Then you will know that I am the Lord. You are my people. I will put my Spirit in you. And you will live again."*
- God explained to Ezekiel that this vision was God's promise to His people. He would one day bring them out of captivity and back to the land he had promised. He promised to give them hope again. God wanted their hearts to be alive again and not like dry bones.

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2025 SUMMER FRIENDSHIP GATHERING

LARGE GROUP LESSON, DAY 1 CONTINUED

- Do you see God's perfect plan for His people? Do you see that God kept His promise? Just like the Israelites, we can rise up and hope again!
- Sometimes we feel like dry bones, held captive by our sins. Or maybe we've lost someone we've love? Have you ever felt that some things would never change? All these things can make us feel hopeless like the Israelites.
- God's Word is powerful, and He speaks to us today through the Bible. We can rise up again and live because of His promise to us.
- *Romans 8:11 says "The Spirit of the God who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you. So, the God who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your bodies. He will do this because of his Spirit who lives in you."*
- God had a plan to bring us out of our dead, dry bones by sending Jesus to take our place on the cross for our sins. Because God's power raised Jesus from the dead, we can be made alive with Him. When we put our trust in Jesus, He breaths His Holy Spirit into our hearts. God makes us a new creation so we can know Him and worship Him alone.
- **The Leader may ask: How does God give us new life?**
- **God brought us out of our deadness and raised us up with Him by giving us new life in Christ Jesus. His Holy Spirit can now live inside our hearts. God makes us a new creation.**
- ***2 Corinthians 5:17 "When anyone lives in Christ, the new creation has come. The old is gone! The new is here!"***

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2025 SUMMER FRIENDSHIP GATHERING

LARGE GROUP LESSON, DAY 1 CONTINUED

There are four key points to be made in this lesson. It is important that each of these points are covered in your lesson because they will be part of the discussion questions.

1. The first point is God is faithful to keep His promises.

God promised Israel that He would one day bring them back to the land He had given them. He also promised to give them hope again and revive them again. When our hearts are alive with hope we will worship and praise Him because we know our hope is in the Lord.

2. The second point is, when the Word of God is proclaimed, it brings with it the power of God.

God's Word was proclaimed at the very beginning when He spoke and created the world. In the Old Testament God used prophets like Ezekiel to proclaim God's Word to His people. Today we have the God's Word in the Bible, when we hear our pastors and teachers preach His word or when we read it for ourselves.

3. The third point to remember is, God wants to raise us up to new life in Jesus. He does this by dying for our sins and rising again.

God tells Ezekiel that God will raise up His people. He will give them new life and hope again. God wants to revive us also. He wants to make us alive again as we trust Jesus, our life giver. He died for our sins and lives in us through the Holy Spirit. This is good news.

4. The last point is, we can be instruments of God, like Ezekiel, to help raise up others.

We can share the good news that Jesus died for our sins and wants to live in us through the Holy Spirit by giving us new life. We can do simple things like encourage others with a smile, hug, or friendly words. We can pray for and with others.

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2025 SUMMER FRIENDSHIP GATHERING

LARGE GROUP LESSON, DAY 1 CONTINUED

- As you plan out the flow of your lesson, we encourage you to use the skit and object lesson. The Day 1 skit fits best after telling the story. The object lesson can be used after the introduction or somewhere in the middle of the story.
- It is important to find more than one way to tell the story of how we can rise up and hope in dark times. Because God loves His people and always keeps His promises.
- Visuals and illustrations will help with learning. Most people learn best if the lesson combines different modes of learning. Remember, you have access to the PowerPoint slides of the story provided on our website.
- You should also review the Small Group Leader's Guide Booklet. The Discussion Booklet has questions after the story. These discussion questions are incorporated in this Day 1 lesson.
- It is good to reinforce the key points of the lesson by asking questions and having our friends participate in the large group.
- This helps them with a smoother transition into the small group discussion time which follows the large group lesson.
- Thank you for your willingness to lead the Day 1 lesson. You are encouraged to review the Large Group Leaders Guide and the notes for this presentation. The links can be found on the Connection Ministries website next to this training video.
- If you have any questions or need information you can email us at connect@connection-ministries.org or call our office 317-646-5067.