

It is time for the church to come out of quarantine.

On the surface that can sound as if I am disregarding any instructions from local, state, or federal governments. **That's** not what **I'm** saying. In fact, **I'm** not even referring to COVID-19 (if that is possible these days).

**I'm** referring to the church and its mission in the world. It is time for the church to come out of quarantine and participate, with greater intensity and intentionality, in the Missio Dei. The Great Commission is not the great suggestion. We could call it the Great Invitation or the Great Transformation. But, the church needs to move beyond the Great Isolation. It is time for the church to come out of quarantine.

In August of 2020 at our District Worship Gathering (streamed from Nashville First Church) I asked the question prompted by Ezekiel's vision: *Can these bones live again?* I **can't** get away from that question. **I've** asked the same question multiple ways:

Can the church be revived?

Will the church come back post-Covid?

Do we want the church back like it was or do we want the church to experience a *missional rebirth*?

Will songs of praise and worship reverberate in the souls and sanctuaries of our churches?

What will it take for the church to be effective in the years ahead?

Can these bones live again?

I certainly **don't** have all the answers. In fact, I still have more questions than answers. But, I do know this: One of the key issues in whether or not these bones can live again is the issue of *EVANGELISM*. The need for evangelism is one of the reasons for our **district's** emphasis on church planting and new church development. We simply must — imperative — join God and His mission in the world.

Pastors, you know how it is when you sense the direction of God for your church. **It's** like a "**fire** shut up in my **bones**," as Jeremiah says, "**I** am weary of holding it in, and **I cannot**." (Jeremiah 20:9). God is trying to light the fire of Evangelism in our bones! May it burn so intensely it moves us to action.

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One of the key issues in the revival of the church is **evangelism!**