

**FROM EXILE
TO EASTER
LIVING WITH
KINGDOM
HOPE**
A Lenten Journey

SERIES OVERVIEW

The world is not as it should be, and our hearts know it. We long for God's kingdom, yet we walk through brokenness, injustice, and death. As believers, we live in exile from Eden, carrying within us the memory of the garden we lost and the longing for the New Creation God has promised. Throughout history, Lent has been a rhythm that has helped believers to acknowledge this reality: naming our dislocation, confessing our need, and waiting with hope for God's decisive action. It is a season of honesty, where we recognise the gap between God's kingdom and our lived experience.

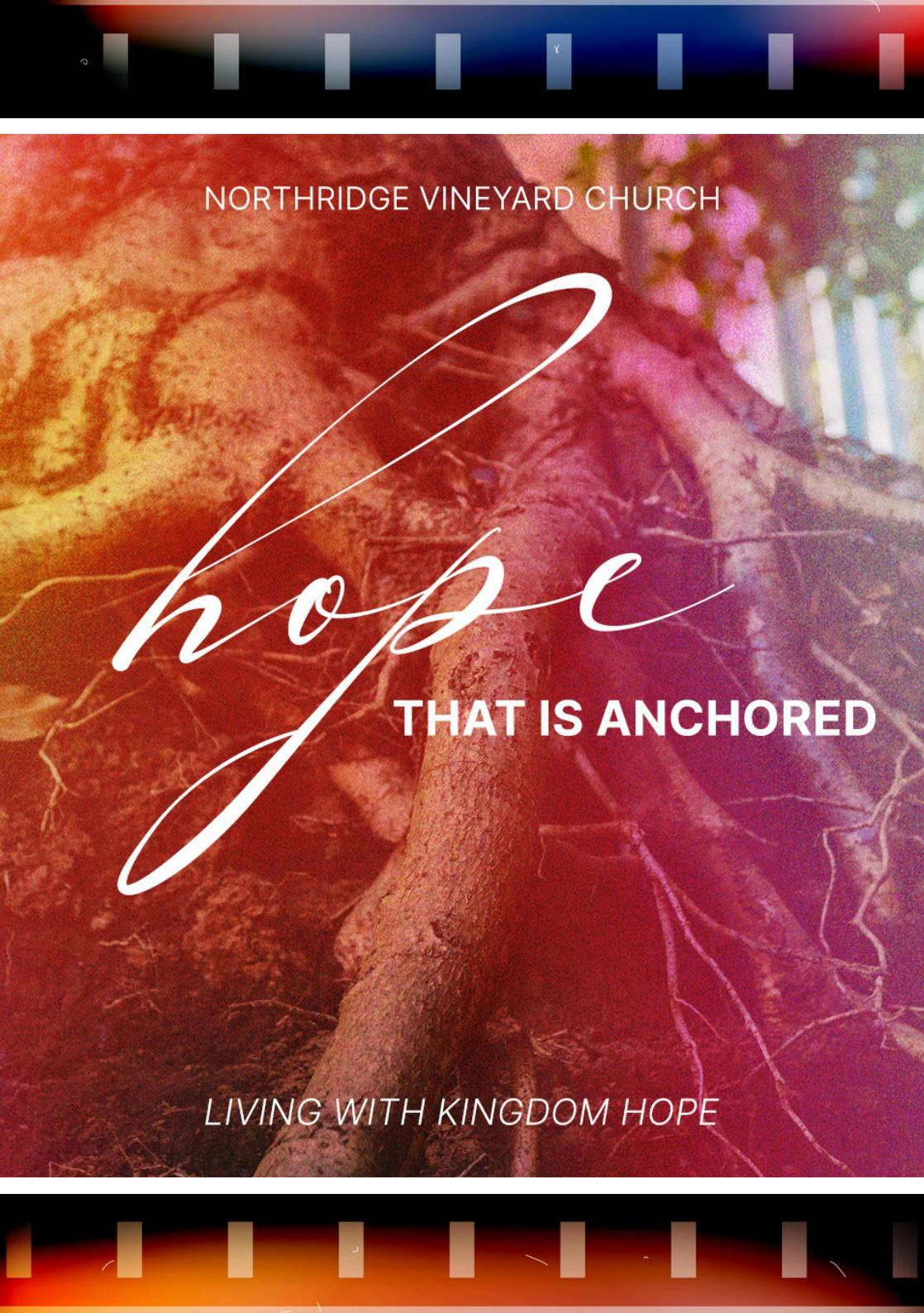
In the first century, Israel still felt the weight of exile under Rome, longing for God's kingdom. Jesus embodied the hope that exiles like Daniel and Isaiah foresaw. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus brought exile to its true end. This exile was not only Israel's experience in foreign lands like Babylon or under the Roman Empire's oppression, but the deeper exile of humanity itself. From the moment Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden, cut off from God's presence, every generation has carried the ache of dislocation; the memory of what was lost and the longing for what God has promised.

Jesus steps into this story, embodying the hope Daniel and Isaiah foresaw. Through His death and resurrection, He brings exile to its true end: not only the exile of nations, but the exile of Eden.

This series traces that journey:

- Exile: Daniel's visions teach us how hope is sustained in faithfulness and community, even in foreign lands.
- Waiting: Daniel (and Isaiah) reminds us that lament, confession, and patience are not wasted, but shape hope.
- Resurrection: Jesus fulfills the longing of exile, bringing life out of death and inaugurating God's kingdom.

Easter is the culmination of this journey: exile giving way to homecoming, despair giving way to joy, death swallowed up in victory. Lent leads us here, to the living hope of Christ, who assures us that God's kingdom is already breaking in and will one day be made complete.



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hope

THAT IS ANCHORED

LIVING WITH KINGDOM HOPE

WEEK 1: HOPE THAT'S ANCHORED

OPENING QUESTION

When have you felt pressure to change who you are to fit in?

SCRIPTURE READING: Daniel 1:1-21;

ADDITIONAL TEXTS: 1 Peter 1:1; Hebrews 11:13-16

EXPLORE THE THEMES

Daniel 1 tells the story of young exiles taken into Babylon's court, where they are given new names, new education, and new expectations. The empire's goal was to reshape their identity so they would forget who they were as God's people. But verse 8 is the turning point: *"But Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king's food, or with the wine that he drank."* This was not simply about diet. It was about identity. Daniel chose to anchor himself in God's truth before the test came.

Walter Brueggemann often describes exile as "the contest of identities." What he means is that exile is not only about geography or politics, it is about who gets to define us. Babylon wanted to rename Daniel, to tell him who he was. But Daniel resisted, showing that hope begins when we refuse to let culture or empire tell us our worth. Brueggemann's insight helps us see that Daniel's choice was not small or private, it was a public act of resistance, saying: *"I belong to God, not Babylon."*

Augustine, in *The City of God*, contrasts two ways of living: the earthly city, built on pride and self-rule, and the heavenly city, built on love of God. For Augustine, the earthly city always tries to claim our identity, but the heavenly city reminds us that our true citizenship is in God. Daniel embodies this heavenly citizenship. Even though he lived in Babylon, he refused to let Babylon define him. Augustine's vision helps us see that Daniel's hope was not in his own strength but in belonging to God's eternal city.

Lent echoes this call to resolve in advance, as Daniel did, that our identity is not in success, approval, or image, but in God's promises. Hope begins when we anchor ourselves in Him.

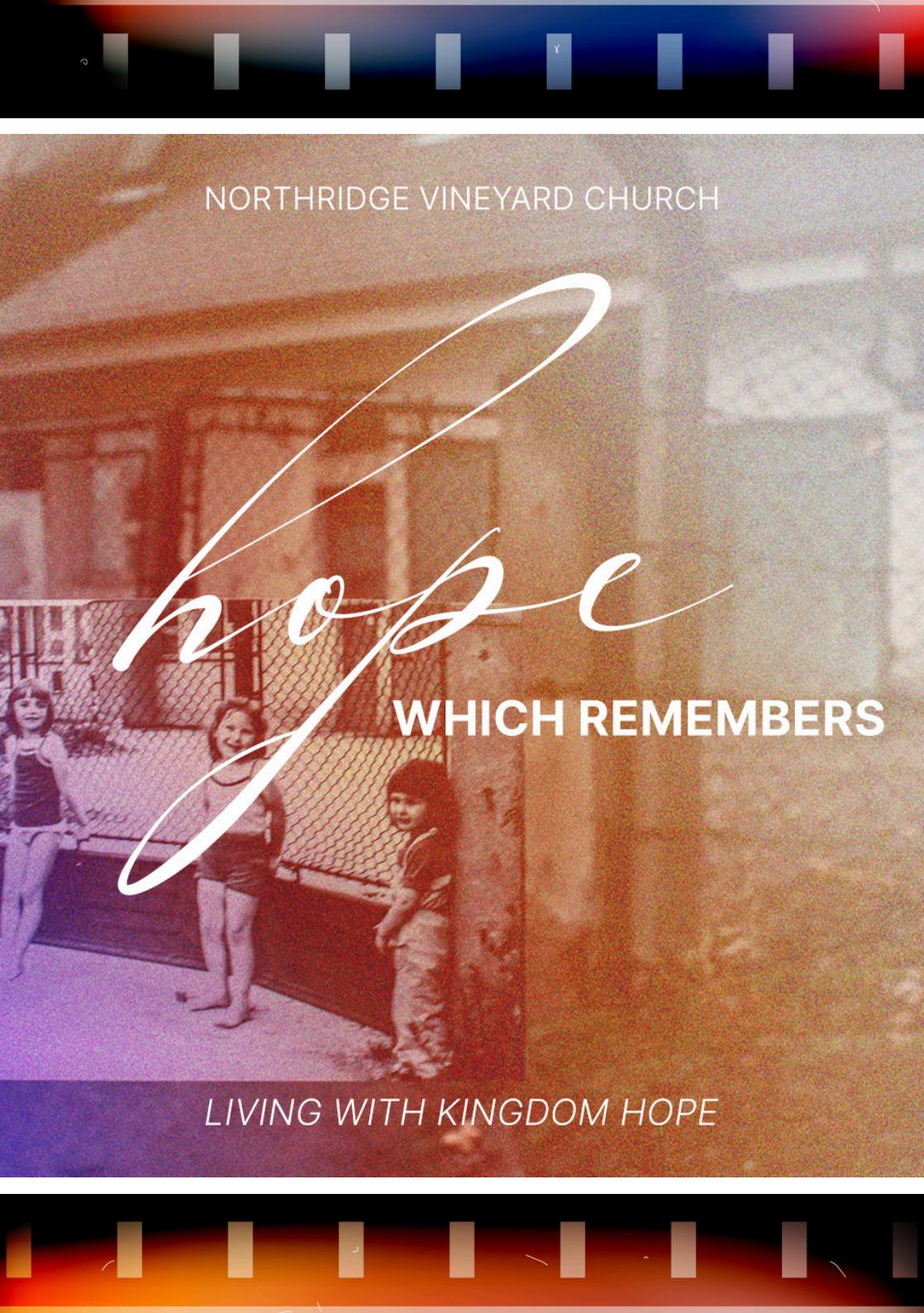
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What "false identities" do people chase today?
- How does anchoring in God's truth give hope in exile?
- What practices help you stay rooted in God's promises?

SHARED LENTEN PRACTICE: Pray three times a day (morning, midday, evening).

Read Psalm 16:8 and pray: *"Lord, anchor my identity in You today."*

PRAYER: Ask God to anchor your Life group's identity in His truth.



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WHICH REMEMBERS

LIVING WITH KINGDOM HOPE

WEEK 2: HOPE WHICH REMEMBERS

OPENING QUESTION

What helps you remember God's faithfulness when life feels uncertain?

SCRIPTURE READING: Daniel 2

ADDITIONAL TEXTS: Psalm 77:11-12; 1 Corinthians 1:25

EXPLORE THE THEMES

Daniel 2 tells the story of King Nebuchadnezzar's troubling dream, which none of Babylon's wise men could interpret. Daniel, however, prays and God reveals the mystery. This is not simply about dream interpretation. It is about remembering who truly rules history. Daniel's prayer in verses 20–23 is key: *"Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, to whom belong wisdom and might. He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings."* Daniel remembers that God alone holds wisdom and sovereignty, even when exile clouds the vision of His people.

Tim Mackie (BibleProject) points out that Daniel's visions are not secret codes for predicting the future but theological reminders that God is the true King. The act of remembering God's sovereignty is itself an act of hope. When Daniel recalls who God is, he resists the temptation to trust Babylon's wisdom. Mackie's insight helps us see that remembering is not passive nostalgia, it is active resistance against forgetting who God is.

N.T. Wright often emphasises that Christian hope is rooted in remembering God's past faithfulness. In his reflections on resurrection, Wright insists that the future is trustworthy precisely because God has already acted decisively in history. Remembering the resurrection is not just looking back, it is anchoring our present and future in what God has already done. Applied to Daniel, remembering God's sovereignty over kings and kingdoms gives courage to live faithfully in exile. Remembering is central to hope. Forgetting leads us to false hope in human wisdom, but remembering anchors us in God's wisdom and care. Lent echoes this call: to rehearse God's goodness, to remember His works, and to trust His sovereignty over the shifting powers of the world.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

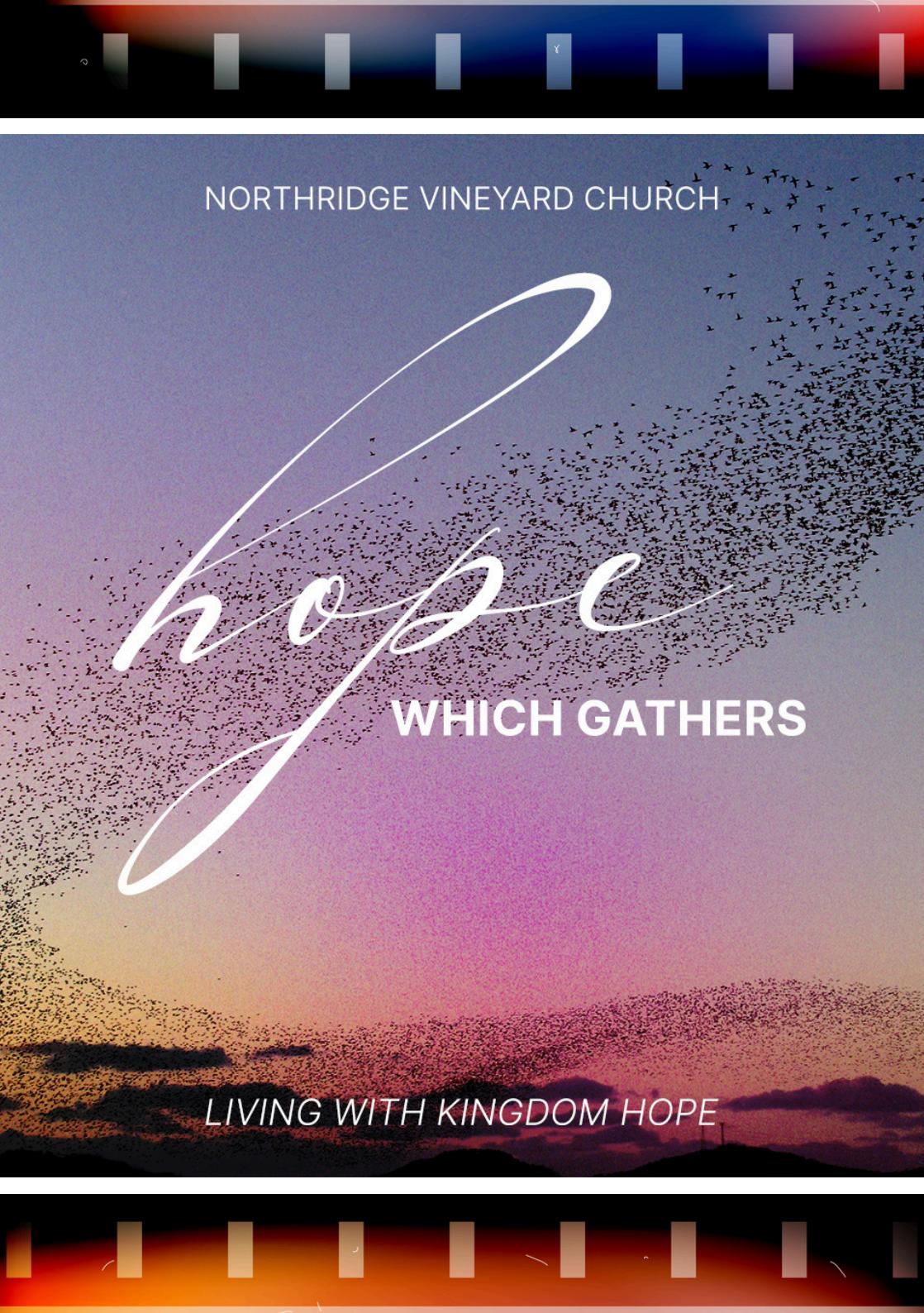
- Why is remembering God's past faithfulness so important?
- How does forgetting lead us to false hope?
- What practices help us rehearse God's goodness together?

SHARED LENTEN PRACTICE:

Journal daily one way you see God's goodness.

Share highlights with the group.

PRAYER: Thank God for His wisdom and faithfulness.



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WHICH GATHERS

LIVING WITH KINGDOM HOPE

WEEK 3: HOPE WHICH GATHERS

OPENING QUESTION

When has community helped you stand firm in faith?

SCRIPTURE READING: Daniel 3:1–30;

ADDITIONAL TEXTS: Matthew 18:20; Hebrews 10:24–25

EXPLORE THE THEMES

Daniel 3 tells the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego standing together against Nebuchadnezzar's command to bow before the golden statue. Their refusal is not just individual courage, it is communal faithfulness. They stand united, and God's presence meets them in the fire. This passage reminds us that hope flourishes when God's people gather together, refusing to compromise and encouraging one another to remain faithful.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, in '*Life Together*', insisted that Christian hope is sustained in community. He wrote that "*the Christian needs another Christian who speaks God's Word to him.*" In other words, faith is not meant to be lived in isolation. When Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego stood together, they embodied this truth, and their courage was strengthened by one another's presence. Bonhoeffer's insight helps us see that hope is not just an individual resource but a shared reality, sustained by the voices and lives of fellow believers.

Walter Brueggemann describes exile as isolating. The empire seeks to scatter and silence God's people. But he also notes that resistance is possible when God's people gather in solidarity. In Daniel 3, the fiery furnace becomes the place where God's presence is revealed precisely because His people stood together. Brueggemann's perspective helps us see that gathering is itself an act of resistance against exile's isolating power.

Hope is sustained in community. Lent reminds us that we are not alone in our journey. We walk together, strengthened by Christ's presence among us. Just as the three friends discovered God with them in the fire, we discover hope when we gather in faith and stand together against the idols of our age.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Why is it easier to compromise alone?
- How does God's presence strengthen us in community?
- What does it mean to "gather in hope"?

SHARED LENTEN PRACTICE: Meet once outside Sunday worship to pray together.

PRAYER: Pray for courage and unity in your Life group.



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WHICH WAITS

LIVING WITH KINGDOM HOPE

WEEK 4: HOPE WHICH WAITS

OPENING QUESTION

What's hardest about waiting on God?

SCRIPTURE READING: Daniel 4:1-37;

ADDITIONAL TEXTS: Psalm 27:13-14; James 5:7-8

EXPLORE THE THEMES

Daniel 4 tells the story of King Nebuchadnezzar's pride and downfall. He boasts in his own power and accomplishments, only to be humbled until he acknowledges that "*the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will*" (Daniel 4:32). This chapter is a vivid reminder that human pride and control are fleeting, while God's sovereignty endures. Waiting on God, then, is not passive resignation but active trust in His timing and authority.

Karl Barth described hope as "*patience with the promises of God*." For Barth, waiting is not about doing nothing. It is about living in the tension between what God has promised and what we have yet to see. Nebuchadnezzar's story illustrates this: his pride led him to grasp for control, but true hope required humility and patience to recognise God's rule. Barth reminds us to see waiting as a discipline of trust, where hope is sustained by God's faithfulness rather than our own achievements.

C.S. Lewis often reflected on our impatience as a symptom of misplaced desire. In *Mere Christianity*, he observed that our longing for quick solutions reveals how much we want to control outcomes. Yet Lewis insisted that hope teaches us to look beyond immediate gratification to God's eternal purposes. In Daniel 4, Nebuchadnezzar's impatience and pride are exposed, but his eventual confession shows that waiting on God leads to restoration. Lewis prompts us to see that waiting is not wasted time. It is the space where God reshapes our desires and teaches us humility.

Waiting is central to hope. Lent echoes this call: to slow down, repent, and trust God's timing. In exile, waiting feels difficult, but it is precisely in waiting that hope is formed, as we learn to release control and depend on God's sovereignty.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How does pride make waiting harder?
- What does waiting with hope look like?
- How can we encourage one another in seasons of waiting?

SHARED LENTEN PRACTICE: Fast from one daily comfort (social media, streaming, or food) and use that time to pray Psalm 27:14.

PRAYER: Ask God for patience and trust in His timing.

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WHICH DWELLS

LIVING WITH KINGDOM HOPE

WEEK 5: HOPE WHICH DWELLS

OPENING QUESTION

Where do you feel most at home with God?

SCRIPTURE READING: Daniel 5:1-31; Daniel 6:1-28;

ADDITIONAL TEXTS: Psalm 91:1-2; John 15:4-5

EXPLORE THE THEMES

Daniel 5 and 6 show us two contrasting scenes: the arrogance of King Belshazzar, who mocks God by drinking from the temple vessels, and the faithfulness of Daniel, who continues his rhythm of prayer even when threatened with death. Belshazzar's kingdom collapses overnight, while Daniel's life is preserved in the lions' den. These stories remind us that true security is not found in earthly kingdoms but in dwelling daily with God.

Walter Brueggemann describes prayer in exile as "*an act of defiance.*" For him, prayer is not simply private devotion but a public declaration that the empire does not have the final word. Daniel's three-times-a-day prayer was a way of dwelling in God's presence even when Babylon sought to dominate his life. Daniel's prayer was resistance. It was a refusal to let fear or empire dictate his identity. Dwelling with God is not escape from reality, but a way of living faithfully in the midst of it.

N.T. Wright emphasises that dwelling with God is about participating in His kingdom here and now. In his reflections on the Lord's Prayer, Wright insists that prayer is not about retreating from the world but about aligning ourselves with God's reign "*on earth as it is in heaven.*" Daniel's prayer life embodies this: he dwells with God in exile, and in doing so, he becomes a sign of God's kingdom breaking into Babylon. Wright's perspective helps us see that dwelling with God is both refuge and mission. It sustains us and sends us out as witnesses.

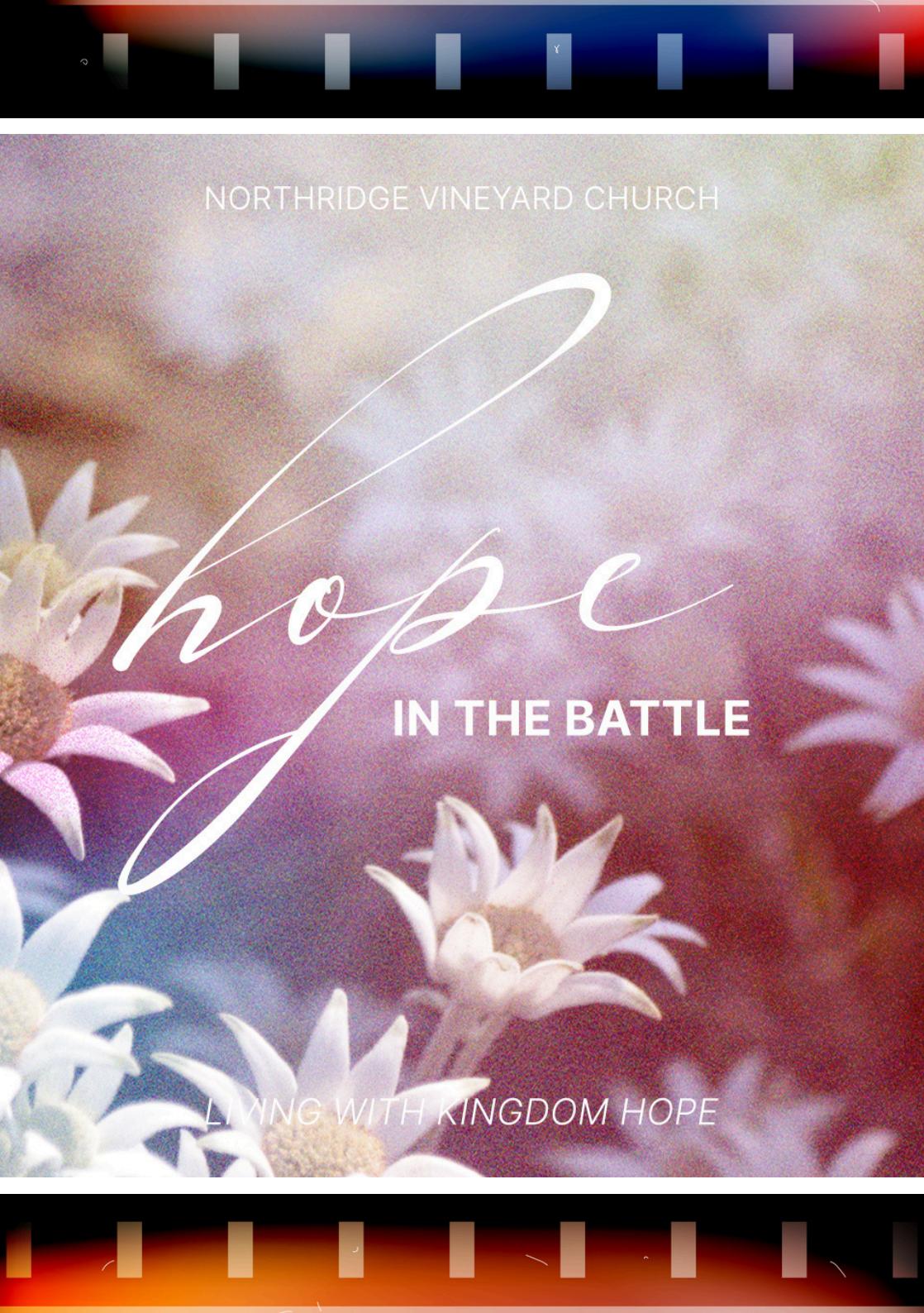
Dwelling in God's presence is our true source of hope. Lent echoes this call: to carve out space each day to dwell with God, resisting distraction and fear, and living as signs of His kingdom in the midst of exile.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What rhythms help you dwell with God?
- How does prayer anchor us in His presence?
- How can we create "dwelling places" together?

SHARED LENTEN PRACTICE: Set aside 10-15 minutes daily in silence, reading Psalm 91:1-2, and praying.

PRAYER: Invite God's presence to dwell with your group.



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IN THE BATTLE

LIVING WITH KINGDOM HOPE

WEEK 6: HOPE IN THE BATTLE

OPENING QUESTION

What battles of faith do you face right now?

SCRIPTURE READING: Daniel 7–8;

ADDITIONAL TEXTS: Ephesians 6:10–18; Romans 8:37–39

EXPLORE THE THEMES

Daniel 7–8 presents visions of beasts, horns, and cosmic struggle.

These apocalyptic images can feel overwhelming, but their purpose is to reveal that beneath the surface of history lies a spiritual battle. Empires rise and fall, but God's kingdom is certain. The "Ancient of Days" sits enthroned, and the Son of Man receives everlasting dominion (Daniel 7:13–14). Hope in exile is not naïve optimism. It is courage to stand firm in the battle, trusting that God reigns even when chaos seems to rule.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, writing in *The Cost of Discipleship*, reminds us that following Jesus is costly precisely because it places us in the struggle against sin and darkness. He insisted that discipleship is not comfortable but a call to resist evil with faith and obedience. Bonhoeffer prompts us to see Daniel's visions not as abstract symbols but as reminders that God's people are called to endure real conflict. Yet hope sustains us because Christ has already won the decisive victory.

Karl Barth emphasised that Christian hope is not optimism but confidence in God's triumph. In his *Church Dogmatics*, Barth argued that hope is grounded in God's action, not human effort. Applied to Daniel, this means that even when the beasts rage and kingdoms clash, hope is anchored in the certainty of God's reign. Barth's perspective helps us resist despair: the battle is real, but the outcome is secure.

Daniel reminds us that hope in the battle is both costly and confident.

Lent echoes this call: discipleship means entering the struggle against sin and darkness, but with resilience rooted in the certainty of God's kingdom.

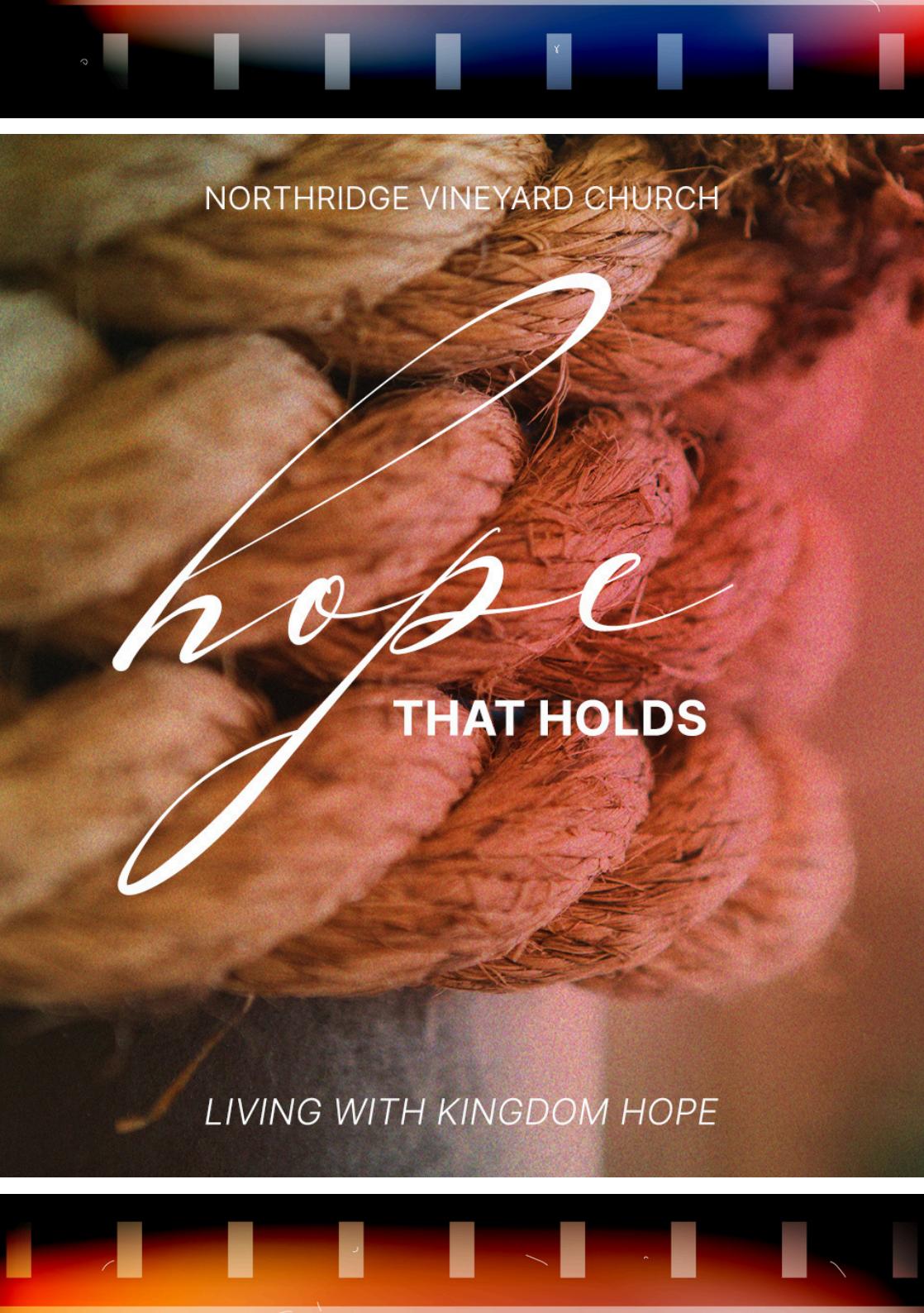
While exile may feel overwhelming, hope strengthens us to fight with courage, knowing that God's victory is assured.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What battles feel overwhelming?
- How does God's victory give courage?
- How can we support one another in spiritual struggle?

SHARED LENTEN PRACTICE: Pray the "Armour of God" prayer daily (Ephesians 6:10–18)

PRAYER: Ask God to equip your group for the battles you face.



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THAT HOLDS

LIVING WITH KINGDOM HOPE

WEEK 7: HOPE WHICH HOLDS

OPENING QUESTION

How do confession and lament bring hope?

SCRIPTURE READING: Daniel 9:1-27;

ADDITIONAL TEXTS: Psalm 51:1-12; Lamentations 3:19-24; 1 John 1:9

EXPLORE THE THEMES

Daniel 9 records one of the most profound prayers in Scripture. Daniel confesses the sins of his people, laments their brokenness, and appeals to God's mercy. His prayer is not self-righteous but deeply honest: "*We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy*" (Daniel 9:18). In exile, Daniel shows that hope is not found in human perfection but in God's steadfast love.

Walter Brueggemann describes lament as "the refusal to settle for the world as it is." In other words, lament is not despair but protest. It names the pain of exile honestly while insisting that God's promises are still true. Daniel's prayer embodies this: he grieves the devastation of Jerusalem and the failure of his people, but he refuses to accept that this is the end of the story. Daniel's lament is an act of hope, because it trusts that God hears and will act. Lament is a spiritual discipline that holds us in hope even when circumstances seem hopeless.

Augustine, in *The Confessions* and *The City of God*, teaches that confession is not about wallowing in guilt but about turning back to God's mercy. For Augustine, the act of confessing sin is itself hopeful, because it acknowledges that God's grace is greater than our failure. Daniel's prayer reflects this truth: he does not minimise sin, but he anchors his hope in God's compassion. Augustine's perspective helps us see that confession is not the opposite of hope. It is the pathway to hope, because it restores us to God's love.

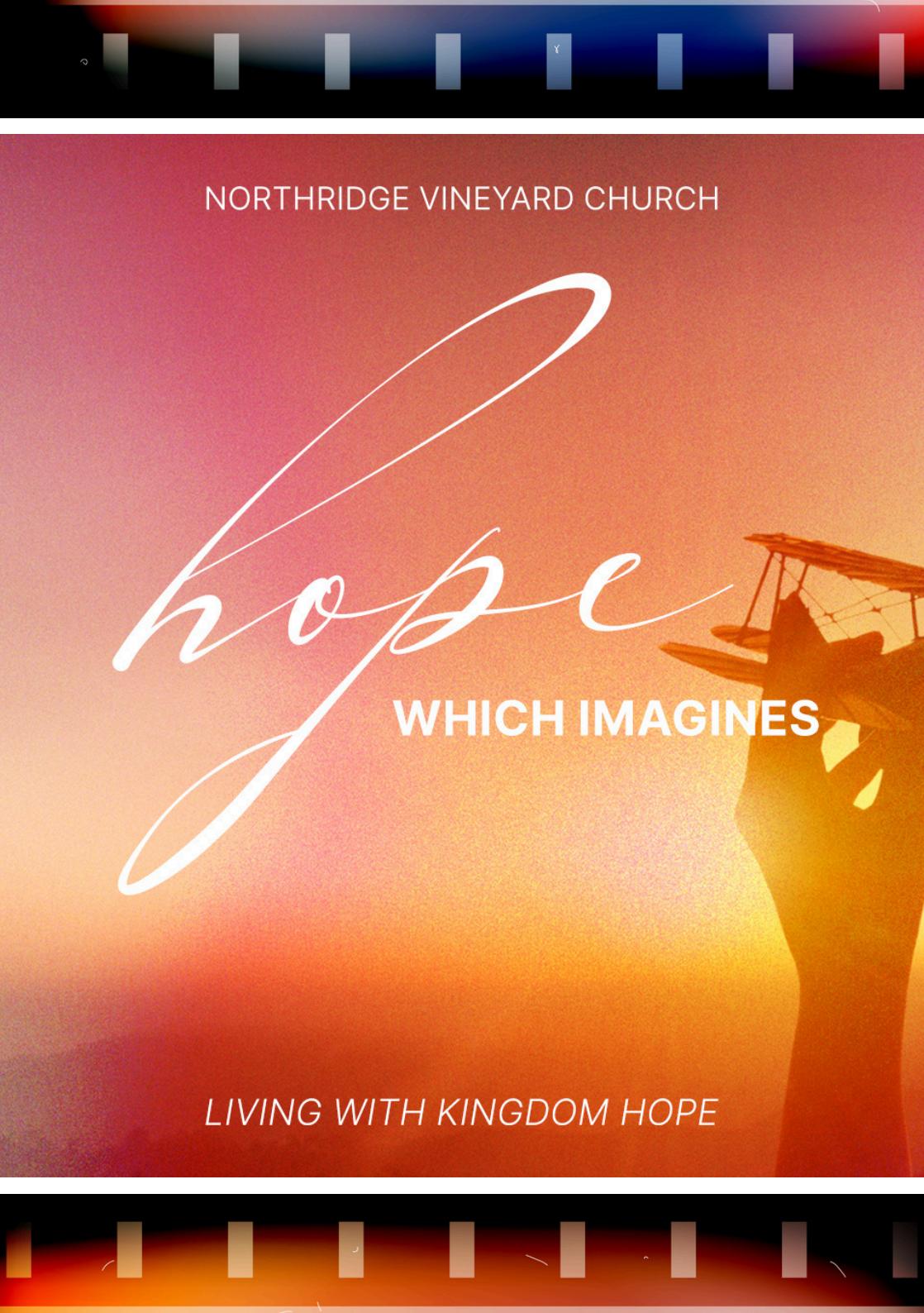
Lament and confession are not signs of despair but of hope that holds. Lent echoes this call: to name our brokenness honestly, to grieve the pain of the world, and to cling to God's mercy. In exile, hope is sustained, not by denial, but by confession and honest lament that clings to trust in God's steadfast love.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Why is lament important in exile?
- How does confession free us to hope?
- What brokenness do we need to grieve together?

SHARED LENTEN PRACTICE: Pray a daily prayer of confession and lament, using Psalm 51:10 and Lamentations 3:21-23.

PRAYER: Confess together and ask God for mercy and renewal.



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hope
WHICH IMAGINES



LIVING WITH KINGDOM HOPE

WEEK 8: HOPE WHICH IMAGINES

OPENING QUESTION

What do you imagine God's future kingdom will look like?

SCRIPTURE READING: Daniel 10–12;

ADDITIONAL TEXTS: Revelation 21:1–5; Hebrews 11:13–16

EXPLORE THE THEMES

Daniel's final visions (chapters 10–12) lift his eyes beyond the turmoil of exile to God's promised future. He is shown cosmic struggle, angelic messengers, and ultimately resurrection hope: *"Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever"* (Daniel 12:3). These chapters remind us that hope is not only about endurance in the present but about imagining the world as God will one day set it right.

N.T. Wright insists that Christian hope is not escapism but the conviction that God's new creation has already begun in Christ's resurrection. In *Surprised by Hope*, Wright argues that imagining God's future is essential because it shapes how we live now. Daniel's vision of shining resurrection life is not just a distant promise. It is a picture of the kind of life God is already calling His people to embody. Wright's perspective helps us see imagination as a spiritual discipline: envisioning God's renewal gives us courage to live as signs of that future in the present.

C.S. Lewis famously wrote, *"Aim at heaven and you will get earth 'thrown in'; aim at earth and you will get neither."* For Lewis, prayerful imagination of heaven is not a distraction but the key to faithful living on earth. Daniel's vision of God's people shining like stars echoes this truth: when we imagine God's future, we are empowered to live differently now. This kind of prayerful imagination is not fanciful dreaming but a way of aligning our lives with God's eternal purposes.

Prayerful imagination is central to hope. Lent echoes this call: to pray with imagination, to lift our eyes beyond exile, and to live today as signs of God's coming kingdom. Daniel's visions remind us that hope is sustained not only by endurance but by envisioning the resurrection life that God promises.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How does imagining God's future give strength now?
- What does resurrection hope mean for daily life?
- How can we live as signs of God's future kingdom?

SHARED LENTEN PRACTICE: Pray with imagination: read Daniel 12:3, picture God's renewal, and write one way to live as a sign of that hope.

PRAYER: Pray for vision to see and live in light of God's future.



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hope
THAT LOVES



LIVING WITH KINGDOM HOPE



WEEK 9: HOPE THAT LOVES

OPENING QUESTION

When has someone's love given you hope?

SCRIPTURE READING: John 13–17; 1 Corinthians 13:13

EXPLORE THE THEMES

Daniel's exile showed that hope was sustained by faithfulness and covenant love. On the night before His death, Jesus does something shocking: He washes His disciples' feet (John 13). When Jesus gathered His disciples in this upper room, Israel was still living under the shadow of empire. Though they had returned from Babylon centuries earlier, many Jews believed exile had never truly ended. Roman occupation was a daily reminder that they were not free, and their hope was for God's kingdom to come in fullness. Into this context, Jesus speaks words of love: "*A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another*" (John 13:34).

Jesus emphasises that hope is not abstract, but embodied in love. This is striking. To a people longing for liberation, Jesus does not call them to violent resistance or withdrawal, but to love. Jesus reframes what hope looks like. The kingdom will come, but it will be marked by love, not by force.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer insisted that "the church is the church only when it exists for others." In *Life Together*, he argued that Christian community is sustained by love expressed in service and sacrifice. The footwashing scene is exactly this: Jesus models a love that stoops low, a love that gives itself away. In exile under Rome, Jesus' disciples were called to embody hope through sacrificial love, showing the world a different kind of kingdom. This love was not sentimental. It was costly, rooted in service and unity, even in the face of oppression.

Karl Barth described love as the "form of God's freedom." In his *Church Dogmatics*, Barth argued that God's freedom is not arbitrary but expressed in self-giving love. Applied to John 13–17, this means that Jesus' command to love is not a burden but an invitation to participate in God's own freedom. Hope flourishes when we live in this freedom... when love becomes the shape of our lives.

C.S. Lewis, in *The Four Loves*, distinguished between affection, friendship, eros, and agape. He insisted that agape, self-giving love, is the highest and most enduring. Lewis helps us see that Jesus' command is not about sentiment but about agape, the kind of love that lays down its life for others. This is the love that sustains hope, because it reflects the eternal love of God.

WEEK 9: HOPE THAT LOVES

Henri Nouwen wrote that “the greatest gift we can give is our love.” In *The Return of the Prodigal Son*, he emphasised that love is not earned but freely given, mirroring the Father’s embrace. Nouwen reminds us that hope is sustained when we receive and share this unconditional love.

For us today, the parallel is clear. We may not live under Rome, but we often feel the weight of cultural exile. We are surrounded by systems, pressures, and values that do not reflect God’s kingdom. Like Israel under Rome, we long for renewal. Jesus’ command to love one another is still the way hope is made visible. Love becomes the signpost of God’s kingdom in a world that feels like exile.

Lent calls us to embody what Jesus lived out: that love is the heartbeat of hope. In exile, hope is revealed not in self-protection but in love that reflects the heart of Jesus. We are to live as people of love in a fractured world, to resist despair and division, and to show through our unity and service that God’s kingdom is breaking in.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How does imagining God’s future give strength now?
- What does resurrection hope mean for daily life?
- How can we live as signs of God’s future kingdom?

SHARED LENTEN PRACTICE: Pray with imagination: read Daniel 12:3, picture God’s renewal, and write one way to live as a sign of that hope.

PRAYER: Pray for vision to see and live in light of God’s future.



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hope

BEYOND DEATH



LIVING WITH KINGDOM HOPE



WEEK 10: HOPE BEYOND DEATH

OPENING QUESTION

Where do you see brokenness that needs God's healing?

SCRIPTURE READING: Isaiah 53:3–6; Luke 23:26–49; Romans 5:6–8

EXPLORE THE THEMES

For Israel, exile was not just about geography but about feeling cut off from God's presence and promises. Even after returning from Babylon, many believed exile had never truly ended, especially under Roman rule. Daniel's visions anticipated suffering before renewal, and Isaiah spoke directly to this longing.

Isaiah 53 portrays the Servant as one who suffers on behalf of the people: "*He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain... he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities*" (Isaiah 53:3,5). This was written to exiles who wondered if God had abandoned them. Isaiah's vision gave them hope that God Himself would act, bearing their pain and restoring them.

Good Friday fulfills this hope. Isaiah 53 portrays the Servant as "pierced for our transgressions" and "crushed for our iniquities," while Luke 23 narrates Jesus' crucifixion in vivid detail. Jesus, the suffering Servant, enters into the deeper exile of sin and death. At the cross, hope does not deny pain, it enters into it fully. The crucifixion is the place where God's love meets the deepest human brokenness.

Augustine saw the cross as the meeting point of divine justice and mercy. In *The City of God*, he argued that the crucifixion was not simply punishment, but the moment when God's mercy was revealed most clearly, because Christ bore what humanity could not. For Augustine, the cross is paradoxical: it exposes the seriousness of sin while simultaneously unveiling the greater reality of grace. This helps us see Good Friday not as a hopeless tragedy, but as the turning point where mercy triumphs over judgment.

Jürgen Moltmann, in *The Crucified God*, insisted that "only the suffering God can help." For Moltmann, the cross is not God standing at a distance from human pain but God entering into it. Jesus' cry of abandonment, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?," reveals that God Himself has taken on the depths of human despair. Moltmann reminds us that hope is born not by avoiding suffering but by encountering God in the midst of it.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, writing from prison, echoed this truth. He argued that discipleship means following Christ into suffering, because it is there that God's presence is most real. Bonhoeffer's famous line, "When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die," reminds us that hope is not cheap. It is costly, forged in the shadow of the cross. Yet it is precisely in dying with Christ that we discover life.

WEEK 10: HOPE BEYOND DEATH

For us today, Isaiah's words still resonate. We may not live under Babylon or Rome, but we often feel the weight of cultural exile: alienation, injustice, and brokenness. Good Friday reminds us that God has not abandoned us. Just as Isaiah promised to exiles that God would act, we see that promise fulfilled at the cross.

Good Friday is not the end of hope but its deepest foundation. The cross holds together lament and mercy, despair and presence, death and life. Lent invites us to bring our griefs honestly before God, to lament the brokenness of the world, and to trust that His love is stronger than death. Good Friday is the place where the exile's longing meets God's mercy.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How does lament deepen our hope?
- What does the cross reveal about God's love?
- How can we bring our griefs honestly before God?

SHARED LENTEN PRACTICE: Write down griefs or injustices, bring them to God in prayer, and end with Romans 5:8.

PRAYER: Pray prayers of lament and thanksgiving for Christ's sacrifice.

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IS ALIVE

LIVING WITH KINGDOM HOPE

WEEK 11: HOPE IS ALIVE

OPENING QUESTION

What makes you feel most alive in Christ?

SCRIPTURE READING: 1 Peter 1:3; Luke 24:1–12; Revelation 21:5

EXPLORE THE THEMES

Daniel 12 offers one of the clearest Old Testament visions of resurrection:

"Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt" (Daniel 12:2). For exiles, this was staggering. Hope was not only about returning from Babylon or surviving under Rome; it was about God's ultimate victory over death itself. Daniel's hope looked forward to resurrection and the coming kingdom that would outlast every empire.

Isaiah echoes this vision. Writing to exiles longing for restoration, he declares: *"He will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces"* (Isaiah 25:8). This promise gave Israel courage: exile and oppression would not have the last word. God Himself would act to undo death and bring joy to His people.

Easter fulfills these hopes. The resurrection of Jesus is not a new idea dropped into history; it is the decisive act that Daniel and Isaiah foresaw. Easter morning proclaims that hope is alive. Luke 24 tells us the women found the tomb empty and heard the angel's words: *"Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen!"* Peter later declares that we have been given *"a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead"* (1 Peter 1:3). Resurrection is not simply a happy ending, it is the beginning of God's new creation.

N.T. Wright, in *Surprised by Hope*, insists that the resurrection is the launching of God's new world. Easter is not about escaping earth but about God renewing creation. The risen Jesus is the first fruits of what God intends for all creation: life, renewal, and restoration. Hope is not wishful thinking but grounded in the reality of resurrection. Because Jesus lives, God's future has already begun.

C.S. Lewis described resurrection joy as "the serious business of heaven." In *Mere Christianity*, he argued that the resurrection is the moment when death itself is undone, and all our deepest longings are fulfilled in Christ. Easter is not merely personal comfort but cosmic joy; the joy of creation set free. Hope is alive because resurrection joy is the truest reality.

Karl Barth insisted that Easter is not myth or metaphor but the decisive act of God's victory. In *Church Dogmatics*, he argued that the resurrection defines all history: it is the moment when God's "Yes" to humanity overcomes every "No." Hope is alive because resurrection is God's definitive word. Life, not death, has the final say.

WEEK 11: HOPE IS ALIVE

For us today, the journey through exile, lament, and waiting leads to resurrection joy. Hope is alive, not as an idea, but as a living reality in the risen Christ. This fulfills the visions of Daniel and Isaiah and assures us that God's kingdom will be complete at the end of time. Like Israel under Rome, we often feel the weight of cultural exile: alienation, injustice, and death itself. Daniel and Isaiah remind us that hope is not mere survival but resurrection. Easter proclaims that this hope is alive: exile ends, death is undone, and God's kingdom is breaking in.

Easter is the heartbeat of hope. Exile ends in renewal, despair gives way to joy, and death is swallowed up in victory.

Easter Sunday proclaims that hope is alive, not as an idea, but as a living reality in the risen Christ.

