

## **Session 2 A Conversation on Hope (Chapter 4 in *The Only Prayer You'll Ever Need*)**

### ***“Thy Kingdom Come”***

*Perspective* is the first alignment of the Lord’s prayer, a prayer to see life with greater clarity and to sense the sacred in our midst.

The second alignment is the alignment of our *hope* with the larger story in which we live as human beings. The Bible teaches that we are a part of a story greater than a single life or generation and invited to play a part. In fact, descriptions of the Kingdom of God can be found in the words of Old Testament prophets, in the teaching of Jesus, and also at the end of the New Testament in the book of Revelation, an intentional close to the story that begins with the book of Genesis.

The book of Revelation offers several images of the new heaven and new earth (Rev. 21 & 22). It emphasizes that this Kingdom to come represents the completion of the creation story in Genesis. The waters of chaos are not merely pushed back (see Gen 1:9-10), but watery chaos itself is gone (“and there was no longer any sea” Rev 21:1). The story that began in the garden of Eden ends in a city---the New Jerusalem. The image of a city emphasizes life together even as it suggests that our individuality, the unforgettable you, is not lost but eternally valued and preserved. Creation finds its end in a new heaven and a new earth where we live as individuals in a loving community.

The book of Revelation also leans on the Old Testament prophetic tradition, reinforcing the significance of the prophets’ declarations of what God wants for the world we live in, and confident that this will be fully realized in the Kingdom. It is where our highest and best aspirations meet, where love, creativity, goodness and joy prevail, where beauty, awe and wonder are common and where death, chaos, injustice and evil meet their end.

This Kingdom is quite unlike the world we live in, a world that can find us chasing after things that have no lasting value. In the Kingdom of God, gold is used for paving streets, like asphalt, not merely to suggest that heaven’s magnificence is beyond our imagination, but also that scarcity is not a part of heaven and that chasing after gold in life (or anything where value is established by scarcity) is a misplaced ambition precisely because it has no ultimate worth.

The book of Revelation offers a breathtaking and incredibly hopeful vision of the story each of our lives is a part of. It further suggests that this great hope gives every life a larger purpose.

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**Open the time together with prayer**, inviting God to be present, and then pray the beginning of the Lord’s prayer concluding with the words of the second petition, “Thy Kingdom come.”

### **Opening questions**

What does “the Kingdom of God” mean to us?

What images come to mind when you think of the “Kingdom of God”?

Are there images of the Kingdom of God we need to let go of?

What are some things you hope for? Has there been a person in your life who helped you to believe that you could do more or be more than you thought you could, who expanded your horizons?

Put to a vote, what would (or should) our group's grandest hopes be?

### **Our experience**

What's the closest to heaven or the Kingdom of God you've ever felt?

How have the hopes with which you have lived shaped the person you have become?

What can cause you to lose hope? Lose a sense of purpose?

### **The prayer**

What should and shouldn't inform our picture of the Kingdom of God? (Is it simply a collection of our happy thoughts?)

How does the hope set before us change how we look at life and the world today?

How are hope and a sense of purpose in life related?

How does this petition of the prayer connect us to others?

### **Our aspirations**

Is it enough to hope for the end of negative things? What are you hoping for right now in your life?

What step could you take toward living with greater anticipation for the Kingdom of God?

How might living in greater alignment with the hope of the Kingdom make life easier? How might it make life harder? How might it make life more meaningful?

Is there a person who models for you living a life of hope and purpose?

Can you share hope with a person who has lost hope?

**Close with a prayer** praying for greater hope in your life and for each other.

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*"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future" (Jer 29:11)*

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