

**'Hear Our Prayer'**  
**Lent Course 2025 Session 3**  
**Ezekiel – Hopeful Prayer**

**LEADER'S NOTES**

**Gathering (5 minutes)**

*Welcome members to the group and ensure they all know each other.*

*Ask group members if they were able to make any changes to their pattern of prayer following last week's session.*

**Opening Prayer**

*You may like to pray by name for every member of the group.*

*Then lead this or another prayer:*

Lord Jesus as you taught your disciples,  
so teach us to pray.  
Give us honesty in our confession,  
ambition in our intercession,  
eloquence in our praise and  
humility in our thanksgiving.  
Help us to trust in the power of prayer,  
and as we pray,  
give us renewed joy in the hope of your salvation.  
For you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit  
one God for ever and ever.

**Amen.**

**Introduction**

*Use these or other words:*

Welcome to session 3 of our Lent Course, 'Hear our Prayer.' The aim of the Course is to deepen our lives of prayer in the company of some characters from the Old Testament.

This week we are going to explore the Prophet Ezekiel. He spoke some beautiful words of hope at a time of great crisis for his people and today he will show us how, through prayer, we too can be prophets of hope.

**Biblical Reflection (15 minutes)**

*Give some background*

In 597BC the people of Israel were conquered by the Babylonians, Jerusalem and its Temple were destroyed and the people were carried off into exile in Babylon. It is into that context of crisis that Ezekiel spoke these words of prophesy: Ezekiel 37:1-14

*Read the passage slowly and clearly.*

The hand of the Lord came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. <sup>2</sup> He led me all round them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. <sup>3</sup> He said to me, 'Mortal, can these bones live?' I answered, 'O Lord God, you know.' <sup>4</sup> Then he said to me, 'Prophecy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. <sup>5</sup> Thus says the Lord God to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. <sup>6</sup> I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the Lord.'

<sup>7</sup> So I prophesied as I had been commanded; and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. <sup>8</sup> I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them. <sup>9</sup> Then he said to me, 'Prophecy to the breath, prophecy, mortal, and say to the breath: Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.' <sup>10</sup> I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude.

<sup>11</sup> Then he said to me, 'Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, "Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely." <sup>12</sup> Therefore prophecy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord God: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. <sup>13</sup> And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. <sup>14</sup> I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken and will act, says the Lord.'

*Leave a time of silence.*

*Ask the following or similar question:*

- What words or phrases struck you in that reading. Why?
- How could Ezekiel prophesy a message of hope when he was living in the midst of such a terrible crisis?
- What does Ezekiel have to teach us about what we are doing when we pray?

### **Talk (15 minutes)**

*Watch the Video. It can be seen on the Blackburn Diocesan Website or on the Fruitful app.*

### **Discussion (25 minutes)**

*Lead a time of conversation. The following questions will help but feel free to choose just a few of them or ask your own.*

- What is hope?
- When you look around the world today, where do you find hope?
- How do you find hope in your relationship with Jesus?
- In what ways does your life of prayer enrich your hope in Jesus?

- ‘There is no such thing as unanswered prayer.’ Do you think this is true? How have you felt when it has seemed that God has not heard your prayer?
- Bishop Philip told the story of a boy with cystic fibrosis who asked, ‘Why does God heal some people and not others?’ How would you answer him?
- In what ways can you be a prophet of hope in your daily life?
- How might you need to grow your life of prayer to be a Prophet of Hope?

### **Prayer (15 minutes)**

*This week we will use silence to pray. This may be quite new, even a little alarming, for some people. So try and help them into the silence.*

*Explain that during the silence you will read short passages from Ezekiel. In the silence that follows they should listen to what God is saying to them through those words.*

*First make sure that everyone is sitting comfortably, that phones are switched off, that no one is going to have to leave.*

*Ask people to listen to their breathing and as they do so to try and put distractions out of their minds.*

*Read these words to them three or four times with a pause between each:*

Breath on me breath of God. Fill me with life anew.

*Leave silence for about a minute. Then say:*

Imagine you are with Ezekiel looking upon a vast, parched valley of dry bones. See that sight, feel the heat, look at that arid place where there is no possibility of life. Imagine you are there:

*Now leave 5-7 minutes of silence, interspersing the silence with these passages from Ezekiel:*

“Thus says the Lord God to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. You shall know that I am the Lord.”

“God says: ‘Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, mortal, and say to the breath: Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.’”

“Thus says the Lord God: ‘I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people;’”

“God says: ‘I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live.’”

*Leave one minute’s silence at the end before concluding:*

We pray together in the words that Jesus taught us:

**Our Father...**

God of Mission  
who alone brings growth to your Church,

send your Holy Spirit to give  
vision to our planning,  
wisdom to our actions,  
joy to our worship,  
and power to our witness.  
Help our church to grow in numbers,  
in spiritual commitment to you,  
and in service to our local community,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
**Amen.**

May the Lord bless us  
and keep us from all evil  
and bring us to everlasting life.  
**Amen.**

### **Conclusion (5 minutes)**

*If there is time, ask people to share how they felt about that time of silent praying with the scriptures. Was it easier than they thought or harder? Is it something they will try at home?*

*Then send them on their way:*

Next we will be looking at Esther and thinking about how we can grow in prayer as we pray communally and in the company of others.