

Scripture Union International



Global Week of Prayer
- 7th - 13th Nov, 2021



www.scriptureunion.global

Prisoners of Hope - An Introduction

This year our Global Week of Prayer will explore the book of Zechariah and what it means to be 'prisoners of hope' (Zech 9:12). What does this ancient book have to say about this present moment? Zechariah is a book rich with imagery, some of it quite unusual and confronting! This book seeks to help the community of Israel to look beyond their exile and captivity towards the fulfilment of the Kingdom of God. The prophet calls them to repentance and a renewed commitment to their covenant with God. He describes a vision of all that God has in store for the community of faith. There is much in this book for us to explore and find inspiration in as we gather to pray.

We particularly invite you to read and meditate on Chapter 8 and the wonderful vision that God lays before His people. Picture the streets filled once again with old men and women. Hear the children playing. Watch people coming from the East and West, a multitude of languages and nations, living in faithfulness and righteousness. Crops growing and vines laden with fat, juicy grapes.

What a wonderful vision to be captured by!

Zechariah calls the people to be 'prisoners of hope', a juxtaposition of terms. It is a great way to think about how we are to live. Bound by hope, captured by hope, inspired to live with a 'lock us up and throw away the key' kind of hope.

As we gather to pray for what God has done over the past year and look ahead to what God will do in the future, we can be people of hope. We can look above the chaos and look forward to the coming of the Kingdom and God's ultimate restoration.

This year we invite you to join the Global SU family in praying together. We invite people of all ages to get involved in a series of events. This will include a daily prayer guide, with a specific focus for each day, a 24 hour Zoom prayer event and a range of creative prayer activities.

day 1

REPENT

day 2

RELY

day 3

RENEW

day 4

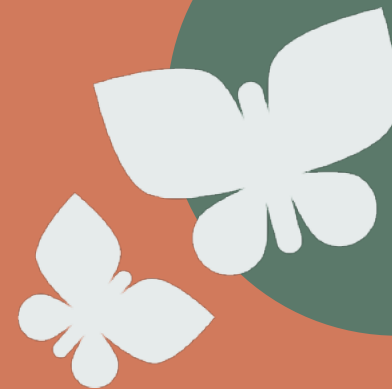
RESTORE

day 5

REJOICE



7th - 13th Nov,
2021





Prayer Guide - An Introduction

This Prayer Guide will provide you with a prayer focus for each day of the week, based on the book of Zechariah. Every movement is different, so choose a way to participate that suits you.

Here are some suggestions:

- ✿ Set aside an hour a day to pray. Include staff, board members and volunteers.
- ✿ Invite people to gather for an evening of prayer, beginning with a meal together (taking into consideration the restrictions amid lockdowns).
- ✿ Send out information to churches near you and invite them to pray

with you as part of their Sunday services and gatherings.

- ✿ Invite supporters and prayer partners to join you in your office or at a camp site or local church (if you're allowed to).
- ✿ Create an online prayer gathering on Zoom or WhatsApp for young leaders involved in your ministry.
- ✿ Post photos and prayers on Facebook and other social media platforms.

You might like to post these to our SU Global Family Facebook page with the hashtags **#prisonersofhope** **#globalweekofprayer**



You can join us as a Global Family for two special events during the Global Prayer Week:

SU Global Prayer Event: This 90-minute gathering on **Sunday 7th November at 7 00PM (London)** will launch our week together and will be a time to pray together in small groups and as a whole.

Click [here](#) to participate!

A **24-hour prayer event** via Zoom, where you could Zoom around the globe. Join for as long as you like, any time you like, and pray with others around the world on **Friday/Saturday 12th/13th November starting at 6 00AM (Auckland, New Zealand time).**

Click [here](#) to register now!





day 1

REPENT

Zechariah 1: 1-6; 16,17

[call to repent]




Come, hope-filled prisoners.
 See your God, coming in mercy,
 Rebuilding from the ruins
 Bringing comfort.
 As we gather to pray today
 May we recognise you as our God
 Live as people of repentance
 Turning anew towards you
 And discovering that
 You are already coming
 To meet us on the way.

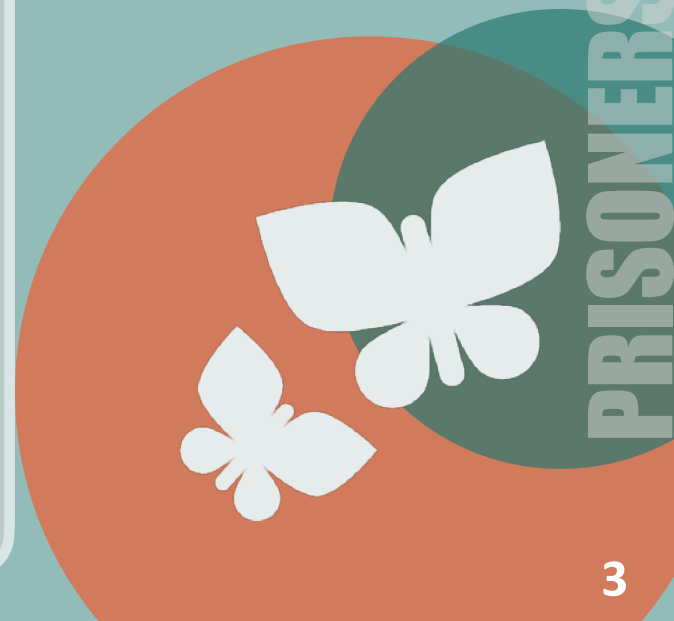
[need for repentance]

We begin our week with a focus on the call to repent. The word 'repent' contains the idea of turning from something and taking a different direction. The people of Israel were in captivity, bound to their disillusionment, failing to listen to God. They had given up hope. Then we read in 1:6, 'Then they repented'.

As we begin our week of prayer, we begin by acknowledging the call of God in our lives to turn and face the right direction, to hope for the future once again. Repentance also includes lament and grief. The past year has stolen much from us, but God offers us hope amid it all. 1:16-17 assures the people that the Lord will return to Jerusalem with mercy and that prosperity will come.

[prayer of repentance]

-  Pray together, focusing on what repentance looks like for your movement and for SU around the world.
-  Spend time lamenting what has been lost or that grieves you, your movement and SU around the world. Commit these to God.
-  Listen to what God is prompting you about for the future. What are the opportunities to be found in a new direction? Ask God for wisdom and courage to discern the way ahead and step into it.





day 2

RELY

[call to rely]

Come, hope-filled prisoners.
Shout and be glad for God is coming
To live among you.
A wall of fire to protect you.
As we gather to pray today
We acknowledge our reliance on you
Our protector and defender
Our source of hope.

Zechariah 2: 1-13






[need to rely]

Day two focuses on a reliance on God. The chapter opens with a man seeking to measure the boundaries of the city, only to discover that the city does not need to be bound by walls. God will be a wall of fire around it! This chapter emphasises that God dwells in the city and that many will come to live there and experience God's presence (2:11). As we come together to pray, let's consider that God's presence dwells with us. We can rely on God, rather on our own ability and efforts to build. It is through God's presence that the Kingdom of God is established.

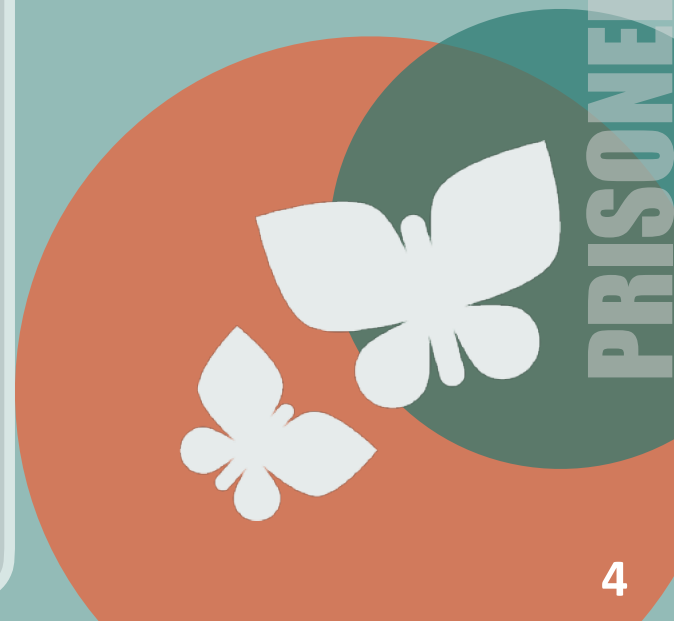
Pray together for where you can see the walls broken down and in need of repair. Consider what it means to see God's Kingdom reigning from a global perspective. Pray together for God's direction as to how to respond to each of these seemingly overwhelming realities.

[prayer of reliance]

What might it look like to experience God's protection and indwelling in each of these places:

-  The impact on nations of COVID-19 or civil war or natural disaster.
-  The rebuilding of communities impacted by violence or apathy.
-  Families torn apart by poverty or neglect.
-  Churches that have been stunned into silence with the closing of their doors.
-  The ministries of Scripture Union that have ceased or been severely impacted by the events of this year.

Pray the Lord's prayer together - Your Kingdom come!





day 3

RENEW

Zechariah 3: 1-10 and 4: 1-10




[need for renewal]

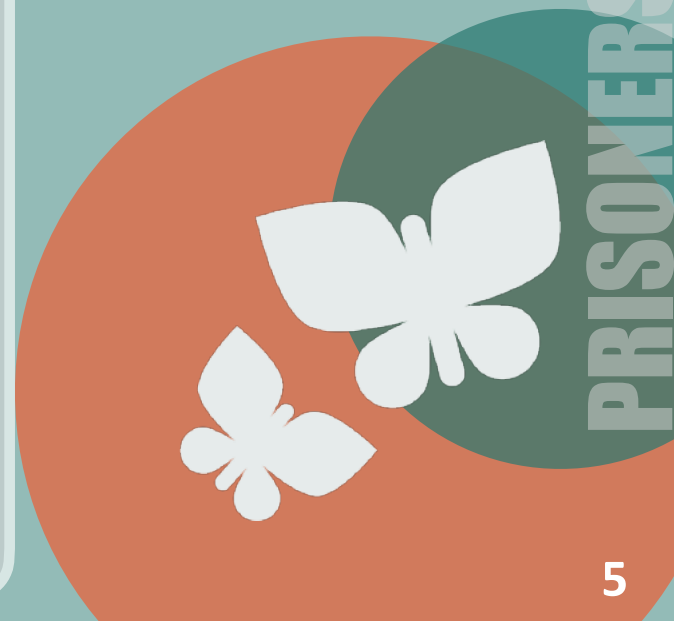
In Zechariah 3, we see the picture of the High Priest Joshua standing in his filthy clothes. The angel of God tells him to take them off and instead to be dressed in the fine garments God supplies. Renewal requires taking off the garments of a previous way of life and embrace what God has for us. Notice that in this process, the prerogative is on Joshua to obey. As a result, he will find his place in God's service, and witness the renewal of the land. This is reflected through reconciled relationships and the extending of hospitality (3:10). Leaders who are committed to renewal will be able to lead others to safety.

[call for renewal]

Come, hope-filled prisoners.
Take off your dirty rags,
Toss your sins away
And allow God to clothe you
anew
In fine garments.
As we gather to pray today
We acknowledge that you are
At work renewing us
As we submit to you in
obedience.
May we never despise the
day of small things
But acknowledge you as Lord
of all the earth.

[prayer for renewal]

-  Pray for the leaders in your SU movement and your local church, in light of Zechariah 3 and 4. Pray the words of 4:6 for them, that they will rely not on their own strength, but on the Holy Spirit.
-  Although we may feel like the 'day of small things' (4:10) describes our ministry, pray for a sense of God at work and a renewed perspective on the local and global ministry of SU.
-  Spend time as individuals focusing on Psalm 139:23-24 and the image of taking off the filthy clothes to dress anew in God's garments.





day 4

RESTORE

Zechariah 7: 7-10 and 8

[call to restore]

Come, hope-filled prisoners.
Dance in the streets.
Sit under the olive tree
Harvest food in plenty.
As we gather to pray today
May we be aware of the
Vulnerable in our midst
Pursue justice, mercy
And hospitality.








[need for restoration]

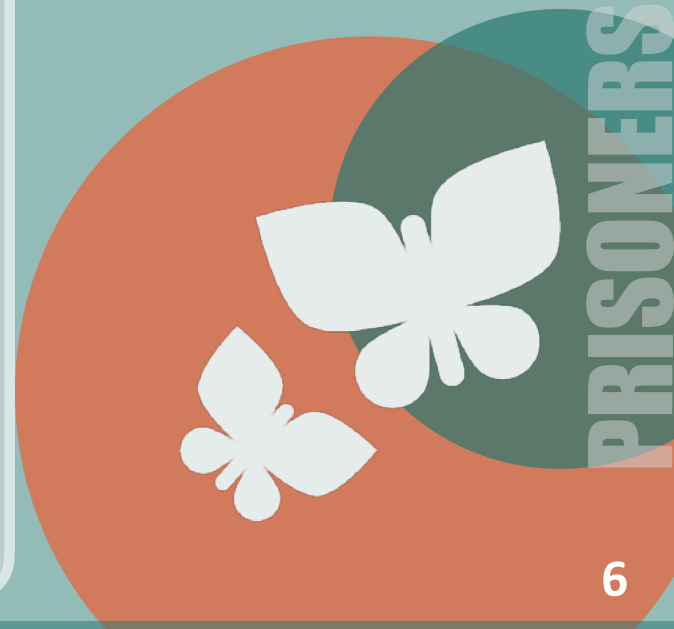
Zechariah portrays a wonderful picture of the restoration of the city of God. We see a collage of images to help us imagine what restoration looks like. In chapter 7 there is a call towards justice, mercy, and compassion for the most vulnerable (7: 9-10). In chapter 8, old men and women are sitting in the streets, surrounded by children playing. The vines are yielding fruit and the crops are plentiful. A safe, secure, and healthy place for even the most vulnerable to dwell. Here is a community of faith that reflects who God is and people are attracted to it! In 8:23 we read that other people saw it and said, 'Let us go with you, because we have heard that God is with you.'

Consider how our churches and communities of faith can best reflect what it means to belong to the Kingdom of God.

[prayer for restoration]

Spend some time praying about what restoration might look like practically in each of the following areas. Respond to what God might be saying to your SU movement about your role in this.

-  Acting with justice and mercy
-  Loving your neighbour
-  Showing compassion
-  Not taking advantage of the vulnerable
-  Not plotting and scheming against each other





day 5





REJOICE

Zechariah 9: 9-13; 10: 1-12; 12: 10-14; 14: 9-11, 16-21*

[need for rejoicing]

9:9 calls to the people of God to rejoice and shout! God is coming in victory! However, this is not the image of a dictator, but rather a lowly king riding on a donkey. God has arrived and weapons of war will be no more (9:10). The final chapters of the book paint a complex picture of our present reality and the future God has for us. Disobedience, rejection, and weeping abound in nations that have rejected God (12:10-14). Yet, God is faithful to His covenant with His people and will bring about full restoration. 14:9 states that there will come a day when God shall reign over the whole earth. 'On that day there will be one LORD, and his name the only name'.

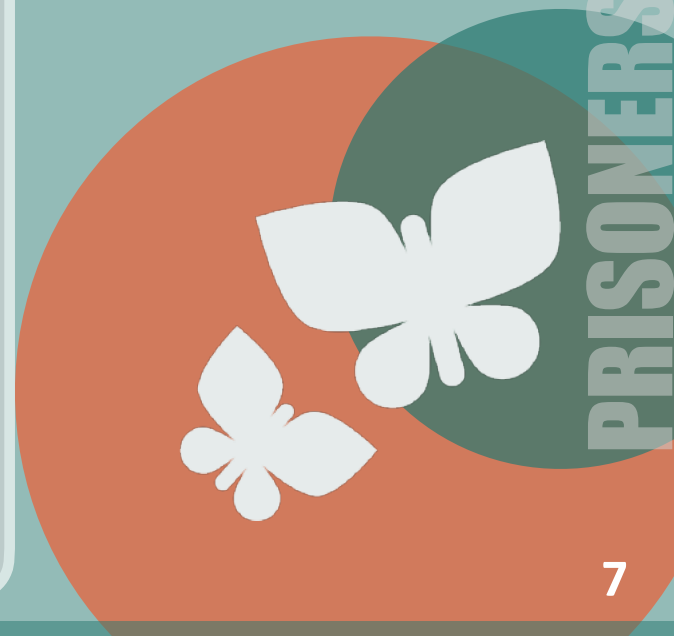
[prayer for rejoicing]

-  Oppression, injustice, war – that God would bring peace.
-  Read 9:14-17 and use these words to create a prayer for the children and young people you minister with.
-  10:6-7 paints a picture of renewed communities, where children flourish in faith. Rejoice together for the lives of children and young people who have been transformed by the good news of Jesus. Take this opportunity to pray for movements who work with displaced children and young people - that the good news will help them thrive, not just survive.
-  Pray for SU as a global movement, that we would live out being 'prisoners of hope' in such a way that people will be drawn to God and His Kingdom.

[call to rejoice]

Come, hope-filled prisoners.
See your God, coming in humility
On a donkey
Riding victorious
Breaking the weapons of war.
As we gather to pray today
May we see you in your power,
Rejoice in your splendour
And live according to your
Covenant relationship
With us.

* You may like to choose one or two of these sections to read together





[the call]

Come,
hope-filled
prisoners.

The call for His covenant people, in 9:12, **'Return to your fortress, you prisoners of hope'**, is the key verse for this year's Global Week of Prayer. The hope that Zechariah proclaims is hope in God as King, hope that God has come to dwell with us, and hope that the covenant between God and God's people will be restored.

This is the sure hope that holds us captive. This hope draws in people from East and West to come and dwell in the city because God is there (8:23).

Rejoice and shout!

PRISONERS OF HOPE