

# FIRM FOUNDATIONS

## *Fresh Faith*

SERMON SERIES STUDY GUIDE

QUARTER 1, 2026



# **FIRM FOUNDATIONS. FRESH FAITH.**

## **Sermon Series Study Guide**

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# Introduction

## **FIRM FOUNDATIONS. FRESH FAITH. Sermon Series: February to March 2026**

NewHope has a rich and celebrated 75-year history that speaks of God's kindness and faithfulness. Ever since Charles Hemming and his family obeyed the call to establish a ministry in Blackburn North, God has been at work, founding and forming the community that is now called NewHope Baptist Church.

This story of God's call and the church's faithfulness is one that has been repeated for the past 2,000 years. Ever since Jesus commissioned his followers and the Holy Spirit fell upon the gathered believers at Pentecost, the Church has carried the good news of Jesus and profoundly changed the world.

We have that same call to share the message of Christ at NewHope. The same foundations that Jesus taught, and the Early Church practiced, are foundational for us today: Love God. Love each other. Love your neighbour. This mission has been central for 2,000 years and will continue to lead us forward. Jesus continues to call us to the same mission. The fields are ripe for harvest, and God is on the move. There is a growing hunger in our secular communities for deeper meaning, hope, and faith. Our hearts are full of fresh faith that we will see a move of the Spirit—more salvations, more baptisms, and more families changed by the power of Jesus—far more than we can imagine as we commit ourselves to his call.

In Acts 2, we encounter the freshest example of the church. Pentecost had come, the Spirit had fallen and energised every follower of Christ. What next? To be the ecclesia, the people of God. We see the early characteristics of what it means to be the people of God—the behaviours and activities expressed then that have held the Church together for 2,000 years. The foundations are strong, but we must never stop keeping these behaviours fresh in our minds as we live out bold faith in our community, city, and world today.

### **Firm Foundations. Fresh Faith. Sermons**

Watch or listen to the sermons for this study guide at:

<https://nhbc.churchcenter.com/channels/16420/series/81904>



## Week 1: Vision Sunday

### Andrew Sercombe

8 February 2026

Visit the [NewHope Teaching](#) page to find this week's sermon

NewHope is a church built on firm foundations and filled with fresh faith.

Our stories matter. Our foundations matter. And on Vision Sunday, we paused to remember the story we belong to and the firm foundation of Jesus Christ that we build upon.

God has been faithfully at work through His Spirit for centuries, and He continues to be at work today. As the church steps into a new season, it does so with fresh faith—grounded in the past, responsive to the present, and filled with confidence for what's ahead.

### Read 1 Corinthians 3:10-11 and Acts 2:42-47

Jesus Christ is our firm foundation. Anything not built on Him will ultimately fail, and the early church gives us a clear picture of what that foundation looks like in action. In Acts, Luke describes the DNA of the first Christian community: devotion to teaching, fellowship, prayer, generosity, worship and mission. These were not temporary practices or optional activities; they are the rhythms and disciplines that have shaped and sustained the church for 2,000 years, and these same practices have shaped NewHope.

Our church has been built by committed people who gave their lives to seeing the gospel proclaimed in Blackburn North and beyond—people whose faithfulness laid firm foundations for future generations. NewHope's history is marked by courage, creativity and a deep desire to see people come to know Jesus.

Yet history, as valuable as it is, cannot become a resting place. To quote our very own Max Myers, *"We dare not ride into tomorrow on yesterday's wheels."*

God is always doing a new work—not by abandoning the past, but by building on it.

1. What stories—personal or communal—have shaped your faith journey? And why do you think remembering our story is so important?



2. Looking at Acts 2:42–47, which practices of the early church do you find most life-giving? Which feel most challenging?

## Read Joshua 1:6–9 and Judges 2:10–11

The message of the gospel never changes, but the context in which it is shared does. Just as bikes have changed dramatically over the decades, so too must the church continue to adapt its methods while remaining anchored in timeless truth.

Fresh faith is not only about methods, it is also about the condition of our hearts. Faith can leak over time. Distraction, discouragement and fear can quietly erode joy, confidence and boldness. Scripture reminds us how easily this can happen. In Judges 2, a new generation grew up who neither knew the Lord nor remembered what He had done. Distraction led to forgetfulness, and forgetfulness led to disobedience.

Discouragement can be just as damaging. Fear is the opposite of faith, and it can stop people from stepping into what God is calling them to. Yet God’s words to Joshua still echo today: *“Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go”* (Joshua 1:9).

Importantly, doubt is not the enemy of faith. Often, the path to a deeper, more resilient faith leads straight through doubt, and wrestling with questions can strengthen belief.

1. Have distraction or discouragement caused your faith to leak? What might help restore joy and confidence?
2. Does thinking about doubt and wrestling as a path to deeper faith encourage or challenge you? Why?

## A Vision for the Year Ahead

Firm Foundations. Fresh Faith. NewHope’s vision for the year focuses on being a church that is firmly grounded and continually renewed—rooted in history, yet alive with expectancy.

Through prayer, discernment and listening to God together, three clear priorities emerged for the coming year.



## **1. Seeking God's Presence in Prayer and Worship**

Read Matthew 7:7-8

Prayer has always undergirded the life of the church. From the early believers to today, renewal and revival have always begun with people seeking God's presence.

To foster fresh faith, NewHope will intentionally deepen its culture of prayer and worship through several key initiatives:

- A churchwide 21-day season of prayer and fasting.
- Four all-in prayer and worship gatherings across the year.
- A renewed emphasis on praying for one another, both in services and throughout midweek ministries—because prayer is not reserved for experts. Everyone gets to play.

## **2. Sharing the Good News of Jesus with Everyone Everywhere**

Read Matthew 9:35-38

There is a growing spiritual hunger in today's world as many search for something deeper. This presents an extraordinary opportunity for the church to speak with confidence, humility and love.

The gospel is good news—for everyone, everywhere. To support this, NewHope will focus on:

- Invitational Sundays, encouraging people to invite friends, family and colleagues to church.
- A focus on Alpha, including the exciting development of *"Alpha in the wild"* courses hosted in homes, cafes, workplaces and community spaces.
- A future teaching series on Encounters with Jesus, sharing stories of lives transformed by Christ.

## **3. Serving the Next Generation While Celebrating the Past**

Read Psalm 145:4

NewHope is deeply committed to raising and resourcing the next generation, while also honouring the faithfulness of those who came before. This focus will be expressed through:

- Leadership development gatherings, strengthening pathways for people of all ages to grow as leaders.
- Celebrating 20 years of the Chinese congregation, partnering together as generations and cultures shape the future of the church.



- A significant 75th anniversary celebration, marking God's faithfulness and telling stories that inspire the next generation to step forward in faith.

## Prayer & Response

The invitation is clear: it is time to get on the bike and move forward.

Invite group members to share one area where they are asking God for fresh faith. You may choose to:

- Pray for one another in pairs or as a whole group
- Sit in a short moment of silence, inviting God to speak
- Use this simple prayer together:

*God, thank You for the firm foundation we have in Jesus.*

*Where our faith has leaked, restore us.*

*Where we feel afraid or discouraged, give us courage.*

*Fill us with fresh faith for this season.*

*Set us apart and help us to live out the good news of Jesus.*

*Amen.*



## Week 2: Jesus

### Andrew Sercombe

15 February 2026

Visit the [NewHope Teaching](#) page to find this week's sermon

Sometimes we approach the Bible as if it were a rulebook with instructions for moral living or religious behaviour. But Scripture is more like a collection of love letters revealing God's relentless desire to restore relationship with humanity.

This week we reflect on the story of a God who promises, comes, dies, wins, and reigns. His invitation is to turn towards Him and live as children who know and are known by the King.

#### Read Acts 2:14-41

In the book of Acts, we see the early believers learning what it looks like to walk in 'the way'. They didn't have the Bible as we know it. The New Testament hasn't been written yet. They were living it out, devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching, and building their lives on the good news of Jesus.

After the Spirit of God falls at Pentecost, Peter stands up and shares this good news as someone with first-hand experience. Peter walked with Jesus. He heard His teaching. He witnessed His miracles. He was there through His life, death and resurrection.

Filled with the Holy Spirit, Peter preaches the gospel and tells the love story of the God who promises, comes, dies, wins, and reigns.

1. Do you tend to approach the Bible as an instructional book and experience faith as rule-keeping? What would it look like to see God's word more like a love letter calling you into relationship?

#### God Promises

Read Acts 2:29-32, also Genesis 3:8-15 and 12:1-3

From the earliest pages of Scripture, God's desire is relationship. Humanity was created to live in closeness with God, walking with Him, knowing Him, enjoying



friendship with Him. But that relationship fractured when humanity turned away. From that moment on, the story of Scripture becomes the story of restoration. Every step is part of a long unfolding promise: God will make a way to bring His people back to Himself. This ancient promise, woven through the Old Testament, finds its ultimate fulfillment in the person of Jesus Christ.

1. God desires relationship with you. Where have you seen this pursuit in your own life?

## God Comes

Read Acts 2:22, also John 1:14 and Philippians 2:5-11

God comes to us. This is one of the most radical claims of Christianity: God does not remain distant. He enters human experience. He lives among ordinary people. He heals, teaches, restores and loves.

If you want to know what God is like, look at Jesus. He welcomes the outcast. He touches the untouchable. He sees the overlooked. The incarnation reveals the nature of divine love—humble, sacrificial and personal.

1. What stands out to you about God becoming human?
2. When you reflect on Jesus' life, what specific quality of His character inspires you most to live out God's love in your own daily interactions?

## God Dies

Read Acts 2:23, also Isaiah 53:3-6 and Romans 5:6-11

Peter is direct: humanity killed the Messiah. The one who embodies divine love is rejected and crucified. This is not simply about a historical event. It's about the human condition. Jesus dies because of human rebellion and self-righteousness. Our tendency to turn from God and our attempts to justify ourselves without Him. Both impulses exist in every human heart.

Turning away from God produces shame, a universal experience that is part of being human. We feel not enough. We feel exposed. We feel unworthy. But rebellion isn't the only problem. Moral self-reliance can be just as binding when we try to prove our own worth. Modern culture often reinforces this pressure: create yourself, define yourself, perfect yourself. But self-creation is exhausting. Trying to be your own saviour is heavy work and ultimately fruitless. Personal growth and self-construction cannot save us.



Jesus died to free humanity from both shame *and* striving. His death is an act of reconciliation, restoring the relationship that humanity could never repair on its own.

1. How do you personally relate to the ideas of shame or striving? Why is it difficult for people to accept grace rather than earn approval?
2. What does the cross reveal about the seriousness of sin and the depth of God's love?

## God Wins

Read Acts 2:24, also Luke 24:1-12 and 1 Corinthians 15:12-22

The story does not end with death. Jesus rises.

This is the turning point of Christian faith. Without the resurrection, Jesus may be remembered as a moral teacher or tragic hero. But the resurrection declares something far greater: death itself has been defeated.

Peter and the other disciples claim they witnessed the risen Christ. They saw him, spoke with him, touched him. Their testimony reshaped their lives, and eventually the world. The resurrection is not a symbolic hope, but a historical reality. It confirms that everything Jesus said is trustworthy. It reveals that sin and death do not have the final word. Life eternal, restored, and abundant is now possible. God wins.

1. The resurrection makes hope a present power, not just a future wish. How does knowing that Jesus rose from the dead impact your current struggles or fears? What specific hope does the resurrection offer you in your daily life right now?

## God Reigns

Read Acts 2:33-39

The final chapter is not just about what happened then, but what happens now. After Jesus rises, the Holy Spirit is poured out on believers. God's presence no longer rests in a temple or sacred place alone, but within people. This means faith is a lived relationship.

Just as love between two people is known through shared life, so God's love is experienced through ongoing connection. You are invited to know God, not just know about him. You are invited to encounter His presence, guidance and power in daily life, and to live in freedom as a child of the King.



1. What does it mean to experience God rather than simply know about him? What difference does it make to see yourself as a child of God?
2. How do repentance and faith function as ongoing practices, not one-time events?

## The Invitation: Turn and Trust

Peter's listeners respond with a question that still echoes today: *What should we do?* His answer is simple—repent and believe.

Repentance simply means turning around and changing direction. Turning from self-rule and turning toward God. It is a movement of trust, surrendering control and receiving grace.

This turning is not a one-time event but an ongoing posture as we daily return to relationship. So, what does it look like for you to "turn around" from a specific area of self-reliance or rebellion this week, and actively "turn toward" God in faith?

## Optional activity for the week

As you commit to regular Scripture reading and prayer of surrender ("thank you, sorry, please"), you may like to meditate on one movement of the gospel each day:

Monday — God promises

Tuesday — God comes

Wednesday — God dies

Thursday — God wins

Friday — God reigns

## Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank you for your great love, a love that seeks and saves. Thank you for your promises, fulfilled in Jesus, and for the new life we have through Him. Help us to turn toward you each day with open hearts. Free us from shame, release us from striving, and teach us to live as your beloved children. Fill us anew with your Spirit, and guide us to walk in faith, hope and love this week. In Jesus' name, Amen.



## Week 3: Prayer

### Andrew Sercombe

22 February 2026

Visit the [NewHope Teaching](#) page to find this week's sermon

What does it really mean to pray? At its simplest, prayer is communication—talking and listening in relationship with the living God. Just as every healthy relationship depends on conversation, so too does a relationship with God. Without communication, connection fades. With it, relationship grows.

This week we reflect on prayer not just as a religious practice, but as a relational lifeline that flows from recognising our deep need for God and choosing to live in ongoing relationship with Him.

### Read Luke 11:1-13

We have been invited into relationship with the God of the universe. This relationship, like any other, is nurtured through communication. Prayer isn't about special words, formulas or performance. It's simply talking to God honestly, openly, and personally. God invites us to come as we are.

Yet while prayer is simple, maintaining a consistent prayer life is not easy. Like any meaningful relationship, it requires time, attention and intentionality. But most of all, prayer is about our desperate need for God.

1. How would you describe your current relationship with prayer?
2. What do you find most difficult about prayer? Why?

### Desperation

#### Luke 11:5-8

Jesus tells a story about a man who receives an unexpected guest late at night. In that culture, hospitality was an honour-bound responsibility. Failing to provide food would bring shame. With nothing to offer, the man goes to a neighbour's house and bangs on the door for help. Persistently. Boldly. Shamelessly. Until he gets what he needs.



Desperation pushes people to seek help beyond themselves. This is why we pray. Because we are in desperate need. And yet, many people don't feel desperate. Comfort, convenience and distraction create the illusion of control. When life feels manageable, prayer feels optional. But human need hasn't disappeared, it's just been hidden beneath busyness and distraction. We need to recover our sense of need through revelation.

1. When do you find yourself most likely to pray – in crisis, in routine, or somewhere in between? Why?
2. In what ways does modern life make it harder to feel dependent on God?

## Revelation

### Proverbs 29:18

Revelation means an unveiling. To see reality clearly. When God reveals the truth about our lives, our hearts, or our world, we begin to recognise our limits. We see brokenness, pain, and need, both personal and global. We realise we are not in control.

This awakening often leads to desperation, not a despairing desperation, but a humble recognition of dependence. Revelation opens our eyes to the need around us, and moves us to pray. But desperation alone cannot sustain a life of prayer. We also need devotion.

1. When have you experienced a moment that made you deeply aware of your need for God?

## Devotion

### Luke 11:1-4

Desperation sparks prayer, but devotion sustains it. Just as people make New Year's resolutions after holiday indulgence, many people make spiritual commitments in moments of urgency. But without ongoing commitment, those decisions fade. Desperation without devotion leads to disappointment.

So, what does devotion look like? Regular, intentional practice. It means forming rhythms that nurture connection with God even when urgency fades. Jesus assumes His followers will live this way. In teaching His disciples to pray, He doesn't say *if* you pray, but *when* you pray. He provides a pattern, not merely words to repeat, but a framework for relational engagement with God.



And importantly, prayer is also corporate: “give **us** our daily bread,” “forgive **us** our sins.” Prayer is not only personal, it is communal. It draws individuals into shared dependence on God that leads to connection.

1. If you imagined a daily “prayer chair” moment, what would it look like for you?

## Connection

### Read Luke 11:11-13

The entire movement of prayer, from revelation to desperation to devotion, leads to one ultimate outcome: connection with God.

Jesus reveals God not as distant or reluctant, but as a loving Father. And we are invited to approach with trust and childlike openness. No loving parent substitutes harm for help. How much more, then, will God give good things to His children?

And what is the greatest gift of all? Not wealth. Not success. Not comfort. The Holy Spirit. God’s own presence. The deepest answer to prayer is not simply provision, it is presence. God gives Himself.

1. If God’s greatest gift is His presence, how might that reshape what you ask for in prayer?
2. What step of growth is God inviting you into right now — revelation, desperation, devotion, or connection?

## Prayer Response Activity

***How desperate are we for God?*** Because the greatest gift we can receive now and for eternity is life lived in connection with Him. Spend time praying as a group as you consider this question personally and corporately. You may like to choose one of the following activities:

### **Surrender Prayer**

Invite members to silently name areas where they feel in control or resistant to dependence on God. Pray together, surrendering those areas.

### **Desperation for God’s Presence**

Read Luke 11:13 again. Invite the group to simply ask for more of God’s presence.



### **Intercession for Community**

Pray for specific needs in your neighbourhood, church, and city. Ask God to bring renewal, healing and awakening.

### Closing Prayer

Gracious Father, thank you that you invite us into relationship with you. Thank you for the gift of prayer. Open our eyes to recognise our dependence on you. Stir in us a deeper hunger for your presence. Help us grow in faithful devotion and shape our hearts to seek you first, trust you fully, and love others deeply. We ask for more of your presence, more of your grace, and more of your transforming power among us. In Jesus' name,  
Amen.



## Week 4: Community

### Sally Agostino

1 March 2026

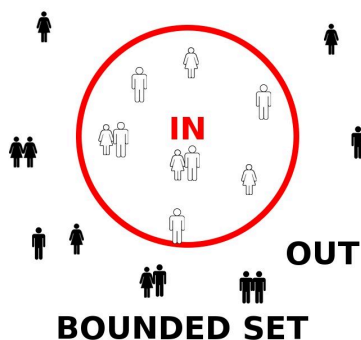
Visit the [NewHope Teaching](#) page to find this week's sermon

The early church in Acts was marked by a profound commitment to learning and living together. They were devoted to understanding the ways of Jesus and to sharing life in deep, meaningful community. This is not a rigid blueprint for church structure. Instead, it offers something more valuable: essential ingredients that characterise a thriving Christian community. Their shared journey of faith is not just an example for us, but a call to consider the depth of our own commitment to knowing Christ and to truly knowing one another.

This week we reflect on what it looks like to be a community orientated towards Christ at our centre, committed to walking together and called to living wide and deep for the sake of the world.

### Read Acts 2:42-47

Paul Helbert, a missiologist who grew up in northern India among missionary communities, describes two models for understanding community.



#### The Bounded Set

A bounded set defines who is “in” and who is “out” by drawing clear boundaries. These might be formal or informal, spoken or unspoken. They may be unintended, but every community develops norms—ways of speaking, behaving, and belonging that subtly signal who fits and who does not.

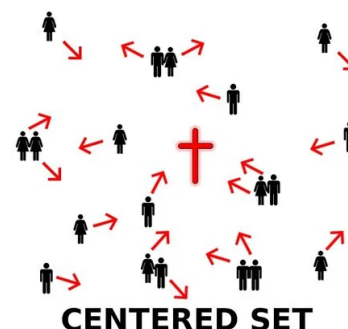
This raises a confronting question: what unwritten boundaries are a part of our church community today?

#### The Centred Set

Instead of focusing on boundaries, the centred set model focuses on direction. The question is not “Are you inside or outside?” but “Which way is your life moving?” Is a person turning toward Christ? Is the trajectory of their life oriented toward Him?



This approach recognises that no one has “arrived.” Everyone is somewhere on a journey. As the book of Acts unfolds, it becomes clear that they wrestled with conflict, misunderstanding, and growing pains. What matters is not perfection, but direction. They were a community moving towards Jesus at their centre. We are called to be the same.



1. What “unwritten boundaries” might exist in your church or social circles that subtly determine who belongs? Who are the people or kinds of people you find hardest to welcome fully and how might God be inviting you to reconsider?
2. As you consider the “arrow” of your own heart, in which area of your life do you sense a gentle invitation from God to turn more fully toward Jesus?

## Read Matthew 9:9-13

The centred set model reflects how Jesus gathers His people. He called those from vastly different backgrounds—including Matthew, a tax collector aligned with Roman power, and Simon, a zealot ready to resist Rome by force. They were opposites in worldview and temperament, yet both were welcomed because both were willing to follow Jesus.

A centred community makes room for curiosity, doubt, exploration, and growth. It welcomes people not because they meet a standard, but because they are drawn toward Christ. That is what it means to be wide.

However, openness alone does not sustain a community. The early church was not only wide, it was also profoundly deep. Acts describes believers who were devoted. They shared resources, homes, and daily rhythms centred on Christ.

This was not a club built around shared preferences. It was a Kingdom community built around shared transformation. A club asks, “Do I enjoy this? Does this serve me?” But a Kingdom community asks, “How do we live faithfully together?”

1. Think about the people Jesus welcomed. What stands out to you about who he included?
2. How does deep community shape spiritual growth in ways individual faith cannot? What is one step you could take to become more deeply connected in Christian community?



## Read Acts 2:44-45 and Romans 12:2

Walter Brueggemann speaks of the church as embodying a “prophetic imagination.” This means offering the world a living picture of how life could be different. It is a contrast to “royal consciousness”, the mindset that accepts inequality, normalises injustice, and assumes the world cannot change. The church is called to stand as an alternative.

Where culture says accumulate, the church practices generosity.  
Where society promotes isolation, the church embodies belonging.  
Where systems numb people to suffering, the church remains awake to both pain and hope.

Christian community lives between what God created and what God is restoring. It stands in the gap, embodying glimpses of what is coming and the conviction that the present order is not the final word.

1. Where do you see signs of “royal consciousness” in the world around you, such as normalised injustice or resignation to the way things are?
2. How could Christian community offer a visible alternative in those areas?

## Optional Reflection Activity

Fresh faith is not about starting something entirely new. It is about rediscovering what has always been at the heart of Christian life—people turning toward Christ together, sharing life deeply, and welcoming others into the journey. This kind of community does not appear accidentally. It requires attention both to the centre and the edges.

Those who feel on the margins are invited inward—to explore, question, participate. Those who feel firmly planted are invited outward—to notice, welcome, and make space.

Both movements reflect the heart of Christ. Sometimes discipleship means stepping deeper into community. Other times it means helping someone else take their first step in.

Invite group members to sit quietly for a minute and consider:

- Is God inviting me to become more wide: more open, welcoming, or attentive to others?



- Is God inviting me to become more deep: more committed, engaged, or rooted in shared faith?

Encourage participants to write down one personal response.

## Closing Prayer

Gracious God, thank you for the gift of community and for the ways you draw us toward one another as we follow you. Shape us to be people who are open in love, deep in faith, and centred on Christ in all we do. Help us to welcome those on the edges, care well for one another, and live as a witness of your hope in the world. In Jesus' name, Amen.



## Week 5: Mission

### Andrew Sercombe

8 March 2026

Visit the [NewHope Teaching](#) page to find this week's sermon

If there is one thing that defines modern life, it might be the endless stream of news. It's everywhere. On our phones. On our televisions. In our social feeds. Headlines roll in around the clock, and most of them share a common theme: crisis, conflict and catastrophe. News today is not just information; it's an industry. It's monetised, amplified, and often shaped to capture attention by triggering fear.

But behind all of that noise lies a deeper human reality: people are longing for good news.

This week we reflect on God's loving pursuit of the lost, and our call to stand as faithful ambassadors sharing the good news of Jesus everywhere we go.

### Read 2 Corinthians 5:14-21

At the centre of the Christian faith is the message of reconciliation. Humanity was separated from God because of sin, yet God did not abandon His creation. Instead, He acted through Jesus to restore that relationship.

Paul describes it as becoming a *new creation*. Our past does not define us anymore. Our guilt and brokenness are not the final word over our lives. Through Jesus' death and resurrection, we are forgiven, restored, and welcomed into relationship with God.

This is good news in a bad news world, and it changes everything!

Instead of living with fear or uncertainty, we live with the confidence that God has already acted to bring us back to Himself and our future is secure in Him.

1. Where do you usually get your news from, and how does it affect your outlook on the world?
2. Why do you think negative news seems to attract more attention than good news?
3. What does the phrase "new creation" mean to you personally?



## Read Luke 15:3-7

The good news of Jesus is not reserved for a select group of people. Paul emphasised that Christ died for *all* and the invitation of reconciliation is extended to everyone (2 Corinthians 5:14-15).

Jesus illustrated this truth through stories. In Luke 15, He told three parables about lost things: a lost coin, a lost son and a lost sheep.

In the parable of the lost sheep, a shepherd leaves ninety-nine sheep to search for the one that has wandered away. The parable shows something remarkable about God's heart: every individual matters deeply to Him.

God is not distant or indifferent. He actively seeks those who are lost. And we are called to align our heart with His. The early Christians understood this. Their compassion for the poor, the sick, and the outcast became one of the most powerful witnesses to the reality of their faith. And today, the church continues that mission.

1. The parable of the lost sheep is a well known and loved story from Jesus. What stood out to you as you read it again today?
2. Why do you think Jesus emphasised the value of "the one"?

## Read 2 Corinthians 5:19b-20

God has entrusted believers with the *ministry of reconciliation*. Those who have experienced God's grace are invited to share it with others.

Paul uses the language of diplomacy to describe this role. We are *ambassadors for Christ*, and just as an ambassador represents their country in a foreign land, followers of Jesus represent God's Kingdom in the world.

This calling doesn't require extraordinary qualifications. It's not reserved only for pastors or church leaders. It belongs to every believer. Sometimes people feel hesitant about sharing their faith because they think they lack knowledge or confidence. Yet the early disciples were described as "unschooled, ordinary men." Their confidence did not come from education or status. It came from their relationship with Christ. What made the difference in their lives was simple: they had been with Jesus.

Being an ambassador for Christ begins with faithful presence. It means "being with" Jesus and living out of that relationship with integrity, compassion and humility. It means showing kindness to people, listening to their stories and offering hope.



Faithful presence creates the space for trust, and this is often how the Kingdom of God becomes visible, through everyday words and deeds that shine the love of Christ.

1. What does it look like to be an ambassador for Christ in your everyday life?
2. What might it look like to share the gospel with gentleness and respect?

## Read 1 Peter 3:15

The apostle Peter encouraged believers to always be ready to explain their faith, but to do so with gentleness and respect. One practical way this happens today is through prayer.

Many people who would hesitate to attend church or discuss theology are surprisingly open when someone offers to pray for them. A simple question—“Can I pray for you?”—can open the door to meaningful conversations and allow God to work in powerful ways. Research even suggests that a large percentage of people would attend church if a friend personally invited them. Often, the barrier is not opposition but the absence of invitation.

1. How comfortable do you feel sharing your faith with others? What might help you grow in confidence?
2. What simple step could you take this week to show the love and hope of Jesus to someone else?

## Closing Reflection

Who is the “one” person God may be placing on your heart right now?

It might be a friend, a family member, a neighbour, a colleague, someone who seems so distant from faith that it would take a miracle to soften their heart.

Encourage everyone to write down the name of one person they feel prompted to pray for. Then invite the group to call out to God. You may like to commit to praying for your person every day this week, or swap names and pray for each other’s person. Ask the Holy Spirit to open opportunities to demonstrate God’s love. And continue to encourage one another as you meet.

God is still seeking the one. And He invites His people to join Him in that work.



## Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, Thank you for the incredible good news of Jesus. Thank you that when we were far from you, you pursued us with love and made a way for us to be reconciled through Christ. Thank you that in Him we are made new—the old has gone and new life has begun.

Lord, in a world that often feels full of bad news, fear and uncertainty, help us to live as people of hope. Remind us that our lives are held in your hands and that our future is secure in you. Fill our hearts with your compassion and help us to see people the way you see them.

Holy Spirit, empower us to be faithful ambassadors of Jesus in our everyday lives. Give us courage to speak when the opportunity comes, wisdom to listen well, and humility to serve others with grace. Help us to live in such a way that people see your light shining through us. May we faithfully carry your good news wherever you send us.

In the name of Jesus we pray,  
Amen.



## Week 6: Worship

### Andrew Sercombe

15 March 2026

Visit the [NewHope Teaching](#) page to find this week's sermon

Church music has changed dramatically over the years. From the days of hymn books and organs, to guitar-led worship and clap-along choruses, to full bands and contemporary anthems. Yet through all the stylistic changes, one thing has remained constant: the people of God continue to praise. Because praise matters.

This week we explore the practice of praise and reflect on the invitation to **public** and **personal** worship that reveals God's **perspective** and His **presence**.

### Praise is Public

Read Acts 2:42-47 and Ephesians 5:18-20

Praise is something we do together. There is something powerful about singing with others. Even modern science supports this idea. Research shows that group singing improves emotional wellbeing, strengthens social bonds, and releases chemicals in the brain associated with happiness and connection. But beyond the scientific benefits, there is something spiritually profound about shared worship.

When believers sing together, they declare truth collectively and remind each other of God's goodness. This is why gathering matters. In an age where faith can easily become private and individualised, the Bible reminds us that worship is meant to be shared.

When we sing together, we join a much larger story, the story of God's people across generations and around the world.

1. What role has music or singing played in your own faith journey? Are there particular songs that have shaped your understanding of God?
2. Why do you think singing together is such a powerful experience? How does it differ from listening to worship music alone?
3. Paul reminds us in Ephesians that praise is trinitarian—it is directed to **the Father**, offered **through Jesus Christ**, and empowered by **the Holy Spirit**. How does this theological lens encourage you?



## Praise is Personal

### Read Psalm 103:1-5 and Romans 1:21-25

While praise is something we do together, it is also deeply personal. Paul writes in Ephesians that believers should “make music from your heart to the Lord” and Psalm 103 speaks of praising from our “inmost being”.

Worship is not about performance or musical ability. It flows from the heart and the soul.

Every person brings their own story, experiences and emotions into worship. Joy, grief, gratitude, confusion, everything we carry can be brought before God because praise is one of the ways we draw near and allow His Spirit to reorient us.

Every human being worships something. Whether we realise it or not, we all direct our affection toward something we believe will give life meaning or fulfilment — success, relationships, comfort, security or achievement. But Scripture reminds us that when our worship becomes centred on created things instead of the Creator, our hearts become misaligned.

True worship re-centres our love on God. And when our focus changes, our lives follow.

1. Why do you think humans naturally give their devotion to something?
2. What are some things people commonly “worship” instead of God?

## Praise Reveals God’s Perspective

### Read Acts 16:22-25 and Psalm 13:1-6

Human beings long for transcendence. Deep down, we desire something bigger than ourselves. Yet modern Western culture often limits life to what philosopher Charles Taylor calls the “immanent frame”—a view of the world that excludes the supernatural.

When transcendence disappears, people often feel a sense of emptiness, but praise reconnects us to the power and greatness of the sovereign God.

This is the God who Paul and Silas worshipped while in chains. Beaten and imprisoned, they chose to pray and sing rather than complain and despair. Their circumstances had not changed, but their perspective had. They trusted that God was still in control and they lifted a song of praise for all to hear.



Life often brings seasons of uncertainty, pain, or disappointment. In those moments, our perspective can easily become clouded by fear, frustration, or discouragement. Praise does not deny these struggles, it reframes them. It allows us to bring our questions and laments honestly before God, to be reminded of the hope we have in Him and strengthened by His presence.

1. Have you experienced a time when worship helped shift your perspective during a hard season?
2. Are there current areas of your life where lament is needed? How can you bring this before God in worship with both honesty and trust?

## Praise Reveals God's Presence

### Read Psalm 22:1-5 and Revelation 5:11-13

Through the gift of Jesus, we can experience God's presence anywhere and at any time. Yet praise has a unique way of helping us become more aware of that presence. As C. S. Lewis once wrote: "It is in the process of being worshipped that God communicates His presence."

When we focus our hearts and minds on God—declaring His goodness and His greatness—we often begin to sense His nearness in fresh ways. Sometimes this awareness feels tangible and powerful. At other times it is quiet and subtle. But through praise, our hearts become more open to the work of the Holy Spirit.

Worship also reminds us that we are part of something eternal. The book of Revelation gives us a glimpse of heaven where countless voices declare the worthiness of Jesus. When Christians gather to praise God today, they are participating in that same eternal reality.

Praise reminds us of the future that awaits us, a day when there will be no more suffering, no more tears, and no more pain. Until then, praise reveals God's presence now and reminds us of the hope that is still to come.

1. How does the vision of heavenly worship in Revelation shape your understanding of praise today?
2. How do you approach Sunday worship? Do you come expectant? Do you participate wholeheartedly? What might be holding you back?



## Close with Praise

Spend some time practicing praise together. You might choose to:

- Read Psalm 150 aloud as a group
- Play a worship song and sing together
- Share brief prayers of thanksgiving

## Prayer

Lord, thank you that you are worthy of our praise in every season. Help us to lift our eyes to you, to trust you in the midst of our circumstances, and to become more aware of your presence in our lives. Shape our hearts so that our worship reflects our love for you. Amen.



## Week 7: Generosity

### Andrew Sercombe

22 March 2026

Visit the [NewHope Teaching](#) page to find this week's sermon

What does it really mean to live generously? Too often, generosity can be reduced to occasional giving. Perhaps a donation here or there, or helping someone in a moment of need. But the picture painted in the early church is something far richer, deeper, and more transformative. It's not just about giving, it's about a way of life.

This week we explore the kind of radical generosity that shaped the early church and ask what it would look like for the church today to live the same way?

Read Acts 2:42-47, Acts 4:32-35 and Matthew 10:8

These passages paint a powerful picture of shared life in the early church. Community wasn't just about meeting together, it was about living deeply interconnected, generous lives. They shared possessions, supported one another, and ensured no one was in need.

This kind of radical generosity wasn't forced or imposed, it was chosen. It flowed naturally from their unity—being “one in heart and mind”—and from their shared experience of God's grace.

Jesus' life is the ultimate expression of generosity. He gave everything—freely, sacrificially, and for all. When we truly grasp the depth of God's grace, it reshapes our hearts and our response, so that giving becomes a natural overflow rather than a reluctant duty.

1. When you think about “community”, what does that look like for you? Where have you experienced genuine belonging?
2. In what ways does the early church's example of generosity challenge your current lifestyle?



## Read Acts 6:1-7 and Galatians 3:28

A problem arises in Acts 6. Some of the widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. Rather than ignoring the issue, the church responded with intentional action to ensure fairness and inclusion.

In a world marked by division, the early church embodied a new way of living, one where every person was valued and cared for. Distinctions like Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male or female were no longer barriers to belonging. This was radically countercultural then, and it still is today.

Generosity is not selective. It does not favour certain groups over others. The gospel breaks down barriers and calls believers to the kind of generosity that extends across cultural, social, and economic lines. Even in a city like Melbourne, there are people facing homelessness, isolation, and hardship. There are newcomers searching for belonging, families under pressure, and individuals longing to be seen.

The call to radical generosity hasn't changed. And when the church lives this way together, it doesn't just meet needs, it transforms society.

1. Who in your world might be feeling unseen or disconnected? How could you show them generosity this week?

## Read Matthew 6:19-24 and Luke 20:20-26

Money is often one of the most challenging areas when it comes to generosity. Jesus speaks directly to this, warning that we cannot serve both God and money. It's not that money is inherently bad, it's that it can easily take hold of our hearts.

The key shift is from ownership to stewardship. Everything we have is ultimately God's. Our time, abilities, finances, and possessions are entrusted to us, not owned by us. When we live with this mindset, it frees us from fear and opens the door to generosity.

1. Why do you think Jesus spoke so often about money?
2. What does it mean, practically, to see yourself as a steward rather than an owner?
3. What might it look like for you to live more open-handedly with your time, resources, or relationships?



## Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-8 and Acts 20:35

Generosity is not just a command, it's an invitation into joy.

Paul writes that God loves a “cheerful giver,” highlighting the heart behind the action. Generosity, when rooted in grace, becomes life-giving. It leads to freedom from anxiety, control, and the constant need for more. And it leads to joy, the kind that comes from participating in God's work and blessing others.

This is the paradox of the Kingdom: in giving, we receive.

1. Have you experienced joy through generosity? What was that like?
2. What fears or pressures might hold people back from being generous?

## Closing Reflection

Ask everyone to hold their hands open in front of them as a symbolic act of surrender and trust. Spend a moment in silence, reflecting on the questions below and inviting God to take any burdens and replace them with freedom and joy.

- Is there a specific way God is prompting you to live more generously?
- Is there something you need to release or trust God with?

## Prayer

Gracious God, Thank you for your incredible generosity towards us. Thank you that you have given your love, your grace, your presence, and your Son. Everything we have comes from you.

Please shape our hearts to be more like yours. Help us to be people who live open-handedly, generous with our time, our resources, our encouragement, and our love. Where we have held on tightly out of fear or uncertainty, would you gently teach us to trust you more. Where we feel burdened or weighed down, would you bring freedom and lightness. And where we feel stirred, give us courage to respond.

Holy Spirit, lead us in the way of generosity. Open our eyes to the needs around us and help us to respond with compassion and kindness.

We offer ourselves again to you. Everything we are and everything we have. Use us for your purposes. In Jesus' name, Amen.