

For God & Nation?

Christian Witness in a Politically Polarized Society

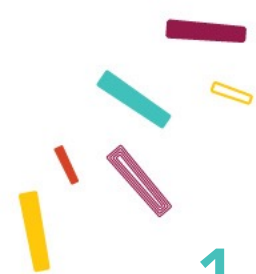
Context



Political tension since at least 12th Century

Irish Republic formed 1922

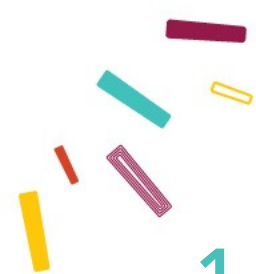
Sporadic Civil conflict in NI: especially 1968-1998



Dynamics of Polarisation

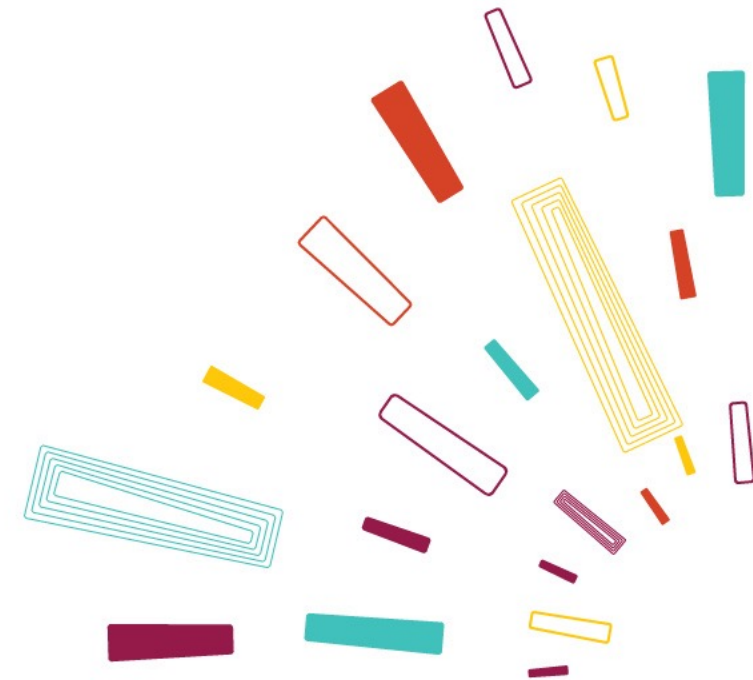
1. Political & Cultural Idolatry





Dynamics of Polarisation

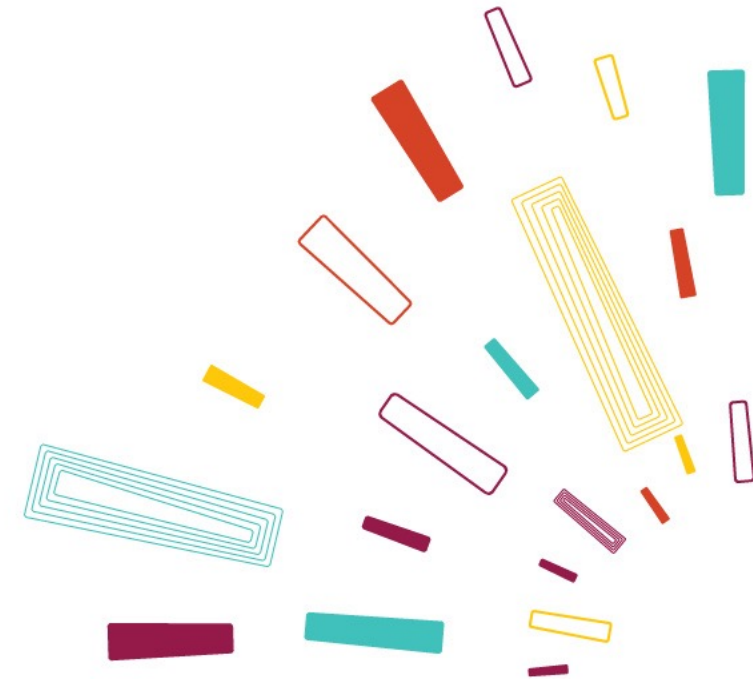
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Dynamics of Polarisation

1. Political & Cultural Idolatry
2. Us v Them
3. Triumphalism



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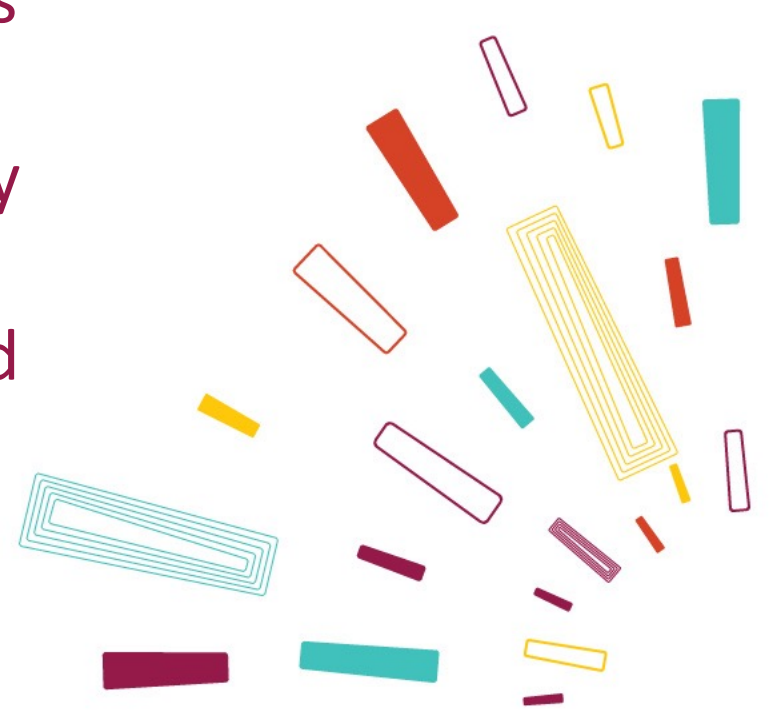


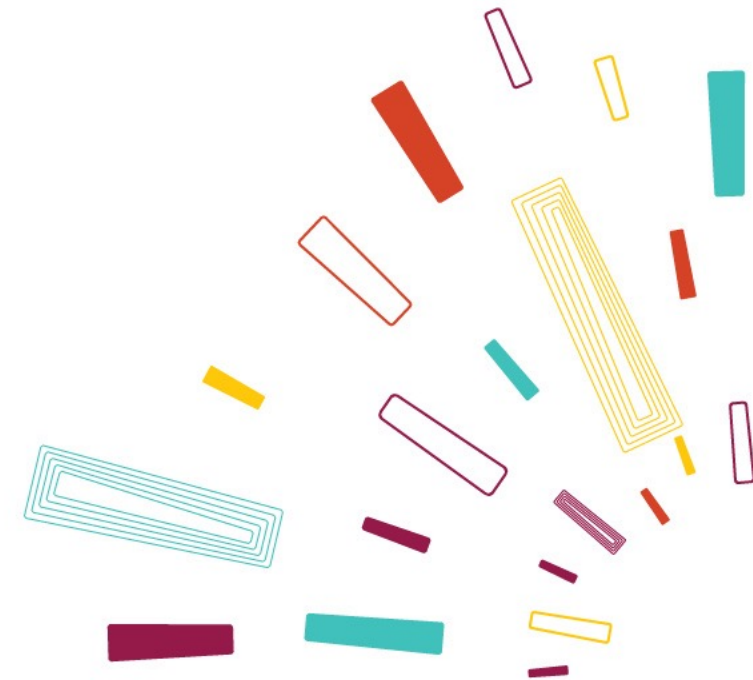


Luke 9

⁵¹ As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. ⁵² And he sent messengers on ahead, who went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him; ⁵³ but the people there did not welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem.

⁵⁴ When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, “Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them^[b]?” ⁵⁵ But Jesus turned and rebuked them. ⁵⁶ Then he and his disciples went to another village.







Deuteronomy 24

17 Do not deprive the foreigner or the fatherless of justice, or take the cloak of the widow as a pledge.

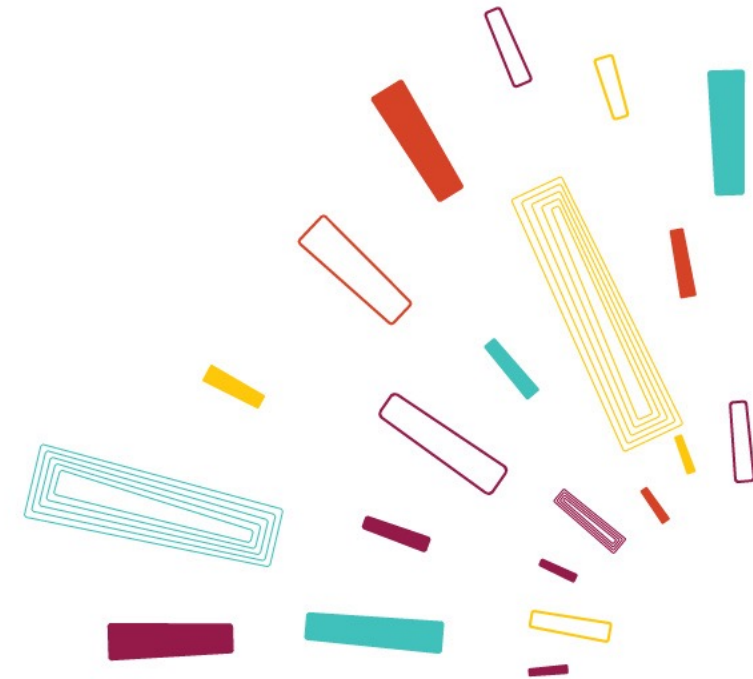
18 Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and the Lord your God redeemed you from there. That is why I command you to do this.





Dynamics of Polarisation

1. Political & Cultural Idolatry
2. Us v Them
3. Triumphalism
4. Selectivity






Luke 13

Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. **2** Jesus answered, “Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? **3** I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.

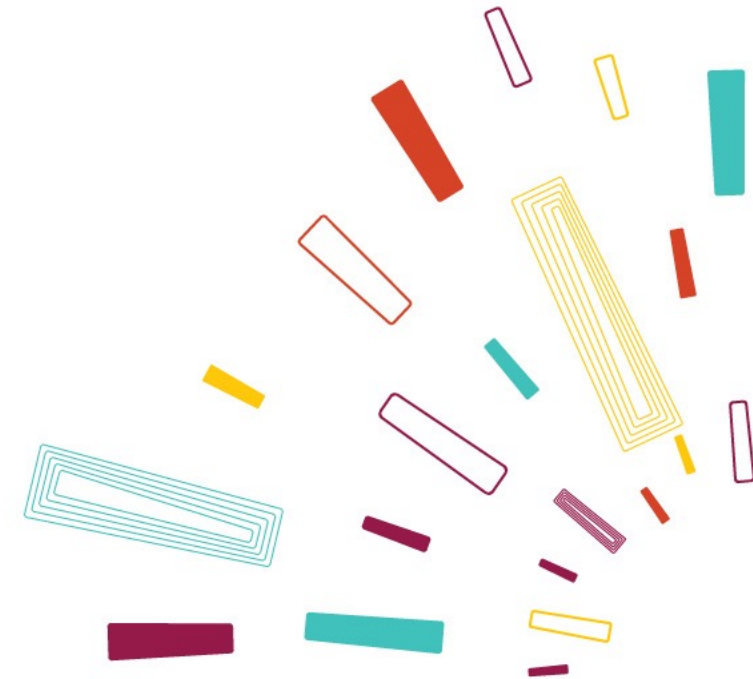
4 Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them—do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? **5** I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.”



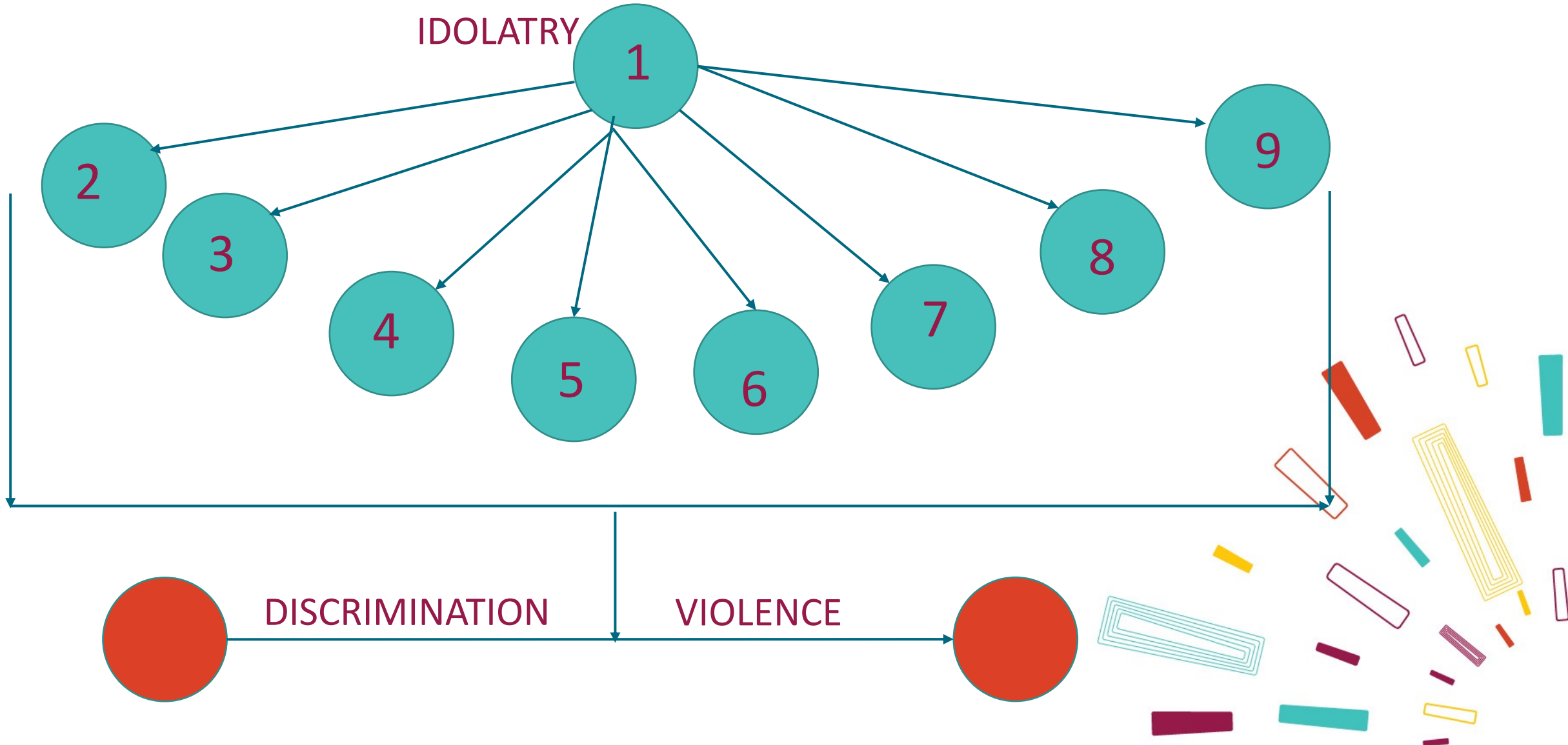


Dynamics of Polarisation

1. Political & Cultural Idolatry
2. Us v Them
3. Triumphalism
4. Selectivity
5. Denial
6. Scapegoating
7. Ignorance
8. Misrepresentation
9. Distrust



Dynamics of Polarisation





Scripture

1. A God who does not take sides (Joshua 5)

13 Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, “Are you for us or for our enemies?”

14 “**Neither**,” he replied, “but as commander of the army of the Lord I have now come.” Then Joshua fell facedown to the ground in reverence, and asked him, “What message does my Lord have for his servant?”

15 The commander of the Lord’s army replied, “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy.” And Joshua did so.



2. The God who has a heart for the nations: (Gen.10; Acts 2)

A World Restored

GENESIS 10

- Magog (v2) = **Lydia**
- Madai (v2) = **Medes**
- Meshech (v2) = **Phrygia**
- **Egypt** (v6)
- Put (v6) = **Libya**
- Caphtor (v13) = **Crete**
- **Elam** (v22) = **Mesopotamia**
- Joktan (26-30) = **Arabia**

ACTS 2

“how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? ⁹, **Medes** and **Elamites**; residents of **Mesopotamia**, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ **Phrygia** and Pamphylia, **Egypt** and the parts of **Libya** near Cyrene; visitors from Rome ¹¹ (both Jews and converts to Judaism); **Cretans** and **Arabs**—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!



2. The God who has a heart for the nations: (Gen.10; Acts 2)

A World Restored

- Seba (v7) = **Ethiopia** - Philip, Acts 8
- Dodanim (v4) = **Roman** centurion - Peter, Acts 10
- Kittim (v4) = **Cyprus**, Barnabas, Acts 11-15
- Rodanites (v4) = **Rhodes**, Paul, Acts 21
- Ashkenaz (v3) = **Scythians**, Colossians 3:20

Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, **Scythian**, slave or free, **but Christ is all, and is in all.**





Scripture

1. The God who doesn't take sides (Joshua 5; Acts 10)
2. The God who has a heart for the nations: (Gen.10; Acts 2)
3. We are never called to defend a culture (Amos 5:21)
4. Fear the Lord alone (Is.8)





Fear the Lord Alone

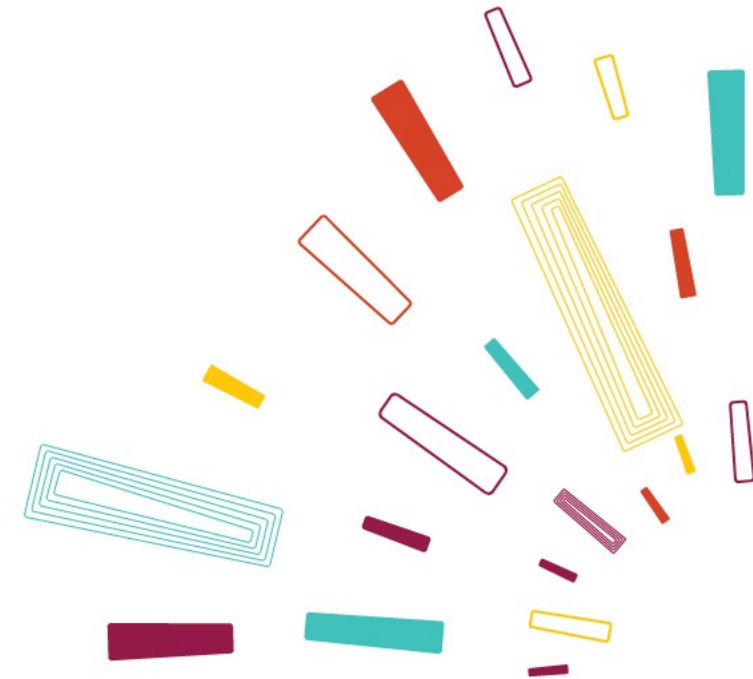
¹¹Then I made love to the prophetess, and she conceived and gave birth to a son. And the Lord said to me, “Name him Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz.....

.....This is what the Lord says to me with his strong hand upon me, warning me not to follow the way of this people:

¹² “Do not call conspiracy
everything this people calls a conspiracy;
do not fear what they fear,
and do not dread it.

¹³ The Lord Almighty is the one you are to regard as holy,
he is the one you are to fear,
he is the one you are to dread.

¹⁴ He will be a holy place;
for both Israel and Judah






Scripture

1. The God who has a heart for the nations: (Gen.10; Acts 2)
2. The God who doesn't take sides (Joshua 5; Acts 10)
3. We are never called to defend a culture (Amos 5:21)
4. Fear the Lord alone (Is.8)
5. Pray for "the other side" (Jer.29)

Seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper." **8** Yes, this is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: "Do not let the prophets and diviners among you deceive you. Do not listen to the dreams you encourage them to have. **9** They are prophesying lies to you in my name. I have not sent them," declares the Lord.





Hosea's children *(Hosea 1:1 - 2:1)*



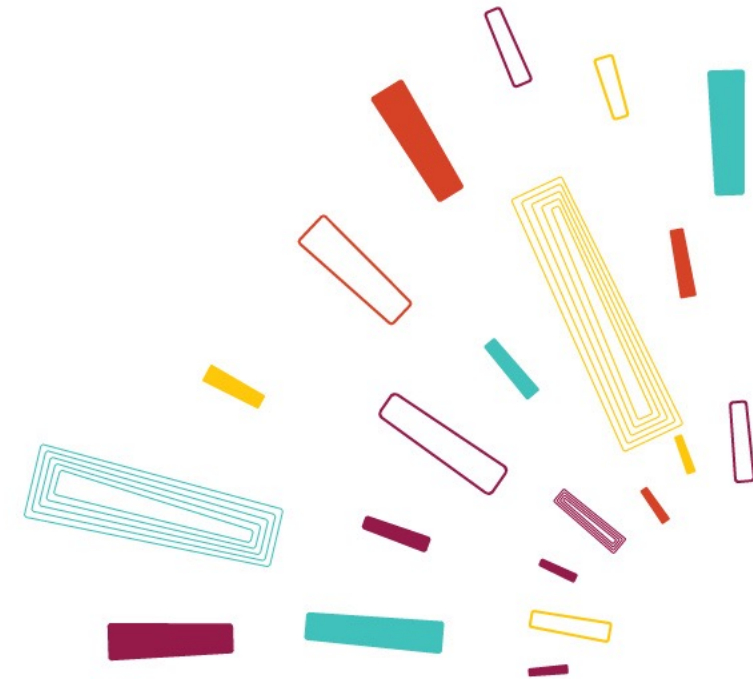
JEZREEL;
the child of
conflict

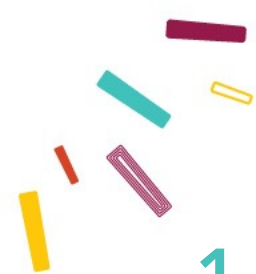


LO-RUHAMA;
the child of
separation



LO-AMMI;
the child of
divorce





Hosea's children



1. Context: Prosperity, Tokenism & Judgement






Hosea's children

1. Context: Prosperity, Tokenism & Judgement

1 The word of the Lord that came to Hosea son of Beeri during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and during the reign of Jeroboam son of Jehoash[a] king of Israel:

2 When the Lord began to speak through Hosea, the Lord said to him, “Go, marry a promiscuous woman and have children with her, for like an adulterous wife this land is guilty of unfaithfulness to the Lord.” 3 So he married Gomer daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son.





Hosea's children

1. Context: Prosperity, Tokenism & Judgement
2. Jezreel: God's help in the past does not guarantee God's pleasure in the present

4 Then the Lord said to Hosea, "Call him Jezreel, because I will soon punish the house of Jehu for the massacre at Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of Israel.

5 In that day I will break Israel's bow in the Valley of Jezreel."





Hosea's children

1. Context: Prosperity, Tokenism & Judgement
2. Jezreel: God's help in the past does not guarantee God's pleasure in the present
3. Lo-Ruhamah: We should not presume upon the mercy of God

6 Gomer conceived again and gave birth to a daughter. Then the Lord said to Hosea, "Call her Lo-Ruhamah (which means "not loved"), for I will no longer show love to Israel, that I should at all forgive them. 7 Yet I will show love to Judah; and I will save them—not by bow, sword or battle, or by horses and horsemen, but I, the Lord their God, will save them."





Hosea's children

1. Context: Prosperity, Tokenism & Judgement
2. Jezreel: God's help in the past does not guarantee God's pleasure in the present
3. Lo-Ruhamah: We should not presume upon the mercy of God
4. Lo-ammi: Why do we think we are the children of God?

8 After she had weaned Lo-Ruhamah, Gomer had another son. **9** Then the Lord said, "Call him Lo-Ammi (which means "not my people"), for you are not my people, and I am not your God.





Hosea's children- The HOPE



1. Redefining Relationship (10)

10 “Yet the Israelites will be like the sand on the seashore, which cannot be measured or counted. In the place where it was said to them, ‘You are not my people,’ they will be called ‘children of the living God.’

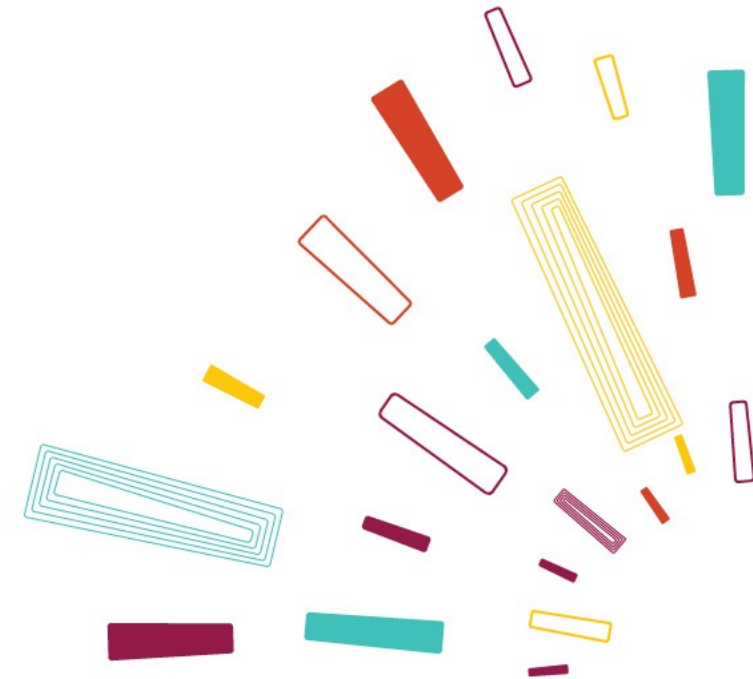




Hosea's children- The HOPE



1. Redefining Relationship (10)
2. Reconciliation (11a) "they will come together and appoint me as leader"
3. Resurrection (11b) "...and come up out of the land"
4. Reinvestment of old slogans with new meaning (11c)
"...for great will be the day of Jezreel"

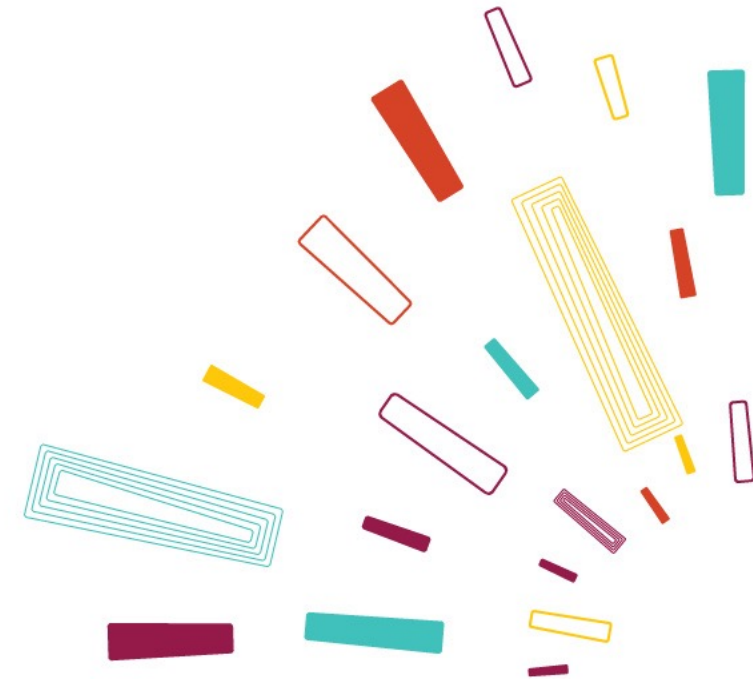




Hosea's children- The HOPE



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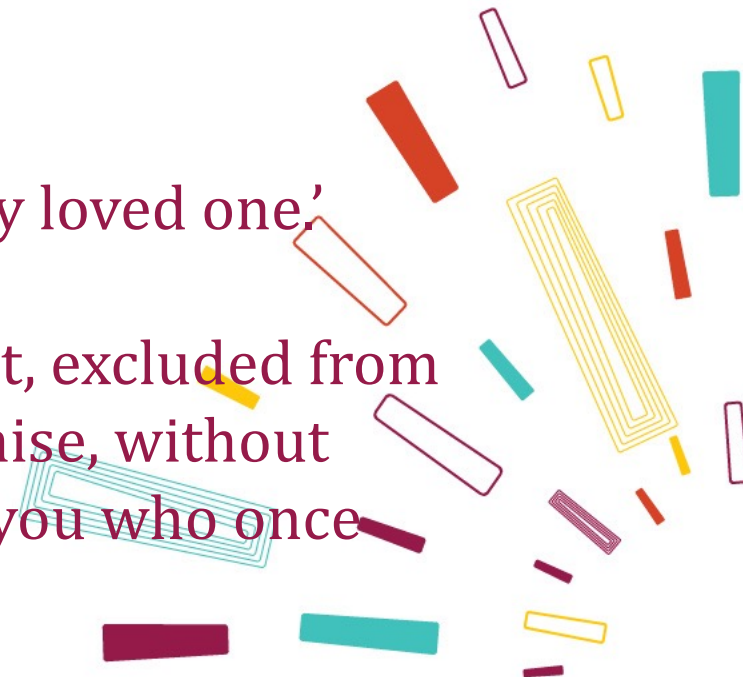
Hosea's children- The HOPE



1. Redefining Relationship (10)
2. Reconciliation (11a)
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4. Reinvestment of old slogans with new meaning (11c)
5. Renaming (2:1) sharing a common name with those who were once excluded (see Eph.2)

Hos.2 Say of your brothers, 'My people,' and of your sisters, 'My loved one,'

Eph.2 remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. **13** But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.



Guarding our Hearts: some Pointers

1. You shall have no other gods before me
2. Reflect on what angers us and why
3. Be politically involved if that is your calling
4. Represent others as they would wish to be represented
5. Don't become the mirror image of what you condemn
6. Always be prepared to critique your own community
7. Keep perspective



Psalm 146

**3 Do not put your trust in princes,
in human beings, who cannot save.**

**4 When their spirit departs, they return to the
ground;
on that very day their plans come to nothing.**

**5 Blessed are those whose help is the God of Jacob,
whose hope is in the Lord their God.**





Jacob in Genesis 32:

“I have seen the face of God, and lived” (v.30)

Jacob in Genesis 33: [to Esau]:

“Seeing your face is like seeing the face of God (v.10)

**Seeing the face of God,
enables us to see the face of God in our enemy**

