

50 Days of
UNLEASHING HOPE

a 7-week spiritual growth campaign designed to
raise the hope quotient of every human being

**SMALL GROUP
STUDY GUIDE**

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“Why are some people more effective than other people? Why do some enjoy life while others endure life? Why do some soar while others sink? ...In short, why are some people just personally, emotionally, and relationally in better shape? Let me give you the whole book in one sentence: Thriving people thrive for one reason—they commit to things that produce inner strength and hope.”

—The Hope Quotient, by Ray Johnston

Welcome

Congratulations, you and your small group friends are about to embark on a journey together that will help increase your degree of hope. Over the next seven weeks, the study’s discussions will identify seven essential factors that will help raise your “Hope Quotient”. Using all seven is hazardous to discouragement and hopelessness. Side effects include elevated hope and, in most cases, dream achievement.

Why A Group Discussion? Why Do Groups Matter?

Groups are essential to the health and mission of a church. They are likely the starting point for community, discipleship, and service in your church. In fact, recent research* shows that people involved in groups are healthier spiritually than those who aren’t. People in groups read the Bible more, pray more, give more, and serve more. Simply stated: your group matters.

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How to Have a Great Unleashing Hope Discussion

The Sequence Of A Great Relational Bible Study Discussion:

- **Introduction:** The easy question- everyone can answer it. It can be fun and it is engaging. It sets the theme for the discussion. Laughter is encouraged!
- **Observation:** Reading the scripture together and finding the answers. It's common to have more than one answer, so encourage multiple group members to share". (Answers in the leader's tips section.)
- **Understanding:** Now let's discuss it in comparison to what's happening in today's world. Unpack it. What do others believe?
- **Application:** What's going on in your world? How can the group members apply the scripture? Be real and give personal examples.
- **Prayer:** The perfect end to a great conversation. Praises are welcome too!

Unleashing Hope Small Group Guidelines

- **Purpose:** To connect to each other, the Bible and to God -three critical ingredients for spiritual growth and life transformation.
- **Attendance:** It is important to consistently meet as it helps build trust within the group.
- **Safe Environment:** Avoid quick judgments or quick fixes in order to create a safe place where people can be heard and feel accepted.
- **Confidentiality:** What is shared in the group remains in the group.
- **Spiritual Health:** Encouraging one another to live a Christ-honoring life-style, which is pleasing to God.
- **Participation:** We value everyone's unique contribution. Let's help one another to find a way to participate.
- **Building Relationships:** Let's look for a way to serve, pray and play together.

Week 1: Recharge Your Batteries

“No one does well when running on empty. This week is about building your relationship with God to levels of strength you may have never experienced before.”

“Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.”

Isaiah 40:31 NIV

1. Take turns answering: What are the top 3 things that drain you?
2. Read aloud Isaiah 40:31; Psalm 51:10; Philippians 3:13; Ecclesiastes 4:10. What theme is present in all of these verses?
3. Which of the five “Passion Killers” listed is the one that can exhaust your fuel supply and cause you to crash and burn? A.) Unhealthy People B.) Unkind Critics C.) Unbalanced Schedule D.) Unnecessary Guilt E.) Underestimating the Impact of Exposure (To a negative situation, people or things.)
4. What do people in today’s world turn to in order to recharge their batteries?
5. Out of the points made in this past weekend’s message at church, which was your favorite? Was there anything that confused you?
6. Which of the following Five “Supply Lines” do you need to develop more to help keep you spiritually and emotionally fueled and why? Invest in your own growth. B.) Don’t underestimate the power of worship. C.) Unleash the Bible into your life. D.) Build Great Relationships. E.) Pay attention to whose voice you are listening to.
7. What is one thing you can change in your life this week to help you recharge your batteries? Please explain your answer.
8. How can this group pray for you?

Week 2 : Raise Your Expectations

“In life, you don’t get what you deserve, you get what you expect. This chapter is about how to get liberated from fear by living by faith. When’s the last time you had a God-sized vision for your life?”

“With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

Matthew 19:26 NIV

1. When is the last time you went to a restaurant or a store and someone exceeded your expectations? Or they came in way short?
2. Read aloud Mark 2:1-12, 9:23; Matthew 9:1-8,19:26, 13:58, 21:22. What expectation is expressed in the scripture?
3. How does belief in Jesus give one hope in the impossible?
4. In the world today, some people found in the Christian community have stopped believing in the impossible. Why do you think that is?
5. Who in your life would you vote for “Mr. or Ms. Optimistic”? What makes him or her so uplifting and positive?
6. This past weekend, the message included replacing “F.E.A.R.” with “F.A.I.T.H.” What were the tips given to help one walk away from “Destructive Steps” and move towards “Positive Choices”?
7. Out of the following five Attitudes and Actions listed, which one do you want to develop and encourage more in your life? A.) Believe Impossible Things Are Possible. B.) Believe That God Has Better Days Ahead. C.) Realize the Power of Perspective. D.) Replace F.E.A.R. With F.A.I.T.H. E.) Replace “What If” With Why Not?”
8. Who do you know, that you wish you could share this message with? What keeps you from doing so? What steps can you take towards having the conversation?
9. What is your prayer request for this week?

Week 3: Refocus on the Future

“Nobody goes forward well when they’re looking back. How do you finally let go of the past and catch a fresh vision from God for your future?”

*“One thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead.”
Philippians 3:13 NIV*

1. What’s the most inspirational thing someone said to you as a kid? Who was your hero at age 10?
2. Share with each other what the results were for your “Hope Quotient Assessment”. (See chapter 4, “The Hope Quotient”).
3. Read aloud Philippians 3:13; Luke 2:49; John 19:30; Philippians 3:13. How do these verses tie in to this week’s theme?
4. Discuss what the meanings of these two statements are from chapter 7: “Some people get freed but not fueled.” “Other people are fueled but not freed.”
5. Five categories of dreams are touched on in this weekend’s message. What were the five categories? What point made caught your attention the most?
6. How would you feel if you knew someone you looked up to was praying for your future, including for you to “become”? How does this knowledge energize and stabilize a person?
7. How does faith in Jesus help one with “become” over “is”?
8. What do you have to change in your mind in order to give yourself permission to “become” over “is”?
9. Who in your life believes in you and encourages you? Who can you encourage and pray for to “become” over “is”?
10. Share any answers to prayer that you have received since starting this study. How can this group pray for you this week?

Week 4: Play to Your Strengths

“Congratulations. You and every other Christian are highly gifted by God. The problem is, no one knows it. This is designed to discover, develop and deploy your God-given gifts.”

“For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God... for the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.”

2 Timothy 1:6 NIV

1. Share with the group: What is one of your hidden talents?
2. Read aloud Romans 12:4-7; 1 Corinthians 12:1-11, 27-28; Ephesians 4:11-13; and 1 Peter 4:8-11. What are Spiritual Gifts?
3. What are your Spiritual Gifts? Look at the chart listed in chapter 8. (Ask your church about taking a Spiritual Gifts test.)
4. What is the difference between natural talents and spiritual gifts?
5. Some Corinthians felt certain Spiritual Gifts were better than others. Have you ever encountered that attitude among Christians?
6. From this weekend's sermon, what was the one most important point for you? Was there anything said that confused you?
7. Can you choose your spiritual gifts? Do children have the same spiritual gifts as their parents?
8. Why is it important that we all have different spiritual gifts? And why is it that we are not whole without each other's gifts?
9. Why is discovering your God-given gifts the best way to change the world? How can your gifts help your church?
10. Out of the four steps: “decide, discover, develop, and deploy”, which is the one that you need to focus on in furthering your gifts?
11. What is your prayer request?

Week 5: Refuse to Go it Alone

“The Lone Ranger made a great television series, but it’s a lousy way to live. How do you help everyone in your church get connected? Special note to pastors: This is designed to help your church become a “sticky church” where people come and actually stay.”

“Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up.”
Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 NIV

1. Share about a time when someone came through for you.
2. Read aloud Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; Proverbs 13:20, 27:17; 1Samuel 20:17,23:16; 1Corinthians 11:1; Philippians 4:9. Why is companionship so important?
3. In what way do people sharpen each other?
4. Chapter 9 highlights mentors and models. Who are yours? And whom are you mentoring and being a model for?
5. Why does the world today need “tail-kickers”?
6. This past weekend, the sermon highlighted friendships. What was said that you know is a message that you needed to hear from God?
7. How does friendships help churches be “sticky”? What team would you like to be a part of at your church?
8. Which of the five relationships listed in chapter 9 do you need to work on more to develop?
9. Is there anyone you would like to reach out to and thank for his or her friendship and encouragement?
10. Share any answers to prayer that you have received since you started this study. How can this group pray for you this week?

Week 6: Replace Burnout with Balance

“The least obeyed verse in the Bible is Psalm 46:10: “Be still and know that I am God.” This is how to help the people in your church get off the treadmill and focus on the things that matter most. No one who is stressed and overwhelmed has hope.”

“Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.”

Psalm 46:10 NIV

1. If you had an extra day a week, what would you do with that day?
2. Read aloud Deuteronomy 4:35; Psalms 46:10, 119:96, 139:3. What is the limit of perfection?
3. Share your score from the “Pace of Life Index” quiz in chapter 10.
4. Out of all of the “Your Spiritual Vital Signs” questions listed in chapter 10, which one asked is a “warning light” to you?
5. Why is it important for Christians to obey the 4th Commandment?
6. Out of the five balls we all juggle—work, family, health, friends and spirit— which one is the most likely dropped by people in today?
7. Which one is most likely to be dropped by you if you had to cut back due to overload?
8. Are you pushing the limit of any of the following: physical, emotional, mental, space or time? Why is it important to examine the priorities in your life?
9. How can practicing one of the tools of our faith-- prayer, journaling, worship, reading and studying the Bible, participating in a Bible study discussion group—help you with the limits and juggling?
10. What are 1 or 2 things that you can do this week?
11. How can the group pray for you this week?

Week 7: Play Great Defense

When discouragement, bitterness, resentment and anxiety enter, hope exits every time. This chapter is designed to help everyone in your church let go of the things that are wrecking their inner life and destroying their relationships.

“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes.”

Ephesians 6:10-11 NIV

1. Common American Hope Killers: What things, when they enter your life, kill hope?
2. Read aloud Ephesians 6:10-18; Hebrews 12:1; Philippians 3:13-14; Isaiah 49:23. How do these verses tie in to this week’s theme? Which one speaks the most to you?
3. Which of the “Hope Killers” in chapter 11 do you combat? A.) “Bitterness and Resentment” B.) “Worry and Anxiety” C.) “Looking Back and Comparing” D.) “Guilt” E.) “Past Failures”?
4. Looking at the chart in chapter 11, “Shake It Off – Grab Onto the Truth”, which lie would you like help with? When you answer, read aloud the verse given for it as the anecdote.
5. Looking back in review on this seven-week discussion...what was your favorite week/theme and why? Have you put anything into practice from it?
6. While reading this book, you may have realized that someone you know doesn’t have the right resources to make hope rise in his or her life. Turn to the final page of the book. Who do you know needs to read the message that is written there? The book would be a great start for a conversation about Jesus Christ with him or her. Share with your group and let them encourage you!
7. What prayer do you want lifted up by the group for your future?

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