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
“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.
How to Have a Great Unleashing Hope Discussion

Unleashing Hope Guidelines for Each Group

Week 1: Recharge Your Batteries (Isaiah 40:31)

Week 2: Raise Your Expectations (Matthew 19:26)

Week 3: Refocus on the Future (Philippians 3:13)

Week 4: Play to Your Strengths (2 Timothy 1:6)

Week 5: Refuse to Go it Alone (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10)

Week 6: Replace Burnout with Balance (Psalm 46:10)

Week 7: Play Great Defense (Ephesians 6:10-11)
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.

- **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 lifestyle, 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?
   1) Unhealthy People  2) Unkind Critics  3) Unbalanced Schedule  4) Unnecessary Guilt  5) 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. Which of the following five “Supply Lines” do you need to develop more to help keep you spiritually and emotionally fueled and why?
   1) Invest in your own growth.  2) Don’t underestimate the power of worship.  3) Unleash the Bible into your life.  4) Build great relationships.  5) Pay attention to whose voice you are listening to.

6. What is one thing you can change in your life this week to help you recharge your batteries? Please explain your answer.
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


2. How does belief in Jesus give one hope in the impossible?

3. In the world today, some people in the Christian community have stopped believing in the impossible. Why do you think that is?

4. 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”?

5. Out of the following five Attitudes and Actions listed, which one do you want to develop and encourage more in your life? 1) Believe impossible things are possible 2) Believe that God has better days ahead 3) Realize the power of perspective 4) Replace F.E.A.R. with F.A.I.T.H. 5) Replace “What If” with “Why Not”?

6. 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 this conversation?
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. Read aloud Philippians 3:13; Luke 2:49; John 19:30. How do these verses tie in to this week’s theme?

2. Five categories of dreams are touched on in this Sunday’s message. What were the five categories? What point that was made caught your attention the most?

3. How would you feel if you knew someone that you looked up to was praying for your future, including for you to “become”? How would this knowledge energize and stabilize a person?

4. How does faith in Jesus help one with “become” over “is”?

5. What do you have to change in your mind in order to give yourself permission to “become” over “is”?

6. Who in your life believes in you and encourages you? Who can you encourage and pray for to “become” over “is”? 
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; 1Corinthians 12:1-11, 27-28; Ephesians 4:11-13; and 1Peter 4:8-11. What are Spiritual Gifts?

3. What are your Spiritual Gifts?

4. What is the difference between natural talents and spiritual gifts?

5. 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?

6. Why is discovering your God-given gifts the best way to change the world? How can your gifts help your church?
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 ways do people sharpen each other?
4. Why does the world today need “tail-kickers”?
5. This Sunday, the sermon highlighted friendships. What was said that you know is a message that you needed to hear from God?
6. How do friendships help churches become “sticky”? What team would you like to be a part of at your church?
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. Why is it important for Christians to obey the 4th Commandment?

4. Of the five balls most of us juggle—work, family, health, friends, and spirit— which one are you most likely to drop?

5. 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?

6. 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?

7. What are 1 or 2 things that you can do 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 to you the most?


4. 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?

5. During the series, you may have realized that someone you know doesn’t have the right resources to make hope rise in his or her life. What have you learned that would help them increase their hope?

6. In what ways has the Unleashing Hope series changed your perspective on hope?