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# HOPELIFTER

CREATIVE WAYS  
TO SPREAD HOPE  
WHEN LIFE HURTS



A PDF COMPANION TO THE AUDIOBOOK

ZONDERVAN

*Hopelifter*

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from The Holy Bible, *New International Version*®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide. Pronouns for deity, however, have been capitalized.

Some of the names of the people mentioned in this book have been changed by personal request.

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# DISCUSSION GUIDE

## How to Use This Guide

The following twelve lessons correspond to the first twelve chapters of this book and may be used in a variety of settings and time frames to meet your needs and spread hope.

You may choose to use them in a weekly series or weekend retreat to ignite fresh enthusiasm and vision for your ministry or organization and to spread hope to hurting people. Or you could use this as a timely training tool to encourage and equip your leaders and laypeople. Perhaps a more intimate setting with a small group, digging deeper together—in person or online—for six, eight, or twelve weeks may seem the right fit for you. Choose your setting and time frame. Do one or more lessons a week. This study guide may also be used as a comforting companion to guide you and a hurting friend over weekly coffee. Pray. Ask God to show you the right connections, setting, and time frame to help you grow and spread hope.

## Lesson 1: Hopelifters Hope on Wheels

1. Read 2 Corinthians 1:3–4. How does this passage encourage you to live?
2. How do you see this truth demonstrated through the lives of women in the “bus story”?
3. Describe a time when someone comforted you and became the hands and feet of Jesus?
4. Take a few minutes to invite God to reveal someone to you who is hurting and needs hope.

5. Write down the person's name and greatest need on a three-by-five card.
6. Spend a few minutes "praising God" over that person (card) as the women did for Deborah in the bus story. Acknowledge God for who Scripture says He is and can be in that person's life: Healer, Comforter, Provider. . . .
7. Invite God to give you a willing heart and ready hands to become a hopelifter and spread hope to hurting people this week.

## **Lesson 2: Knowing Hope**

1. Read Ruth 1. How were Naomi and Ruth experiencing "no hope"? What did Ruth do to offer Naomi hope?
2. Share a time when a circumstance seemed hopeless, but God revealed His hope to you or through someone?
3. Read Jeremiah 14:8 and Psalm 119:81. How can you look eagerly ahead regardless of your circumstance and find and know hope?
4. Take a moment and focus your gaze on God Himself, who is your hope. Thank Him for loving you and caring about every detail of your life. Thank Him for His Word, His promises of hope.
5. If you're experiencing a season of suffering like Job (or know someone who is), what lessons can you learn from Job's life to show hope to other sufferers?
6. Invite God to help you be alert this week and look for ways He shows you hope in unexpected ways.



### **Lesson 3: Hope in a Person**

1. Share your story of coming to know Jesus personally and receiving His free gift of eternal life. Thank God for the people He used in your journey to know Jesus.
2. Read the story in Mathew 15:32–39. How does this story encourage you? What is one small way you could meet a hurting person's physical needs?
3. How did Jesus meet the emotional needs of Mary after Lazarus died? What hidden hurt did He address in the Samaritan woman? How did He restore Peter after denying Him?
4. Jesus met spiritual needs by confronting sinners, teaching truth in a variety of ways, and defeating evil forces. Which approach do you feel the most comfortable with? How have you encouraged someone spiritually using this approach?
5. Invite God to increase your sensitivity this week to see those hurting physically, emotionally, or spiritually. Armor up and make Ephesians 6 your daily prayer.

### **Lesson 4: The Power Behind Our Hope**

1. Read 1 Corinthians 3:16 and Ephesians 3:20. The Holy Spirit takes up residence in you. How does knowing His power is at work in you give you hope?
2. How do you know if you are relying on the Holy Spirit or your own strength? What do you need to do to surrender to live “Nothing but God” and be empowered by Him?
3. Share an example of how the Holy Spirit spoke to you through the Bible, through prayer, through circumstances, or through the church (people).
4. How did the story of praying for the soldier and the “immeasurably more” bracelet encourage you to tap into the wonder-working power of the Holy Spirit, who magnifies our

efforts to spread hope to others? Invite the Holy Spirit to be your guide and teacher this week.

### **Lesson 5: Hope in a Place**

1. What place or setting inspires you or brings you hope?
2. Home is a word that implies safety, comfort, and love. “None of us can feel hope unless we can feel a deep sense of being ‘at home.’” What does this mean to you?
3. How did Brenda’s story of offering her extra room and Erica’s story of finding comfort in her Aunt Bonnie’s home and friendship encourage you that hope can be found in a place?
4. Read Revelation 21:2–5; 22:1–5; and John 14:2. What excites you about your eternal home, heaven? Invite the Holy Spirit to reveal to you someone who needs to know Jesus and look forward to an eternal place of love, security, and rest. How could you be a hopelifter by opening your heart and perhaps even your home to that person?

### **Lesson 6: Hope in a Process**

1. Read Romans 5:3–5. Based on these verses, what does S+P+C=H mean?
2. Where are you at in the process of hope today?
3. How did Kim’s story of losing a child and starting a support group for grieving moms demonstrate hope in a process?
4. Share how a specific area of suffering in your life has come full circle and God is now using you to bring hope to others.
5. When God looks at a hurting person, anything is possible. How can you invite Him to open your life to His work to bring hope to others through each stage of hope?

## **Lesson 7: Hope in a Possession**

1. Read Acts 4:32. How does this verse tell us to live as believers? What is the benefit of sharing our possessions?
2. Physical possessions may bring timely hope. How did Elijah receive hope from the penniless widow? How did God bless her faith and willingness to share?
3. What hidden, slightly used, or unused skills, talents, and life experiences do you have that could offer hope to others?
4. Believers are entrusted with spiritual gifts to serve, to build up the body of Christ, and to bring glory to God. What spiritual gift(s) has the Holy Spirit entrusted you with? How are you using it to spread hope to others? If you don't know, pray and ask God to show you, and ask other believers to share with you, what gift(s) they think you may have.

## **Lesson 8: Hope in a Connection**

1. Read 1 Corinthians 12:26–27. What do these verses say about being connected to others?
2. Who did God connect to Saul (Paul), and how did each person do his/her part to help him?
3. How is hope “contagious”? How have people in the body of Christ brought hope to you in your life, and how were you inspired to pass it on to others?
4. Review the “Table of the Brokenhearted” story. How did hope spread in this story?
5. God knows how to link every hurting heart with a heart that can offer hope and healing. What is “your part”? How can God use it to give hope to someone this week?

## **Lesson 9: Overcoming Hope Blockers**

1. Read Joshua 3. What external “hope blocker” did the Israelites face? What was God’s command for them to overcome it?
2. Recall a time of suffering, success, or a circumstance in your life when your hope was blocked. How did God “cross you over” to hope again?
3. Picture yourself as one of the priests. What “internal obstacles” do you think they faced as they stepped forward?
4. Review Linda’s airline ticket story. What internal and external obstacles did she and others face? How did the women respond to this hope blocker?
5. Read Joshua 4. What did the Israelites do to remember how God removed their hope blocker? Invite the Holy Spirit to remind you of the times God has removed your internal or external hope blockers and “crossed you over” to hope again. Write down each instance on an index card. When people ask, be ready to share.

## **Lesson 10: Hopelifters Need Hope Too**

1. Why do you think God’s directive in 1 Thessalonians 5:11 to “encourage one another and build each other up” is important?
2. Reflect on the issue of “self-care.” What are intentional ways you can “fill your pitcher” so you are able to pour out hope to others?
3. Developing a network of support—“people before you, beside you, and behind you” and “wise advisors”—can keep you growing and help you spread more hope to others. Who are the people in your life in each category? In which category do you need the most support for this season of your life?
4. What significant role did Moses, Aaron, and Hur play in Joshua’s ministry in Exodus 17:10–13?

5. Why is having a PIT Team important in your ministry as a hopelifter? Who are three people you could enlist to pray for you in your ministry to spread hope?

## **Lesson 11: Developing Your Hope Plan**

1. Review Sandy's story. Why do you think it's important to prepare your heart before you reach out to someone who is hurting?
2. "Lord, break my heart with what breaks yours." What does this mean to you?
3. It's time for a hope audit. What tangible resources or physical possessions can you offer? What intangible resources (spiritual gifts, talents, skills, connections, expertise, life experiences) are entrusted to you by God so that you can serve others?
4. Why is it important to evaluate the role of time in your hopelifting and your lifetime commitments?
5. Pray for creativity. Ask God to help you personalize your hope plan and point others to Jesus through it. Look through the recipes of hope in the previous pages and share your favorite one. Or, write one of your own on a blank recipe page included in this book and share it with your group.

## **Lesson 12: Spreading Your Hope**

1. Share creative ways you've experienced "hope spreading" during this study.
2. How did Crystal's story and "surprise wedding" inspire you that "even in the midst of suffering, hope lives"? Who were Crystal's hopelifters? What kind of hope did they give her?
3. Review the section on Future Hope. Which example to spread hope to future generations inspired you most? How are you investing in spreading a legacy of hope?



4. Investing in Jesus, the chief Hopelifter, is an investment that continues to spread and give hope. How have you been inspired by this study to be a hopelifter and to spread hope to others?
5. Read Revelation 19:1–10. Imagine the day Jesus returns as our bridegroom to take us who know and love Him—*His church*—as his bride, to celebrate the eternal wedding.
6. List the names of people you know who have not accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior or you're uncertain if they have:

### *Eternal Wedding Invitation List*


Pray for the people on your list to have a pure and willing heart (Ps. 51:10–12) and ears to hear (Rev. 3:6): *Open \_\_\_\_\_'s eyes and turn him/her from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that he/she may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in Jesus.* (From Acts 26:18)

Pray for God to work through you to share creative compassion as Jesus' hands and feet until He returns. Keep spreading hope, dear friend and hopelifter. I'll look forward to seeing you and the people on your list at the wedding!

## APPENDIX B



# VERSES OF HOPE

*“He sent out His word and healed them.”*

—PSALM 107:20

It only takes a moment to share God’s Word with someone in need of timely hope. The following verses are favorites of hopelifters who were hurting and found comfort in God’s Word. Choose one or more and share them in a card, text, email, or voice message, or as a personalized prayer for someone.

Trust in the LORD with all your heart  
and lean not on your own understanding;  
in all your ways acknowledge Him,  
and He will make your paths straight.

PROVERBS 3:5–6



“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. You will seek Me and find Me when you seek Me with all your heart.”

JEREMIAH 29:11–13



I called on your name, LORD,  
from the depths of the pit.  
You heard my plea: “Do not close Your ears  
to my cry for relief.”  
You came near when I called You,  
and You said, “Do not fear.”

LAMENTATIONS 3:55–57

Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at His coming.

1 PETER 1:13



Look to the LORD and His strength;  
seek His face always.

PSALM 105:4



The LORD will guide you always;  
He will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land  
and will strengthen your frame.  
You will be like a well-watered garden  
like a spring whose waters never fail.

ISAIAH 58:11



Forget the former things;  
do not dwell on the past.  
See, I am doing a new thing!  
Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?  
I am making a way in the wilderness  
and streams in the wasteland.

ISAIAH 43:18–19



The LORD is my strength and my shield;  
my heart trusts in Him, and He helps me.  
My heart leaps for joy,  
and with my song I praise him.

PSALM 28:7



And the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will Himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.

1 PETER 5:10



Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you.

1 PETER 5:7

The LORD is a refuge for the oppressed,  
a stronghold in times of trouble.  
Those who know Your name trust in You,  
for You, LORD, have never forsaken those who seek You.

PSALM 9:9–10



How precious to me are your thoughts, God!  
How vast is the sum of them!  
Were I to count them,  
they would outnumber the grains of sand—  
when I awake, I am still with You.

PSALM 139:17–18



Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;  
I have summoned you by name; you are Mine.  
When you pass through the waters,  
I will be with you;  
and when you pass through the rivers,  
they will not sweep over you.  
When you walk through the fire,  
you will not be burned;  
the flames will not set you ablaze.  
For I am the LORD your God,  
the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.

ISAIAH 43:1–3

The Lord is close to the brokenhearted  
and saves those who are crushed in spirit.

PSALM 34:18



Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not  
be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer  
and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.  
And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will  
guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

PHILIPPIANS 4:5–7



He replied, “Because you have so little faith. Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.”

MATTHEW 17:20



He will cover you with His feathers,  
and under His wings you will find refuge;  
His faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.

PSALM 91:4



Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you.

DEUTERONOMY 31:6



Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be the glory.

EPHESIANS 3:20



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. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

EPHESIANS 6:10–17



## APPENDIX C



# HELPFUL, HOPEFUL WEBSITES FOR CARING

**www.hopelifters.com** Hopelifters provides resources, tools, and more recipes of hope.

**www.caringbridge.org** Caring Bridge is a health social network to keep family, friends, and supporters connected. Anyone with a health care issue can create a personalized Caring Bridge website.

**www.stephensministry.org** Stephens Ministries is a resource and training organization that equips laypeople to provide one-on-one Christian care to hurting people.

**www.mendingthesoul.org** Mending the Soul is a training organization that empowers the church for ministry to those impacted by abuse.

**www.celebraterecovery.org** Celebrate Recovery is a Christian twelve-step program based for people with hurts, habits, and hang ups, including sex disorders or drug and alcohol addictions.

**www.griefshare.org** Grief share is a Christian grief support program.

**www.speakupforhope.org** Speak up for Hope provides hope to prisoners and their families through resources and encouragement.

**www.cbi.fm** Crossroad Bible Institute provides free Bible studies to prisoners and equips the church to enlist volunteers to help check the lessons.

**www.friendship.org** This ministry helps individuals and churches minister spiritually to the intellectually disabled.

**[www.momsinprayer.org](http://www.momsinprayer.org)** Moms in Prayer is an international ministry of women praying for their children and schools. Their website provides prayer tools and resources.

**[www.younglife.org](http://www.younglife.org)** Young Life is an international ministry that introduces adolescents to Jesus Christ and helps them grow in their faith.

**[www.focusonthefamily.org](http://www.focusonthefamily.org)** Focus on the Family is a ministry that helps families thrive.

**[www.hannah.org](http://www.hannah.org)** Hannah's Prayer provides Christian support for fertility challenges, including infertility and the loss of a child from conception to birth.

**[www.dc4k.org](http://www.dc4k.org)** Divorce Care for Kids helps children heal from the pain of divorce.

**[www.joniandfriends.org](http://www.joniandfriends.org)** Joni and Friends provides resources and support to people with disabilities and their families.

**[www.speakupconference.com](http://www.speakupconference.com)** The Speak Up Conference provides training for Christian speakers, writers, and leaders.

**[www.teenchallengeusa.com](http://www.teenchallengeusa.com)** A nationwide residential program providing youth, adults, and families with an effective and comprehensive Christian faith-based solution to life-controlling drug and alcohol problems in order to become productive members of society.