

Chapter 9

REIGNITING HOPE THROUGH LOVE

Theories and studies without regard for the refreshing virtue of God's order are merely dead letters, emptying the heart by filling the mind.

—Jean Pierre de Caussade

Group Study 3

Welcome and Introductions

Opening Prayer (spoken in unison)

Divine Physician, hear our prayers. Restore in us a pure heart, O Lord. You know us better than we know ourselves. We confess, Lord, that we wish we knew why this disaster happened. Help us discern how you are using this disaster to bring restoration. Help us not be bitter because we do not understand. But help us be better. Support and strengthen us as we reach out in love, concern, and care for others. Grant that we may always be blessed by your love that helps us bear all things, believe in your goodness, hope always, and endure by the power of your eternal love. We pray this through the one who makes all things new, Jesus Christ our Redeemer. Amen.

Icebreaker Questions:

Some say that healing and finding comfort for our emotions may come before trying to understand why bad things happen. Is this true from your experience? What gives you the most hope?

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTER 3: RESTORATION— REIGNITING HOPE

There are well over three hundred biblical references to *hope*. Biblical hope is based on God's promises and covenant. Hope is rooted in a deep sense of confidence. Hope gives us a powerful assurance of our salvation. The very nature of hope is based upon the love of God.

There are a number of biblically based characteristics of God's love that can inspire you and reignite your hope:

Love restores. (Eph 4:4)

Love suffers. (1 Pet 3:8)

Love seeks. (Prov 8:17)

Love transforms. (Rom 12:2)

Love heals. (Hos 14:4)

Love sustains. (*Wis.* 16:26)

Love is our anchor. (Heb 6:19)

Love is action. (Jer 7:3)

Love brings power to life. (Rom 15:13)

Key Discussion Questions

1. Which one of these hope-filled characteristics is most helpful to you now? Why?
2. People of faith are taught the very character of God is rooted in love. Why is this important to you?
3. If you have been a victim of a disaster, why would you then want to be of help to others?



LESSONS FROM THE PAST



Bruce Blumer, author of *Simply Grace*, shared in his blog entry “Why Do You Help?” after serving with a disaster relief team in Texas after Hurricane Harvey in 2017. Bruce writes,

A week ago, I was part of a team that drove to Houston to help with the flood relief efforts. Let me begin with recognizing Cypress United Methodist Church in Cypress, Texas (in northwest Houston), who showed us incredible hospitality. Their pastors, staff, and the church have committed a tremendous amount of resources in hosting teams, reaching out, monitoring projects in homes, and assisting their community. At devotions one of the first nights, the team leader asked a question he too struggles with—why do you volunteer, why do you help? It prompted me to reflect on the reasons to help and my own motivations to drive thirty-two hours in a car and spend a week on my knees putting up sheetrock. I believe the reasons for helping are complex. When I asked the team to put in writing why they volunteered, here’s a sampling of their responses:

- To serve others in need.
- First, to glorify and honor with thanksgiving to God. Second, to honor my family and my church with a thankful heart.
- The reason I volunteer is because I feel like I have been abundantly blessed by God and want to give back to show that I appreciate it. Also, I have had people come to my rescue when I needed it the most.
- I enjoy sharing my time and talents with others. The more I volunteer, the more drawn I feel toward volunteering again.
- Volunteering jump-starts my spiritual journey. A palpable sense of the Holy Spirit is with me when I am freely giving my time and talents to those in need.

My own reasons can be found in these responses too. I do feel I’ve been blessed and have the ability to help. I enjoy spending time with others, working toward a common goal. I feel good when I help and sometimes feel guilty for feeling that way. The more I volunteer, the more I volunteer. It helps me in my spiritual journey and energizes me.

Group Discussion Questions

1. So why do you volunteer? Each of us may have our own reasons for helping others.
2. Today, more and more people come to experience a deeper faith through mission work and involvement. Why do you think this is true?
3. Bruce mentions a church that demonstrated incredible hospitality. How do churches in disaster areas witness God's love for victims and volunteers?

WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT

Look for ways to turn challenges into opportunities for recovery and restoration. Take time to notice people of faith around you who take the ordinary situations and add God's love in a way that becomes extraordinary. Know that disasters can diminish your hope. How can you find help to reignite your hope? Recognize the power of a positive and can-do attitude. Realize that there are beliefs and myths that help or hurt. While bad things do happen in this world, out of those situations we see the amazing care of people who come to our aid. Trust yourself, others, and especially the hope that comes from God. You can grow through your grief and loss to recognize lasting values. Live your life and leave a legacy of love, faith, and hope.

UNDERSTANDING THE SCRIPTURES

Read each scripture aloud and answer the questions for each passage:

1 Chronicles 28:20; Romans 8:28; Galatians 2:20

What does this scripture say?

What does this scripture mean?

How does this scripture apply?

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

It is all about hope. How does hope help you? Does your hope give you strength and resilience? Why do we see some people handle trauma and loss better than others? Is it because they have had less trauma and loss, or are there other reasons? How does our faith factor increase your capacity for hope? And how can you grow stronger after a crisis so that you can better handle the next crisis? We can see how hope brings greater strength to not only survive a disaster but also grow emotionally and thrive spiritually.

Here are a few myths about hope:

Myth 1: Hope means your troubles will go away.

Myth 2: Hope is something we always feel.

Myth 3: Hope is easily lost in troubled times.

What other myths about hope can you identify? Consider these four helpful characteristics about hope:

Hope helps us handle adversity and gives us a perspective of meaning and purpose.

Hope can become a source of strength when our emotions need comfort or control.

Hope offers Christians connections that guide outreach to help others.

Hope motivates you to take better care of yourself, your body, your mind, and your soul.

What other characteristics of hope can you identify?

ACTION STEPS

1. Know what hopeful steps you can begin to take to keep on going.
2. Recognize that every challenge may also bring an opportunity, not just a difficulty.
3. Gain greater trust in a biblically based hope. Highlight passages and then memorize them.
4. Identify and commit yourself to your life goals daily through prayer and meditation.
5. Know your limitations and control those things you can control.
6. Express gratitude often to God and others.

Tools and Resources

Adam Hamilton, *Unafraid: Living with Courage and Hope in Uncertain Times* (New York: Convergent Books, 2018).

Max Lucado, *Anxious for Nothing: Finding Calm in a Chaotic World* (Nashville: HarperCollins, 2017).

Arlene K. Unger, *Calm: 50 Mindfulness and Relaxation Exercises to De-Stress and Unwind* (New York: Metro Books, 2015).

William Barclay, *Prayers for Help and Healing* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1968).

John Wimber, Kevin Springer, and Richard J. Foster, *Power Healing*, 2nd ed. (Nashville: HarperCollins, 1987).

Jane Cage, ed. *Joplin Pays It Forward: An Essay Collection of Lessons Learned*. Download a pdf or purchase an eBook at <http://janecage.com/joplin-pays-it-forward/>. Joplin, Missouri, was the site of one of the deadliest tornadoes in US history on May 22, 2011. This collection of essays by community leaders shares the recovery process and offers advice to civic leaders.