



HOPE|**EXPLORED**

WHAT'S THE BEST FUTURE YOU
COULD EVER IMAGINE?

LEADER'S HANDBOOK

Hope Explored Leader's Handbook

Copyright © 2022 Christianity Explored Ministries
www.ceministries.org

Published by:

The Good Book Company Ltd

thegoodbook.com | thegoodbook.co.uk

thegoodbook.com.au | thegoodbook.co.nz | thegoodbook.co.in

Unless indicated, all Scripture references are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version.

Copyright © 2011 Biblica, Inc. Used by permission.

All rights reserved. Except as may be permitted by the Copyright Act, no portion of this publication may be reproduced in any form or by any means without prior permission from the publisher.

Christianity Explored Ministries has asserted its right under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 to be identified as author of this work.

ISBN: 9781784986810 | Printed in Turkey

Design by André Parker

CHRISTIANITY
EXPLORED
MINISTRIES

thegoodbook
COMPANY

Key

-  Watch a film
-  Discuss a question
-  Explore a Bible passage



SESSION 1

HOPE

- *If you're using these sessions in a group context, welcome the guests to Hope Explored and introduce yourself. Make sure everyone has been introduced to each other. Try to remember names ready for next week.*
- *Give a brief introduction. If you have more than one discussion group, this is best given by the course leader or speaker to everyone together. (The wording below is intended only as a general guide.)*

As we begin, I want to reassure you that:

- you won't be asked to read aloud, pray, sing or do anything that makes you feel uncomfortable.
- we aren't going to take your phone number and pester you. If you decide not to come back, we are still delighted you made time to come today.
- you can ask any question you want, or alternatively feel free just to sit and listen.

Over the next three sessions, we're going to be thinking about some of the big questions of life: How can we find hope in a world of frequent disappointment? Is there any hope of us living at peace with ourselves and with one another? Where can we find a sense of purpose that will infuse our lives with genuine meaning?

We also want to spend time addressing whatever questions are important to you. As well as having times of discussion in groups, we will be available to chat at the end of the session.

Please feel free to make notes and list questions you may have as you watch the films. There is space for notes in your Handbook.

Give each guest a Luke's Gospel or Bible and a Handbook.

Ask the group to turn to Session 1 on page 7 of the Handbook.

- *Explain how the evening will run.*

Watch Part 1: We watch an introduction to this session's theme.

Discussion: We have an opportunity to discuss our own views and experiences in relation to the theme.

Watch Part 2: We watch a film teaching something from the Bible.

Explore: We read that part of the Bible and discuss it together.

WATCH: Hope Part 1 (approx 6 mins)

- Hope is a wonderful thing – but few things are more crushing than when our hopes are disappointed.
- A hope worth having needs to...
 - be true.
 - deliver what it promises.
 - be for something that will last.
- The Christian faith is all about hope: a joyful expectation for the future, based on true events in the past, which changes everything about my present.


DISCUSS

This activity makes use of four picture prompts, each representing a view of where the world is going. The pictures are provided in the Handbook, but to make this activity more dynamic, it's recommended that you print out or purchase a larger set of pictures (see page 12), so that they can be spread in front of you and passed between you as you discuss them together.

Ask the question below, and then briefly explain the pictures and what they represent, but don't worry about nailing down specific definitions. Encourage guests to choose the one which resonates most with them. This is an opportunity to listen to guests as they share their understanding of hope, and the things they place their hope in.

How much hope we have will depend on where we've been, where we are, and where we think we're going. Some of us may be searching for hope; others of us may be more sceptical. What about you? Where do you think the world is going?

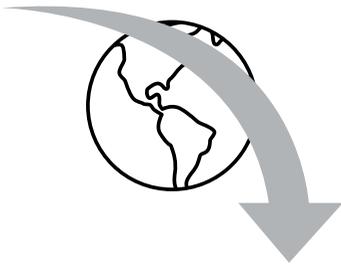
Things are getting worse: The course of history leaves us hopeless. Human beings are on course to destroy the planet. Climate change will destroy us if war and global pandemics don't. Our lives used to be better than they are now, and it looks as if they won't recover.

Things are getting better: The course of history leaves us hopeful. Human beings are making progress in politics, technology and healthcare. The world faces big problems, but we are innovating good solutions. Our lives used to be worse than they are now, and it looks as if they will keep improving.

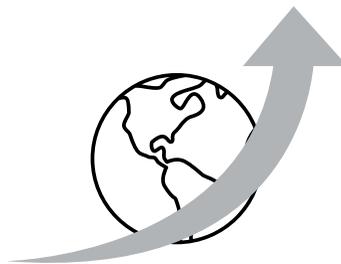
Things go round in a circle of life: History is going round in circles. Nations rise and fall. The seasons come and go. We've seen it all before, and we'll see it all again.

Things are in chaos: History is governed by random events. Human beings are each a collection of atoms, ruled by chemical and electrical impulses. Nature is unpredictable and uncontrollable. We don't know where we've come from, and we can't know where we're going.

It may be that members of your group find that a combination of these resonate, or they have their own ideas. To stimulate discussion, you could ask some follow-up questions: How would you – or your parents – have answered when you were growing up? What significant life events have changed your attitude towards hope? How would you answer differently if you were asked about the world in general, and then about your life in particular?



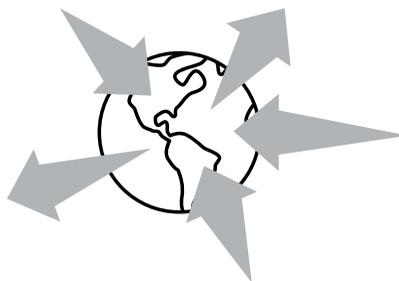
Things are getting worse



Things are getting better



Things go round in a circle of life



Things are in chaos

▶ **WATCH: Hope Part 2 (approx 16 mins)**

(Page 9 in the group members' Handbook.) Encourage people to make notes or write down questions as they watch the teaching film.

- Life is full of many good things. But the Bible is realistic about the darkness we experience too.
- Isaiah 9 speaks to “people walking in darkness”. It was a message from God, promising his people a “Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace”, who would bring light to the darkness (Isaiah 9:6).
- Most of us hope that there’s a God out there. The Bible says that there *is*, and that he’s come to earth in the person of Jesus. Jesus is the person Isaiah spoke of.
- Jesus calmed a storm on Lake Galilee.
- Jesus raised a dead girl.
- There’s only one category big enough for him: Mighty God.
- Jesus proves there is a Mighty God who cares for his world and wants to help people.
- Jesus’ miracles point to the end of the story: one day he will bring in full a new world without uncertainty, sickness or grief.
- This is the Christian hope: a joyful expectation for the future, based on true events in the past, that changes everything about the present.

*² The people walking in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of deep darkness
a light has dawned ...
⁶ For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

Isaiah 9:2, 6

 EXPLORE

1. What most surprised or intrigued you about the Christian view of hope that we've just heard described?

This question aims to give guests an opportunity to respond to what they've just heard, if they'd like to. It's fine to keep this conversation short if guests don't have much that they want to share.

Christian hope claims to be "a joyful expectation for the future based on true events in the past". The question is: how do we know those events are true? In the film, we heard about one day in Jesus' life, as told by a man named Luke in his "Gospel". So, can we trust Luke's account?

Right at the beginning of his book, Luke describes how he went about compiling his Gospel.

Help group members to find Luke 1:1-4 in their copy of Luke's Gospel or Bible. You may want to take this opportunity to explain how Bible chapter and verse references work.

Read Luke 1:1-4

("Luke 1:1-4" refers to Luke, chapter 1, verses 1-4.)

2. According to Luke, why did he write his Gospel? (See Luke 1:4.)

Luke wanted his readers to have "certainty of the things you have been

Fulfilled | Brought about; completed.

Eye witnesses | Those who saw first-hand what Jesus said and did.

The word | God's message about Jesus.

Theophilus | A Greek name meaning "friend of God". This was the first, though not the only reader of Luke's book.

taught". Theophilus had clearly already heard Christian teaching (just like the people in your group will over the course of these *Hope Explored* sessions). But he needed to be able to know its "certainty" – that the things he'd heard about Jesus really happened and were really true. You could follow up by asking, "Why is it important to have certainty about the teaching about Jesus, do you think?" If we don't have that certainty, then we can't enjoy solid hope. Our view of the future will be dogged by doubt or despair. But if we are confident that Jesus is who he said he is, we can be certain that his wonderful promises about the future will come true.

3. How did Luke research the events he wrote about? (See Luke 1:2-3.)

He acted like a modern-day journalist or historian.

- He spoke with eye witnesses (v 2) and "servants of the word" (those who were sharing the news that "things ... have been fulfilled").
- He "carefully investigated everything" (v 3). It seems that Luke did not just believe everything he'd been told, but checked, cross-referenced, followed-up etc. Luke is not presenting us with a fairytale or embellished legend. He's telling us what really took place.
- He aimed to "write an orderly account" (v 3). He'd clearly thought about what to include, in what order, etc.

4. How does Luke's method help us to have confidence in what he wrote about Jesus?

As the Part 1 film emphasised, Christianity is not about a feeling in my tummy or a blind faith in defiance of the data. It starts with information, which we are called to put our trust in. These true events in the past are the basis of Christian hope.

You might also like to point out that Luke wrote about "the things that have been fulfilled among us" (v 1). Luke is talking about events that kept (or "fulfilled") previously-made promises. These events happened "among us" – that

is, in (roughly) the time and place that this book was being written in. In other words, Luke is referring back to Old Testament prophecies – such as the one in Isaiah 9, written 700 years before – and saying that Jesus fulfilled them. The fact that these centuries-old prophecies in the Old Testament had come true shows us that the Bible, although written by human authors such as Luke, is inspired by God – the only one who is able to predict the future, because he controls the future. This helps us to have even greater confidence in what it tells us about Jesus.

Note: These questions may well not satisfy the more doubtful in your group when it comes to the historicity of the Bible. You don't need to worry about this at this point in the series. The aim here is to establish that Luke claimed to be writing history, not fables or allegories. At the end of the discussion, encourage guests to read "Can We Rely on Luke's Gospel?" on page 33 of their Handbook when they get home. For those who want to look into these things more, point them to a book such as *Is Jesus History?* by John Dickson, *Cold Case Christianity* by J. Warner Wallace, or *The Case for Christ* by Lee Strobel. It would be a good idea to have copies of one or more of these books to hand so that you can give them to guests.

So, the claim is that we're reading the words of a historian who had carefully researched the events of Jesus' life by speaking with eye witnesses – including the two events described in the film. Let's take another look at the second of those events.

Read Luke 8:40-42, 49-56

5. Trace the events of this passage. How might Jairus have felt at each of these points?

- **Verse 49:** Utter grief. His daughter is dead.

Synagogue | Where Jewish people gather for worship.

- **Verse 50:** Perhaps a mixture of hope and incredulity. He's told not to be afraid, and to believe that she can be healed – when she's dead!
- **Verses 51-53:** Perhaps hope based on trusting Jesus, or grief based on what everyone else thinks – or both.
- **Verse 54-55:** Can you imagine a happier moment for Jairus than when his deceased daughter stands up?!
- **Verse 56:** Luke tells us – astonishment.

6. What does this episode show us about:

- **Jesus' power?**

He can reverse death itself. Jesus came so that one day he can bring an end to sickness and death, and to all the pain, anxiety and grief that go along with them. He is the Mighty God come to earth.

- **Jesus' character?**

This is a harder question – but the aim is to see that Jesus chooses to use his power to help others, to bring life and to give hope; and that despite his great power, he wants to meet and speak with and help those who are struggling and desperate.

7. Earlier, we heard these events in Luke's Gospel described as "a thumbnail preview of an entirely new world" that Jesus will bring about one day. What hopeless situations do you see around you? What difference would it make to how we think and feel about those situations if Jesus were the Mighty God, who would one day step in to set everything right?

This question provides an opportunity to connect what we've seen in the Bible with peoples' lived experiences. In answer to the first part of the question, some people may feel comfortable sharing something very personal; others

may want to keep the conversation more general. Either is fine. The point is that – whether on a global scale or in our most private struggles – if we knew that one day Jesus would make things right in the way he made things right for Jairus, we could endure even the most seemingly hopeless situations in the present with hope. If you have time, this would be a great opportunity for you to share the difference that Jesus' promises for the future have made to you in otherwise hopeless situations.

8. We've been thinking in this session about how the Bible claims that Jesus is the Mighty God, who gives us a hope worth having. What has particularly struck you as you've heard the films and looked at this part of Luke's Gospel?

The aim of this question is to get a feel for where people are at in their response to what they've heard. If people want to talk more, encourage them to stick around at the end of the session.

Session 2 will be based on Luke 23. You could encourage group members to read more of Luke's Gospel before then – however much they want or are able to – and to come to the next session with any questions they may have.
