



# Small Group Study Guide

# **Finding Hope In Trying Times**

## **Small Group Study Guide**

Thank you for being willing to lead and care for people in your Small Group! This is not an easy task, but it is an important one. You are leading a group of people to help them engage in community, and encounter God together. This doesn't mean you have to be serious and solemn when you lead, it means that you get to help a group of people learn more of who God is, what He is about, and how we can follow God more fully in our life. This can be a fun and exhilarating adventure!

Below are some things that will help you in your role as the leader:

**Focus of the Series:** Have you noticed that there are some seasons in life that just seem like they are full of darkness? So far, 2020 has been like that. Even in August, with so many days in the 90's, we are going through a very dark time. And when light emerges from the darkness, we find hope. Our new series is called FINDING HOPE. The fuller title is: Finding Hope in Trying Times. Together we will learn how the gospel of Jesus Christ starts with Hope Rising in the midst of the darkest times.

**Structure of the Study:** The format of the study is broken down into three sections (Share, Study, Symbolize), progressing from easy-conversational questions, exploring the Bible passages, to personal reflection and thought. There are plenty of questions from which to choose from. Do not feel pressured to have to get through every single question in the study. The study was specifically designed in order that you can pick and choose the questions that will be most effective in navigating the discussion. The ultimate goal is for the group to engage in discussion to better understand God's grace together. If there is good dialogue happening, and you only get through a few questions, that's great! If you need more questions to help move the group along, then feel free to use whatever you need.

Some Tips For Leading The Study:

Your role is to be a facilitator. You do not need to be the in-house expert of the Bible, you simply need to lead the group in good discussion. This means speaking less yourself, and giving as many people in your group as possible a chance to share their thoughts and insights.

Silence is OK! Don't get nervous if no one answers the question right away. If too much time goes by (say, 45 seconds), ask if you need to repeat the question, or if the question was clear.

It's OK if you or the group does not have an answer to a question. If someone asks a difficult question, and the group is unsure of the answer, it's ok to table the question

for a week in order to research the answer. Some of Apostle Paul's letters were responses to questions and problems in the church, and they waited months for an answer!

**Expect God to Show Up:** Most of your prep-time should be prayer-time. Ask God to be present in your group. Invite the Holy Spirit to be present in your group. Ask God to show you where He is working in your group. Pray for the challenging dynamics in the group. Allow God to lead your group's discussion by being open to what is coming to the surface in the discussion. Shepherd the group to engage with what God is doing. Pray that group members don't leave the same way they came!

**Honor Start/Stop Times.** Your group should agree together on when the group should start and end. Honor those times by beginning on-time, and manage the time so you don't go over.

## **Finding Hope: Week One**

### **SCRIPTURE: Matthew 4:12-17 and Isaiah 9:1-2**

**The Big Idea:** Hope rises whenever we see light shining in the darkness. Jesus is God's light in the darkness.

### **Share**

1. We reviewed the story of the Chilean miners. Have you had an experience of being in darkness? what do you remember about "seeing the light"?
2. What are some of the dark circumstances surrounding us today ?

### **Study**

Read Matthew 4:12-17 and Isaiah 9:1-2

1. What were the "dark things" going on at this time? (Pastor Paul mentioned 4 things alluded to in these verses)
2. In Isaiah 9, what gets rid of the gloom?
3. Who does the light shine on?
4. How do we know Jesus is the light? (Isaiah 9: 6,7; John 8:12) [Additional reading in John 1: 1-9]
5. How is Jesus' role as the light of the world the foundation of our hope?
6. Why is Jesus' message of repentance the next part of His message? Matt 4:17

### **Symbolize**

1. How can Jesus transform the darkness in our world today?
2. Who does God want you to show light to? Pray for an opportunity to do that this week. Jesus light transforms the darkness