



# Sermon Discussion Guide

## Winning Battles You Can't Afford to Lose

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*"And now these three remain: faith, hope and love." 1 Corinthians 13:13 (NIV)*

Much has been spoken and written about faith and love. However, hope is a strength God knows we need as well. Hope keeps us encouraged when circumstances tend to pull us down. Hope and confidence help us become more: successful, compassionate, healthy, productive, satisfied, ethical, forgiving, caring, and loving. Let's explore how to keep hope alive in our lives.

**OPEN YOUR GROUP WITH A PRAYER. THIS IS ONLY A GUIDE – SELECT THE POINTS YOU WANT TO DISCUSS.**

*"But 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. Ask each member to share a time in their life when their hope was strong. If discouragement precedes destruction, what spiritual practices can keep hope alive and spiritual batteries charged? How can key relationships with other believers prevent discouragement? Why can encouraging others renew your strength in the Lord?

*"Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead..." Philippians 3:13 (NIV)*

2. If we were to remember the best and forget the rest, what is God telling us to do and how should we respond? God has forgiven us our sins, so why is it so difficult for Christians to forget the past and move forward?

*"For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." Ephesians 2:10 (NIV)*

3. We are inspired by God's word that God has prepared us in advance to make great things happen. Share with the group a plan, work or ministry that God has for you to do. In what ways did God prepare you?

### Diving Deeper (optional)

*"I sought the LORD, and he answered me: he delivered me from all my fears." Psalm 34:4 (NIV)*

1. What has God called you to do that scares you? What would it take for you to move past your fear and live for the hope and purpose he has given you? Who could encourage you as you move forward in faith?
2. Why is it important to shift your focus to God when you are afraid? Why do you trust God in some areas but not in others? What do you need to do to get closer to God in order to experience greater hope in your life?

**REVIEW ANY ASSIGNMENTS OR COMMITMENTS MADE DURING YOUR PREVIOUS MEETING.**



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## Sermon Discussion Guide Leader Notes

### Suggestions for This Week’s Study

- Icebreaker: Share a time when you felt joyful for being used according to your purpose.
- Goal: Help group members recognize that hope is critical to being fully used by God.
- Pray: Lord, thank you for the hope we have in you and in your Word. Help us stay charged up spiritually, future focused, and living to make great things happen through your power. Let us experience new strength, new heights, new joy as we live out the calling you have put on our lives. Help us stay connected to you and encourage one another as we live out our faith, hope and love daily. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

### Preparing to Lead Your Group

- ✓ **PRAY** for insight as you begin to prepare for leading your group. Ask for God’s wisdom, that the Holy Spirit will be the teacher and that you will be God’s instrument to lead the group to greater understanding and a willingness to commit to becoming more like God. Prayer should be your primary source of personal preparation for leading your group.
- ✓ **PLAN** where you want to take your group in the next 60-90 days. Is your group strong in some areas and weak in others? How can you challenge the members to live more balanced Christian lives? Consider God’s five purposes for the church: Fellowship, Discipleship, Ministry, Mission and Worship, and make a plan to encourage your group members to growth and commitment in their weak areas.
- ✓ **PONDER YOUR PROGRESS** after each session and at the end of a series. Reflect on what went well and what didn’t. Re-evaluation is key to your growth as a leader. Consider whether your plan is being effective in moving the group to greater understanding and commitment. How are you doing with leading the discussion: is it stimulating, challenging, and meaningful? Are you able to keep the group on track? Do you need to make some changes?

### Using This Sermon Discussion Guide

- Talk It Over is a tool to aid you in meeting the needs of your group. We’ve designed it so it can be completed easily within 30-45 minutes. As the discussion leader, you should preview and evaluate the questions based on the needs of your group. Decide in advance what is most important to focus on, should time not allow for the entire lesson.
- Feel free to adapt the format to meet the needs of your group. If your group is mature and wants to dig deeper, consider using the Diving Deeper section or add additional Scripture and ask suitable questions. Remember that this is only a guide.
- The questions relating to Bible study methods are helpful to develop Bible literacy and spiritual maturity in our lives. You can help your group be aware of their needs in these areas by using these questions as a regular part of each discussion.
- Personal applications are essential for growth and should be included in every discussion. When discussing how they will apply principles, group members may state very general goals such as “I need to spend more time in prayer.” It is important for you to help people make goals that are very specific and commit to specific plans of action by asking, for example, “How are you going to begin?” An example is to get up 25 minutes earlier each morning, spending 15 minutes reading the Bible and 10 minutes in prayer. Encourage each group member to be accountable to the group for personal progress at the next meeting.
- Your goal as the leader is to bring the group into a stimulating discussion that helps the members recognize their needs for personal life change. Ultimately you want them to be willing to commit to change with accountability to the group. Accountability helps us to persevere in our commitments and achieve the blessings of success.