



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

The logo for The Good Book Company features the text "thegoodbook" in a lowercase, sans-serif font, with a stylized, curved line above the "o" and "o" in "book" that suggests an open book or a wing. Below "thegoodbook" is the word "COMPANY" in a smaller, uppercase, sans-serif font.

thegoodbook
COMPANY



WELCOME TO
HOPE | **EXPLORED**

There are few emotions more powerful than hope. It's a spark inside you that brings a smile to your lips, a light that shows on your face, a feeling that lifts your head and pulls you forward. Hope is what keeps us alive.

These days hope often feels hard to come by. But real hope is what the Christian faith claims to offer: a joyful expectation for the future, based on true events in the past, which changes everything about my present.

Over three sessions, *Hope Explored* shows guests how the gospel infuses life with the hope, peace and purpose we all long for. We'll see how Jesus was himself the fulfilment of a promise of hope made to God's Old Testament people centuries before; and how his life, death and resurrection are the guarantee of an even greater fulfilment to come.

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit" (Romans 15:13).

The Hope Explored Team

CONTENTS

Section 1: How to run Hope Explored	7
Getting started	9
Before the course	15
God's role in evangelism and ours	19
Section 2: Hope Explored Sessions	27
Introduction	29
SESSION 1 Hope	31
SESSION 2 Peace	43
SESSION 3 Purpose	53
Appendices	63
Questions about Christian belief	65
Can we rely on Luke's Gospel?	71
Film scripts	73

SECTION 1
HOW TO RUN
HOPE | EXPLORED



REGISTER YOUR COURSE AT **WWW.HOPE.EXPLORED**

Visit the *Hope Explored* website to register your course and gain access to additional materials:

- **Digital picture prompts** for the discussion activity
- Outlines and **transcripts** of the teaching films
- A **sample presentation** for use when running *Hope Explored* online
- Guidance for **setting up your course**, including setting up a venue, inviting guests, and choosing and training leaders
- **Promotional materials** including trailers, logos and posters



GETTING STARTED

Hope Explored is a three-session series about the person and work of Jesus, and the hope that can be found in him. It is intended to be an introduction to the gospel for those who would not consider themselves to be followers of Jesus.

Through the prophet Isaiah, God promised to send a Saviour who would be called “Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6). Through the work of Jesus that promise was fulfilled. *Hope Explored* shows how the events of Jesus’ time on earth in the past can change our future and transform our present.

STRUCTURE OF THE COURSE

Each session explores an aspect of Jesus’ work: his life, his death and his resurrection. Each session also explores one of the great longings we have in life: for hope, for peace and for purpose. Through teaching and studies from Luke’s Gospel, Jesus is seen to be the fulfilment of God’s promise through Isaiah, and the fulfilment of our greatest needs.

By exploring Jesus’ life in Session 1, we see that Jesus is the Mighty God, who fulfils our longing for hope. By exploring Jesus’ death in Session 2, we see that Jesus is the Prince of Peace, who makes it possible for us to have peace with God and one another. By exploring Jesus’ resurrection in Session 3, we see that Jesus is the Everlasting Father, whose defeat of death gives life the purpose we’re looking for. And having explored these things, we are left with a question: will you have Jesus as your Wonderful Counsellor?

The chart below shows how the course is structured and how the themes fit together.

	SESSION 1	SESSION 2	SESSION 3
Film Part 1	Hope	Peace	Purpose
Discussion activity	Where do you think the world is going?	How do you think we can find peace?	Where do you look for a sense of purpose?
Film Part 2	Luke 8:22-25, 40-56	Luke 23:32, 39-46	Luke 24:1-11, 36-44
Explore	Luke 1:1-4; 8:40-42, 49-56	Luke 23:32-47	Luke 24:1-6, 9-12, 36-44
	Jesus is the Mighty God, with the power to meet our deepest needs.	Jesus is the Prince of Peace, who tears down the barrier between us and God.	Jesus is the Everlasting Father, whose defeat of death gives life the meaning we long for.
	Will you have Jesus as your Wonderful Counsellor?		

KEY THEMES

As you use *Hope Explored*, look out for the following themes, which run through the material:

- **Definition of hope:** Hope is a joyful expectation for the future, based on true events in the past, which changes everything about my present.
- **Fulfilment of prophecy:** The Christian faith is based on evidence – the promises of God for the future made in the Old Testament, which were fulfilled in history in the person and work of Jesus. This in turn gives us a confident hope that God will keep his promise to bring about a new creation for his people in the future.
- **Turning points:** The events of Jesus' life, death and resurrection are the turning points of history; they can be turning points in our lives too.

STRUCTURE OF A SESSION

How and when you meet will depend on your situation. Many courses run on a midweek evening for three weeks; you may meet at a church, at home, in a coffee shop or online.

Advice and additional resources for running a course are available to download from the *Hope Explored* website at www.hope.explo.red.

Below is a recommended structure for a session. A key part of *Hope Explored* is building relationships with guests. You may want to consider serving a meal before the session or offering hot drinks and cake. At the end of the session, encourage guests to stay and chat further if they would like to do so.

- **Film Part 1** | 10 minutes
- **Discussion activity** | 15 minutes
- **Film Part 2** | 20 minutes
- **Explore** | 30 minutes

The **Film Part 1** introduces the theme of the session.

The **Discussion activity** gives guests the opportunity to share their views on the theme of the session. Picture prompts are provided to spark discussion. These are included in the Handbook, but the activity will work better for groups if everyone is looking at a larger set of pictures together. These can be purchased from The Good Book Company or downloaded from www.hope.explored to print out or display on a screen.

The **Film Part 2** contains teaching from Luke's Gospel. It picks up on the theme of the session and shows how it finds its fulfilment in the person and work of Jesus. Alternatively you may prefer to give the Bible teaching live, in person. The transcripts of both parts of the films are included at the back of this Leader's Handbook for your use, and can also be downloaded from the *Hope Explored* website.

The **Explore** section gives guests the opportunity to read and discuss a Bible passage for themselves. The questions reinforce and explore in more depth the material covered in the teaching film. This Leader's Handbook contains notes with additional guidance for leaders.

REQUIRED MATERIALS

To use *Hope Explored* most effectively, you will need the following materials:

- A copy of **Luke's Gospel** or a **Bible** for each leader and guest. The Bible version used in the *Hope Explored* materials and teaching films is the New International Version (NIV 2011).
- A copy of the **Handbook** for each guest and a copy of the **Leader's Handbook** for each leader.
- Pens, to allow guests to make notes or jot down questions.
- A copy of the **picture prompts** for the **discussion activity** for each small group. (Optional but recommended – see above.)

REGISTER YOUR COURSE

Visit www.hope.explo.red to register your course. This gives you access to a range of additional resources, which can be downloaded and used or adapted for your context:

- **Picture prompts** for the discussion activity
- Outlines and **transcripts** of the teaching films
- Sample **presentation** for use when running *Hope Explored* online
- Guidance for **setting up your course**, including setting up a venue, inviting guests, and choosing and training leaders
- **Promotional materials** including trailers, logos, and posters

The www.hope.explo.red website also contains information about the *Christianity Explored* and *Life Explored* series. *Hope Explored* is an introduction to the person and work of Jesus, but after three sessions many guests will be left wanting more. Consider following this series with *Christianity Explored* or *Life Explored* to help your guests to continue exploring the Christian faith.



BEFORE THE COURSE

Before the course starts, there are a number of things you should do.

GET TO KNOW LUKE'S GOSPEL, THE HANDBOOK AND THE FILMS

Read through the Bible passages, and through the whole of Luke's Gospel to set them in context. Familiarize yourself with the Handbook that your group will be using and the guidance on the answers to questions in the study-guide section of this Leader's Handbook (page 27).

As you prepare, you might find it helpful to make notes in your copy of the group members' Handbook. Some people prefer to use an annotated Handbook to lead their group instead of referring back to this Leader's Handbook. Either way, you will feel much more confident to lead your group once you've prepared for the Bible studies and discussions.

As your group members journey through *Hope Explored*, you will need to be prepared to answer questions that arise from the teaching films and from the Bible text. There is a section on page 65 that will help you prepare for these questions in advance. If, during the session, you don't know the answer to someone's question, just acknowledge the fact and ask if you can find the answer in time for the next session.

If you are using the *Hope Explored* films, watch each episode through several times. This will help you to become more familiar with the material and also enable you to refer back to it during discussion: "Do you remember what was said in the film?"

PREPARE YOUR PERSONAL STORY

“Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect...”

(1 Peter 3:15)

A personal story or testimony is an account of God’s work in your life. Everybody who has been born again and who is becoming like Christ has a unique, interesting and powerful story, regardless of whether or not it appears spectacular.

At some point during the course, you may feel it appropriate to share your story with the group. Often someone will ask you directly how you became a Christian, and you will need to have an answer ready.

You may find the guidelines below helpful as you prepare your story:

- Keep it honest, personal and interesting.

Tip: Your first sentence should make people sit up and listen. Anything too dull-sounding – for example, “Well, I don’t have a very interesting story” – may make people switch off immediately.

- Keep it short.

Tip: Any more than three minutes may stretch people’s patience. They can always ask you questions if they want to know more.

- Keep pointing to Christ, not yourself.

Tip: Your story is a great opportunity to communicate the gospel. Always include what it is that you believe, as well as how you came to believe it. As a general guide, try to explain why you think Jesus is God, how his death affects you personally, and what changes God has made in your life.

- *Prepare your personal story. (List the main points below.) You might find it useful to share your story with other leaders and get their feedback.*
-
-

PREPARE FOR DIFFICULT QUESTIONS

As you look at the Bible with guests and discuss the claims of Christianity, it is likely to draw out a number of questions that will need careful handling. The appendices, starting on page 63, will help you deal with some of the most common questions that people may ask.

PRAY

- that those invited will attend the course.
- that God would enable you to prepare well.
- for the logistics of organizing the course.
- for good relationships with your co-leaders and group members.
- that God would equip you to lead faithfully.
- that the Holy Spirit would open the blind eyes of those who attend.



GOD'S ROLE IN EVANGELISM **AND OURS**

We need to distinguish between God's role in evangelism and our role. It's going to be incredibly frustrating if we try to fulfil God's role – because only the Creator of the universe is able to do that.

Read 2 Corinthians 4:1-6

Answer the following questions from the verses you've just read:

What is God's role in evangelism?

Why can't people see the truth of the gospel?

What is our role in evangelism?

How should we carry out our role in evangelism?

GOD'S ROLE IN EVANGELISM

What is God's role in evangelism? God makes "his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:6).

In other words, God enables us to recognize that Jesus is God. God makes it possible – by his Holy Spirit – for a person to see who Jesus is. When Paul is on the Damascus road, he asks, "Who are you, Lord?" and is told, "I am Jesus" (Acts 9:5). That is the moment of his conversion – when he recognizes for the first time who Jesus actually is.

The beginning of 2 Corinthians 4:6 reminds us that God said, "Let light shine out of darkness". That is a reference to the miracle of creation in Genesis 1:3. This same God, who brought light into the world at creation, now shines light into the hearts of human beings, enabling them to see that Jesus is God. In other words, for people to recognize that Jesus is God, God must perform a miracle.

People do not become Christians just because we share the gospel with them. God must shine his light in people's hearts so that they recognize and respond to the truth of the gospel.

And we know from 2 Corinthians 4:4 that people can't see the truth of the gospel because "the god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers".

Here, Paul reminds us that we are in the midst of a supernatural battlefield. The reason so many reject the gospel is that the devil is at work, preventing people from recognizing who Jesus is.

The devil blinds people by making them chase after the things of this world, which are passing away and which cannot save them. Their concerns are confined to the here-and-now: their popularity, their family, their relationships, their material possessions. They are blind to anything beyond that.

As a result, they can only see Jesus in the here-and-now, perhaps only as a great moral teacher; his eternal significance is completely obscured. And, according to verse 4, Satan is determined to prevent people from seeing "the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God". Satan does not want people to recognize who Jesus is.

OUR ROLE IN EVANGELISM

What then is our role in evangelism? "We preach ... Jesus Christ as Lord" (2 Corinthians 4:5).

The word "preach" can evoke negative images, but it derives from a word simply meaning "herald": someone who relates important announcements from the king to his kingdom. Our role is to tell people the gospel and leave the Spirit of God to convict them of its truth.

These verses also reveal the attitude we should adopt as we preach. We are to be like "servants for Jesus' sake" (2 Corinthians 4:5). The word translated "servants" literally means "slaves" in Greek. Paul was determined to present Christ to others without any hint of self-promotion.

We must remember that the only difference between ourselves and an unbeliever is that God, in his mercy, has opened our blind eyes and illuminated our hearts by his Holy Spirit. We should be forever grateful and so seek to promote Christ, not ourselves.

We must keep preaching Christ as Lord and, remembering that only a miracle from God can open blind eyes, we must keep praying that God will shine his light in the hearts of unbelievers.

2 Corinthians 4:1-6 also helps us to carry out our role in the right way: “We do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God ... By setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to everyone’s conscience in the sight of God ... For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord.”

When we tell people about Christ, we should demonstrate the following qualities:

Integrity – “We do not use deception.” We are straight with people; we are genuine and sincere, and we never use any kind of emotional manipulation.

Fidelity – We do not “distort the word of God”. We have to tell people the tough bits. If, for example, we don’t tell people about sin, about hell, and about the necessity of repentance, then we are distorting God’s word. Preaching these hard truths means trusting in the work of the Holy Spirit to draw people to Christ, however “difficult” the message.

Humility – “What we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord.” We must draw people to Jesus, not to ourselves. We must remember that some people are very impressionable, and that we want them to make a decision to follow Christ because they are convinced by the truth and are being led by the Holy Spirit, rather than being manipulated by their admiration of the course leader.

As we use *Hope Explored* to preach the gospel, we must remember that it is up to God whether somebody becomes a Christian or not. Only he can open blind eyes, so we must trust him for the results.

HELPING SOMEONE WHO WANTS TO FOLLOW CHRIST

When someone shares with you their desire to follow Christ for the first time, it's surely one of the most joyous privileges of the Christian life.

But, like Jesus, we need to be clear – from the outset – about what prospective believers are getting themselves into. In Luke 14, Jesus says, “Whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, saying, 'This person began to build and wasn't able to finish'” (Luke 14:27-30).

Grace may be free, but it is not cheap. It cost Jesus his life. And Jesus calls us to give up our lives too, if we want to follow him. The invitation may be extended to all, but only those who obey Jesus' call – to carry their cross – can receive it.

So when we find ourselves in the privileged position of helping someone who wants to follow Christ, we must be clear about what following him will mean for them.

And according to Jesus, it means we must “repent and believe” (Mark 1:15). This won't be easy in a world which rejects Jesus and those who want to follow him.

- Explain that “**repent**” means we turn around from the direction we're currently heading in and turn back to God. We start living life to please him, rather than continuing to rebel against him.
- Explain that “**believe**” means we believe that Jesus is who he says he is and that he died for our sin on the cross – and we're putting our trust in him as a result.

So to repent and believe is something that we do decisively at a moment in time, but it is not just a moment to look back on; it is a new, ongoing way of life. Help your guest to see what repentance and belief will look like in their daily lives:

- **A new attitude to God.** A follower of Jesus is deeply thankful to God, and longs to know him better and love him more. This longing is nurtured by reading the Bible, praying and spending time with his people.

Encourage your guest by offering to read the Bible one to one with them, and suggesting some daily Bible-reading notes. A follow-up course like *Discipleship Explored* is also a great way for a new believer to get started.

Encourage them to pray to God about what they've discovered on *Hope Explored*, thanking him for Jesus and what he means to them. Assure them that they can speak freely in their own words, because God sees our hearts and understands our deepest longings, even if our words are hesitant and uncertain.

- **A new attitude to God's people.** A follower of Jesus longs to love and serve their Christian brothers and sisters – and, in turn, be loved and served by them.

This shows itself when a new believer commits themselves to a local church – a particular body of believers they can love. As Jesus said, "Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:34-35).

Jesus also commanded his followers to be baptized (Matthew 28:18-20) as a way of publicly identifying with Christ and his people. Encourage your guest to speak to their pastor or minister about being baptized.

Offer to meet your guest at church on Sunday and help them to establish a pattern of attending each week. Encourage them to join a small group and to use whatever skills they have in serving their brothers and sisters in Christ.

- **A new attitude to ourselves.** A follower of Jesus longs to please him by rejecting sin and living for Jesus instead.

There will be areas of our lives which we know – or will come to see – are not pleasing to Jesus. To repent and believe means that we willingly turn away from those ways of living and try to live life in the way God intends. This is the life Jesus described as life “to the full” (John 10:10).

- **A new attitude to others.** A follower of Jesus seeks to love others.

We’re called to reflect Christ by relating to others with love, looking for ways to treat them as we would treat ourselves: “So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you” (Matthew 7:12). And one aspect of that love for others will be our desire to tell them the good news about what Jesus has done.