

The Incredible Journey:

To Life



A Six Week Small Group Discussion Guide
Hope Lutheran Church

Help For The Facilitator!

- To **prepare** for the meeting read through that week's whole lesson so you are familiar with it.
- Don't have your group read the Bible verse or questions to themselves, always read them **out loud**.
- Don't do everything yourself, you are facilitating this meeting so it is **okay to ask**, "who would be willing to read the Scriptures?" or "who would be willing to read the discussion questions?"
- **Don't force** people to respond to questions or pray by "going around the circle", allow people to answer as they are moved to do so.
- If someone is **dominating** the meeting and won't let anyone else speak, it is okay to gently nudge the conversation away from them by saying something like, "thank you, does anyone else have something to add? We want to be sure everyone gets a chance to take part in the discussion if they want to" when the talker stops to take a breath.
- Don't feel like you have to have the answer to every question or need to be the first to speak. A little **silence** is okay after the question is asked and will encourage the quieter members of your group to speak.
- If you are encountering a **problem** and are not sure what to do about it feel free to give one of the people below a call, they are experienced small group leaders.

Chuck at 941-2294 or Michele at 891-5620

Explanation of Terms

Covenant: These are promises you make to each other before you begin your first meeting. You will find a form to fill out together on page 3.

Guiding Principles: For any organization it is as important to know how you will proceed as to know where you are going. For God's church it is doubly important. If our journey is not as God centered as our goal then we journey in vain. These Guiding Principles, posted on our website and hanging from the ceiling in Hope's foyer, remind us how our life's journey can be taken. Each Guiding Principle has a Bible verse connected to it that is not used in the discussion but can be referred to if you wish.

Icebreaker: These help your group get to know each other better in a fun and interactive way. Feel free to use one of your own. You shouldn't spend more than 15 minutes on this.

Prayer: These can simply be read or you can make up your own. Prayer is an important reminder each time that these meetings have God at their center. Any concerns or praises the members want to share can be written down in this booklet in the space provided each week as a reminder to pray for them each day and as a journal to help us see how God answers our prayers over time.

Opener Questions: These are used to get the brain warmed up and thinking about the days subject in a different way. Don't spend more than 10 minutes on these.

Bible Readings: the Contemporary English Version is used. Have someone read it out loud.

Discussion Questions: These are here to help you think about what God is saying to you in these verses. Some questions will not click with the group, feel free to move on but don't rush things if a good conversation lingers over one question. You are being guided by the Holy Spirit here and not a list of questions, so don't worry if you can't get through them all.

Details: taking turns facilitating different aspects of your group time makes for a more interesting discussion as well as not making one person feel like they have to shoulder the whole load. Be sure to make these decisions before you leave each week.

GROUP COVENANT

A group covenant is a valuable tool that can help make sure every group member has the same idea of what the group is all about. The process of filling this out at your first meeting should involve everyone in the decision making.

We will meet for 6 weeks, after which we will decide if we wish to continue as a group. If we do decide to continue we will reconsider this covenant.

We will meet on _____ (day of the week)

Our meetings will start at _____ and end at _____ and we will strive to start and end on time.

We will meet at _____ or rotate house to house.

We will take care of the following details before ending our meeting each week: Childcare, Refreshments, and Leadership.

We will agree to the following rules for our small group:

- **PRIORITY:** While we are in this group we will give group meetings priority.
- **PARTICIPATION:** Everyone is given the right to their own opinion and all questions are encouraged and respected.
- **BE APPROPRIATE:** We acknowledge that this is not a counseling session and we will not use these meetings as a way to solve serious personal problems.
- **CONFIDENTIALITY:** Anything said in the meeting is never to be repeated outside the meeting.
- **EMPTY CHAIR:** The group stays open to new people as long as group size and space requirements allow.
- **SUPPORT:** Permission is given to call each other in times of need
- **Other:** _____

Signature: _____

Week 1: Who's Journey?

Guiding Principle: Jesus is our Lord and Savior.

Philippians 2:6-11

Icebreaker: Everyone pairs up with someone they don't know very well and they have 3 minutes total to learn as many things as they can about the other person (that's 1.5 minutes each). When the time is up come back together and each pair introduces the other person to the group, listing as many things as they can remember about that person. As each person shares about their partner deal them a card for each item of information. In the end everyone plays a poker hand of their five best cards. You can even have a goofy prize for the winner if you wish.

Prayer: Dear God, we thank you for the opportunity to gather here today, help us get to know each other better and to journey through your Word together in confidence. Help us to connect this week's guiding principle into our journey. In Jesus name we pray. Amen

Opener:

- What is the most amazing event you have ever witnessed?
- What one event of history would you wish you had been a witness to?

Bible Reading: Luke 8:40-48

⁴⁰Everyone had been waiting for Jesus, and when he came back, a crowd was there to welcome him. ⁴¹Just then the man in charge of the Jewish meeting place came and knelt down in front of Jesus. His name was Jairus, and he begged Jesus to come to his home ⁴²because his twelve-year-old child was dying. She was his only daughter.

While Jesus was on his way, people were crowding all around him. ⁴³In the crowd was a woman who had been bleeding for twelve years. She had spent everything she had on doctors, ^[a] but none of them could make her well. ⁴⁴As soon as she came up behind Jesus and barely touched his clothes, her bleeding stopped.

⁴⁵"Who touched me?" Jesus asked.

While everyone was denying it, Peter said, "Master, people are crowding all around and pushing you from every side." ⁴⁶But Jesus answered, "Someone touched me, because I felt power going out from me." ⁴⁷The woman knew that she could not hide, so she came trembling and knelt down in front of Jesus. She told everyone why she had touched him and that she had been healed right away.

⁴⁸Jesus said to the woman, "You are now well because of your faith. May God give you peace!"

Discussion Questions:

1. It is against Jewish law for a woman to touch another man besides her husband and it is also unlawful to touch someone if you are bleeding because you are considered unclean. Why do you think this woman was willing to risk so much to touch Jesus?
2. What paths had this woman already taken to try to find healing?
3. What paths does the world take to find, happiness, wholeness, healing, purpose and peace?
4. Do you think it was wrong for her to have interrupted Jesus' journey to heal a young child in order to heal herself? (the result of this interruption is the death of Jarius daughter vs. 49)
5. What path does Jesus take to find happiness, wholeness, healing, purpose and peace?

6. What type of interruptions drive you crazy and which ones are you willing to stop everything for?
7. What would motivate you to interrupt your boss, teacher, spouse or an authority figure?
8. What might the consequences be of those interruptions?
9. Who are the people in your life who would drop everything to help you, and who would you do it for and why?

Prayer Journal: *This is everyone's chance to share a Praise and a Problem with the group. Basically you are saying, here is something I can thank God for this week and here is something I need help from God with this week. You are not sharing deep dark personal matters here and no one is required to share if they don't wish to. By sharing with the group in conversation you are in fact praying to God. By jotting down, in the space below, everyone's Praises and Problems you can look it over later this week and pray for everyone. There is nothing better than knowing that a group of people are lifting up your needs to God in prayer!*

Ending Prayer: Dear God, encourage us to enter this journey of faith with you and thank you for being willing to walk with each of us in our lives. Remind us that the interruptions of our lives might be opportunities to encounter with you. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

Don't forget the...

Details: For next week: Where will we meet? _____ Who will facilitate? _____
 Who will provide refreshments? _____ Who will pray? _____ Who will contact a
 babysitter? _____ Who will read the Bible passage? _____

Week 2: Getting in Shape for the Journey: Proper Nutrition

Guiding Principle: Through prayer, worship, sacraments and study we continue to grow in our trust of God. 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

Icebreaker: What is your favorite hobby and how did you learn the skills needed for it?

Prayer: Dear God, we thank you for the opportunity to gather here today, help us get to know each other better and to journey through your Word together in confidence. Help us to connect this week's guiding principle into our journey. In Jesus name we pray. Amen

Opener:

- What happens when you doubt? Can you doubt and trust at the same time?
- When in your life did you feel physically strong and what activities were you participating in to achieve this?

Bible Reading: Matthew 14:22-33

²²Right away, Jesus made his disciples get into a boat and start back across the lake. ^[a] But he stayed until he had sent the crowds away. ²³Then he went up on a mountain where he could be alone and pray. Later that evening, he was still there. ²⁴By this time the boat was a long way from the shore. It was going against the wind and was being tossed around by the waves. ²⁵A little while before morning, Jesus came walking on the water toward his disciples. ²⁶When they saw him, they thought he was a ghost. They were terrified and started screaming.

²⁷At once, Jesus said to them, "Don't worry! I am Jesus. Don't be afraid."

²⁸Peter replied, "Lord, if it is really you, tell me to come to you on the water."

²⁹"Come on!" Jesus said. Peter then got out of the boat and started walking on the water toward him.

³⁰But when Peter saw how strong the wind was, he was afraid and started sinking. "Save me, Lord!" he shouted.

³¹Right away, Jesus reached out his hand. He helped Peter up and said, "You surely don't have much faith. Why do you doubt?"

³²When Jesus and Peter got into the boat, the wind died down. ³³The men in the boat worshiped Jesus and said, "You really are the Son of God!"

Discussion Questions:

1. What were the values and beliefs that allowed Peter to put aside his doubt and get out of the boat?
2. What activities help you to develop those same values or strengthen the ones you already have?
3. How does Jesus response to Peter help you to take risk?
4. Would you rather play it safe and never fail or live life as an adventure and risk failure?
5. What does "getting out of your boat" mean to you?
6. What would you consider to be out of your comfort zone in matters of faith, (ie telling others about Jesus, preaching in front of people, praying out loud or in public, being a leader, reading the Bible, going to studies, asking for forgiveness or forgiving others, giving time and money)
7. How would you describe a strong faith and how would you begin to achieve it?
8. When have you doubted yourself, or others and what was the consequence?

Prayer Journal: *This is everyone's chance to share a Praise and a Problem with the group. Basically you are saying, here is something I can thank God for this week and here is something I need help from God with this week. You are not sharing deep dark personal matters here and no one is required to share if they don't wish to. By sharing with the group in conversation you are in fact praying to God. By jotting down, in the space below, everyone's Praises and Problems you can look it over later this week and pray for everyone. There is nothing better than knowing that a group of people are lifting up your needs to God in prayer!*

Ending Prayer: Dear God, thank you for inviting us to jump into this journey with you. Help us to seek ways to grow in our trust of you amidst the doubts and turmoil of our lives. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

Details: For next week: Where will we meet? _____ Who will facilitate?
_____ Who will provide refreshments? _____ Who will pray? _____
Who will contact a babysitter? _____ Who will read the Bible passage? _____

N

2

9

1/10

5

6

8

7

W

4

3

E



S

9

Week 3: Directions for the Journey: Compass for life

Guiding Principle: We look for God's presence in everyone and everything.

Isaiah 44:24

Icebreaker: Starting at the dot at the center of the previous page follow the directions given below. **Do not** use a ruler, you have to estimate distances and draw them freehand only. When everyone is finished compare what you've drawn and then check out the box at the bottom of page 16. Directions (all numbers are in inches, compass directions are on the page): 3N, 1W, 7S, 2W, 5N, 6E, 4S, 2W, 3N, and 1W.

Prayer: Dear God, we thank you for the opportunity to gather here today, help us get to know each other better and to journey through your Word together in confidence. Help us to connect this week's guiding principle into our journey. In Jesus name we pray. Amen

Opener:

- When you are down, would you rather be alone or with others? Why?
- Tell of an experience that you could not help but tell people about?
- What about God warms your heart?

Bible Reading: Luke 24:13-35

¹³That same day two of Jesus' disciples were going to the village of Emmaus, which was about seven miles from Jerusalem. ¹⁴As they were talking and thinking about what had happened, ¹⁵Jesus came near and started walking along beside them. ¹⁶But they did not know who he was. ¹⁷Jesus asked them, "What were you talking about as you walked along?"

The two of them stood there looking sad and gloomy. ¹⁸Then the one named Cleopas asked Jesus, "Are you the only person from Jerusalem who didn't know what was happening there these last few days?"

¹⁹"What do you mean?" Jesus asked.

They answered: Those things that happened to Jesus from Nazareth. By what he did and said he showed that he was a powerful prophet, who pleased God and all the people. ²⁰Then the chief priests and our leaders had him arrested and sentenced to die on a cross. ²¹We had hoped that he would be the one to set Israel free! But it has already been three days since all this happened.

²²Some women in our group surprised us. They had gone to the tomb early in the morning, ²³but did not find the body of Jesus. They came back, saying that they had seen a vision of angels who told them that he is alive. ²⁴Some men from our group went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said. But they didn't see Jesus either.

²⁵Then Jesus asked the two disciples, "Why can't you understand? How can you be so slow to believe all that the prophets said? ²⁶Didn't you know that the Messiah would have to suffer before he was given his glory?" ²⁷Jesus then explained everything written about himself in the Scriptures, beginning with the Law of Moses and the Books of the Prophets. ²⁸When the two of them came near the village where they were going, Jesus seemed to be going farther. ²⁹They begged him, "Stay with us! It's already late, and the sun is going down." So Jesus went into the house to stay with them.

³⁰After Jesus sat down to eat, he took some bread. He blessed it and broke it. Then he gave it to them. ³¹At once they knew who he was, but he disappeared. ³²They said to each other, "When he talked with us along the road and explained the Scriptures to us, didn't it warm our hearts?" ³³So they got right up and returned to Jerusalem.

The two disciples found the eleven apostles and the others gathered together. ³⁴And they learned from the group that the Lord was really alive and had appeared to Peter. ³⁵Then the disciples from Emmaus told what happened on the road and how they knew he was the Lord when he broke the bread.

Discussion Questions:

1. Do you find God in many of the activities and people you meet or do you feel that God is absent

most of the time?

2. Do you think it's odd that these two guys pick this time to leave, when there is news that angels are visiting women and Jesus' body is gone?
3. What is there about faith that drives people away?
4. What are your expectations of your faith, God, and the church?
5. How does your expectation align with reality?
6. Are you open to the possibility that your understanding and expectations of God and church could be wrong?
7. Does this keep you from seeing God?
8. Why do you think that the two disciples recognized Jesus when he broke the bread and not before?
9. How can we as followers of Jesus exhibit these same recognizable traits?
10. Do you sense God's presence in the breaking of the bread? Does receiving Holy Communion more often strengthen your faith or weaken your faith?
11. What was the result of the two disciples seeing Jesus?

Prayer Journal: *This is everyone's chance to share a Praise and a Problem with the group. Basically you are saying, here is something I can thank God for this week and here is something I need help from God with this week. You are not sharing deep dark personal matters here and no one is required to share if they don't wish to. By sharing with the group in conversation you are in fact praying to God. By jotting down, in the space below, everyone's Praises and Problems you can look it over later this week and pray for everyone. There is nothing better than knowing that a group of people are lifting up your needs to God in prayer!*

Ending Prayer: Dear God we thank you for revealing yourself to us. Keep the distractions of our expectations from diverting us from your path. Help us to look for you daily in the simple blessings of our life. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Details: For next week: Where will we meet? _____ Who will facilitate? _____
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babysitter? _____ Who will read the Bible passage? _____

Week 4: A Good Pair of Boots

Guiding Principle: We live our lives in the joy of God's grace and forgiveness in Jesus. Isaiah 65:17-19

Icebreaker: Divide into birth order groups (oldest child, middle children, youngest) and each group comes to a consensus about what was the best and the worst aspects about their birth order. Then get back together and share what you decided with the whole group.

Prayer: Dear God, we thank you for the opportunity to gather here today, help us get to know each other better and to journey through your Word together in confidence. Help us to connect this week's guiding principle into our journey. In Jesus name we pray. Amen

Opener:

- When was the first time you thought about leaving home?
- Did you ever leave and have to come back?

Bible Reading: Luke 15: 11-32

¹¹Jesus also told them another story:

Once a man had two sons. ¹²The younger son said to his father, "Give me my share of the property." So the father divided his property between his two sons.

¹³Not long after that, the younger son packed up everything he owned and left for a foreign country, where he wasted all his money in wild living. ¹⁴He had spent everything, when a bad famine spread through that whole land. Soon he had nothing to eat.

¹⁵He went to work for a man in that country, and the man sent him out to take care of his pigs. ^[a] ¹⁶He would have been glad to eat what the pigs were eating, ^[b] but no one gave him a thing. ¹⁷Finally, he came to his senses and said, "My father's workers have plenty to eat, and here I am, starving to death! ¹⁸I will go to my father and say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against God in heaven and against you. ¹⁹I am no longer good enough to be called your son. Treat me like one of your workers.' "

²⁰The younger son got up and started back to his father. But when he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt sorry for him. He ran to his son and hugged and kissed him.

²¹The son said, "Father, I have sinned against God in heaven and against you. I am no longer good enough to be called your son."

²²But his father said to the servants, "Hurry and bring the best clothes and put them on him. Give him a ring for his finger and sandals ^[c] for his feet. ²³Get the best calf and prepare it, so we can eat and celebrate.

²⁴This son of mine was dead, but has now come back to life. He was lost and has now been found." And they began to celebrate. ²⁵The older son had been out in the field. But when he came near the house, he heard the music and dancing. ²⁶So he called one of the servants over and asked, "What's going on here?"

²⁷The servant answered, "Your brother has come home safe and sound, and your father ordered us to kill the best calf." ²⁸The older brother got so angry that he would not even go into the house.

His father came out and begged him to go in. ²⁹But he said to his father, "For years I have worked for you like a slave and have always obeyed you. But you have never even given me a little goat, so that I could give a dinner for my friends. ³⁰This other son of yours wasted your money on prostitutes. And now that he has come home, you ordered the best calf to be killed for a feast."

³¹His father replied, "My son, you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. ³²But we should be glad and celebrate! Your brother was dead, but he is now alive. He was lost and has now been found."

Discussion Questions:

1. What would you have done if you were the father when his son basically said, "Father I wish you were dead and would give me my money now"?

2. If you were the father and knew that your son was wasting all of your money, would you try to stop him?
3. Do you think the youngest son was wrong in allowing the father to accept him back as his son?
4. Do you think it was wrong for the oldest son to be upset and refuse to celebrate his brother's return?
5. What did it take for the son to come home?
6. What did it take for the father to forgive?
7. What did it take for the older son not to forgive?
8. Who missed out the most?
9. Do you think Jesus' picture of the Father accurately depicts God when it comes to your understanding of who He is?
10. How does this picture of God help you to forgive those who have hurt you?

Prayer Journal: *This is everyone's chance to share a Praise and a Problem with the group. Basically you are saying, here is something I can thank God for this week and here is something I need help from God with this week. You are not sharing deep dark personal matters here and no one is required to share if they don't wish to. By sharing with the group in conversation you are in fact praying to God. By jotting down, in the space below, everyone's Praises and Problems you can look it over later this week and pray for everyone. There is nothing better than knowing that a group of people are lifting up your needs to God in prayer!*

Ending Prayer: Dear God, thank you for the gift of Jesus, your only son who gave his life so that we might be forgiven and allowed to return home. Help us to forgive ourselves and others as you have forgiven us and live in the abundance of Your grace. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

Details: For next week: Where will we meet? _____ Who will facilitate? _____
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Week 5: Buddy Up!

*Guiding Principle: In community we celebrate who we are in Jesus Christ.
Colossians 3:15-17*

Icebreaker: Tell your best childhood memory of community activities such as church, clubs, or sports.

Prayer: Dear God, we thank you for the opportunity to gather here today, help us get to know each other better and to journey through your Word together in confidence. Help us to connect this week's guiding principle into our journey. In Jesus name we pray. Amen

Opener:

- What is the best group you ever belonged to? What made it so special?
- How did you first come to Hope? What made you stay?

Bible Reading: Acts 2:42-47

⁴²They spent their time learning from the apostles, and they were like family to each other. They also broke bread and prayed together.

⁴³Everyone was amazed by the many miracles and wonders that the apostles worked. ⁴⁴All the Lord's followers often met together, and they shared everything they had. ⁴⁵They would sell their property and possessions and give the money to whoever needed it. ⁴⁶Day after day they met together in the temple. They broke bread together in different homes and shared their food happily and freely, ⁴⁷while praising God. Everyone liked them, and each day the Lord added to their group others who were being saved.

Discussion Questions:

1. How is Hope similar and different from the fellowship/community described in Acts?
2. Is it harder to stay connected in a faith community than in other communities you are a part of? Why?
3. How do you stay connected in a faith community in the midst of arguments and other problems?
4. Why do you suppose that most people who say they believe in God don't actually attend church in America?
5. Do you prefer to celebrate alone or with others?
6. What is it that we as believers in Jesus Christ have to celebrate?
7. If we don't feel like we have anything to celebrate in Christ we certainly won't feel the urge to join a celebration party. Do you suppose that deep down that is the root cause of people's indifference to being part of God's family in the church?
8. What would a church that is united in celebration look like in this day and age?

Prayer Journal: *This is everyone's chance to share a Praise and a Problem with the group. Basically you are saying, here is something I can thank God for this week and here is something I need help from God with this week. You are not sharing deep dark personal matters here and no one is required to share if they don't wish to. By sharing with the group in conversation you are in fact praying to God. By jotting down, in the space below, everyone's Praises and Problems you can look it over later this week and pray*

for everyone. There is nothing better than knowing that a group of people are lifting up your needs to God in prayer!

Ending Prayer: Dear God thank you for giving us so much to celebrate and a community to celebrate with. Help us to be truly thankful for what You have given us. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

Details: For next week: Where will we meet? _____ Who will facilitate? _____
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babysitter? _____ Who will read the Bible passage? _____

Week 3 Icebreaker
You should have ended up where you began, at the dot in the middle of the page. The numbers were just there to distract you. :) You will find that when you focus on and follow God's directions you will not be as easily distracted and you will return to where you began which is in God.

Favorite food

Favorite animal

Favorite activity

Favorite vacation spot

Week 6: Hit the Road Hope and don't you look back no more, no more...

Guiding Principles: 1.) We seek God's will for us and the world through scripture and prayer -- Colossians 1:9-11

2.) As a disciple of Jesus we are called and sent to boldly share in words and actions His love for everyone -- Matthew 28:18

Icebreaker: On the previous page in each of the four quadrants draw your favorite food, animal, activity, and vacation spot. This is not a test for artistic skill, in fact, the less skill you have the funnier the outcome can be. Before you explain what your drawings are to the group have them try to guess what you drew.

Prayer: Dear God, we thank you for the opportunity to gather here today, help us get to know each other better and to journey through your Word together in confidence. Help us to connect this week's guiding principle into our journey. In Jesus name we pray. Amen

Opener:

- What is the difference between what we do and who we are?

Bible Reading: Matthew 28:16-20 and Acts 1:9-11

¹⁶Jesus' eleven disciples went to a mountain in Galilee, where Jesus had told them to meet him. ¹⁷They saw him and worshiped him, but some of them doubted.

¹⁸Jesus came to them and said: I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth! ¹⁹Go to the people of all nations and make them my disciples. Baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teach them to do everything I have told you. I will be with you always, even until the end of the world.

⁹After Jesus had said this and while they were watching, he was taken up into a cloud. They could not see him, ¹⁰but as he went up, they kept looking up into the sky. Suddenly two men dressed in white clothes were standing there beside them. ¹¹They said, "Why are you men from Galilee standing here and looking up into the sky? Jesus has been taken to heaven. But he will come back in the same way that you have seen him go."

Discussion Questions:

1. List and discuss the verbs and actions in this scripture? What do you find and hear in these words?
2. Have you ever tried to pursue something but God has redirected your plans?
3. Do you believe that God is sending you? If so where?
4. When Jesus invited the disciples to the mountain, what do you think they expected?
5. How are you like the disciples staring up into the sky? Are you at a loss for what God wants you to do?

6. As a vital member of the community of Hope and with the understanding we've come to over the last several weeks; namely that:
 - God is at the center of all that we do and it is God's journey not ours.
 - God expects us to grow and mature in our faith in order for us to be prepared for His journey.
 - We need to look for God in the everyday blessings and relationships of our lives.
 - We can only take this journey by the free gift of God's grace and forgiveness, which is experienced when we pass it on to others.
 - God does not call us to take this journey alone but rather in the community of fellow believers.
 - We have all been invited on God's journey and called to invite others.

Can you begin to imagine the path God has set before you?

7. Can you begin to imagine the path God has set for Hope?
8. How do these two paths converge?
9. What is the next step for you and for Hope? And are you willing to take it?
10. Do you see small groups as part of your continued journey? Either this group or some other type?

Ending Prayer: You are invited to share either aloud or quietly what you are thankful for or what you have learned these past several weeks together. Amen

YOUR NEXT STEPS

Thank you for taking the time to go on this six week journey with the other people in your group and the rest of Hope. If this was your first time giving small groups a try we hope and pray that the experience is one you will want to repeat. For all of you we pray these gatherings have been fulfilling and meaningful.

Just as God did not want the disciples to remain dumbfounded, staring blankly into space, and so sent his angel messengers to prod them into action we do not want you left feeling without a way forward. If you are feeling any conviction at all, any call from God to take a new faith step then now is the time to act.

Your first act is to write down this new step (or steps). These could be as simple as continuing to meet with your new small group or setting aside a time to read the Bible every day. By writing it down you are being accountable to yourself and not ignoring God's voice.

Your second act is more difficult, show what you have written to someone else. This could be someone in this small group or somebody else you trust within the faith community. Now you are accountable to someone else.

Being accountable to yourself, someone else and to God will increase your chance of success in your new faith steps. Success encourages more steps. May you continue on your walk with God for the rest of your life as it leads you to new life, to life eternal.

I hear God calling me to: