



LIVING OUR LIVES IN THE
HOPE OF JESUS CHRIST



IMMANUEL
BAPTIST CHURCH

40 Days of Hope: Living Our Lives in the Hope of Jesus Christ
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PREFACE

Welcome to the 40 Days of Hope Challenge! We are so glad you have chosen to embark on this journey with us.

What is the 40 Days of Hope Challenge? Jesus arose from the grave then walked the earth for 40 days. During this time of intentional focus, we will release worldly hope and replace it with hope in the resurrected Christ.

What is our strategy? It is one of putting off the “old self,” the former ways and things of our sinful nature — finding our hope, worth value, meaning, and purpose in the wrong things, and putting on the “new self.” If we try to release something in our lives without filling the gap or void, the old ways will come right back to us. We need to release our hope in the wrong things while filling it up with the right thing — the Person of Jesus Christ.

INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE

The 40 Days of Hope Challenge is a strategic focus on 1) releasing our hope in the wrong things, 2) intentionally, willingly and regularly fixing our eyes on the hope of the resurrecting power of Christ, and 3) living out this hope by sharing it with others.

WEEKLY BREAKDOWN

Each week has a specific challenge on which we will focus our attention and effort.

Week 1: “Reveal” — Ask the Holy Spirit to REVEAL to you the things you place your hope in other than God. This week will revolve around placing yourself in a posture of waiting on God and listening to Him, so that you can see more clearly what it is that might be standing in the way of a closer relationship with Him.

Week 2: “Release” — Release the lesser things you seek for hope in order to find your true hope for now and the future solely in Christ.

Week 3: “Replace” — Instead of placing your hope in some “lesser thing” that cannot fully satisfy, focus your gaze and your hope for the future on Christ. This week is all about seeking Christ to replace the void that the “lesser things” inhabited in your life.

Week 4: “Reach” — Find ways to share hope this week with someone in your community, at your school, at your workplace, in your neighborhood.

Week 5: “Respond” — Share your story — Share with the church body how God has helped you to center your gaze and your hope on Him during this 40 day journey.

Week 6: “Rejoice & Repeat” — Celebrate the work God has done in you and repeat! Keep going! God’s not done with His work in you.

DAILY BREAKDOWN

Each day of the week has an activity to help you focus on and accomplish the weekly challenge. The purpose of these different activities is to help you experience communing with God and seeking Him using different spiritual disciplines. The hope is that your walk with the Lord will be renewed, refreshed, and deepened.

Day 1: STILLNESS & WAITING

Day 1 of each week will be centered around placing ourselves in a posture that is available and open to receiving what God might reveal to us. Stillness and time spent in God's presence can give us more space to dig deeper within ourselves and to expose those areas of our life that we prefer to crowd out with busy schedules, noise, or activity. Frenzied activity can be an escape mechanism used to suppress the uncomfortable feeling of being exposed to our own faults and things that we would rather not address in our lives.

Remember, our loving Father wants to reveal these things to You—not to beat you down or chastise you, but because He longs for you to know more of Himself and the life He has for you. As you release the old nature and the sins that weigh you down, you become freer to live in the hope of Christ. Think of God gazing upon you with a Fatherly tenderness. He delights in You. This is a time to come to Him, to enjoy His presence, and to humbly ask for Him to bring something to light that might stand in the way of closer communion with Him.

Try to find a place with few distractions for your quiet time with God. Perhaps this is a room where you can shut the door to all of your household distractions, a closet, or even sit outside. Sitting outdoors can be a wonderful place to enjoy God's presence.

DAY 2: WORDS OF TRUTH AND PRAYER

Day 2 of each week will give you a scripture verse for the week and prayer to offer up to God.

DAY 3: DIGGING DEEPER

Day 3 will give you an activity to dig deeper and help you brainstorm ways to apply the week's challenge to your life.

DAY 4: MIDWEEK ACCOUNTABILITY ACTIVITY

Day 4 will be a check-in day to evaluate your progress and will give you a small activity for application based on the week's challenge that

involves sharing with a close friend, mentor, or accountability partner about your journey this week.

DAY 5: WRITTEN PRAYER

Day 5 will be an opportunity to write out a prayer to God. If you struggle to find the words to pray to seek the Lord in your daily time with Him, pray through the Psalms. They are full of vulnerable, honest questions and requests and contain beautiful prayers of praise, thanksgiving, and even laments (prayers of grief). They will help you know how to talk to God.

DAY 6: MEDITATION

Why is meditation helpful for Christians?

- It can be calming to the mind, body, and emotions.
- It challenges us to be still.
- The stillness and simplicity of what we say during that time helps us to center our minds on a simple verse, phrase, or “truth statement.”
- It fills our minds with thoughts that honor God (Phil. 4:8).

Think of it as your mental training time. Our subconscious mind can be trained for good thoughts or negative thoughts. Most of the thoughts we think today are not new thoughts. We thought them yesterday and the day before that. Many probably originated from our childhood. We think the same things over and over again unless we intentionally intervene and feed our mind new thoughts. Meditating is an intentional action that helps us to crowd out the thoughts that don’t honor God and to make truth a part of the way we think. And the thoughts we think become the words we speak that can affect the trajectory of our life and numerous people around us. If you don’t intentionally fill your minds with truth, your mind will believe the lies that are all around you — those hurtful things that someone said to you, the lies culture tells you, the lies you see on T.V. or on social media. The disciplines of reading God’s Word, meditating on truth, and memorizing it can completely transform our lives.

The idea of meditation may seem awkward at first if you have not practiced this discipline before, but the act is really very simple and very biblical. In Psalm 1, the psalmist speaks of meditating on God’s word day and night. This discipline can be compared to a cow that chews and chews it’s food over and over and over slowly digesting every morsel. The act of speaking truth over and over aloud is as if we are continually chewing on truth to let it sink in and become a part of our lives and our

way of thinking. Dwelling on and soaking in the truths of God's word can be a powerful spiritual discipline to train our minds for battle. Over time, the simple act of saying or listening to a truth statement over and over again is depositing goodness and truth into our minds. As we internalize truth, we become more and more like Christ.

DAY 7: REFLECTION & THANKSGIVING

Day 7 is a time to reflect on how God is working in your life and a time to thank the Lord for that work.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR THIS 40 DAY JOURNEY

- Daily Email Devotionals — Make sure you are subscribed to the church's daily devotionals sent out by email. These will line up with our weekly challenges.
- Spotify Playlist — Each week has a specific playlist of songs in a variety of musical styles focused on the theme for the week. Listen to the music throughout the day, in your car, or during your time with God to feed your prayers with words to pray back to Him.
- Opt in to ongoing encouragement throughout the 40 days by texting IBCHOPE to 94090.
- Small hope cards will be available for week 4 to write short notes of encouragement.

HOW TO USE THIS HANDBOOK

The activities and prompts in the book could certainly be done all in one day, but the purpose of this handbook is to accompany you in a 40 day journey. Journeys take time. Spreading out the activities and practical application prompts over 40 days will give you ways to dig deeper in this journey toward living in the hope that only Christ can give you. This is *your* book. Write in it. Highlight it. Make notes. Carry it with you throughout the day to read or reflect on certain phrases, scriptures, or thoughts to ponder. We hope God uses this resource to challenge and encourage you as He continues to work in your life during this season.

This is not meant to replace personal devotional reading or Bible study, but rather to accompany what you are currently doing in your time with God. You may already be involved in a weekly Bible study that requires a lot of time to study and respond. The 40 Days of Hope Challenge and handbook can easily be incorporated into each day. It is meant to complement, not detract from, what you are currently doing in your devotional time.