



Getting Started

There's an inspiring scene toward the end of *The Two Towers*, the second of *The Lord of the Rings* movies, in which two of the main characters face despair. As Sam and Frodo confront the impossibility of taking the evil ring of power to be destroyed in the fires of Mount Doom, Sam gives Frodo a moving speech that ignites hope and rouses them to action. He says:

"It's all wrong. By rights we shouldn't even be here. But we are. It's like in the great stories, Mr. Frodo. The ones that really mattered. Full of darkness and danger, they were. And sometimes you didn't want to know the end. Because how could the end be happy? How could the world go back to the way it was when so much bad happened? But in the end, it's only a passing thing, this shadow. Even the darkness must pass. A new day will come and when the sun shines, it will shine out the clearer. Those were the stories that stayed with you, that meant something. Even if you were too small to understand why. But I think, Mr. Frodo, I do understand. I know now. Folk in those stories had lots of chances of turning back, only they didn't. They kept going because they were holding onto something."

"What are we holding onto, Sam?"

"That there's some good in this world, Mr. Frodo. And it's worth fighting for."

Everyone needs hope. It is more than just a wish. It is more than simply a dream. Hope gives us courage to try something new, take a risk, or step out of our comfort zone. This guide offers everyone an opportunity to engage in an important conversation about hope.

"Courage doesn't always roar. Sometimes courage is the little voice at the end of the day that says, I'll try again tomorrow."

- Mary Anne Radmacher

"Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see."

Hebrews 11:1, NIV

● Choose one

Is hope delusional?

What are the things that feel rather hopeless to you today in the world?

If life is like jumping out of a plane and hope is a parachute, what is your parachute?

What is a time in your life when you acted despite a lack of hope? What allowed that to happen?



Jesus offers food...and faith.

The story about Jesus feeding 5000 people with the five loaves and two fishes given to him by a small boy is a familiar one, a popular children's story. But the story has a different flavor when read as an adult. The contrast between a cynical Philip and a pessimistic but hopeful Andrew takes on new meaning in an adult world where hope is sometimes hard to come by. For Christians, one of the lessons of this moment is that when all is dark, taking small steps is enough, when God is involved.

1-4 After this, Jesus went across the Sea of Galilee (some call it Tiberias). A huge crowd followed him, attracted by the miracles they had seen him do among the sick. When he got to the other side, he climbed a hill and sat down, surrounded by his disciples. It was nearly time for the Feast of Passover, kept annually by the Jews.

5 When Jesus looked out and saw that a large crowd had arrived, he said to Philip, "Where can we buy bread to feed these people?" He said this to stretch Philip's faith. He already knew what he was going to do.

7 Philip answered, "Two hundred silver pieces wouldn't be enough to buy bread for each person to get a piece."

8-9 One of the disciples—it was Andrew, brother to Simon Peter—said, "There's a little boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But that's a drop in the bucket for a crowd like this."

10-11 Jesus said, "Make the people sit down." There was a nice carpet of green grass in this place. They sat down, about five thousand of them. Then Jesus took the bread and, having given thanks, gave it to those who were seated. He did the same with the fish. All ate as much as they wanted.

12-13 When the people had eaten their fill, he said to his disciples, "Gather the leftovers so nothing is wasted." They went to work and filled twelve large baskets with leftovers from the five barley loaves.

(John 6: 1-13, The Message)

What is your reaction to a dilemma that seems hopeless?

Which is more important: to be realistic about the facts or hopeful about the possibilities?



Going Deeper

In the feeding of the 5000, Philip was the realistic one. Andrew was maybe a little more hopeful; he acted, but hardly with confidence. "Probably not enough" is about all he seems to be able to muster.

"Hope begins in the dark, the stubborn hope that if you just show up and try to do the right thing, the dawn will come. You wait and watch and work: You don't give up."

Anne Lamott

Choose one

Assuming prayer makes a difference, what hopeless situation in the world would you pray for?

In the story of the feeding of the 5000, who would you be: Philip, Andrew, or a person in the crowd?

Hockey star Wayne Gretzky said, "You miss 100% of the shots you don't take." Where in your life do you just need to take a shot?

The Journey Ahead

Does someone else's hope inspire you? How can you adopt that hope?

Cut out five paper loaves and two paper fishes and write something you feel hopeless about on each. Imagine giving them to Jesus.

Jesus said the faith of a small mustard seed can move mountains. Who can you give mustard seeds to in your life?

To Learn More



Almost Everything: Notes on Hope by Anne Lamott

Secrets in the Dark by Fredrick Buechner

Finding Water: The Art of Perseverance by Julia Cameron



The Upside of Vulnerability, Brene Brown 2011
<https://youtu.be/JJo4qXbz4G4>

Learn How Hope Is Your Anchor with Rick Warren Sep 8, 2015
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i35Jyxg-cq0>



Hope In All Circumstances - <https://www.bethel.tv/en/podcasts/sermons/episodes/153>

The Hope Cycle - <https://player.fm/series/elevation-church-charlotte-nc/the-hope-cycle-holly-furtick>

Dream Big Framework - <https://dreambigframework.com/podcast>