

# THE WAY OF HOPE

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

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Published by Wesleyan Publishing House  
Indianapolis, Indiana 46250

This guide is to be used in conjunction with *The Way of Hope DVD* by Beth and Dave Weikel (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2016).

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## CONTENTS

Introduction	4
Session 1. Testimonials about Losses	5
Session 2. Finding Blessings	7
Session 3. A Soul's Recovery Plan	9
Session 4. The Garden Analogy	12
Session 5. A Recovery Plan Applied	15



## INTRODUCTION

Becoming a Christian does not exempt a person from heartache and loss. Every honest Christian will admit that loss and pain are frequent visitors that often stay too long. Likely all of your group members know the sting of personal loss, but do they know the way of hope? This five-session course guides the group members into hope so they may recover from the pain of loss and get on with life—life that is full of hope and spiritual growth.

Pray that each session will accomplish God's will in the recovery process. You will find *The Way of Hope DVD* essential, but the books, *The Way of Hope* and *Hope in the Midst of Loss* are also valuable resources you can draw from to instill hope in your group members.

If you find there is not enough time in a session for the group members to write their responses to all the questions in the workbook and for you to lead a discussion based on those questions, you may wish to select only a few relevant questions to be written or answered verbally. It is better to have too much material than too little. Be flexible as you lead each session.

As you facilitate each session, trust God to use you greatly. Offer Him your mind, soul, and heart, and anticipate positive changes in the lives of your group members—and in your own life.



## SESSION 1

# TESTIMONIALS ABOUT LOSSES

### SESSION OVERVIEW

This session discusses the truth that Christians may suffer loss, whether it is a loss of job, finances, good health, friendships, or a loved one. On the video, several believers share their stories about personal loss and how it affected them. The session ends with practical tips for handling loss.

### SESSION AIMS

As a result of this session, the group members will:

- know they are not alone in the midst of their losses;
- feel encouraged as they deal with loss; and
- tell at least one hurting person that hope is available.

### PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

What you will need for this session:

- *The Way of Hope DVD*, disc 1
- DVD player
- Three slips of paper on which are written:
  - “If God loves me, why did I lose my job?”
  - “My wife was a faithful Christian, so why did God let her die?”
  - “If God really cares about me, why would He allow me to have terminal cancer?”

### SESSION DEVELOPMENT

Introduce yourself to the group, and assure everyone you are there to help facilitate discussion and healing, not to judge or lecture. Have each person give his or her name and one interesting piece of background information.

Show session 1 of the video until it reaches the first “Pause for Discussion.”

## **DISCUSSION 1**

At the video discussion break, give group members time to answer questions 1–3 from the workbook, and call for responses when the members have answered the questions.

1. To which video testimonial(s) do you most closely relate? Why?
2. On page 15 of *The Way of Hope*, authors Beth and Dave Weikel state: “Our God is no stranger to loss himself.” Why do you agree or disagree with this statement?
3. The Weikels lost a son in Iraq. If you experienced a similar loss, would you be angry with God? Why or why not? Would such anger be justified? Why or why not?

## **DISCUSSION 2**

At the video discussion break, give group members time to answer questions 4–9 from the workbook, and call for responses when the members have answered the questions.

4. Why is it important to face your loss rather than deny it?
5. How might it help you overcome the sadness of your loss by acknowledging your feelings?
6. Read Galatians 6:2. Specifically, what resources has God made available to help you get through your losses?
7. Is it therapeutic or harmful to cry during a time of loss? Why or why not?
8. Read Romans 8:28. Do the “all things” in this verse include personal losses? If so, how does this verse encourage you?
9. How can you draw hope from Job’s experiences with trials?

## **PANEL OF “EXPERTS”**

Select a panel of a few “mature” believers to answer the questions. Give the slips of paper you prepared earlier to group members. Instruct them to read the questions one by one to the panel. Panel members should answer spontaneously.

## **SESSION CONCLUSION**

Lead the group in reading or singing “Make Me a Blessing.”



## SESSION 2

# FINDING BLESSINGS

### SESSION OVERVIEW

This session focuses on blessings that can come from loss. Individuals and Dave and Beth Weikel share their personal experiences of finding blessing in times of loss. The workbook helps group members to find such blessings.

### SESSION AIMS

As a result of this session the group members will:

- know that God has provided resources for finding blessings in the midst of loss;
- feel grateful to God for the available resources; and
- choose available resources that will aid in the recovery process.

### PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

What you will need for this session:

- *The Way of Hope DVD*, disc 1
- DVD player
- Chalkboard and chalk or whiteboard and markers

### SESSION DEVELOPMENT

If possible, arrange the seating in a circle or semi-circle so group members can see one another's faces. This will enhance group discussion.

Show session 2 of the video until it reaches the first "Pause for Discussion."

### DISCUSSION 1

At the video discussion break, give group members time to answer questions 1–6 from the workbook, and call for responses when the members have answered the questions. Write volunteers' responses to question 6 on the board.

1. What recent trial has enriched your faith?
2. What attitude would you assume if a heavy loss occurred today?
3. The video emphasizes the emergence of support from friends as a blessing found in trials. How have friends helped you during a time of loss?
4. Read Mark 14:3. Beth Weikel cited the example of the woman mentioned in this verse as someone who supported Jesus as He approached His time of suffering on the cross. How did she support Him?
5. On page 70 of *Hope in the Midst of Loss*, Beth Weikel writes: “We all have our experiences with loss, some worse than others, but it’s not about us. It’s about the truth that hard times can introduce in tangible ways. . . . As we are afforded a widening sphere of influence to help others in disastrous and dangerous circumstances, we count on the fact that He goes with us and lives within.” Read 2 Corinthians 1:3–5. How do Beth Weikel’s words affirm the truth of this passage of Scripture?
6. How might a job loss lead to blessings?

## **SMALL GROUPS**

Divide into groups of four. Tell each group to scan Genesis 37–49 and read 50:18–20. Instruct the groups to list the losses Joseph experienced and the subsequent blessings. After ten minutes call for reports from the groups.

## **DISCUSSION 2**

At the video discussion break, give group members time to answer questions 7–10 from the workbook, and call for responses when the members have answered the questions.

7. Stacey and Richard, featured in the video, lost a newborn baby, but they received strong support from their church. What might your church do to help a couple cope with a similar loss?
8. Dave and Beth credit music with helping them cope with their loss. Has music helped you cope with loss? If so, how?
9. What new pursuits and/or interests might help a person deal with loss?
10. Near the end of session 2, Beth Weikel advises us to deal with loss by asking God to keep our hearts soft. What might God use to keep your heart soft in the midst of loss?

## **SESSION CONCLUSION**

Invite two or three volunteers to pray for strength and renewed spiritual vitality for those who are trying to deal with a recent loss.



## **SESSION 3**

# **A SOUL'S RECOVERY PLAN**

### **SESSION OVERVIEW**

This session zeroes-in on the way a soul can recover from loss. It discusses the tools that are available for recovery and describes the ways God aids in the recovery.

### **SESSION AIMS**

As a result of this session, the group members will:

- know recovery from loss is possible;
- feel confident that God is able to deliver them from their losses; and
- use the recovery tools God has provided.

### **PREPARING FOR THE SESSION**

What you will need for this session:

- *The Way of Hope DVD*, disc 2
- DVD player

### **SESSION DEVELOPMENT**

Never censure a person for his or her answer or simple question. Thank the person for the answer or question and suggest that it will likely be addressed as the session continues.

### **BUILDING PROJECT**

Have the group identify tools that are often used to construct a building. Explain that God has provided tools we can use to construct a joyful, purposeful life when we have suffered loss. We will learn about these tools in this session.

Show session 3 of the video until it reaches the first "Pause for Discussion."

## DISCUSSION 1

At the video discussion break, give group members time to answer questions 1–2 from the workbook, and call for responses when the members have answered the questions.

1. Read Genesis 3:6–13. What losses did Adam and Eve incur by sinning against God? Where did they place the blame? Our losses may not come to us because we have sinned, but our response to them may be similar to Adam and Eve’s. We try to withdraw from God and blame Him or others for our loss.

2. In *The Way of Hope*, the Weikels observe: “God has a purpose for all we are walking through. It is a paradox, really. Bad things have happened to us, yet God uses these same situations to mold us, strengthen us, and prepare us for a calling that is unique” (p. 84). Why is it wise not to blame God for our losses?

## DISCUSSION 2

It is important to understand that good can come out of a bad situation. It is also important to submit to God and to pray honestly.

At the video discussion break, give group members time to answer questions 3–11 from the workbook, and call for responses when the members have answered the questions.

3. Read Philippians 1:12–14. What good things did Paul say had come about because of his imprisonment?

4. How is God using a so-called bad situation in your life for a good purpose?

5. Read James 4:7–8. What will God do if we submit ourselves to Him?

6. Dave Weikel cites staying in the Word as a way for the soul to recover. He says we should draw strength from examples of Bible characters that recovered from losses. Which Bible characters come to mind?

7. In the video, the Weikels recommend praying honestly for the soul to recover from loss. Read Psalm 31:1–5. What designations for God did David use in his prayer for help?

8. How does it help you to view God as David viewed Him?

9. Read Matthew 26:36–42. How sorrowful was Jesus?

10. What evidence of submission did Jesus show?

11. Read Romans 8. Who assists our prayers when we pray honestly and pour out our hearts to God?

## DISCUSSION 3

At the video discussion break, give group members time to answer questions 12–14 from the workbook, and call for responses when the members have answered the questions.

12. The Weikels suggest that proper exercise and sleep help the soul recover. On a scale of one to ten how well are you doing each of these things? How can you improve in each area?

13. Read 1 John 4:4. How does this verse help you stay strong in the face of loss?

14. Read Hebrews 12:2–3. Why is Jesus our perfect model of patiently enduring hardship?

## TESTIMONIALS

Encourage group members to share how proper diet, reading, and pursuing new interests helped them recover from loss.

## **SMALL GROUPS**

Divide into groups of three. Charge each small group with the task of sharing their feelings about losses and then offer each other practical encouragement.

## **SESSION CONCLUSION**

Read John 14:25–27. Point out that Jesus has given us the Holy Spirit to counsel us and to fill us with supernatural peace. Therefore, we have good reason to recover from our losses and to serve God with renewed vigor. Lead the group in reading or singing “Like a River Glorious.”



## SESSION 4

# THE GARDEN ANALOGY

### SESSION OVERVIEW

This session focuses on the analogy of gardening to provide principles related to handling loss effectively.

### SESSION AIMS

As a result of this session, the group members will:

- understand why gardening is a good analogy for effectively dealing with loss;
- strongly desire the benefits of working through loss with God's help; and
- apply the principles of gardening to personal loss and recovery.

### PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

What you will need for this session:

- *The Way of Hope DVD*, disc 2
- DVD player
- Chalkboard and chalk or whiteboard and markers

### SESSION DEVELOPMENT

Introduce this session's topic by asking volunteers to describe their most memorable garden. How much work did it involve? How satisfying was the finished product?

Show session 4 of the video until it reaches the first "Pause for Discussion."

### DISCUSSION 1

At the video's first discussion break, give group members time to answer questions 1–5.

1. What relationship does Beth Weikel draw between compost and grief?
2. How does Bible study break up the clay (the hardness) in our lives?
3. Which do you think is harder: growing a garden or overcoming the sorrow of loss? Explain.

4. What experiences have you used as compost in growing a productive spiritual life?
5. How has prayer helped you overcome grief?

## TESTIMONIALS

Have volunteers share how the testimonials encouraged them in their struggle with loss.

## SMALL GROUPS

Beth Weikel explains that just as garden plants face attacks during their period of growth, so we experience attacks, but, she insists, the Holy Spirit can grow our faith when we are attacked. In *Hope in the Midst of Loss*, she writes:

One of the key things that can frighten hope away is too often denied: our own fallibilities. My own weaknesses seem to be among the toughest things to fight off. The truth is, however, God knows us intimately and exactly where we'll need Him most. . . .God trumps our weaknesses. God is not expecting us to be any more than the humans He created, but because of the resurrection, we can be raised to new life in Him and have the benefit of the Spirit of Christ. . . . He is dependable and exemplary; we aren't. As ruler and sustainer of the world, God is able to accomplish His will. Our job is to admit our weaknesses and "clothe [ourselves] with humility" (1 Pet. 5:5). (pp. 167–168)

Divide the group into groups of four. Have each group address two questions: (1) What kinds of negative things attack our faith? (2) How does the Holy Spirit help us overcome these attacks? After seven minutes, call for reports from the groups.

## DISCUSSION 2

Give participants time to respond to questions 6–10 in the workbook. Call for their answers.

6. What toxic ideas can act like weeds to hinder growth in the midst of your loss?
7. How can you become more forgiving, kind, and patient?
8. If forgiveness, kindness, and patience were plants in your garden, how short or tall would they be? Why would they be that short or tall?
9. What suppositions does Beth Weikel cite as harmful?
10. If God leads us in a straight path, why do "bad" things happen along the way?

## DISCUSSION 3

Give the group members time to respond to questions 11–12 in the workbook, and then call for their answers.

11. How deep are your spiritual roots?
12. On a scale of one to ten, how motivated are you to get rid of the weeds in your life? Who might help you identify the weeds in your life so you can get rid of them? What steps will you take to get rid of those weeds?

## **PULLING OUT WEEDS**

Divide the board into two columns. Label the left column “Weeds That Attack Our Spiritual Garden.” Label the right column “How to Get Rid of the Weeds.” Ask the group members to suggest responses to write in the columns.

## **SESSION CONCLUSION**

Read 1 John 1:9. Point out that God is ready to forgive our toxic attitudes if we confess them. Lead the group in reading or singing “Search Me, O God.”



## SESSION 5

# A RECOVERY PLAN APPLIED

### SESSION OVERVIEW

This session examines practical ways to overcome loss and pain and maintain hope.

### SESSION AIMS

As a result of this session the members will:

- know how to apply God's recovery plan;
- feel joyful that God's plan works; and
- make an important decision related to the application of the recovery plan.

### PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

What you will need for this session:

- *The Way of Hope DVD*, disc 2
- DVD player
- Tennis ball
- Index card and pencils, one per person

### SESSION DEVELOPMENT

Thank the members for their attendance and participation throughout this course. Tell them you have enjoyed serving as the facilitator.

Show session 5 of the video until it reaches the first "Pause for Discussion."

### DISCUSSION 1

Give group members time to answer questions 1–4 in the workbook, and then call for their responses.

1. How have people hurt you when you experienced loss? How did you respond to those hurts?
2. What is God's role in the restoration process?

3. Why do you agree or disagree that it is hard to surrender your wounds to God?
4. Read Proverbs 3:5–6. How have you applied this passage to your life?

## **TENNIS BALL TOSS**

Explain that you will toss a tennis ball to a member, whose responsibility is to identify one situation or need for which he or she will trust God. Then that member will toss the ball to another member. The process should continue until silence breaks the action.

## **DISCUSSION 2**

Give group members time to answer questions 5–11 in the workbook, and then call for their responses.

5. Dave Weikel recommends moving from head to heart in the recovery from loss. How does it feel when you trust God with all your heart?

6. Why do you agree or disagree that being thankful for God’s actions includes being thankful for your losses?

7. Why are you looking forward to heaven?

8. What things do Christians need to hold loosely?

9. Dave Weikel instructs us to worship by presenting our bodies a living sacrifice to God. What negative influences attempt to pull you off the altar of sacrifice?

10. How can confession of sin and praise help you recover from loss?

11. Who has served as a positive role model that you can emulate as you recover from pain and loss? How has he or she been a positive role model?

## **SESSION CONCLUSION**

Give each group member an index card and a pencil. Instruct each person to complete the following statement on the card: “As a result of this course, I will . . .”

Suggest the members keep their cards in their Bibles and refer to them often. Conclude the session with prayer.