Hope for the Holidays
Hope for the Holidays

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.

— Paul, Letter to the Romans 15:13 (TNIV)

Family, friends, eggnog and presents. The sights and scents of the Christmas season. For many the holidays are a time for joy and happiness. But for those who are hurting and lonely, the holiday festivities only make the pain more bitter.

Looking for Hope? Find hope in the real-life stories of other hurting people. Hear the story of a woman who has suffered through five marriages. The story of a man who had all his wealthy dreams come true, but does not have happiness. Discover the hope they found.

Do you have Hope? Share hope with the single mom, the family losing their home, the student far from home. Share your hope, your love, and your life.

Hope for the Holidays. Find hope. Share hope.

0.1 Hope for Broken Relationships ................................................................. 4
0.2 Hope for the Lonely .................................................................................. 8
0.3 Hope for the Hurting ............................................................................... 12

Leader’s Guide

How to lead your I am Second Group .......................................................... 18
Helps ............................................................................................................. 20

© 2009 e3 Partners Ministry. All rights reserved.
Where to Start.

Start a Group.
Talk to your friends, neighbors, or coworkers. Share an I am Second video with them. Invite them to join you as you learn about hope.

Keep it a Discussion.
This is a discussion group — not a time to practice your public speaking skills. Make sure discussion happens. Ask good questions. Listen.

Be Authentic.
Let them see your pains and weaknesses and they will let you see theirs. Model to your group that this is a place where honesty, openness, and acceptance are normal and expected.
Hope for Broken Relationships

Opener

Watch: the Parks video

Question: How did the Parks handle their broken relationship?
   How did they find hope?

Share: What would you say if you were sitting in the I am Second Chair?
   What is your broken relationship story?

Hear the Bible Read this as a Group

Now he had to go through Samaria. So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob’s well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon.

When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, “Will you give me a drink?” (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

The Samaritan woman said to him, “You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?” (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)

Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.”

“Sir,” the woman said, “you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his flocks and herds?”

Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.”

He told her, “Go, call your husband and come back.”
Talk about the Bible Reading

What it says
1. What did you like about this story? What in this story could you relate to?
2. What did you not like or find confusing about this story?

What it means
3. What does this story teach about people?
4. What does this story teach about God? How did Jesus respond to this woman who had so many broken relationships?

Live and Tell
5. What will you do now? Be practical and real. What can you do to walk towards healing? Do you need to talk to an old friend and ask for an apology? Do you need to call up your father and work out your childhood pain? Do you and your spouse need marriage counseling? What practical steps do you need to take to work towards healing?
6. Who will you tell? Who do you know that needs to hear about hope for broken relationships?

Background.
Jesus was a Jew. All Jews were supposed to hate Samaritans. And Samaritans were supposed to hate Jews. They would not go near each other, eat with each other, or even talk with each other. Women were not much better. Associating with women in public was culturally unacceptable for men. Jesus broke the rules.

John 4:4-30, 39-42 (TNIV)

Read Hope
Read this verse out loud several times.

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.

Paul, Letter to the Romans 15:13 (TNIV)
Hope for the Lonely

Opener

Watch: the Karen video (may not be appropriate for younger viewers)

Question: How did Karen respond to her abusive childhood?
How did she find hope?

Share: What is your story? Describe a time when you felt lonely, abused, or unloved.

Check-Up

Live and Tell. Last time you met you talked about broken relationships. How did you live out what you learned? Who did you talk with about what you learned?

Talk with God

God wants to hear from you. What do you want to talk with God about regarding your broken relationships? What do you need to ask from him? Talk to God right now.

Hear the Bible  Read this as a Group

Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.

When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.” So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.

All the people saw this and began to mutter, “He has gone to be the guest of a sinner [a terrible person].”

But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.”

Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham.”

Background.
Zacchaeus was a hated man. The Romans conquered and began taxing the Jews. As a tax collector, Zacchaeus was hated by his fellow Jews as a cheat, a traitor to the Roman occupiers, and a betrayer of God himself. As a Jewish religious leader, it would be unheard of that someone like Jesus would associate with such a low-life.

Talk about the Bible Reading

What it says
1. What did you like about this story? What in this story could you relate to?
2. What did you not like or find confusing about this story?

What it means
3. What does this story teach about people? How did people treat Zacchaeus?
4. What does this story teach about God? How did Jesus relate to Zacchaeus?

Live and Tell
5. What will you do now? What can you do to walk towards healing? What can you do to help someone else walk towards healing?
6. Who will you tell? Who do you know that needs to hear this story of hope for the lonely?

Walk towards healing
Healing takes time and effort. Take practical steps everyday to walk towards healing. Here are some ideas.

1. Get closer to Jesus. What do you need to do to get closer to Jesus?
2. Write a letter. Write to your father, a friend, or God. You do not have to mail the letter; just use the letter to express your pain and frustrations.
3. Join a support group. Find a group able to focus on your specific support needs. See Leader’s Guide for more details.
4. Not sure where to go? Talk to friends, family, or the staff at your church to get additional suggestions.

Pray Hope
Pray this verse for yourself and others.

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.

Paul, Letter to the Romans 15:13 (TNIV)
Hope for the Hurting

Opener
Watch: the Josh Hamilton video

Question: How did Josh handle the loss of the constant companionship of his parents? How did he find hope?

Share
What is your hurting story? Describe a time when you felt pain or loss.

Check-Up: The last time you met you talked about loneliness. What have you done to walk towards healing? What have you done to help someone else find healing?

Hear the Bible  Read this as a Group

Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha... So the sisters sent word to Jesus, “Lord, the one you love is sick.”

...Jesus went on to tell them [his disciples], “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep [died]; but I am going there to wake him up.”

On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days... “Lord,” Martha said to Jesus, “if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.”

Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.”

Martha answered, “I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.”

Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?”

“Yes, Lord,” she told him, “I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who was to come into the world.”
After she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. “The Teacher is here,” she said, “and is asking for you.” When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him. Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. When the Jews who had been with Mary in the house, comforting her, noticed how quickly she got up and went out, they followed her, supposing she was going to the tomb to mourn there.

When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”

When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. “Where have you laid him?” he asked.

“Come and see, Lord,” they replied.

Jesus wept.

Then the Jews said, “See how he loved him!”

But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?”

Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. “Take away the stone,” he said.

“But, Lord,” said Martha, the sister of the dead man, “by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days.”

Then Jesus said, “Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?”

So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.”

When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face.

Jesus said to them, “Take off the grave clothes and let him go.”

Select readings from John 11 (TNIV)

Talk about the Bible Reading

What it says

1. What did you like about this story?

2. What did you not like or find confusing about this story?

What it means

3. What does this story teach about people? What does this story teach about pain and loss?

4. What does this story teach about God? How did Jesus react to Lazarus’ death?

Live and Tell

5. What will you do now? What can you do to walk towards healing? What can you do to help someone else walk towards healing?

6. Who will you tell? Who do you know that needs to hear this story of hope for the hurting?

Think Hope

Memorize this verse.

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.

Paul, Letter to the Romans 15:13 (TNIV)
Where next?

Will your group end with the holidays? Discuss as a group where you will go next.

What will your group do next?

1. **Follow and Trust Jesus.** You want the hope of Jesus. Take a moment right now to tell God you want to follow and trust only in Jesus for your eternal life. Trust him to forgive your wrongs and bring hope to your life. Tell him you believe that Jesus died for your wrongs and then rose from the dead. Commit to follow him with your life, wherever that takes you. Download the *Video Discussion Guide* at [www.iamsecond.com/getinvolved](http://www.iamsecond.com/getinvolved) to begin the journey.

2. **Discuss more about Jesus.** Hope is just one thing that Jesus taught. Are you curious to learn more? If you are interested, download the *Video Discussion Guide* at [www.iamsecond.com/getinvolved](http://www.iamsecond.com/getinvolved). This discussion guide is designed as an open ended platform for you and your group to discuss Jesus’ life and teachings.

3. **Start New Group.** Your group loved learning about hope and you would like to share this hope with others. Download the *How to Start a Second Group* discussion guide at [www.iamsecond.com/getinvolved](http://www.iamsecond.com/getinvolved). Go through this discussion guide together again with your new group. Inspire and help each other bring hope to the hopeless.
Presents and eggnog are miserable counselors. The holiday season alone will not heal hurting souls.

Divorce. Death. Sickness. Loneliness. These plagues need something more than holiday cheer. They need the hope of Jesus and the love of people like you.

**How to lead your I am Second Group**

Talk with God. Without God you are alone. And this group is much too important to be doing alone. Talk with God about the group’s needs, difficulties, and successes. You are only on your own when you neglect to ask God for help.

**Be Authentic.** Do not be fake or shallow and try not to use churchy words. Be your real self as you lead. Model to your group that this is a place where honesty, openness, and acceptance are normal and expected. As a leader you will need to open up about your own pains and be vulnerable. Ask tough questions to the group that will help them to do the same.

**Be Accepting.** As a leader, you must model the kind of openness and acceptance that this group needs. When you tell your own stories, do not appear to be the perfect saint. Be honest, raw, and vulnerable so that the group sees that you too have not arrived at perfection and need to continue to grow spiritually.

This also means that when you hear the stories of others you do not judge or criticize. The time to provide answers, spiritual guidance, and the truth of the gospel will come. Right now, help the group listen to the Bible. Let conviction come from the Bible, group discussion, and the Holy Spirit. Be slow to judge and quick to forgive.

**Keep it a Discussion.** This is a discussion group — not a time to practice your public speaking skills. Make sure discussion happens by asking good questions, bringing short challenging thoughts, and keeping the discussion on point. Allow people time to truly wrestle with what the Bible has to say without forcing them into anything.

Sometimes the discussion will raise questions to which you do not know the answer. When this happens, remember you, as the facilitator, are not expected to know all the answers. It is perfectly acceptable to tell your group that you just do not know the answer. Volunteer to research the questions further, or ask someone in the group to find the answer. Sometimes postponing certain questions like this until a later time is the best way to go.
Hope for Broken Relationships 0.1

Summary: The Samaritan woman suffered through five failed marriages and was not working on the sixth. Jesus did not condemn. Jesus knew she was hurting and reached out with love and concern. Jesus brought hope to a woman trapped in a cycle of broken relationships.

Share: Give people time to share their stories. Do not let one person dominate the entire time but if everyone is participating let the stories flow. Even if you do not get to the actual Bible reading, it is important to let your group bond and heal through sharing stories of broken relationships.

Some Help with the Lesson
Have you talked about the main things?

1. What did you like? Jesus cared for a hurting woman in need of a solid relationship. He did not hide her pain or ignore the problem. He addressed her problem with relationships. But he addressed the problem with love. He wanted to bring healing not just judgment. The woman saw this love and wanted to share it with others. Love is contagious.

2. What did you not like or find confusing? A couple of cultural notes. In Jesus’ time the Jews and the Samaritans hated each other. The Samaritans were a people of mixed racial backgrounds. They were half Jew and half something else. The Jews thought of them as half-breeds and unworthy to be a full part of society. For Jesus to travel through Samaria was exceptional, for him to stop and talk with a Samaritan woman was even more exceptional.

Women’s rights did not exist in ancient times. Women were half citizens at best. Culturally, it was unacceptable for a man to talk with an unknown woman in public. Jesus broke two major social rules. He talked with a Samaritan and he talked with a woman.

3. What does this teach about people? Jesus wants to heal broken relationships. Whether it be racism, divorce, bad grudges, or broken friendships, Jesus wants to bring hope and healing.

4. What does this teach about God? People need love. The hurting and the hopeless will never find healing without love. Jesus stepped out and risked his name to associate himself with what society considered a low-life. Jesus loved the unlovable. She was not simply an anonymous waiter or clerk. He personally engaged her in conversation about spiritual things.

5. Be practical and real. What can you do to walk towards healing? Do you need to talk to an old friend and ask for an apology? Do you need to call up your father and work out your childhood pain? Do you and your wife need marriage counseling? What practical step do you need to take to work towards healing?

6. Who will you tell? Find someone in your life that needs to hear the same hope you heard today.

Hope for the Lonely 0.2

Summary: Zacchaeus was rich and powerful but he was also hated and alone. Jesus loved Zacchaeus enough to reach into his life and bring hope.

Check-Up: Talking about healing and never going out to put what you are learning into action is pointless. Get out there and do something. As the leader, you need to make sure your group is serious about applying what they learn.

Talk with God: Talk to God as a person not as some archaic stuffy figurehead. Open up your heart and let it pour out to God. Encourage your group to do the same.

Some Help with the Lesson
Have you talked about the main things?

1. What did you like? Zacchaeus was a hated man. He worked for the occupying Roman army to levy taxes from his own people. He was seen as a betrayer to both God and country. In the middle of a crowd of people, Jesus stopped, looked at Zacchaeus, and asked him to dinner. Jesus became friends with the most hated man in town.

2. What did you not like or find confusing? The people hated Zacchaeus. Rather than applauding Jesus’ attempt to show love to an outsider the crowd criticized him. A definite low point of the story.

3. What does this teach about people? Zacchaeus was hated by his community. Wealth flowed through his pockets but loneliness flowed through his heart. Jesus saw this loneliness and decided to befriend him. Jesus invited himself over to be a personal dinner guest of Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus’s life changed forever. Jesus knew that people need to be loved. Zacchaeus needed to be loved.
4. What did you not like or find confusing? Jesus knew he could raise Lazarus from the dead, so why does he weep? The important part is not why he cried but that he did cry. Even Jesus was not exempt from pain and grief. It broke his heart to see the pain in Mary and Martha’s face and it broke his heart to know that his friend was dead. A mother knows her child will recover when he crashes his bike and scrapes his knees but it breaks her heart anyways. His pain is her pain. Jesus knew Lazarus would rise from the dead but the fact that he died still caused Jesus grief and pain.

3. What does this teach about people? Grief is not bad. When death, sickness, and pain hurl through your life you should mourn. Do not bury your feeling and hide your grief. Your grief should not lead to hopelessness and despair but you should grieve nonetheless.

4. What does this teach about God? Jesus cares. He understands your pain and has felt your grief. Whether it is the worry of losing your job or the pain of losing a spouse, Jesus understands. He mourns with you like he mourned with Mary and Martha. Find hope in Jesus.

*DivorceCare: Find help and healing for the hurt of separation and divorce. To find a group go to www.divorcecare.com.*

*Not sure where to go? Talk to friends, family, or the staff at your church, to get additional suggestions.*

**Hope for the Hurting 0.3**

Summary: While out traveling, Jesus catches word that Lazarus, his close friend, is deathly ill. He arrives at Lazarus’ home to find him dead and buried. Jesus weeps. He weeps to see the pain in the eyes of Lazarus’s family and he weeps to feel the pain of death. Jesus knew the hope of resurrection but grieved any way. Hope does not mean you never grieve. Hope means you grieve with faith.

Some Help with the Answers

Have you talked about the main things?

1. What did you like? Jesus felt pain. Even with the power to raise people from the dead, Jesus felt pain. The death of his friend Lazarus brought Jesus to tears. He hurt for the loss of his friend and he hurt for the pain he saw in Mary and Martha. There is hope in knowing that Jesus understands pain and hurting.

2. What did you not like or find confusing? Jesus knew he could raise Lazarus from the dead, so why does he weep? The important part is not why he cried but that he did cry. Even Jesus was not exempt from pain and grief. It broke his heart to see the pain in Mary and Martha’s face and it broke his heart to know that his friend was dead. A mother knows her child will recover when he crashes his bike and scrapes his knees but it breaks her heart anyways. His pain is her pain. Jesus knew Lazarus would rise from the dead but the fact that he died still caused Jesus grief and pain.

3. What does this teach about people? Grief is not bad. When death, sickness, and pain hurl through your life you should mourn. Do not bury your feeling and hide your grief. Your grief should not lead to hopelessness and despair but you should grieve nonetheless.

4. What does this teach about God? Jesus cares. He understands your pain and has felt your grief. Whether it is the worry of losing your job or the pain of losing a spouse, Jesus understands. He mourns with you like he mourned with Mary and Martha. Find hope in Jesus.

**Walk towards healing**

Encourage everyone in your group to take practical steps towards healing everyday. These steps will look different for everyone. Some need to just open with a friend, others need to change destructive behaviors. Help each person find the help and hope they need to find healing.

**Find a support group.** Your I am Second Group is a great place to find acceptance, love, and support as you journey to hope. But some may need more specialized help to overcome addictive behaviors, destructive lifestyles, or grief. There are many great support groups out there. Use the list below to help you find the right support group for you.

- Celebrate Recovery: Freedom from your hurts, hang-ups, and habits. To find a group go to www.celebraterecovery.com.
- Grief Share: Dealing with death, your journey from mourning to joy. To find a group go to www.griefshare.org.
- DivorceCare: Find help and healing for the hurt of separation and divorce. To find a group go to www.divorcecare.com.
- Not sure where to go? Talk to friends, family, or the staff at your church, to get additional suggestions.

**Helps**

- Celebrate Recovery: Freedom from your hurts, hang-ups, and habits. To find a group go to www.celebraterecovery.com.
- Grief Share: Dealing with death, your journey from mourning to joy. To find a group go to www.griefshare.org.
Where Next?

What will your group do next?

1. Disband and return to life as normal. As a leader it is important to let your group openly discuss their desires regarding the future of this group. You do not want to spend the next couple months chasing down people that do not want to come to your group. If they wish to disband, let them.

2. Discuss more about Jesus. If they wish to discuss more about Jesus go to www.iamsecond.com/getinvolved and download the Video Discussion Guide.


Keep meeting as a group. Just because you start another group does not mean you should stop meeting in this group. Maybe you only meet once a month but keep meeting. It is important to keep getting together to encourage, inspire, and help each other.

I am Second®

214.440.1101
info@iamsecond.com
iamsecond.com

All scripture quotations marked (TNIV) taken from the Holy Bible, Today’s New International Version™ TNIV. Copyright © 2001, 2005 by International Bible Society ®. All rights reserved worldwide.

The “TNIV” and “Today’s New International Version” trademarks are registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by International Bible Society. Use of either trademark requires the permission of International Bible Society.

You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce and distribute this material provided that you include the following copyright notice:

© 2009 e3 Partners Ministry. All rights reserved.

Where next?

We recommend you try Video Discussion Guide as your next discussion guide. Download it at iamsecond.com/getinvolved.

Questions? Do you need help or have questions? Email us at coach@iamsecond.com.