

## Discussion Guide for Hope After Hurt



*Thank you for being willing to lead a group through Hope After Hurt. It is our prayer it will be a meaningful time of growth and comfort for all who attend. As a group leader, you are not responsible for answering all their questions, fixing their situation, or being their counselor. However, you are there to encourage them to read and reflect, to persevere in this process, to be present with them in their pain and most importantly to guide the group time so everyone benefits the most. The following are a few guidelines we think will help you do just that.*

### **Guidelines for Groups**

Read over these three important guidelines with the group the first week and remind them anytime the group seems to lose focus. No need to read our leaders notes to you.

- **Confidentiality** – We respect confidentiality so everyone feels safe sharing. No sharing of other’s stories outside the group.
- **Honoring others** – Our goal is to focus on your growth. We encourage you to share anything personal about yourself and how that knowledge has affected your relationships. We won’t share negatively about our partners. Make sure you have your partner’s permission before sharing anything about them. No one is required to share anything they do not feel comfortable sharing.
- **Topic focus and time sensitivity** – In the interest of time, we will keep discussions on track and allow everyone to share. (Leader: If someone is getting off track or occupying too much time the leader needs to redirect by saying something like, **“Thanks for sharing so honestly, but we need to hear from a few others too”**).
- **Self-Discovery**- This group is about self-discovery and not complaining about our partner or offering suggestions to other group members. (Leader: gently redirect “cross-talk” or unsolicited opinions). Speak about yourself in *I* messages not *you*.
- **Prayer** – (Leader: Close your time in prayer and encourage them to pray for each other throughout the week.

### **Discussion Questions:**

At the end of each chapter are discussion questions. Become familiar with them before each week so you can more easily direct the conversation. There may be more questions than you can get to depending on your time allotment, if so, highlight the ones that you think will be most helpful for the group.

There are Personal Reflection Questions and Group Discussion Questions. Feel free to ask if anyone **wants** to share what they discovered in personal reflection, and then center the rest of your time on the group discussion questions. You may need to draw out the quiet ones if you notice they are not sharing, but make the invitation general, for example “let’s hear from someone who hasn’t shared yet”.

*“Dear brothers and sisters, I close my letter with these last words: Be joyful. Grow to maturity. Encourage each other. Live in harmony and peace. Then the God of love and peace will be with you.” 2 Cor. 13:11 (NLT)*

## **Chapter 1: The Girl in Black and Blue**

### **Leader Notes:**

Roxanne’s story is an example of how early scars, memories, traumas, and conclusions about those things, showed up in her marriage. Although your members may or may not identify with her story you are looking for the context of their story and how it may be impacting them.

#### ***For Personal Reflection***

- 1. Are there parts of Roxanne’s history you identify with? Which ones?*
- 2. Can you remember a time in your history when your parents gave you comfort for an emotional upset, not just a physical injury? If not, what did you do when you were upset?*
- 3. Parents or others in our families often create more stress than relieve stress. Who in your family caused pain or crisis without helping you process your emotions?*
- 4. How is my current relationship similar or different from my childhood home growing up?*

#### ***For Group Discussion***

- 1. What example, or model, of a healthy relationship did your parents (or someone else) give you? Remember, the absence of all conflict is not entirely helpful either.*
- 2. What were your conclusions about relationships that came from watching your parents?*
- 3. How do you think Roxanne’s history set her up for having problems later in her marriage?*

## **Chapter 2: When the Past Shows up**

### **Leaders Notes:**

Rob’s early experiences were very different than Roxanne’s, but they showed up in marriage too. Some may identify more with his history and need to examine how their history is showing up even in subtle ways.

#### ***For Personal Reflection***

- 1. Are there parts of Rob’s history you identify with, or remind you of your spouse? Which ones?*
- 2. Do you have memories of parents asking about how you were feeling in a caring and curious way? If not, what did they do during times of stress, loss or discomfort?*
- 3. In your home did you feel you were on your own in terms of coping with emotions? What did you do when you were upset?*

#### ***For Group Discussion***

- 1. Did you feel free asking for help when you were growing up? If not, what were your conclusions about relationships from what you saw?*
- 2. How do you think Rob’s history set him up for problems in his marriage later?*
- 3. Is there a part of Rob’s story that helps you understand your mate a little better? What was most helpful?*

## Chapter 3: Broken Thinking

**Leaders Notes:** There is a lot in this chapter to ponder, so you may need to focus on the Gaze and Glance questions, as well as the core values questions. Even when a value is very good like honesty, it can be super-charged from a negative experience growing up.

### ***For Personal Reflection***

1. *Which way do you lean in terms of your thoughts? Are they more positive or negative? Track your thoughts in a journal for a few days. Write out these thoughts and see what patterns you identify.*
2. *What do you see about your own broken thinking and beliefs from Rob's thoughts and struggles?*
3. *Are you waiting for your spouse to change before you change? What part of that belief may you need to adjust?*
4. *List 12 core values (strong beliefs and morals you live by) and then ask if any of them were formed due to the absence of that value, a negative message from one or both of your parents or is it a value you believe is directly from God. Many people find at least half of their strong beliefs come from the absence of a value or a negative influence.*

### ***For Group Discussion***

1. *Ask yourself if you have a **Growth** or a **Fixed** mindset. Where did this start and how can you move from fixed to growth? Write out your thoughts and share if you are in a trusted group.*
2. *Look over the **Gaze and Glance** diagram. Talk about what you usually do when you are in a trial or hard circumstance. Most of us **Gaze** at our circumstances. What are some baby steps that can help shift your focus?*
3. *Read over Hebrews 12:1-2. What do you hear that's encouraging about shifting your focus?*  
  
*<sup>1</sup> Therefore, since we also have such a large cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us lay aside every hindrance and the sin that so easily ensnares us. Let us run with endurance the race that lies before us, <sup>2</sup> keeping our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith. For the joy that lay before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Hebrews 12:1-2 (CSB)*
4. *Share any new discoveries about yourself from listing your core values with your group. How many are a reaction to what you did or did not see growing up?*
5. *How would **you** or your situation be different if instead of praying (or begging) God to change things, you practiced more prayers of thanks for who God is and his love, care, and power?*

## Chapter 4: Broken Self Image

**Leaders Notes:** In this chapter we are exploring false beliefs we've formed about ourselves, from family, friends, society, and culture. Some of the thoughts are so familiar we never challenge their validity especially when we are prone to find our value from the actions of others toward us. Encourage your group to spend time with the reflection questions and journaling their discoveries. Try to ask open ended questions that would not be answered with just a yes or no and try to avoid the question "why" and use "because?" instead, it sounds less challenging.

### **For Personal Reflection**

1. *Think about the connection between the comments your parents (or others) made about you, and the way you thought of yourself growing up, and now. Write your thoughts and some of the false beliefs you have.*
2. *How does the approval of others affect your life? Are you overly pleasing, in need of constant affirmation, or seeking something else from others?*
3. *Is there any part of Roxanne's letter to Rob you identify with? Which part and why?*
4. *If you didn't do this before, write out a description of how you view yourself, without reference to your occupation, gender, children, or the things you do. Are you finding your worth by the response of others or do you really believe your intrinsic value comes from God? What small steps would help you integrate his love for you? How well do you accept your strengths and weaknesses?*
5. *Read these verses and answer the questions:*
  - *John 15:15 – "I do not call you servants anymore, because a servant doesn't know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything I have heard from my Father." (I am **accepted** because \_\_\_\_\_?)*
  - *Philippians 4:12-13 – "I know how to make do with little, and I know how to make do with a lot. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being content—whether well fed or hungry, whether in abundance or in need. I am able to do all things through him who strengthens me." (I am **secure** because \_\_\_\_\_?)*
  - *Ephesians 2:4-7 – "But God, who is rich in mercy, because of his great love that he had for us, made us alive with Christ even though we were dead in trespasses. You are saved by grace! He also raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavens in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might display the immeasurable riches of his grace through his kindness to us in Christ Jesus." (I am **significant** because \_\_\_\_\_?)*

### **For Group Discussion**

1. *Rob struggled with the "not enough" message and shame; what part of his thoughts do you identify with and why?*
2. *A trigger is an event or experience that sets off a memory tape or a flashback that ignites a reaction. It's usually an overreaction to a situation. It can be a sound, sight, touch, smell, etc. related to an earlier experience. When do you notice your overreactions and how are they connected to your early history? What circumstances set you off? Share with your group some of your triggers, we all have them.*
3. *Review the chart on **Responding vs. Reacting** and discuss small steps you can make in responding when a sensitive spot is triggered.*

## **Chapter 5: Broken Trust**

### **Leaders Notes:**

Be especially prayerful before this week's discussion, broken trust and forgiveness is a very sensitive topic and it can take time to forgive depending on the offense. Try to emphasize your member's growth and journey rather than replaying all the ways their spouse has broken trust and hurt them. As hard as this chapter is, the way to healing is self-discovery hopefully leading to forgiveness and maybe reconciliation.

### **For Personal Reflection**

1. Describe how you identify with Roxanne's broken trust, and the ways you tend to control.
2. Before your husband's or partner's issues began being revealed, did you have difficulty trusting (like Roxanne) or were you too trusting? What do you think that's tied to?
3. What parts of Rob's thoughts helped you see inside a man's brain, or thinking process?
4. On a one to ten scale how fearful are you? The more controlling, the more fearful. Do you believe God is not going to care for you, so you need to overly protect yourself?

### **For Group Discussion**

1. As you heal personally, or as a couple, how does the enemy try to trip you up? What thoughts or situations does he use to take you down? These could be things like the children acting up, illness, work-related stress, or things breaking down like the car. What can you do to recognize and resist the enemy's influence over you?
2. How has the fear of change, abandonment, or judgment caused you to stay stuck? Do you identify with thinking you can't go on, like wanting to quit during labor while giving birth? Write out your thoughts on this and share with a trusted friend or group.
3. What is your understanding of forgiveness, and where did that come from? Are you waiting for feelings before forgiving? What's the difference between forgiveness and reconciliation?
4. Read Matthew 18:21-35. What is God inviting you to regarding forgiveness?

21 Then Peter approached him and asked, "Lord, how many times must I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? As many as seven times?" 22 "I tell you, not as many as seven," Jesus replied, "but seventy times seven. 23 "For this reason, the kingdom of heaven can be compared to a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. 24 When he began to settle accounts, one who owed ten thousand talents was brought before him. 25 Since he did not have the money to pay it back, his master commanded that he, his wife, his children, and everything he had be sold to pay the debt. 26 "At this, the servant fell facedown before him and said, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you everything.' 27 Then the master of that servant had compassion, released him, and forgave him the loan. 28 "That servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him, started choking him, and said, 'Pay what you owe!' 29 "At this, his fellow servant fell down and began begging him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.' 30 But he wasn't willing. Instead, he went and threw him into prison until he could pay what was owed. 31 When the other servants saw what had taken place, they were deeply distressed and went and reported to their master everything that had happened. 32 Then, after he had summoned him, his master said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. 33 Shouldn't you also have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?' 34 And because he was angry, his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured until he could pay everything that was owed. 35 So also my heavenly Father will do to you unless every one of you forgives his brother or sister from your heart."

Matthew 18:21-35 (CSB)

## **Chapter 6: Broken Intimacy**

### *Leaders Notes:*

Spend some time on the Stepping Stones to Intimacy section to help your member self-identify where they are in their marriage journey. This chapter is a challenge because we find most people are unsure how to define intimacy other than sex. Don't feel you have to answer their questions, but you may need to question their answers and ask them to ponder this topic more, or seek a wise counselor.

### **For Personal Reflection**

1. *What descriptions of fear of intimacy do you resonate with and why?*
2. *In what ways do you resonate with either Roxanne or Rob when it comes to broken intimacy, either emotional, relational, or physical?*
3. *In the Stepping Stones to Intimacy (the WE/I), identify which stage you are in and why. Write out your thoughts about this.*
4. *What small steps could you make to build or rebuild emotional intimacy in your relationship? It could start with just being more honest with compassion.*

### **For Group Discussion**

1. *How would you define intimacy, and how do you need to redefine this? Write about this and share with your trusted group.*
2. *In reviewing the qualities of building trust at the end of the chapter, which areas do you need to work on, and which ones would be helpful for you to trust again if your spouse did?*
3. *How have you defined Boundaries? How is it loving to know your limits for yourself and your partner or child?*
4. *What are you afraid will happen if you set a boundary? Do you believe it's selfish?*

## **Chapter 7: Broken Love Styles**

### **Leaders Notes:**

This topic of broken love styles was pivotal for changing our marriage, so even though we are only able to touch on this important area, encourage your group to take the test, get the book and read up on their unhealthy style. Also, review the Secure List and ask where they may need to develop some of those skills. There is a bit more information in the appendix you can reference as well. My experience is that the Avoider is hardest to convince their independent way is not good, so you may receive some resistance from them, but when the student is ready the teach will come, so pray for them and encourage them to stay open.

### **For Personal Reflection**

- 1. If you haven't done so yet, take the Love Style test on [howwelove.com](http://howwelove.com)*
- 2. Which style, or styles, did you score the highest?*
- 3. As you review your potential broken love style, what are your thoughts and feelings?*
- 4. On a scale of 1 to 10, how open are you to learning more about relating to others and yourself in a different way?*
- 5. Connect the dots. Although you are not responsible for your spouse's choices, you each brought damaged love styles into your marriage. How has yours affected your relationship?*

### **Group Discussion Questions**

- 1. Read the list of Codependent characteristics and check any that fit you. Then look at the description of the securely attached love style at the end of this chapter and pick one or two to work on. Share with your group what you are learning about your love style.*
- 2. Review the Vacillator/Avoider diagram in the Appendix to see if your marriage fits this dance pattern. There are other combinations of Love Styles, and we highly recommend buying the book, **How We Love**, by Milan & Kay Yerkovich for detailed explanations of each style and how they combine in relationships.*

## Chapter 8: Broken Communication

### Leaders Notes:

You may need two weeks for this chapter. Communication bad habits are hard to recognize in us and even harder to break. If you choose to take two weeks, talk about the barriers to communication they tend to fall into, and the next week the building blocks of healthy communication and what the Bible has to say about it. The Four Quadrants chart is very helpful in seeing all the nutrients a relationship needs but especially to learn to do them in order for best communication and connection.

### For Personal Reflection

1. *What did you learn about communication in your family growing up? What part of those lessons have you brought into your marriage?*
2. *As you look at the list of what prevents good communication, what are you prone to do and why?*
3. *Review the different types of defenses you use and check which ones you go to when you are being triggered or feeling hurt. The more secure you become, the less defensive your responses, but you need to recognize them first.*

### For Group Discussion

1. *Read the **Connecting Conversation** in the Appendix. Where do your conversations usually break down? Applying the suggestions in the chapter on communication, try having a conversation with your partner, or someone close. It takes practice to learn this skill. Active Listening is like learning to ride a bike, it takes time and messing up occasionally until you are better at it.*
2. *Review the **4 Quadrants of Relational Nutrients**. Which skills do you need to develop? Think about your conversations. Do you start in Quadrant 1 (the most effective place to start), or do you tend to start in Quadrant 3 or 4? How about your spouse?*
3. *The Bible has much to say about communication. Read the following verses and write out what they say that applies to your prayer and thought life.*
  - a. *“Surely you desire integrity in the inner self, and you teach me wisdom deep within.” Psalm 51:6 (CSB)*
  - b. *“Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my concerns. See if there is any offensive way in me; lead me in the everlasting way.” Psalm 139:23-24 (CSB)*
  - c. *“Not many should become teachers, my brothers, because you know that we will receive a stricter judgment. <sup>2</sup> For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is mature, able also to control the whole body. <sup>3</sup> Now if we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we direct their whole bodies. <sup>4</sup> And consider ships: Though very large and driven by fierce winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. <sup>5</sup> So too, though the tongue is a small part of the body, it boasts great things. Consider how a small fire sets ablaze a large forest. <sup>6</sup> And the tongue is a fire. The tongue, a world of unrighteousness, is placed<sup>[b]</sup> among our members. It stains the whole body, sets the course of life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. <sup>7</sup> Every kind of animal, bird, reptile, and fish is tamed and has been tamed by humankind, <sup>8</sup> but no one can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. <sup>9</sup> With the tongue we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in God’s likeness. <sup>10</sup> Blessing and cursing come out of the same mouth. My*

*brothers and sisters, these things should not be this way. <sup>11</sup> Does a spring pour out sweet and bitter water from the same opening? <sup>12</sup> Can a fig tree produce olives, my brothers and sisters, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a saltwater spring yield fresh water. <sup>13</sup> Who among you is wise and understanding? By his good conduct he should show that his works are done in the gentleness that comes from wisdom. <sup>14</sup> But if you have bitter envy and selfish ambition in your heart, don't boast and deny the truth. <sup>15</sup> Such wisdom does not come down from above but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. <sup>16</sup> For where there is envy and selfish ambition, there is disorder and every evil practice. <sup>17</sup> But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peace-loving, gentle, compliant, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without pretense. <sup>18</sup> And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who cultivate peace." James 3:1-18 (CSB)*

## **Chapter 9: Cycles of Change**

### **Leaders Notes:**

This week there are not that many questions, so I would talk about the personal reflection questions as well as the group discussion questions. The cycles of change can be challenging because we find most people want a quick fix to their problems, make a few adjustments to their behavior and think or expect things to be all better. However, the “Spiritual Cycle is ongoing and is less outcome focused and more about personal growth and liberation.

Draw out the group around question 4 about fear. Some people don’t think they are fearful, but they need to control situations. The more controlling someone is there is a fear factor involved even if they’ve convince themselves they are confident and in charge.

### **For Personal Reflection**

1. Which cycle of change have you used the most and why?
2. Are you merely looking for pain relief, or do you want release from things that are keeping you stuck? Why?
3. The spiritual cycle starts with brokenness (admitting we don’t have all the answers or power). What areas of brokenness are you becoming aware of? Write about this.
4. To what extent is **fear** a factor for you? What is the earliest age you recall feeling fearful? When did fear begin when you were young? Fear is common to all of us, but some of us struggle with it more, or we just get better at covering it up. Make a list of your fears and ask God to give his perspective and grace in dealing with them. Ninety-five percent of the things I feared never happened, but I lost sleep for years over them.
5. What are some of your **Outcome Focused Goals**? Make a list of your desires, and ask yourself if you think you **need** them to be whole, or are you asking a person to provide what God wants to give you?

### **For Group Discussion**

1. There are many things to avoid in the process of change. As you read about what to avoid, which ones do you need to pay attention to, and why? Write out one small decision you can make in that area to help keep you on the path of growth. For example, if you tend to make hasty decisions, one small step would be to wait 24 hours, or even 30 days depending on the decision, before deciding. Use this time to calm any strong emotions or reactivity so you can hear God and think more clearly before deciding anything.
2. Read the verse below and write about what you can count on during challenging times.

*“Do not fear, for I am with you;  
do not be afraid, for I am your God.  
I will strengthen you; I will help you;  
I will hold on to you with my righteous right hand.”*

(Isaiah 41:10)

## **Chapter 10: Where do we go from here?**

### **Leaders Notes:**

Congratulations if you've gotten this far you have made it through the book and covered a lot of content. Now is the time to reflect with the group what they've learned and what be their next steps would be. Review the appendix section for the books and tools we've found helpful for our own marriage and in helping other couples. We have only included books we know are good. What invitation did they hear (maybe repeatedly) from God in terms of their faith walk? This journey through the book may have been the start of healing and now they may need a good counselor to walk beside them as they grow, we sure did. Thank you again for your willingness to be available to lead a group, we hope it was a growing experience for you. You stepped out in faith and now we leave the results to God.

### **For Personal Reflection**

- 1. Write out when you felt lost or confused, and it was hard to hear from God. Then write about when you felt more trusting of God and you had a sense of peace. Compare the two and look for what you were doing differently during peaceful times.*
- 2. What have you read in this book that provided perspective, hope or peace? Is there an invitation from God you need to follow or apply?*
- 3. If you are reading this book alone, consider joining a group for support. Groups create a powerful learning experience, and there is much to learn from each other as we share our joy, our pain, and our questions along the way.*

### **For Group Discussion**

- 1. What is the real foundation for your hope? Is it only in your spouse changing, a child behaving, or any other person becoming different?*
- 2. What legacy are you leaving? It may not be a perfect picture, but what will you do today to influence the lives around you in a positive way?*
- 3. Review the suggested reading list. We included a selection of books that had a profound influence on our growth and healing. Talk with your group on the next steps you are going to take.*
- 4. Check out our website [iSightcoaching.com](http://iSightcoaching.com) where you can view videos and other resources on topics discussed in this book.*