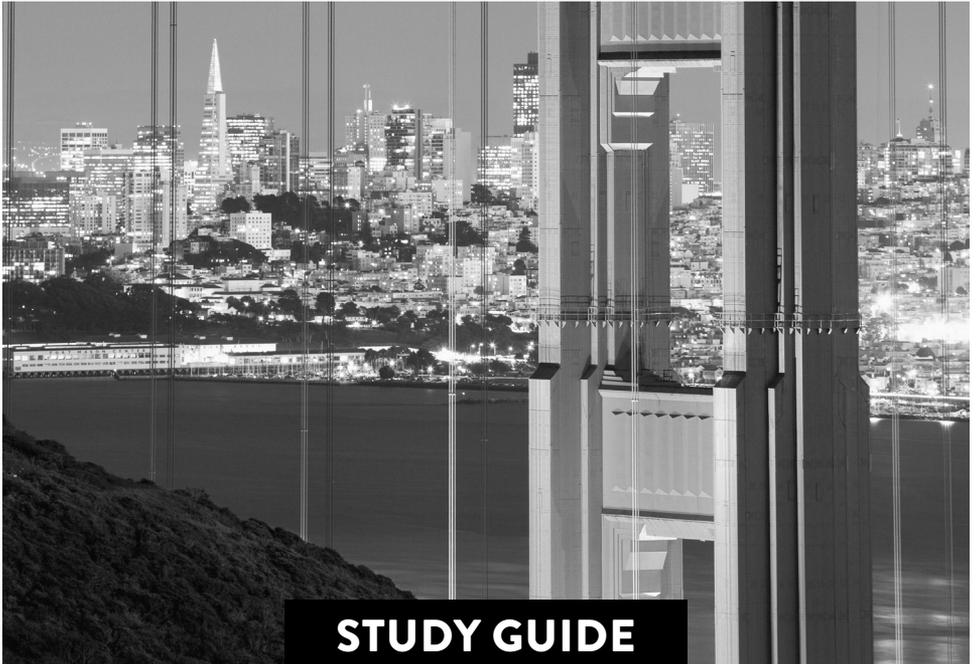




THE CHURCH OF IRRESISTIBLE INFLUENCE



STUDY GUIDE

Hope's 10 for 10, which launched Nov. 2, 2019, details 10 goals for Hope in the next 10 years. With a fresh, updated vision for the next decade of ministry, we are ready to see the amazing ways God is going to move! This study is focused on goal #4, City-Changers.



SERVE

**our neighbors
in need as the
hands and
feet of Jesus by
bringing good
news ...**

... to the poor, sharing God's love for all, breaking strongholds of systemic corruption, amplifying our voice for racial harmony, rebuilding a deeper sense of connectedness, upgrading our support for local mission partners to serve together as a united force for good in our communities, and developing new initiatives that bring light to the darkest places around us, in the cities and towns where we reside.

Matthew 25:40 | Mark 12:31 | Galatians 5:14



THE CHURCH OF IRRESISTIBLE INFLUENCE

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Session 1:

Spanning the Great Divide: The Great Chasm & Living Proof

PRE-READING: Chapters 1-2

OPENING PRAYER

Take a few minutes to open your group meeting in prayer. Thank God for joining you, ask him to guide your conversation and request that he reveal his truth to you.

BIBLE READING:

Read aloud: Ephesians 2:8-10

God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.

Read aloud: Matthew 5:14-16

You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

Read aloud: John 13:34,15:16-17

A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another ... You didn't choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask for, using my name. This is my command: Love each other.

Read aloud: Excerpt from "Freedom of a Christian" by Martin Luther (1520)

As our heavenly Father has in Christ freely come to our aid, we also ought freely to help our neighbor through our body and its works, and each one should become as it were a Christ to the other that we may be Christs to one another ...

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

These questions are conversation starters. Don't feel pressure to answer them all. Instead, read through them, select a few that your group connects with, and discuss those together.

1. What kind of impact has Hope had on you and those you know? Can you think of some examples?
2. What kind of impact do you think Hope has had on its surrounding communities? What are some examples?

3. What do you think it means in our divided country for you, your small group or Hope to be a Bridge Builder? What are some ways you, your group or Hope are already building bridges? Where might there be opportunities to build more bridges?
4. On page 41, Robert Lewis describes the church as “a community of people who ... present living proof of a loving God to a watching world.” Where have you seen this “living proof” in action at Hope?
5. Jesus told his disciples, “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:34). What do this passage and the Bible passages on pages 42-44 say about God’s mission for the church as a community and for individual Christians?

CLOSING PRAYER

When your conversation is finished, take some time to close your group meeting in prayer. Give everyone a few minutes to share a prayer request. Then, have someone in your group close the group in prayer. If you want, have someone open the prayer and another person close.

Here’s a starter prayer if you’re looking for a way to begin your prayer session:

Heavenly Father, you created us as your church to be a light in the darkness and healing for the broken. Transform us, Lord, by the power of your Spirit, so that those around us would come to know the restoring love and forgiveness you have so freely given us. We pray in the Name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Excerpt from “Evangelical Lutheran Worship”

PRAYER JOURNALING

Journaling is a wonderful way to talk to God. We invite you to use the following pages during your prayer time as you read through The Church of Irresistible Influence with your group.

Date: _____

Today I read _____ **chapter(s)**

Takeaways as I read...

_____ *How I can apply this to my life...* _____



Dear God,

Teach me...

You are...

I confess...

I'm thankful for...

Specific Prayer Requests:

Amen.

Session 2:

Designing the Structure: Jesus and the Idea of Irresistible Influence (i²)

PRE-READING: Chapter 3

OPENING PRAYER

Take a few minutes to open your group meeting in prayer. Thank God for joining you, ask him to guide your conversation and request that he reveal his truth to you.

BIBLE READING:

Read aloud: Matthew 28:18-20

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Read aloud: Mark 8:1-8

During those days another large crowd gathered. Since they had nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples to him and said, "I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. If I send them home hungry, they will collapse on the way, because some of them have come a long distance." His disciples answered, "But where in this remote place can anyone get enough bread to feed them?" "How many loaves do you have?" Jesus asked. "Seven," they replied. He told the crowd to sit down on the ground. When he had taken the seven loaves and given thanks, he broke them and gave them to his disciples to set before the people, and they did so. They had a few small fish as well; he gave thanks for them also and told the disciples to distribute them. The people ate and were satisfied. Afterward the disciples picked up seven basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

These questions are conversation starters. Don't feel pressure to answer them all. Instead, read through them, select a few that your group connects with, and discuss those together.

1. The author, Robert Lewis, suggests that Jesus' "Big Idea" was that the church should be a force of *irresistible influence* in the world around it (page 56). How do you see Hope being a force of irresistible influence in the Des Moines metro? What are some ways you and your family might be a force of irresistible influence in your neighborhood, school and work?
2. According to Lewis, what's the difference between a "successful church" and a church of irresistible influence (pages 58-9)? What are some ways that a large church like Hope can be a church of irresistible influence?

3. On pages 64 and 66, Lewis quotes Matthew 5:16. How does this key verse tie into his contention that Christians and the church should be a positive and irresistible influence on the world around it?
4. Looking at pages 65-65, what does it mean for us as a church and as individual followers of Jesus to be “a bridge over the troubled waters between an isolated church and a cynical culture ...”?

CLOSING PRAYER

When your conversation is finished, take some time to close your group meeting in prayer. Give everyone a few minutes to share a prayer request. Then, have someone in your group close the group in prayer. If you want, have someone open the prayer and another person close.

Here’s a starter prayer if you’re looking for a way to begin your prayer session:

*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:
where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.*

*O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved as to love.*

*For it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.*

Prayer of St. Francis

PRAYER JOURNALING

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Takeaways as I read...

_____ *How I can apply this to my life...* _____



Dear God,

Teach me...

You are...

I confess...

I'm thankful for...

Specific Prayer Requests:

Amen.

Session 3:

Designing the Structure: The Core of i² Construction

PRE-READING: Chapter 4

OPENING PRAYER

Take a few minutes to open your group meeting in prayer. Thank God for joining you, ask him to guide your conversation and request that he reveal his truth to you.

BIBLE READING:

Read aloud: James 2:14-18

What good is it, dear brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but don't show it by your actions? Can that kind of faith save anyone? Suppose you see a brother or sister who has no food or clothing, and you say, "Good-bye and have a good day; stay warm and eat well"—but then you don't give that person any food or clothing. What good does that do?

So you see, faith by itself isn't enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless.

Now someone may argue, "Some people have faith; others have good deeds." But I say, "How can you show me your faith if you don't have good deeds? I will show you my faith by my good deeds."

Read aloud: Acts 2:44-47

And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need. They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity—all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

These questions are conversation starters. Don't feel pressure to answer them all. Instead, read through them, select a few that your group connects with, and discuss those together.

1. On page 70, Lewis describes the partnership Fellowship Bible Church has with the community of Little Rock, Ark. What are some of ways Hope partners with the cities in the Des Moines metro? (Hint: Visit hopewdm.org/serve/locally to discover the many service and partnership opportunities Hope is involved in.)
2. Ezra taught God's word to the Jews who returned from Babylon and led them in confessing their misplaced priorities, their pride and the enormous compromises that had settled comfortably into their lifestyles (Nehemiah 9:1-3). What would it mean for us as Christians in our country

to do the same? How would such a confession help the American church build bridges to the world around us?

3. God's vision for Hope is that we are "Powered by the Spirit to bring Christ to all cultures, revive the world with God's love and make heaven more crowded!" Part of that is to be "city-changers." How might you, your family or your life group become city-changers?

CLOSING PRAYER

When your conversation is finished, take some time to close your group meeting in prayer. Give everyone a few minutes to share a prayer request. Then, have someone in your group close the group in prayer. If you want, have someone open the prayer and another person close.

Here's a starter prayer if you're looking for a way to begin your prayer session:

Lord God, your Son came among us to serve and not to be served, and to give his life for the life of the world. Lead us by his love to serve all those to whom the world offers no comfort and little help. Through us give hope to the hopeless, love to the unloved, peace to the troubled, and rest to the weary, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Excerpt from "Evangelical Lutheran Worship"

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_____ *How I can apply this to my life...* _____



Dear God,

Teach me...

You are...

I confess...

I'm thankful for...

Specific Prayer Requests:

Amen.

Session 4:

Designing the Structure: From Lay Spectators to i² Participants

PRE-READING: Chapter 5

OPENING PRAYER

Take a few minutes to open your group meeting in prayer. Thank God for joining you, ask him to guide your conversation and request that he reveal his truth to you.

BIBLE READING:

Read aloud: Exodus 3:7-8,11-12a

The LORD said, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering ... And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt."

But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?"

And God said, "I will be with you ...

Read aloud: 1 Corinthians 1:4-7

I always thank my God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. For in him you have been enriched in every way—with all kinds of speech and with all knowledge—God thus confirming our testimony about Christ among you. Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed.

Read aloud: Hebrews 13:20-21

Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

These questions are conversation starters. Don't feel pressure to answer them all. Instead, read through them, select a few that your group connects with, and discuss those together.

1. On page 96, Robert Louis explores the "fear of inadequacy" many Christians feel when they think about personally making a difference in their communities. On a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 is "fully confident," where would you place yourself in regard to personally serving in your neighborhood or city?

2. What might be some roadblocks to getting involved in your neighborhood or city? What steps could you take to remove those roadblocks?
3. On page 99 Lewis states that what matters is “good works that display the love of Christ.” How might that work itself out in the rhythms of your everyday life?
4. What are the gifts, strengths, talents and life experiences that God has given you? How might you use what God has given you to make an impact in others’ lives?

CLOSING PRAYER

When your conversation is finished, take some time to close your group meeting in prayer. Give everyone a few minutes to share a prayer request. Then, have someone in your group close the group in prayer. If you want, have someone open the prayer and another person close.

Here’s a starter prayer if you’re looking for a way to begin your prayer session:

Almighty God, your Holy Spirit equips the church with a rich variety of gifts. Grant that we may use them to bear witness to Christ in lives that are built on faith and love. Make us ready to live the Gospel and eager to do your will, so that those around us may know your everlasting love; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

Excerpt from “Evangelical Lutheran Worship”

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Dear God,

Teach me...

You are...

I confess...

I'm thankful for...

Specific Prayer Requests:

Amen.

Session 5:

Experiencing the Results: Stories of Transformed Lives

PRE-READING: Chapters 6-8

OPENING PRAYER

Take a few minutes to open your group meeting in prayer. Thank God for joining you, ask him to guide your conversation and request that he reveal his truth to you.

BIBLE READING:

Read aloud: Ephesians 3:16,19-21

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ... that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

Read aloud: Matthew 25:37-40

"Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.

Read aloud: 1 Timothy 6:17-19

Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

These questions are conversation starters. Don't feel pressure to answer them all. Instead, read through them, select a few that your group connects with, and discuss those together.

1. From your reading of the stories of Bridge Builders in chapters 6-8, which ones stood out to you? What made them stand out to you?
2. What was inspiring about these stories? What was challenging?
3. When are times when God has done "immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine" as you followed Jesus' call to serve those around you? (Ephesians 3:20)

4. Where are some places where God might be calling you to be “rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share”? (1 Timothy 6:18)

CLOSING PRAYER

When your conversation is finished, take some time to close your group meeting in prayer. Give everyone a few minutes to share a prayer request. Then, have someone in your group close the group in prayer. If you want, have someone open the prayer and another person close.

Here’s a starter prayer if you’re looking for a way to begin your prayer session:

Heavenly Father, we call to mind before you all whom it is easy to forget: those who are homeless, destitute, sick, isolated, and all who have no one to care for them. May we bring help and healing to those who are broken in body or spirit, that they may have comfort in sorrow, company in loneliness, and a place of safety and warmth; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Excerpt from “Evangelical Lutheran Worship”

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Dear God,

Teach me...

You are...

I confess...

I'm thankful for...

Specific Prayer Requests:

Amen.

Session 6:

Expanding the i² Effort: Becoming a Light for the City

PRE-READING: Chapters 9-11

OPENING PRAYER

Take a few minutes to open your group meeting in prayer. Thank God for joining you, ask him to guide your conversation and request that he reveal his truth to you.

BIBLE READING:

Read aloud: Luke 4:14-19

Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. He was teaching in their synagogues, and everyone praised him.

He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

*“The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to set the oppressed free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”*

Read aloud: Romans 13:8-10

Owe nothing to anyone—except for your obligation to love one another. If you love your neighbor, you will fulfill the requirements of God’s law. For the commandments say, “You must not commit adultery. You must not murder. You must not steal. You must not covet.” These—and other such commandments—are summed up in this one commandment: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Love does no wrong to others, so love fulfills the requirements of God’s law.

Read aloud: Isaiah 58:6-9

*Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen:
to loose the chains of injustice
and untie the cords of the yoke,
to set the oppressed free
and break every yoke?
Is it not to share your food with the hungry
and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—
when you see the naked, to clothe them,
and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?*

*Then your light will break forth like the dawn,
and your healing will quickly appear;
then your righteousness will go before you,
and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard.
Then you will call, and the LORD will answer;
you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I.*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

These questions are conversation starters. Don't feel pressure to answer them all. Instead, read through them, select a few that your group connects with, and discuss those together.

1. What is the reputation of Christians and churches for people in the Des Moines metro? What do you think contributes to that reputation?
2. How does Hope serve the Des Moines metro? How does Hope work with other churches, ministries and social service agencies throughout the Des Moines metro? (Hint: Learn about Hope's mission partners at hopewdm.org/serve/locally and learn about Hope's 10 for 10 goals at lutheranchurchofhope.org/10-for-10.)
3. Here are just some of Hope's classes and events where leaders are equipped for volunteer or staff ministry: EQUIP, Alpha leadership track, School for Listening Prayer, Pneuma, internship program, and small group leader training. What do you know about these equipping ministries? Where would you go to find out about these ministries? How might they equip you for God's calling on your life?
4. What do you know about the needs of your local neighborhood or city? How would you go about finding out about those needs? How might Hope help you respond to those needs?

CLOSING PRAYER

When your conversation is finished, take some time to close your group meeting in prayer. Give everyone a few minutes to share a prayer request. Then, have someone in your group close the group in prayer. If you want, have someone open the prayer and another person close.

Here's a starter prayer if you're looking for a way to begin your prayer session:

Almighty God, by your holy prophet Jeremiah you taught your people Israel to seek the welfare of the cities in which they lived. We commend our neighborhoods and cities to your care, that they might be kept free from poverty, despair and inequality. By the power of your Spirit, help us to love our neighbors, so that through us, your healing, salvation, justice and peace would flourish in our communities. We pray in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Excerpt from "Evangelical Lutheran Worship"

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Specific Prayer Requests:

Amen.



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