



## LEADER'S GUIDE

Andy Stanley

# FAITH LUCK

## HOPE AND LUCK

### *Faith, Hope and Luck #1 :: Better Odds* {Andy Stanley}

#### INTRODUCTION

How does faith *really* work? If your prayers aren't answered, is it because you didn't have enough faith? What does it mean to *lose* faith? Does your faith waver depending on your circumstances? Or is your faith supposed to be in something beyond your control, so that it isn't swayed by the circumstances of your life? Your faith is resting against something. Is it something that changes day to day, or does it endure through time?

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When people say they have lost faith or that their faith came crashing down, what exactly does that mean? Have you ever lost faith?
2. What do you believe is the relationship between faith and answered prayer? Or is there a relationship between faith and prayer?
3. When have you misinterpreted God's voice/direction? When have you been surprised or frustrated by God's timeframe in answering your prayers?
4. Is it more likely that our behavior changes our beliefs or that our beliefs change our behavior?
5. Read Hebrews 12:2-3. These verses encourage us to rest our faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ. How is faith that rests in Jesus Christ different from faith that rests on what's going on around us?
6. What does it look like to continue to have faith in the face of difficult and trying circumstances?

#### THINK ABOUT IT

God never intended for us to rest our faith on what's going on around us. Eventually, the pleasures of life will sway us to change what we believe. The pressures and tragedies of life will cause us to doubt. But if our faith is placed in a relationship with Christ, it will endure. So what is your faith resting against? Is it circumstances? Or is it Jesus Christ?

#### WHAT WILL YOU DO?

This week, put your trust in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Start with a simple prayer: "God, I trust you today."

#### CHANGING YOUR MIND

*Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.*

Hebrews 12:2-3

# LEADER'S GUIDE SESSION NOTES



## SESSION 1 — BETTER ODDS

### Bottom Line

We all tend to have circumstantial faith—faith that's colored by our circumstances and our personal observations of life. Unfortunately, this kind of faith is fragile. But the Bible teaches that the true foundation for faith isn't experience, but a *person*. That person is Jesus Christ, who demonstrated by his life, death, and resurrection that he is God and came from God.

### DISCUSSION STARTER

Use the "Discussion Starter" printed in Session 1 of the Participant's Guide to "break the ice"—and to help everyone see that we're all working on our approaches to life (and our understanding of God) and that the exercise of faith is always part of it.

## Notes for Discussion Questions

1. **In your observation, what are the factors that cause people to abandon their faith? How would you describe the typical process that someone goes through in abandoning his or her faith?**

Use this question to help everyone understand the real and present danger—which the Bible addresses—of failing to hold fast to our faith.

2. **To what degree is *your* faith shaped and influenced—or even controlled—by the circumstances of life?**

Answering this honestly should help everyone see that we all tend to let our faith be colored by our circumstances and life observations.

3. **When have you misinterpreted God's voice/direction? When have you been surprised or frustrated by God's time frame in answering your prayers?**

The responses to this question should help your group see the spectrum of answers to prayer—from a definitive YES! from God to an eerily silent no.

4. **What “God moments” have shaped your faith—events or experiences in which you felt God was especially present in your life?**

These answers are likely to bring up some strong emotions and memories.

5. **In what instances have you recognized that your faith is inconvenient, inadequate, or irrelevant?**

Spend a generous amount of discussion time to uncover these moments of vulnerability. For some, these may be the kinds of memories we’ve tried to forget.

6. **Read Hebrews 12:2–3. These verses encourage us to rest our faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ. How is faith that rests in Jesus Christ different from faith that rests on our experiences?**

The foundation of true Christian faith is not *experience*, but a *person*. This is the key point of Session 1. Encourage everyone to bring in Scriptures they know that communicate and reinforce this core truth.

## **Moving Forward**

The goal is to help your group look increasingly to Jesus as the “author and perfecter” of their personal faith (Hebrews 12:2).

## **Preparation for Session 2**

Remember to point out the brief daily devotions that the group members can complete. They will help stimulate discussion in your next session. These devotions will enable everyone to dig into the Bible and start wrestling with the topics that will come up next time.

# FAITH ON HOPE AND LUCK

## *Faith, Hope, and Luck #2 :: Betting On Hope* {Andy Stanley}

### INTRODUCTION

What is faith? Is it different than hope? How do you even measure faith? If things are going well with you and God, does that mean you have a lot of faith? If things are not going well in your life, if your prayers are not being answered, does that mean you don't have enough faith? Unfortunately, messages about faith today are very *me* centered. Do I have enough faith? Am I praying or believing enough? In reality, the object of our faith is much more important than the amount of faith we have.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Is there anything about faith that is confusing for you?
2. What are some modern misconceptions about faith? How have those misconceptions influenced our views about God?
3. What is the difference between hope and faith? (When have you been hopeful that something would happen? When have you had faith that something would happen?)
4. Read Hebrews 11:1. The bridge from hope to faith is the promise or revelation of God. What are some promises from the Bible that have been especially meaningful to you?
5. Faith is confidence that God is who he says he is and he will do what he promises to do. Have you ever expected God to do things he never promised to do?
6. How does having faith in God's promises affect the way we live our everyday lives?

### THINK ABOUT IT

We tend to resist the biblical definition of faith because it takes faith out of our hands and puts God back in control. Much too often, we don't want God—we want a genie. But the goal of faith is not to get God to do what we want him to do; the goal of faith is to get us to live in accordance with the character and promises of God. Ultimately, faith comes down to trusting that God knows what he is doing. In what areas of your life is it difficult for you to trust that God is in complete control?

### WHAT WILL YOU DO?

This week, start your days with this prayer: "God, your will be done." Identify a promise from the Bible that resonates with you and walk by faith, trusting that God will hold true to his promise.

### CHANGING YOUR MIND

*Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.*

Hebrews 11:1

## SESSION 2 — BETTING ON HOPE

### Bottom Line

We need a clear definition of faith. Here it is: faith is simply the *confidence that God is who he says he is and that he will do everything he's promised to do*.

### DISCUSSION STARTER

Use the "Discussion Starter" listed for this session in the participant's guide. This one should help everyone in your group see that we have various ideas about what faith involves.

### Notes for Discussion Questions

1. **In what ways have you tried to shrink God down to a manageable size in order to serve your desires?**

Share your own honest response, and encourage everyone to do the same.



2. **Have you tended to view faith as a (a) quantifiable force, or (b) a formula? If you've seen faith as a force, what have you expected that force to accomplish? If you've seen faith as a formula, what are the components of the equation?**

Most of us have times when we tend to come up with our own "formulas" for faith. Look to the past as well as the present for answers to this question.

3. **In your present understanding, how would you express the difference between *confidence*, *hope*, and *faith*?**

Also bring in the perspectives taught in the DVD content on this topic.

4. **Read Hebrews 11:1. The bridge from hope to faith is the promise or revelation of God. What are some promises from the Bible that have been especially meaningful to you?**

Give everyone in your group an opportunity to respond to this question. As a result, you may develop a sense of your group members' familiarity with the Bible and how they view God.

5. **What do you see as the right relationship between God's promises and our faith? How does this relationship work out in your life, especially in how you pray?**

The goal is to work to build up a stronger dependence on God's trustworthy promises.

6. **What are the things about your life and about God that you can be certain of?**

Help guide the discussion toward God's explicit promises and the truths of Scripture.

## **Moving Forward**

Encourage your group members to realize that they can freely approach God in prayer *because of who he is*. Encourage them to focus on him, not on themselves, and not on what he can do for them as they come to him in open and honest prayer.

## **Preparation for Session 3**

Again, encourage your group members to complete the brief daily devotions. These will help stimulate discussion in your next session. They'll enable everyone to dig into the Bible and start wrestling with the topics coming up next time.

# FAITH HOPE AND LUCK

## *Faith, Hope, and Luck #3 :: Beating the Odds* {Andy Stanley}

### INTRODUCTION

Does God promise us good health? Fame and fortune? Some in this world would suggest that God does promise us these things. Others would suggest that God doesn't promise us anything and, rather, stands distantly from the circumstances of our lives. Last week, we learned that faith is believing that God will do what he promised. If that's true, if faith is attached to a promise, if walking by faith is living as if God will do what he promised, then we need to ask the question, "What has God *really* promised us?"

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are some things that God has not promised . . . that you wished he had?
2. You may hear someone say, "God has promised me this or that." How can you determine if something is an authentic promise of God?
3. Read Hebrews 4:14-16. God promises us mercy. How does Jesus' experience help us approach God with confidence?
4. Hebrews 4:14-16 also tells us that God promises grace. What does it look like to receive grace from God in the midst of difficult circumstances?
5. Are mercy and grace tangible promises to be received? How have you experienced God's mercy and grace?
6. How do these promises affect our ability to trust God during difficult times? Does it change the way we approach tough situations?

### THINK ABOUT IT

God has not promised to deliver us *from* our circumstances; he has promised to deliver us *through* them. Jesus, himself, asked for the circumstances of his death to be changed, but ultimately yielded control to God's plan. A day will come when God will directly intervene to rid the world of sin, sorrow, and death. But in the meantime, how should we balance our prayers of, "God, please do this," and "God, I trust you"?

### WHAT WILL YOU DO?

This week, ask God to change your circumstances, but trust him for the grace to endure in the meantime.

### CHANGING YOUR MIND

*Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. (Hebrews 4:16)*

## SESSION 3 — BEATING THE ODDS

### Bottom Line

What has God promised to do for us? His promises are the bridge between our hope and our faith. We can have absolute confidence that he'll do what he says—he'll always give us what he promises. And his promises include his mercy and grace for our times of need whenever we confidently and trustingly pray to him.

### DISCUSSION STARTER

Again, use the "Discussion Starter" listed for this session in the Participant's Guide. Identify and summarize the perspectives and assumptions your group holds regarding God's promises.

### Notes for Discussion Questions

1. **When you think of "God's promises," is it a long list or a short one? Which of God's promises, if any, seem to be the most important?**

Help everyone see the crucial importance of the gospel and its rich and full promise of salvation through Christ.

2. **When it comes to health, wealth, and comfort, why do you think so many Christians develop wrong concepts and expectations regarding the promises of God?**

Unwise and unhealthy teaching is certainly a factor here, but so is our quick and selfish readiness to believe it.

3. **What requests are appropriate to bring before God in prayer? Is anything and everything “fair game”?**

Help guide the discussion to the truth that we’re free to bring all our requests before God, whatever they are.

4. **Read Hebrews 4:14–16. God promises us mercy. How does Jesus’ experience help us approach God with confidence?**

You can also ask a follow-up question such as: How can Jesus, who lived in the first century, fully understand what we’re experiencing today?

5. **Hebrews 4:14–16 also tells us that God promises mercy. Are mercy and grace tangible promises? How have you experienced God’s mercy and grace?**

Challenge your group members to explore in depth the ideas of

grace and mercy and how those concepts have tangibly been reflected in their lives.

6. **How do these promises affect our ability to trust God during difficult times? Does it change the way we approach tough situations?**

Spend enough time to recognize the infinite richness and fullness of God's mercy and grace toward us.

**Moving Forward**

Help your group members understand that they can approach God freely and confidently in prayer with whatever needs and concerns they have. Help them see how much God values their coming before him with honest recognition of their neediness.

**Preparation for Session 4**

Again, encourage your group members to complete the daily devotions. This will help them be better prepared for the topics coming up next time.



# FAITH AND HOPE AND LUCK

## *Faith, Hope, and Luck #4 :: No Dice* {Andy Stanley}

### INTRODUCTION

We've heard amazing stories of answered prayer. A friend was healed. A marriage was restored. A check arrived in the mail. And in these circumstances, we are ecstatic about God's goodness, mercy, and interest in our lives. *Go God!* But our prayers aren't always answered to our liking. What about the times when they seem to go unheard? What do we do when God apparently says no? Does it take more faith to endure a no from God than to receive a yes?

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When have you prayed for something and God responded, "No"? How do you tend to respond when you feel like God has said no?
2. In Philippians 4:6, God invites us to bring our requests to him. Why does God invite us to pray when his response is oftentimes no?
3. Read 2 Corinthians 12:7-10. Paul made specific requests of God on three occasions. And God responded with a no each time. Does Paul's experience encourage or discourage you from continuing to approach God in prayer?
4. The point of our greatest weakness is the point where God has his greatest opportunity to demonstrate his power. How is accepting God's "No" different than giving up on prayer?
5. When have you seen God's grace and power magnified in your weakness or someone else's weakness?
6. How does praying "Not my will, but your will be done" reflect God's grace in our lives?

### THINK ABOUT IT

When God says no, it is not a reflection of your faith; but if you respond correctly, *you* will become a reflection of his grace, because it takes more faith to endure a no from God than to acquire a yes. In essence, you're saying, "God, if you don't remove this, then I'm trusting that your grace is going to empower me to keep on going." How can you manifest God's grace through your weakness?

### WHAT WILL YOU DO?

This week, pray for another person in your community group to whom it appears God has said no. Pray that he or she will know how to receive God's grace.

### CHANGING YOUR MIND

*But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.*

2 Corinthians 12:9

## SESSION 4 — NO DICE

### Bottom Line

God allows serious hardships in our lives as a means for us to more fully experience his power and grace as we continue to endure. We learn that our points of greatest weakness are also God's greatest opportunities, as we trust him.

### DISCUSSION STARTER

Again, use the "Discussion Starter" listed for this session in the Participant's Guide. There may be a wide variety of answers. Later, the discussion questions will direct your group members to think more personally about their responses to hardship.

### Notes for Discussion Questions

1. **What is your typical pattern for responding to tough circumstances in your life?**

This may be something that many of us fail to recognize in ourselves. Allow enough time to bring out the truth.

2. **To what degree do you think God brings hardships into our lives in order to curb our pride and strengthen our humility? How effective is this?**

We see this in Paul's example in 2 Corinthians 12, but also in other biblical contexts—as well as in our own lives.

3. **As you consider Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 12:7–10, what seemed to be the most important considerations in God's mind and heart as he dealt with Paul in this situation?**

Look especially at the factors of God's glory and the display and free flow of his grace.

4. **Read Philippians 4:6. God invites us to bring our requests to him. Why does God invite us to pray when his response is oftentimes no?**

You can ask your group members about specific situations where they felt they received a no from God.

5. **What are the toughest circumstances in your life that seem to fall under the category of negative conditions that are not likely to change?**

There may be significant reluctance to fully identify these. The

main point is to help each person clearly recognize the answer for himself or herself.

6. **What are some practical ways in which our weaknesses serve as vehicles for God's grace and glory to be better evidenced and experienced (as Paul experienced in 2 Corinthians 12:9–10)?**

This will again bring out the open recognition of their biggest weaknesses, if the group is comfortable enough with each other to share these things.

**Moving Forward**

Again, look strongly to Paul's example in handling life's most difficult and long-lasting hardships.

**Preparation for Session 5**

Once more, encourage your group members to complete the daily devotions in preparation for the next session.

## SESSION 5 — ALL IN

### Bottom Line

Great faith means great surrender—as especially demonstrated in the life of Jesus. Our logical response to all that God has done for us would not be “What can you do for me?” but “How can I serve you?”

### DISCUSSION STARTER

Once more, use the “Discussion Starter” listed for this session in the Participant's Guide. Encourage the group members to say more about the degree of commitment, sacrifice, and surrender they've noticed in the lives of those whom they identify as having “extraordinary faith.”

### Notes for Discussion Questions

1. **What areas of your life are you unwilling to surrender to God?**

Your group members' responses could provide opportunities to incorporate some accountability among your group.

2. **From God's perspective, what's the proper place in our lives for personal goals and plans?**

Help everyone recognize the crucial importance of submitting and yielding our personal pursuits to God's higher intentions.

3. **Read John 12:49–50. Why does Jesus surrender so willingly to his Father? Is this a passive response? Why is surrendering control so hard for people?**

Allow your group members to discuss the difference between active and passive responses. Challenge those in your group to reconsider what "surrender" means if they believe it to be a weak act of faith.

4. **Why does experiencing brokenness or weakness help so many people come to faith in Jesus?**

This is a question that can trigger group members to remember their own journeys of faith, since so many people start their relationship with Jesus Christ in response to a low point in their lives.

5. **In John 14:12, Jesus promised that his followers would do "even greater things" than he did in life. What do you think**

**those “greater things” might be for you?**

Encourage everyone here to look closely at the life and character of Jesus.

6. **As a result of studying *Faith, Hope, and Luck*, what changes have you seen in your view of God, of faith, and of yourself?**

Allow plenty of time for a thorough review of this study course and its degree of helpfulness for everyone in your group.

## **Moving Forward**

There may be a need to release personal goals and agendas in light of God's greater purposes. Encourage everyone in your group to be open to this.



# FAITH <sup>ON</sup> LUCK HOPE <sup>AND</sup>

## *Faith, Hope, and Luck #5 :: All In* {Andy Stanley}

### INTRODUCTION

*You can control your destiny. The secret to life is realizing your full potential.* Popular self-help messages offer you the chance to take control of your life—kinda god-like. In comparison, Christ’s command to “*take up your cross and follow me*” doesn’t sound too appealing. It requires giving up control. It requires surrender. But is that a bad thing? If faith is confidence that God is who he says he is, then doesn’t it make sense to relinquish control and invite him to come alive in your life?

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How much control do we really have in our lives? Are we victims of fate, or do we determine our own futures?
2. What areas of your life are you unwilling to surrender to God?
3. Read John 12:49-50. Why does Jesus surrender so willingly to his father? Is this a passive response? Why is surrendering control so hard?
4. Read John 14:13. How does this verse influence the way you pray?
5. Why does experiencing brokenness or weakness help so many people come to faith in Jesus?
6. What would it look like to live by faith financially, relationally, professionally, morally, at home, as a parent?

### THINK ABOUT IT

Faith is not about moving God to embrace our agendas. It is about being moved to embrace his agenda. As Jesus demonstrates for us, great faith is reflected in great surrender. Lots of people come to this place of surrender on their own or as a result of broken seasons in their lives. Either way, yielding control of our lives to God is an invitation for him to come alive in us in ways that help us realize our full potentials. How can you best express your faith?

### WHAT WILL YOU DO?

This week, start your days by praying, “I’m going to live as if you are who you say you are and will do everything you have promised to do. Let your will be done in my life.”

### CHANGING YOUR MIND

*This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.*  
1 John 5:14-15