

Finding Hope

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Ford quotes Gerald May on the concept of "transformed hope" — hope that has gone through the fire (of tragedy, trauma, and the like) and emerged stronger than ever. Has your hope been transformed in that way? If so, describe the circumstances that strengthened your feelings of hopefulness. If not, think of someone else whose hope has been tested by fire. How do you account for the steadfast hope that you, or they, now have?
- Think of a time when someone tried to rob you of your hope by criticizing you, mocking you, or telling you to be "realistic." How did you respond at the time? How would you respond today? What role do you think maturity and experience play in cultivating a hopeful attitude toward life?
- Ford devotes an entire chapter to distinguishing between hopefulness and wishful thinking. How can you tell when your hope is genuine and when it's crossed the line into wishful thinking? In a group setting, have members suggest possible outcomes, such as "winning the lottery," and then discuss whether the outcome reflects genuine hope or wishful thinking.
- Discuss the impact of hope in the aftermath of overwhelming tragedies such as 9/11, Hurricane Katrina, and the December 2004 tsunami in the Indian Ocean. What images of hope emerged from those events?
- Chapter 13 focuses on the relationship between hope and healing. What do you make of that correlation? Do you believe your attitude can affect your body's ability to heal? Why or why not?
- Discuss the concept of hopelessness. Have you ever known someone who felt truly hopeless — or have you yourself ever felt that way? Ford writes that very few situations that are genuinely hopeless and that glimmers of hope can be found nearly everywhere. What are some evidences of hope that you've seen in seemingly hopeless situations? (Something as ordinary as continuing with a daily routine can provide evidence that a person has not truly given up.)