

***Multiplying Hope*, <https://www.multiplyinghope.org>.**

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Living in a broken world filled with struggles, pain and suffering has always been difficult, but adding the Covid pandemic took things to another level. Many believers and unbelievers have never been taught how to handle crisis in their life, so as a result people pretend to be ok even though they are carrying a heavy burden. We refer to this burden as a “heart wound”—which affects almost every aspect of their life. As a missionary couple living in Central Mexico during the pandemic, we saw how the lack of money, lack of food, and loss of loved ones caused an increased fearfulness, increased violence due to desperation, and a lack of ability to control circumstances. Heart wound issues also affect the church, as people who are hurting often hurt others.

We had previously received training in trauma healing, but then we discovered *Multiplying Hope* trauma healing that is oral based and more easily reproduced. We learned that using an oral format helped people process their pain due to what happens to the brain during trauma. There are some physiological reasons for this. The logical side of the brain and the emotional side of the brain are no longer working together when someone goes through trauma. People in trauma operate from the emotional side. When they make decisions based only on emotions, this leads to more problems. The person in trauma has difficulty thinking or being able to read a book. Their mind is filled with the trauma event, such as a death of a loved one. During Covid there were many losses such as the loss of not having closure when people never saw their loved ones after they went into a hospital.

Why *Multiplying Hope*

In *Multiplying Hope*, the basic story set is *New Hope*. It is an oral narrative small group study designed to be immediately reproducible. Each session is divided into 3 parts: looking back, looking up and looking forward.

“Looking back” is learning principles about trauma, talking through a specific question, and applying it to one’s personal experience. Being able to share in an environment of trust without distractions is essential to healing. “Looking up” focuses on the story from God’s word that addresses that same issue. The first story in the *New Hope* series is the story of Joseph from Genesis 37-47, which many people can immediately relate to. The story is told twice, and then the group tells the story together; the story is then acted out, and then acted out without words using only emotions and movement.

We talk through the story with stopping points allowing the person to share how they felt at certain points in the story. Often, God reveals to them that they have some of these same emotions and issues and can identify with the Bible story. We talk through the story using questions to verbalize what we have learned about God’s character and what we learn about people’s actions. Each story has a healing activity that is personal and that helps them to process their own circumstances and pain. This is where we have seen the working of the Holy Spirit.

The last part is “looking forward,” or sharing what they have learned with someone else. They think of someone else who might benefit from hearing this story and we pray with them that they will have opportunities to share the story during the week.

A big part of *Multiplying Hope* is being a good listener. It has been said that 70% of people who experience trauma would be able to overcome their situation faster if they had someone who would just completely listen to them.¹ For this program, there are guidelines on how we will listen to each

¹ <https://www.multiplyinghope.org>

other during the session. The listener is not allowed to interrupt or give counsel. In the session on listening is a skit that uses examples of bad listeners. The skit is humorous but shows the harm that can happen when bad listening skills are used. The one who is telling their story about their trauma needs a good listener, not someone who tries to give them the solution to the problem.

When people are in crisis, it takes time to understand what they have gone through, and being able to tell their story is part of the process. We use three questions to allow the person to tell their story while gently guiding them to talk. The questions are: “What happened?” “How did you feel?” and “What was the worst part for you?”

The beginning session focuses on the similarities between a heart wound and a physical wound. Both wounds need treatment and time to heal. The treatment of the wound may cause pain. In the case of a heart wound, talking about what happened may be painful though it is the beginning of the healing process. Healing takes time; it does not happen quickly. Many believers feel guilty for having a heart wound. Some feel that if they only had enough faith, they would get through this painful event quickly. The wound affects their spiritual growth if they are not taught how to heal. The question asked frequently is, “If God loves me, why is there suffering in this world?” Depression and addictions can become a problem for those who have no hope that their suffering will ever end. This is a big problem for those who have not heard the gospel.

The *New Hope* series is done once a week, each session lasting at least 2 to 2 ½ hours, for seven weeks. The group functions best with a small group of participants around six people. In order to maintain confidentiality and openness, the group agrees that what is shared in the group will not be shared outside the group, or only as permission is given.

We have led many groups and have trained many leaders, and it has been amazing that most group members do not miss a meeting. The group normally forms community by week four and at the end of the seven weeks,

they do not want to stop meeting. Members are given the opportunity to accept Christ as their Savior at end of any session, and many do by the last session. The group can then be Entry to the Missionary task to start a new work or can be put into an existing church for discipleship. *Multiplying Hope* has a variety of story sets that can be used in each component of the missionary task.

During Covid, we led many training sessions using Zoom with both Mexicans and missionary colleagues. We have had many training classes with the intent that these leaders and pastors would use *New Hope* as they work with displaced people or plant new churches. Most of the people in the classes realized they had some deep heart wounds in their own heart that came out of the pandemic, and the class was a time of healing for these leaders. When new leaders begin to lead, we offer mentoring to help them through their first classes. The leaders participate in what we call a “Community of Practice” where we talk through issues, and we encourage and pray for each other.

As we have used the *New Hope* series, we have seen the Lord work in incredible ways. We have heard of several who were planning to commit suicide, who after hearing the creation story in the second session, come to the realization that they are a special creation of God for a purpose. They did not commit suicide but received Jesus as their Savior instead. We have seen family relationships restored when people have learned to ask for help, which is discussed in one of the sessions. In one area of Mexico, *New Hope* groups have multiplied to the fourth generation. In other areas of the world such as refugee camps, the multiplication has gone further.

Multiplying Hope and the Missionary Task Work Together

Entry Everyone experiences woundedness at one point or another in their life. The *Multiplying Hope*, *New Hope* series provides opportunities to discuss and find healing for this common thread in everyone’s life. We begin with healing conversations which use the three simple questions:

What happened? How did you feel? What was the worst (best) part of that experience? We talk about some of the dynamics of the heart wound/physical wound, and sometimes we use a portion or an entire story. Many times, as we speak with someone, it opens the opportunity to explain what a *New Hope* healing group is, and they want to participate and invite others.

Evangelism *New Hope* helps break down barriers to hearing and accepting the gospel. Through the stories, the participants are introduced to God and Jesus in a fresh, real way. For many, it is the first time that they see God's word connect to their lives.

Discipleship Trauma affects spiritual growth and maturity as participants deal with their hurts and see Jesus in a new light as Savior. Some continue as a group and begin to be discipled. We have a couple of groups that are now in discipleship that started as a *New Hope* group.

Reproducing Healthy Churches We are seeing *New Hope* as a great tool for helping hurting churches heal. Using the *New Hope* series followed up with the series on *Forgiveness* is producing fruit. When a community forms, an opportunity arises to become a new church.

Leadership Development Because the participants are encouraged to go and share their stories or lead the session each week, new leaders emerge. As participants look back each week, we can encourage and help with challenges that arise. Also, when someone begins a *New Hope* group, a coach/mentor is available to help them walk through the process.

Since our introduction to *Multiplying Hope/New Hope* series, we have seen a fresh way of bridging a gap from hurting people to the gospel. If you would like to learn more about trauma healing and *Multiplying Hope*, go to the website www.multiplyinghope.org. This is also the place where you can find a training class. In the AMP affinity, we have missionaries and national leaders trained in several countries and materials already translated into the language.