



Discussion Guide

SEASON 1



Welcome to Hope Springs

A place of everyday wonders and eternal mysteries.



It's Saturday morning in Hope Springs, a charming town nestled amidst the Colorado Rocky Mountains. 11-year-old Jay West and aspiring podcaster Rooney Lane are excited about the long-awaited opening of the newly renovated train depot. Everyone will turn out for the festivities. But a smoke bomb disrupts the day, launching a series of mysteries involving stolen artifacts, unexplainable secret messages, and the deep forgotten history of the town. In no time, Jay, Rooney, and their friends are caught up in events that will test their relationships and bring them face-to-face with unexpected danger.

Welcome to Hope Springs is a lavishly produced audio drama series featuring stories of normal life and extraordinary circumstances that both entertain and inspire. Filled with relatable and compelling characters, each episode gently touches on the joys and challenges of living out the Catholic faith. *Hope Springs* is fun and engaging, while presenting the reality of God's love and the truth of His Church to all listeners.

Recommended for ages 10 and above.



Introduction



The town of Hope Springs first appeared as short stories for the *SIGNS OF GRACE* catechetical program. Those stories were then assembled into *THE ADVENTURES OF NICK & SAM*, a series of first-reader novels that centered around the lives of twins Nick and Sam (Samantha) Perry. The ins-and-outs of their relationships with family and friends, day-to-day responsibilities at home and school, and the kinds of choices that elementary school kids might face, laid the foundation for the “world” of Hope Springs as it grew.

Nick’s and Sam’s older brother Andrew Perry found himself in the middle of unusual adventures with *THE VIRTUE CHRONICLES*, presenting the lives of a few saints in surprising ways. The Augustine Institute’s *WORD OF LIFE* curriculum introduced Gabriel Romero, a cousin to the Perry family, and his experiences in the first few grades of school. *SMALL WONDERS* subtly tied into Hope Springs through the pre-school lessons learned by the “living toys” in the Kind Garden.

The ever-expanding world of Hope Springs now comes together in *Welcome to Hope Springs*, combining the dramatic and comedic storytelling approaches found in all that has come before it. The characters and their situations are recognizable and compelling. And, ultimately, all of the stories are opportunities for families to explore and discuss the life-lessons they hear. These discussion questions and booklet are designed to help.

“God’s creation... our world... the universe... even time... there’s a lot more to them than we know.”

—ANDREW PERRY

SEASON 1

A Grand Opening

➤ It's Saturday morning in Hope Springs and the old train depot, restored by a well-known entrepreneur and town benefactor, Clark Perry, is about to have its Grand Opening. The festive event includes live broadcasts by local radio personalities, newly opened shops and restaurants, kids' play areas, a museum, train cars, displays, and free ice cream. But strange messages arrive through a vintage telegraph and then smoke bombs suddenly go off, triggering a series of mysteries, comedy and dramatic tension, and suspenseful twists and turns. A small group of kids—with help from a few adults—are drawn into an unlikely ending to their summer fun.



EPISODE 1

A Grand Bombshell

It's a pleasant Saturday morning in Hope Springs when aspiring young podcaster Rooney Lane arrives at her best friend Jay West's house, and they make their way to celebrate the opening of the newly renovated Grand Depot. The town is abuzz and reporters Art Jameson and April Martin are on the scene to cover the excitement of the day. But not everyone is thrilled about the Grand Depot's re-opening. Eleven-year-old Zach Sykes hides out in an old train car and plots his revenge for the loss of what used to be his "headquarters," while his quirky father Ray Sykes stages a protest outside. When the loud explosion of a smoke bomb rattles through the depot, the Grand Opening is thrown off the rails.



➤ DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Note: Spoiler Alert! Please use these questions after listening to each episode.

1. Can someone tell us what happened in this episode? What did you like about this episode? Which character did you like? Why? Which character was funny (or interesting)?
2. This episode centers around the opening of the newly remodeled Grand Depot in Hope Springs. The Grand Depot is owned and has been remodeled by a Catholic organization. Most people remodel buildings and shopping centers to make money and benefit themselves alone. How is this different?
3. Episode 1 discusses some important artifacts that were recently discovered in Hope Springs and are now in the historical museum in the Grand Depot. The characters talk about how important these artifacts are for understanding the history of the town. Do you have anything special that has been passed down from an ancestor? (The leader could give an example about something that was given by a parent or grandparent and how that makes them want to learn more about the giver or helps them feel connected to the giver.)



EPISODE 2

Artifactualities

In the aftermath of the smoke bombs at the Hope Springs Grand Depot, Jay and his newfound friend Brace—along with school friends Dante and Woodward—suspect Zach was behind the trouble. Dante’s mother, Detective Rose Hall, arrives to investigate the crime—and learns that it may have been more than a mere prank. In the Depot’s restored Telegraph Office, Jay and Brace meet Andrew Perry, nephew of Clark and an amateur historian, just as mysterious and urgent messages come in on the old telegraph machine – which isn’t supposed to work!



➤ DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Note: Spoiler Alert! Please use these questions after listening to each episode.

1. Can someone describe what happens in this episode? Tell us about Zach. What do you think of him? Would you trust him? Why or why not? Describe a time when you’ve struggled to trust someone who has been dishonest in the past.
2. Sirach 7:13 warns us against lying, saying, “Refuse to utter any lie, for the habit of lying serves no good.” Have you ever been caught lying? How were you treated by those who knew you had lied? How did you feel about your lie? Why do you think it is important to tell the truth?
3. What did we learn about telegraph machines in this episode? How is communicating by telegraph different from the way we communicate and send messages today? What would you do if you were in the scene with Jay, Brace, and Andrew and you received those messages? What do you think will happen next?



EPISODE 3

Excursions

The search continues for the culprit behind the crimes in the Depot's museum. Brace and Andrew team up to find the source of the bizarre telegraph messages. Rooney and her sometime-adversary Dakota put their rivalry aside to do podcasts together about the Grand Depot. Jay leaves the suspense at the Depot to fulfill his obligation to do yard work for Professor Dribble and runs afoul of Mrs. Conner, the HOA enforcer.



➤ DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Note: Spoiler Alert! Please use these questions after listening to each episode.

1. Dakota suggests that she and Rooney work together after hearing Father Benedict's homily on unity. How is working together challenging or difficult? Who was generous and willing to overcome differences in this episode? How is working together better than working alone?
2. Dante and Woodward talk about how their parents work on Sundays, even though it is supposed to be a holy day. How can we follow God's law and keep Sunday holy? How does your family make Sunday special and dedicate it to God?
3. Jay works really hard so that he can pay for things that he wants himself, rather than expecting his parents to buy him things. How does he do this? What can we learn from Jay about hard work?



EPISODE 4

A Mountain of Mystery

Woodward is bored, but the day is about to get much more exciting when the kids spot Detective Hall arresting Ray Sykes at a local antique shop. Andrew enlists his uncle Clark Perry for help in solving the mystery of the telegraph messages from Wendell Burton. A hike up the mountain to Treetop Cabin leads to an even deeper mystery.



➤ DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Note: Spoiler Alert! Please use these questions after listening to each episode.

1. Who did Andrew and Brace meet in the cabin on the mountain? What do you think is going to happen next?
2. By learning about the past, the characters in Hope Springs begin to understand a few important things about the present. What can the past teach you about your own life?
3. In this episode, we hear the story of how Wendell Burton lost his fingers to frostbite when saving a group of stranded hikers. How is Wendell's sacrifice similar to what Jesus did for us?



EPISODE 5

Twists and Traps

Andrew and Brace have trouble explaining what they experienced in the cabin. Jay continues his work on Professor Dribble's lawn and discovers some odd containers buried in the back of the garden. Rooney and Dakota attempt to record their first podcast together while touring the Depot's old Round House, which is now a charitable food bank. But their show turns into a true crime episode when someone drops off a surprising donation.



➤ DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Note: Spoiler Alert! Please use these questions after listening to each episode.

1. What happens in this episode? Why does Andrew tell Brace not to tell anyone about meeting the mysterious man in the cabin? What would you have done in this situation?
2. Andrew also says that there are things in the world that can't be explained. Can you think of an example of something that has happened to you that you couldn't explain? (Many people relate stories of guardian angels protecting them or mysterious healings.)
3. Andrew says that God keeps him guessing to remind him that "He's God—and I'm not." How is God all powerful and wise? What are we compared to God? How can this help us understand a little better what occurred at the cabin on the mountain?



EPISODE 6

Keeping Traps Shut

New leads on the museum robbery are popping up all over Hope Springs. Detective Hall questions a new volunteer at the Round House. Jay, Dante, and Woodward discover a few suspicious items in Professor Dribble's yard, but Jay warns his friends—including Rooney—not to jump to conclusions and tell anyone else.



➤ DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Note: Spoiler Alert! Please use these questions after listening to each episode.

1. Describe what Woodward did in this episode. Can someone tell us what it means to be a good friend? (Trustworthy, loyal, faithful, thoughtful) Do you think that Woodward acted like a good friend in this episode? Why or why not? Why do you think Woodward acted like this?
2. Sheridan Michaels tells Detective Hall that he was taught "When you work for an organization, you should take care of it as if it's yours. Doesn't matter if you're the president or the janitor." Do you agree with his statement? How does Sheridan Michaels do this at the Depot?
3. Should Woodward and Jay have made fun of Mr. Otto (the man who works at the cemetery)? Why or why not? Who was brave in this episode? (Dante for standing up for Mr. Otto) There are a lot of examples in the Bible of Jesus showing mercy to those judged harshly by others. Can you think of a few? Have you ever been teased by others or treated unfairly? How did you react? How does it feel?



EPISODE 7

Getting the Scoop

An accident while Rooney is recording leads to new suspects in the smoke bomb/artifact theft mystery—but Rooney also reveals more than she intended.



➤ DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Note: Spoiler Alert! Please use these questions after listening to each episode.

1. Should Zach have covered for his friend even though his friend did something wrong? Why or why not? What would you have done in this story? What is the difference between being a “tattle tale” and telling the truth?
2. Art Jameson is determined to get the “scoop” for a news story, no matter what it takes or who it impacts. Do you think he is right? Why or why not? Do you think that Art cares about others? Why or why not?
3. Mrs. Curtis tells her son Troy that “consequences are what choices lead to.” Have you ever gotten in trouble or faced a consequence for something you chose to do? What happened, and did it change how you act now?



EPISODE 8

Trapped

Worried that her investigation will be compromised, Detective Hall shuts down Art Jameson's reporting on the missing artifacts case. But Rooney triggers new trouble when she tells Dakota what Jay told her not to say—and puts Professor Dribble in a very difficult position.



➤ DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Note: Spoiler Alert! Please use these questions after listening to each episode.

1. Dakota is so focused on the podcast that she can't see anything or anyone else. Can someone describe that scene in this episode? Do you ever get like that? Rooney argues with Dakota that friendship is more important than making a cutting-edge podcast. Dakota disagrees. Do you think Rooney was right—or Dakota? Why or why not?
2. Proverbs 27:17 says, "As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens the countenance of his friend." How might the relationship between Rooney and Dakota help each girl to grow? Describe a time when a friend influenced you to do the right thing.
3. Dakota is driven by producing a successful podcast, with potentially hurtful consequences. Have you ever hurt someone in order to get what you want? How did you feel? What did you learn from the experience?



EPISODE 9

Ransom

Jay, Dante, and Woodward try to find a way to escape from their captivity. Brace and Andrew stumble onto the source of the distress telegraph from the Deer View cabin. Detective Hall finally gets to the truth about the stolen artifacts. But her best efforts to capture the criminals face obstacles.



➤ DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Note: Spoiler Alert! Please use these questions after listening to each episode.

1. Can someone describe the events of this episode? Professor Dribble was motivated by revenge to take the actions that led to all the trouble. Read Romans 12:17-19. The Apostle Paul instructs that we aren't supposed to repay evil for evil, because vengeance belongs to God alone. Why shouldn't we take revenge for a wrong done to us? Why does God claim revenge for Himself?
2. How did Professor Dribble's desire for revenge cause so many of the events in Hope Springs? What harm did he cause? What do you think he learned from his mistakes? Talk about a time when you tried to get revenge against someone. What happened?
3. Sheridan Michaels seems to do a lot of work at the Grand Depot that he isn't required to do. How do selfless acts like his help spread the message of the gospel? What is one act of kindness you can do today?
4. How are Sheridan Michaels and Professor Dribble different?



EPISODE 10

Consequentialities

Wayne Pilfer and some of his gang are on the run to find the real artifacts, hidden somewhere by Dribble. It falls to Jay to provide a vital piece of information to Detective Hall to find their hiding place. Some shocking encounters throw the bad guys' escape plan into chaos.



➤ DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Note: Spoiler Alert! Please use these questions after listening to each episode.

1. Tell me something that surprised you in this season. What did you find exciting? Which character or characters did you like? Why? Did you like the ending? Why or why not?
2. What impacts do you think this adventure had on the lives of the kids?
3. Deacon Chuck finds Sheridan Michaels praying in the chapel, and they agree that they believe their prayers made all the difference. Sometimes when we're faced with a stressful situation, prayer is the first thing to go. Why is prayer just as important as anything else in a sticky situation? What is something that you want to turn to God for in your own life?



Who's Who in Hope Springs

THE KIDS

Jay West | An all-around good kid who, at eleven years old, can be both precocious and naive at the same time as he navigates finding his place in the world.

Rooney Lane | Jay's best friend who has started her own podcast and hopes to become a world-class newscaster.

Brace Nelson | The mysterious and intelligent "new kid" with a past everyone has yet to discover.

Dante Hall | Son of Detective Hall and long-time pals with Jay and Woodward, Dante is both thoughtful and glib.

Woodward Woodward | "The kid with the most boring name in the world"—which is fitting because he claims he is always bored. Yet he somehow manufactures a lot of activity with his imagination and feisty, childlike view of the world.

Dakota "Dax" Thorpe | A rival podcaster to Rooney who seems to value success and popularity over relationships. Even when her edgy arrogance gets her into trouble, she remains strong, opinionated, and a force to be reckoned with.

Andrew Perry | An adventurous, amateur historian and resourceful mentor to the kids. Listeners might recognize him as the older brother from *The Adventures of Nick & Sam* series and the traveler in *The Virtue Chronicles*.

Zach Sykes | A persistent mischief-maker, Zach is impulsively reckless, often getting into more trouble than he can handle. His motto: "consequences are things that happen to other people."

Troy Curtis | Zach's sharper, manipulative friend who is often looking for the angles to get the upper-hand.



THE STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS OF THE GRAND DEPOT

Clark Perry | Local entrepreneur and renovator of the Grand Depot, Clark is passionate about making Hope Springs a thriving and prosperous town. He's Andrew's uncle and can be found playing important roles in *The Adventures of Nick & Sam*.

Deacon Chuck Crosby | A deacon at St. Clare's Catholic Church and the manager of the Grand Depot who acts as a spiritual guide for the kids.

Carol Crosby | Chuck's wife and the coordinator of the food bank at the Grand Depot, Carol is warm and sincere, and her wisdom and go-getter attitude make her a role model for the girls in Hope Springs.

Sheridan Michaels | A retiree who is new to Hope Springs and brings with him an air of mystery, spiritual wisdom, and generosity.

THE PROFESSORS

Professor Marcus Sheed | A local history professor who teaches at colleges across Colorado. He's intelligent and reputable.

Professor Don Dribble | A professor of history and archaeology who feels underappreciated and holds some deep grudges from past slights.

THE STEAM-102 FM RADIO TEAM

April Martin | Hope Springs radio personality on Steam 102 FM. She's professional, friendly, and an engaging storyteller with equal parts integrity and authenticity.

Art Jameson | April's counterpart on Steam 102 FM and her opposite in every way. Always trying (and often failing) to be funny, he tends to dig himself into a hole every time he talks.

Nate | An audio wizard and the beleaguered sound engineer at Steam 102 FM who plays an important role in finding the culprit of the smoke bomb explosion.



THE HOPE SPRINGS POLICE

Detective Rose Hall | Dante's mother and an upstanding, experienced detective in Hope Springs. She's bold and commanding on the job, has a soft side off the job, and is loved and admired in both.

Officer Davidson | A rugged and handsome (by his own account) officer with the Hope Springs Police Department.

Officer Boyle | A well-liked and confident officer with the Hope Springs Police Department who comes through as the leader on the team assigned to the ransom case involving Debbie Dribble and the boys.

THE GANG

Pilfer | A greedy and manipulative thief who turns a petty theft into something much larger.

Langford, Taggart, and Brady | Pilfer's henchmen.

OTHER FOLKS IN HOPE SPRINGS

Ray Sykes | Zach's father who is known for protesting just for the sake of protesting.

Debbie Dribble | Professor Dribble's smart, brave, and resourceful wife. Her former military experience comes to her aid when needed.

Mrs. Nellie Conner | The aggressive neighborhood enforcer in Dribble's area.

Wendell Burton | A tough, folksy mountain man.

Hope Springs was created by **Paul McCusker**.
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