

GOALS FOR THE GROUP LEADER

Help the group members:

1. to be convinced that God wants Christians to obey and apply his Word
2. to learn how to make possible applications and a personal application

I. WORSHIP (14 min.)

1. Prayer

Pray that God will guide us through his Spirit; that we will be aware of his presence and that we will listen to what he says.

2. Meditation

Worship is to commit yourself to obey God.

Theme: Jesus Christ learned obedience

Read the Bible verses mentioned below and the explanation. Or explain the verses in your own words.

Hebrews 5:7-10

⁷ During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. ⁸ Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered ⁹ and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him ¹⁰ and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.

- *There are three requirements for every high priest*
 - A high priest mediates between man and God and brings sacrifices (of atonement) to make that mediation possible (Hebrews 5:1).
 - A high priest must be able to empathize with the person he represents: "He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness" (Hebrews 5:2).
 - A high priest must be appointed by God, not by man: "No one takes this honour upon himself; he must be called by God" (Hebrews 5:4).

From 171 B.C. a number of high priests were appointed in Israel by the political authorities. The history books relate how ill they were qualified for the task.

- *Jesus fulfilled all three requirements* (Hebrews 5:5-10).
 - Jesus Christ was appointed by God to be the Only High Priest: "To Day I have become your Father" (Psalm 2:7; Matthew 3:17). Jesus never made this claim on his own authority, but God called him to be the Messiah-King in the royal line of David (Psalm 2:2-6) and the High Priest in the priestly line of Melchizedek and not of Aaron. (Psalm 110:4). Jesus Christ is the King and the High Priest at the same time, something that never occurred in Israel (Hebrews 5: 5-6)!
 - Jesus Christ empathised with the people for whom he died (Hebrews 5:7-10; cf. Hebrews 2:17-18; 4:15-16).
 - Jesus Christ died as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of his people (Hebrews 7:27).

➤ *Jesus in the days of his flesh*

Jesus Christ was born in the same weak human nature (Greek: flesh) which people have, except that he was without sin.

➤ *Jesus' petitions and tears*

The expression that "he offered prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears" does not only refer to his prayer in Gethsemane (Luke 22:41-44), but to his human nature before his resurrection from the dead.

Jesus Christ did not inherit this priesthood. He did not claim this priesthood against the law. He did not receive this priesthood as a gift from a politician. No, God himself appointed Jesus Christ as High Priest (Psalm 110:4)!

The fact that the cup of suffering was not taken away from Jesus Christ, means that he is able to empathize with people when they wrestle with the mystery that their prayers have remained unanswered!

Jesus could have used his divine power to escape the suffering and the death on the cross. Yet, he did not do that. When he was tempted in the desert, he did not turn the stones into bread (Matthew 4:2-4). And when he was tried to be crucified, he did not summon twelve legions of angels to save him (Matthew 26:53-54). He knew the will of God and he learned to submit to the will of God right up to the bitter end. God took the anxiety of death away from him (cf. Hebrews 2:14-15) and gave him power to drink the cup (to accept and to submit to the suffering), in order that the will of God the Father would be done (Luke 22:42-44). Note the will of God the Father: "The Christ have to suffer these things" (Luke

24:25-27). “Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me (Christ) in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms (the Old Testament)” (Luke 24:44-45).

➤ *Jesus learned obedience*

Ordinary sons learn obedience when their fathers discipline them for their transgressions (Hebrews 12:4-6). They learn obedience from the unpleasant consequences of their disobedience (*read* Hebrews 12:5-11).

But Jesus was not an ordinary son and also not a disobedient son. Although he was the Son of God (he possessed the divine nature), his human nature learned obedience through his suffering. He obeyed God the Father throughout his life on earth and through all this suffering learned what obedience on earth means to people.

It is possible that the prophet Isaiah had this in mind in Isaiah 50:4-6. Jesus Christ listened to what God the Father said to him. He did not rebel (against his calling) and he did not draw back (in fear of flogging and mocking). The price for learning obedience was suffering!

Already at his baptism with water, he did not undergo baptism as a symbol that his sins had been washed off (which is the symbol for Christians), but as a symbol that he submitted completely to God’s will, namely, that he must suffer (Matthew 3:13-15). His baptism with water became a sign of being overwhelmed by suffering for the sins of his people. He identified himself with sinners and as a consequence he suffered in their place.

➤ *Jesus Christ became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey*

When Jesus Christ reached the end of his work of salvation, that is, when his obedience had reached its completion, he met the requirements of being the perfect Saviour and High Priest for his people.

His people are all those who believe in Jesus Christ and obey him.

3. Worship

Let everyone in the small group take a turn to worship (in one or two sentences) Jesus Christ as the One who in his human nature learned complete obedience.

II. INTRODUCTION THEME (1 min.)

The theme for this meeting is: Bible applications

Read or explain in your own words.

God has not given the Bible to us merely to increase our knowledge, but also transform our lives. The purpose of practical obedience or the making of practical applications from the Bible is to become more and more Christ like!

An ‘application’ is that response to God’s Word which God expects from you. An application is obedience to God’s Word in order to be transformed yourself and to help others to be transformed.

The reading and studying of the Bible becomes a life-changing experience only when you also believe it and apply it to your own life as well as to the lives of others. That is why you must believe in the truth of the Bible and believe that this truth can and will transform your life.

Devote yourself, not only to know what is written in the Bible, but also to do what God says in the Bible. Without faith no one can please God (Hebrews 11:6). Without faith, reading or studying the Bible has little value. And without application, studying the Bible remains incomplete.

After you have read or studied a Bible passage, you should answer the following question: “Which response does God require?” “What does God want me to do with what I have read?”

III. SHARING OF QUIET TIMES (30 min.)

Let everyone in the small group take a turn to share (or read) what he has learned from one of the assigned quiet times.

Theme: Applying the Bible, e.g. obeying God’s Word

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|---------------------|---|
| Day 1 | James 1:19-25
Listen to God’s Word and do what it says |
| Day 2 | James 2:14-26.
Faith without action is dead |
| Day 3 | Mark 3:31-35
Doing God’s will shows you belong to Christ’s family |
| Day 4 | Matthew 7:18-24
Putting God’s Word into practice is necessary to enter God’s kingdom |
| Day 5 ^{BS} | Luke 6:46-49
Putting God’s Word into practice is the best foundation for your life |
| Day 6 | Philippians 4:8-9
Putting God’s Word into practice results in God’s peace |
| Day 7 | Hebrews 6:11-12 and 10:35-36
Doing God’s will is necessary to receive God’s promise |
| Day 8 | James 3:13-18
Deeds and a blameless life show wisdom |
| Day 9 | James 4:13-17
Deeds done in dependence of God shows humility |
| Day 10 | 1 Samuel 15:16-23
God requires total obedience |

IV. ADDITIONAL SHARING (15 min.)

Part IV is optional.
If after sharing quiet times there is still time left over, the following may serve as subjects for conversation.

1. Discussing the study

Discuss the study with reference to the questions mentioned below:

Theme: Making biblical applications

- What is 'an application'?
- Why is making applications of the truths in the Bible so important?
- Which questions help you to make a list of the possible applications?
- How would you define 'a personal application'?
- What can help you to practise making personal applications?

2. Commitment

Let the group members consider the following question and record their answer:

- "Which practical applications have you made during the past year?"

3. Personal sharing

Discuss personal growth and commitment. Who would like to share a difficulty or blessing in his/her personal life? What are your thoughts or feelings?

V. MEMORISATION (5 min.)

1. Review of previous Bible verses

Let pairs of group members review each other's previously memorised Bible verses (the last memorised Bible verse or the last 5 memorised Bible verses).

2. Memorisation of the new Bible verse

Explain the meaning of the new Bible verse.

APPLICATIONS

John 14:23

If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching.

My Father will love him,

and we will come to him

and make our home with him.

John 14:23 (NIV)

VI. BIBLE STUDY (45 min.)

Theme: Putting Christ's words into practice is laying the best foundation for life

1. Bible Study

Make use of the 5 step method and study:

Luke 6:39-49

³⁹ He also told them this parable: "Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into a pit? ⁴⁰ The student is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher.

⁴¹ "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? ⁴² How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye,' when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

⁴³ "No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. ⁴⁴ Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thorn bushes, or grapes from briers. ⁴⁵ A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.

⁴⁶ "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say? ⁴⁷ As for everyone who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice, I will show you what they are like. ⁴⁸ They are like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. ⁴⁹ But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete."

2. Emphasis

Making applications from the Bible is indispensable!

3. Explanation for the group leader

6:39. A comparison about the blind leading the blind

- *The blind.*

Who are they? They are people who have become blind through their sins and cannot see their own darkness any more. They try to convince themselves and pretend that they can see. Spiritually they claim to lead other people. But because they are blind, they mislead the people. Spiritually they claim to show people the way, but they

are doing the same wrong things! *'The blind' are spiritual leaders like the Pharisees who are not born-again and theologians that interpret the Bible making use of their own rules for interpreting the Bible (hermeneutics).*

➤ *Pit.*

The rugged landscape of Palestine has many pit holes, furrows and other unevenness. The Bible uses the 'pit' in several figurative expressions. God "lifted me up out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire" (representing the grave) (Psalm 40:2). "A prostitute is a deep pit and a wayward wife is a narrow well" (Proverbs 23:27). "If a man digs a pit, he will fall into it" (Proverbs 26:27). "If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out?" (Matthew 12:11) "If one of you has a son or an ox that falls into a well on the Sabbath day, will you not immediately pull him out?" (Luke 14:5)

➤ *The message of the parable.*

People must not follow such blind people (e.g. the Pharisees and other legalists). People should follow Jesus Christ and his apostles!

6:40. A comparison between the disciples of the Pharisees and the disciples of Jesus

➤ *The disciples of Jesus Christ had no formal training.*
Would the twelve disciples of Jesus qualify for their task? Would they be able to set an example that others can follow? The disciples of Jesus were unschooled, ordinary men (Acts 4:13a). This does not mean that they were illiterate (people who cannot read or write) or uneducated (people who have not been taught)! 'Unschooled' means that they had not received the long (theological) education of the teachers of the law and the Pharisees (cf. Jesus in John 7:15 and Paul in Acts 22:3).

➤ *The disciples of Jesus Christ were well trained by Christ.*
Jesus Christ encouraged his disciples by saying that the training and equipping which he gives would make his disciples more and more Christ like. They would be sufficiently equipped to carry on the task of Jesus Christ.

They would not have knowledge and wisdom like Jesus possessed, because Jesus was God. But people would recognise the disciples as people who had been with Jesus Christ (Acts 4:13b).

6:41-42. A comparison about the plank and the speck

➤ *A plank and a speck.*

A plank or beam was used to support the roof. But a speck was a tiny piece of dirt like dust.

➤ *The self-appointed eye specialists.*

Who were they? During the time of Jesus Christ they were the Pharisees. In our time they are hypocritical religious legalists. They claim to believe that God is 'one', but have no personal relationship with God (cf. James 2:19). They give money, pray several times a Day and fast to be seen by people (Matthew 6:2,5,16). They criticize, judge and correct others, but not themselves (Matthew 7:5). They quote as authority their religious traditions, but nullify God's Word (Matthew 15:7-9). They pretend to be interested in finding answers to their questions in the Bible, but in reality only want to trap Jesus (Matthew 22:16-18). They enforce 613 traditional Jewish laws on people, while they absolve themselves (Matthew 23:1-33).

People with a plank in their eye claim to be 'righteous' on the basis of outwardly keeping the law, but despise other people who do not keep their traditional laws (Luke 18:9-12). They try to enforce their man-made laws on the whole nation and falsely accuse those who do not keep their man-made laws in the courts (Luke 23:1-2). They even publicly malign them and start a riot in order to get the death sentence pronounced against them (Luke 23:9-25).

➤ *Self-examination and self-discipline.*

Jesus does not reject discipline. He taught Christians to first examine themselves and change before they correct others (cf. Psalm 139:23-24; 1 Corinthians 11:28).

After that they must gently restore (not: mercilessly condemn) other Christians (Galatians 6:1). Christians must exercise self-discipline (Luke 6:41-42) and mutual discipline (Matthew 18:15-17; 1 Corinthians 5:12-13).

6:43-44. A comparison about a tree and its fruit

➤ *A logical impossibility.*

It is impossible for a bad tree to bear good fruit (Matthew 12:33). It is impossible for people to pick figs from thorn bushes, or grapes from briars (Luke 6:44). It is impossible for fresh and salt (Greek: bitter) water to flow from the same spring (James 3:11). It is impossible for a fig tree to bear olives, or a grapevine to bear figs (James 3:12).

In the same way it is impossible for a man who bears the fruit of the flesh to bear the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:19-23). It is impossible for a man who continues to live his old life of sin and legalism to be born again (1 John 3:6-9)! It is impossible for a non-Christian to confess the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Romans 10:9-10; 1 Corinthians 12:3).

➤ *The heart is a treasure room.*

Jesus says, "You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks, The good man brings good

things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him” (Matthew 12:34-35).

If your heart is full of God’s Word, you will teach God’s Word to other people (Colossians 3:16). If your heart is full of things that are true, noble (worthy of respect), right, pure, lovely (sounds good, acceptable, pleasing), admirable (attractive, appealing), in short, full of anything that is excellent (moral and spiritual virtue) or praiseworthy, then you will also think about and do such things (Philippians 4:8-9). Whatever a person has in his heart will sooner or later come out in his speech and behaviour!

➤ *Your teachings reveal who you are.*

While Christians encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose sound doctrine (Titus 1:9), many non-Christians rebel against the healthy teachings of the Bible and are mere talkers, liars and deceivers (Titus 1:10-12).

Christians must not trust every ‘spirit’, that is, spirits that speak through so-called ‘prophets’ and ‘teachers’ who in reality are false prophets and false teachers! Christians must test these spirits, because the spirit of the antichrist is already in the world and many antichrists have already come (1 John 3:1-3; 2:18).

These heretics (Gnostics) claimed that ‘the human Jesus’ was not divine, because they claimed that he was born in the ordinary human way from a father and a mother and then died like all men. They claimed that ‘the divine Christ’ only came on Jesus at his baptism and left him before Jesus was crucified, because they found it impossible to accept that the divine Christ could die. But the angel Gabriel taught that Jesus Christ possessed the divine and human nature since his virgin birth (Luke 1:30-35)! And the apostle John taught that Jesus Christ (who is God that became Man) (John 1:1,14; Colossians 1:15,19; 2:9) took on himself the willingness to die for people at his baptism in water (Matthew 3:13-17) and actually shed his blood on the cross (John 19:34). These are historical facts to which the Holy Spirit continually testifies (1 John 5:6-8).

The apostle John furthermore teaches, “Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ, does not have God!” Religious prophets and teachers who deny these facts about Jesus Christ do not have God! These religious teachers talk about God, but have no personal relationship with God (2 John 9; cf. Matthew 7:21-22). The apostle John says, “If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching (about Jesus Christ), do not take him into your house or welcome him. Anyone who welcomes him shares in his wicked work” (2 John 9-11).

➤ *Your behaviour reveals who you are.*

John the Baptist says, “Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.” The rich must share with the poor. The people who have food must share with those who are hungry. People who collect money (taxes, etc) may not demand more than required. Government officials (like soldiers) may not extort money or accuse people falsely (in order to extract a bribe) (Luke 3:8-14).

Christians must bear much fruit and thereby glorify God the Father. They must love people and obey the commands of Jesus Christ (John 15: 8-10).

Christians bear the fruit of the Spirit, as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23).

Christians do good works which God has prepared beforehand for them to do (Ephesians 2:10).

Christians walk in the light, do what is good, right and true, test what pleases God, do not participate in the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose these dark works (Ephesians 5:9-12).

Christians behave in a way that is worthy of God, please God in every way, bear fruit in every good work and grow in their knowledge of God (Colossians 1:10).

Christians express the wisdom that comes from above (James 3:17-18).

6:46. Lordship of Jesus Christ

The name of God in the Old Testament Hebrew is ‘JaHWeH’ (Exodus 3:14-15) and is translated in Old Testament Greek with ‘KURIOS’ which mean ‘LORD’.

In Luke 6:46 Jesus Christ claims to be ‘LORD’ (Greek: kurios)! Compare also Isaiah 40:3 with Mark 1:3. John the Baptist came to prepare the coming of the LORD, that is, of God who took on the human nature in Jesus Christ. People who call Jesus Christ ‘Lord’, but do not do what he says, actually reject that he is whom he claims to be (namely: God, who requires absolute obedience)!

6:47-49. Building on the foundation

➤ *Practical application.*

A person who applies the teachings of Jesus Christ is compared to a man who builds his house (life) on rock! When the storms in the world beat against that house, it will not collapse, but remain standing! In Matthew 7 Jesus says that such a man is wise: he turns his knowledge into practice!

But a person who does not apply the teachings of Jesus Christ is compared to a man who builds his house (life)

on sand (a dry riverbed)! When the storms (flood and wind) in the world beat against that house, it will certainly collapse! In Matthew 7 Jesus calls such a man a 'fool': he knows, but does not act upon his knowledge!

➤ *The Day of testing.*

One thing is very sure: there will come a Day of testing! It will come in different unexpected ways. Sometimes it comes as a temptation that seduces you into sin. Other times it comes as a trial that tests your character. Sometimes it comes in the form of losing your job or losing a beloved. But the Day of testing always comes unexpectedly and suddenly! Just like a flash flood or tsunami.

The final Day of testing is the final judgement day. It will come suddenly and visibly like the lightning (Luke 17:24). It will close on you unexpectedly like a trap. And it will come upon all those who live on the face of the whole earth (Luke 21:34-35). It will come like a thief at night (1 Thessalonians 5:2).

➤ *The Day of victory.*

For the builder on the rock that Day will be a Day of rejoicing (1 Thessalonians 2:19-20). It will be the resurrection Day when Christians will be snatched upwards into the sky to meet and welcome Jesus Christ (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; 2 Thessalonians 1:10). On that Day all Christians will receive the laurel crown consisting of Christ's perfect righteousness (2 Timothy 4:8).

VII. PRAYER (8 min.)

Pray with one another in response to what God said to you during this gathering. Let every group member take a turn to pray one or two sentences about what God taught him during this meeting.

Pray with one another for one another (Romans 15:30) and for other people (Colossians 4:12).

VIII. THE NEXT MEETING (2 min.)

Hand out the preparation for the next gathering.