

GOALS FOR THE GROUP LEADER

Help the group members:

1. **to understand that they are not only bound to Christ, but also to one another**
2. **to dare to be different to the people in the world (in attitude, speech and behaviour)**

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 praise God.

Theme: To praise God that no one and nothing can separate us from his love for us

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

Romans 8:31-39

³¹ What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? ³³ Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ³⁶ As it is written: “For your sake we face death all Day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” ³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Discover what is said about God.

3. Worship

Let everyone in the small group take a turn to worship (in one or two sentences) God as the One with whom you may take shelter and feel completely save.

II. INTRODUCTION THEME (1 min.)

The theme for this meeting is: Fellowship

Read or explain in your own words.

The best way to understand Christian fellowship is to consider the responsibilities Christians have towards one another. The Bible teaches how Christians ought to relate to one another.

In several Bible passages we find the words ‘one another’ connected to responsibilities. For example, love one another, serve one another, etc. They teach the responsibilities Christians have towards one another within the Christian fellowship in the local congregation and in the worldwide Body of Christ.

However, Christians must beware not to turn these responsibilities into a *checklist of Christian laws* which every Christian must keep. Christ does not demand that Christians keep all these responsibilities at one and the same time. He rather desires that Christians grow more and more into these responsibilities. Every Christian needs to keep his personal calling and spiritual gifts in mind.

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: Christian fellowship

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| Day 1 | Romans 15:1-7 Christian attitude: accept one another |
| Day 2 | 1 Peter 5:5-6 Christian attitude: be humble towards one another |
| Day 3 | Hebrews 3:12-19 Christian speaking: admonish and encourage one another |
| Day 4 | James 4:11-12 Christian speaking: do not slander one another, judge or gossip |
| Day 5 | 1 Peter 4:8-11 Christian acting: help one another (spiritual gifts) |

- Day 6^{BS} Galatians 6:1-10
Christian acting: bear one another's burdens
- Day 7 Ephesians 5:15-21
Christian attitude: submit to one another
- Day 8 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11
Christian speaking: encourage one another
- Day 9 John 13:3-17
Christian acting: serve one another by doing what no one else can or want to do
- Day 10 1 John 1:5-7
Christian acting: have fellowship with one another by walking in the light

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: How Christians fellowship

- What is an easy way to explain what Christian fellowship is?
- What do you regard as an important Christian attitude towards one another?
- With which responsibility in the area of Christian speaking are you comfortable with?
- To which responsibility in the area of Christian action should you give more attention?

2. Commitment

Let the group members consider the following questions and record their answers:

- "Towards whom have I deliberately practiced a Christian responsibility the past year?"
- "Towards whom are you going to practise a Christian responsibility in this coming 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.

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP John 13:34

A new command I give you:

Love one another.

As I have loved you,

so you must love one another.

John 13:34 (NIV)

VI. BIBLE STUDY (45 min.)

Theme: Help one another

1. Bible Study

Make use of the 5 step method and study:

Galatians 6:1-10

¹ Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted.

² Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ. ³ If anyone thinks they are something when they are not, they deceive themselves. ⁴ Each one should test their own actions. Then they can take pride in themselves alone, without comparing themselves to someone else, ⁵ for each one should carry their own load. ⁶ Nevertheless, the one who receives instruction in the word should share all good things with their instructor.

⁷ Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. ⁸ Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. ⁹ Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. ¹⁰ Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

2. Emphasis

Christians must help carry one another's burdens, but each must carry his own load

3. Explanation for the group leader

6:1 Restore one another gently

"If someone is caught (literally: caught beforehand) in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently." Maybe the Christian is attacked by a temptation (caught in the trap of the devil, the sinful world or his own sinful nature) or maybe he commits a transgression

before he realises well what he has done. The word 'transgression' here has the more general sense of 'a misstep' or 'mistake (fault)' instead of a deliberate, rebellious act.

A Christian who is more mature should restore him with a gentle spirit. The word 'restore' literally means 'to mend', 'to restore to its original state of wholeness'. Think of mending torn nets (Matthew 4:21) or restoring a broken porcelain vase so perfectly that you can't see a crack!

He must restore the transgressor in a positive way. He must help him to find the right way again and not break his spirit.

The Christian must all the time watch his own life (attitude, speech and behaviour). Even older and stronger Christians can fall into temptation. "So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12-13).

6:2 Carry each other's burdens

The word 'carry' (Greek: *bastazo*) does not mean 'to passively tolerate', but rather to actively carry, for example: a jar (Mark 14:13) or a man (Acts 21:35). It means to put your shoulders under the burden and help carry it!

'The burden' (Greek: *baros*) are the temptations, trials (problems, difficulties), oppressions (persecutions), crises, tragedies and losses the other person suffers. In this context it especially refers to spiritual weaknesses and temptations.

In this way we fulfil 'the law of Christ', namely, to love one another as Christ loved us (John 13:34-35; Galatians 5:14; James 2:8).

Note the example of Jesus Christ, how he related to the sinful woman (probably a prostitute) (*Read* Luke 7:36-50), the denial of Peter (*Read* Luke 22:60-62; John 21:15-17), the repentant criminal on the cross (*Read* Luke 23:43), the sinful invalid (*Read* John 5:14) and the woman caught in adultery (*Read* John 8:11). Note the example of the father in the parable of the lost son, when his son returned home and repented (*Read* Luke 15:18-24). Paul continually holds Jesus Christ as the example Christians must follow (*Read* Romans 15:3-8; 2 Corinthians 8:9; *Read* Philippians 2:5-8).

The bad historical examples in the Bible are explicitly condemned and likewise the bad examples of so-called 'Christians' in the history of the world must be condemned (1 Corinthians 10:5-11)!

6:3 Do not deceive yourself

"If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself." Paul does not condemn the abilities and accomplishments of Christians, but their exaggerated self-esteem.

Goliath possessed an inflated self-esteem in his physical power when he despised David (1 Samuel 17:42-44). Nebuchadnezzar over-exaggerated his accomplishments (Daniel 4:7-9). Peter was over-confident when he declared that he would never deny Jesus (Matthew 26:33). The Pharisee publicly bragged about his so-called spiritual righteousness when he compared himself to the despised tax-collector (Luke 18:9-12).

When Paul in truth summarises his accomplishments, he gives all the glory to God. Paul says about himself that as 'an expert builder he laid the foundation' (1 Corinthians 3:10) that 'he was entrusted with the secret things of God' (1 Corinthians 4:1), that 'as a father he did more than ten thousand guardians' (Greek: *paidagogoi*) (1 Corinthians 4:15) and 'as a worker he worked much harder than all the other eye-witnesses of Christ' (1 Corinthians 15:10) and harder than all the false apostles (2 Corinthians 11:13-33).

But Paul did not think of himself more highly than he ought, but thought of himself with sober judgement (Romans 12:3). Paul did not over-estimate himself, but kept himself within the limits of his calling and task which he had received from Jesus Christ. Paul does not recommend himself, but devotes himself to the task to which God recommended him (2 Corinthians 10:18). Paul acknowledges that he can do all this, because God gives him the power (Philippians 4:13). Paul boasts, but then only in what God through Jesus Christ has accomplished in him (Acts 14:27; 15:4; Romans 11:36; Romans 15:17-19; Galatians 6:14).

6:4 Each one should test his own actions

The word 'test' (Greek: *dokimazo*) means 'to approve after testing'. The testing is with respect to life-style and works and in respect to quality and quantity (1 Corinthians 11:28; 2 Corinthians 13:5).

We should never compare ourselves to other Christians, but keep looking at ourselves. Because Christians have received so many different personalities, characters, tasks, talents and spiritual gifts, making any comparison would be unfair. Christians should rather watch their own example (1 Timothy 4:12) and look at their own spiritual growth and progress in how they live and in what they believe (1 Timothy 4:15-16).

6:5 Each one should carry his own load

The word 'load' (Greek: fortion) means 'load' as used of the load of a ship (Acts 27:10), the heavy load of the 613 ceremonial laws which the Pharisees put on the shoulders of the Jews to carry (Matthew 23:4) or the easy and light load which consists of the yoke of Jesus Christ which Christians carry (Matthew 11:30). This word refers to what each person must carry himself and may not offload on someone else!

Every Christian remains responsible for his own thoughts, motives, attitudes, feelings, emotions, words, beliefs, convictions and commitments, knowledge and obedience, choices and decisions, values, behaviour and life-style. He remains responsible for what he does with his time, possessions, talents, gifts, body and soul, work and leisure time, what he listens to and sees on TV, what he eats and reads in books, for his neglects and disobedience, his mistakes and transgressions. No one else than you yourself are responsible to carry your own load!

Personal responsibility is not transferable!

'Works' will not *save* anyone. But everyone will be judged according to his works (Ecclesiastes 12:14; Matthew 16:27; Revelation 20:13). Non-Christians will be condemned for what they neglected to do towards Christians (Matthew 25:41-48). Christians will be judged in accordance to what they did towards other Christians (Matthew 25:34-40). And Christians will be rewarded out of grace (1 Corinthians 3:11-15). 'The brothers of Jesus Christ' do not refer to ethnic Jews, but to refer to Christians (Matthew 10:40-42; Mark 3:35).

6:6 Share all good things with your instructor

One of the 'works' which Christians must do is: to share all good things with those who teach them the Word of God. Literally: "He who is instructed in the Word of God (the catechumen) ought to share all good things with the one who instructs (the catechist)." The 'catechumen' is a new Christian convert who receives instruction in the Christian teachings. The 'catechist' is the teacher who instructs the catechumen by means of question and answer. "The good" he should share includes financial support (if needed) (Romans 15:27; 1 Corinthians 9:14; 2 Corinthians 8:7-9,13-15; 1 Timothy 5:17).

6:7-8 You reap what you sow

"God cannot be mocked": People mock God when they refuse to listen to God, do not take him serious and do not accept him. They mock God when they despise his words in the Bible or when they neglect to carry out his instructions as written in the Letter to the Galatians. God knows that the liberals have set God's Word aside in order to be 'free' (to do what they like, to do what is

good in their own eyes) (Galatians 5:13) or to hold on to their own devised religious traditions (Mark 7:7,8,13).

People mock God when they twist his Word in the Bible or misuse his laws to rule over others. God knows that the orthodox among the Jews and other religions try to lay their religious laws as a heavy yoke of slavery on the backs of Christians (Galatians 5:1-4). And when Christians continue to carry the light yoke of Jesus Christ, these religions persecute the Christians.

Both those who set aside God's moral law (Matthew 5:19; cf. Mark 12:30-31) and those who lay their own religious laws as a heavy yoke on others (Matthew 23:4) will reap God's judgement! A true Christians is neither liberal (subtracting from God's Word) nor orthodox (adding traditions to God's Word) in the wrong sense of the word. He allows himself to be led by the Holy Spirit and that is always in accordance with the Word of God in the Bible!

"A man reaps what he sows". The person who allows his old sinful nature to rule in his life, will reap destruction (Romans 8:7-8; Galatians 5:19-21). But the person who allows the Holy Spirit to rule in his heart, mind and life, will reap eternal life (Romans 8:9-11; Galatians 5:16-18). Both 'destruction' and 'life' are eternal! (Matthew 25:46; cf. Mark 9:48 and 2 Thessalonians 1:9).

6:9-10 Don't become weary in doing good.

A part of the good harvest is the good works of Christians. This consists of giving or doing what poor people need. People may be 'poor' in a material sense (Galatians 2:10; James 2:14-18; 1 John 3:16-18; cf. 1 Corinthians 16:1-3). But people may also be 'poor' in a physical sense (Hebrews 10:32-34; 13:2), emotional sense (1 Thessalonians 5:14) or in a spiritual sense (Luke 4:18-19).

Christians must first of all do good to their fellow-Christians in their own congregation – literally: 'the family of believers' (cf. James 1:27; 2:15-17; 1 John 3:17-18). But Christians must also do good to their fellow-Christians in other places (2 Corinthians 8:12-15).

Something which happens to many Christians is "becoming weary of doing good" or "to slacken in one's effort to do good". Do not slacken your personal time with God (quiet times, Bible reading and prayer) (Psalm 27:4). Do not slacken in your personal attention to your marriage partner and family (Ephesians 5:25-29). Do not slacken in your first love and zeal for Christ and his ministry (Revelation 2:4-5). 'To slacken' is the one area in which Christians must be watchful, because it may lead to back-sliding. We Christians should rededicate ourselves again and again to do what God in Christ expects from us.

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.