

QUIET TIME

Theme: Assurances

- Try to make a specific time every day to meet Jesus Christ through reading and meditating his Word.
- Pray, talk with Jesus Christ and make a few short notes about this Bible passage in your notebook.
- Record what you discover, what speaks to your mind and heart, what you find difficult or what you understood.

- Day 1 John 10:24-30
God never lets go of you!
- Day 2 Hebrews 8:12
God puts your sins behind him
(cf. Isaiah 43:25; 44:22; Micah 7:18-19)
- Day 3 Hebrews 4:14-16
God helps you in your time of need
- Day 4 Psalm 32:8-9
God promises to teach you the way you should go (cf. Psalm 143:8-10)
- Day 5^{BS} 2 Timothy 1:3-14
God is able to guard what you have entrusted to him¹
- Day 6 Romans 8:31-39
If God is for you, then you are more than a conqueror!
- Day 7 1 John 5:14-15
God hears you when you ask according to his will
- Day 8 1 Peter 1:3-7
God will complete what he began
(cf. Philippians 1:6)
- Day 9 Isaiah 43:1-2
God is your only Saviour from trouble
(cf. Revelation 17:14)
- Day 10 John 5:24-29
You have been resurrected spiritually and will be resurrected physically
- Think about 1 John 5:14.
What confidence may Christians have when they pray?
 - Pray every day for someone or something specific and wait in expectation for what God is going to do (Psalm 5:3).

STUDY

Theme: The five Christian assurances

Read study 32 carefully before the next meeting. If you have questions, write them down and mail them to one of your group leaders. We will seek an answer together.

BIBLE STUDY

Theme: God is able to guard what you have entrusted to him

If you like, you may already prepare the Bible Study for the coming meeting by reading through the Bible passage. Make use of the 5-step Bible Study method. The Bible passage is: **2 Timothy 1:3-14**

MEMORISATION

1. Motivation

Jesus memorised Bible verses (Luke 4:4-13). Are you doing that?

2. Memorisation

Memorise this verse in the Bible version of your choice.

ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

Philippians 1:6

being confident of this,
that he who began a good work in you
will carry it on to completion
until the day of Christ Jesus

Philippians 1:6 (NIV)

3. Review and back-review

Review the last 5 memorised verses once every day and *back-review* all other memorised verses once every three weeks.

¹ 2 Timothy 1:12 What the believer entrusted to God, and 2 Timothy 1:14 What God entrusted to the believer

32. The five Christian assurances

Assurance is necessary in order to live secure and grow spiritually! Five promises in the Bible lay a firm foundation for assurance about your Christian Faith: assurance of salvation, assurance of answered prayer, assurance of victory, assurance of forgiveness and assurance of God's guidance.

1. ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

1 JOHN 5:11-13

11 And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. 12 Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. 13 I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.

EXPLANATION OF ASSURANCE 1

1. What is a testimony?

A testimony is a report of what someone saw, heard and experienced. A testimony reveals truth and is always given in public, so that everyone may hear the truth.

In 1 John 5:11-12 it is *God* himself who gives this testimony (verse 10)! And God cannot lie. God wants everyone to hear this truth.

John recorded God's testimony (verse 13), so that also later generations of people may be able to hear this truth.

2. What is eternal life?

Eternal life is *salvation* - salvation from sin and all its consequences: salvation from spiritual death, salvation from slavery to sin, salvation from condemnation in judgement, salvation from physical death and finally salvation from the punishment to eternal death (hell)!

Eternal life is a complete new kind of life, a very special kind of life, challenging, exiting and very fulfilling! Eternal life or salvation never ends! Above all eternal life is a personal and intimate relationship with God through Jesus Christ and a confidential fellowship with him forever (John 17:3)!

3. How do you obtain eternal life (salvation)?

In his testimony God says that he has given eternal life to people. Eternal life is a *gift* from God! You cannot buy or earn eternal life (salvation).

In this testimony God says that this eternal life is in Jesus Christ, that is, salvation is indissolubly connected to Jesus Christ, There is only one name given to people by which they **MUST** be saved (Acts 4:12; cf. John 14:6). God gives eternal life only by way of one person in history: the Lord Jesus Christ!

There is no salvation (eternal life) in religion, in keeping the law or in doing good works. People who try to be

saved by doing these things remain under God's curse (Galatians 3:10-11; 5:4).

In this testimony God says that everyone who has Jesus Christ (in his heart and life), also has eternal life (salvation). But everyone who does not have Jesus Christ certainly does not have life (salvation).

Whoever *receives Jesus Christ* into his heart and life, also receives eternal life (salvation)! John 1:12 says: To all who receive Jesus Christ, that is, to all who believe in his name, God gives the right to become children of God. But whoever rejects Jesus Christ, rejects God and consequently rejects salvation (Luke 10:16).

4. Assurance of eternal life (salvation)

John recorded God's testimony, so that everyone who receives Jesus Christ may *know* that he has eternal life (verse 13). The assurance of your salvation is therefore not dependent on your feelings, but on your knowledge about what God promised! When you have accepted Jesus Christ into your heart and life as Saviour and Lord, then *you may be absolutely sure* that your eternal life (salvation) has begun. You may have this assurance, because God promised it and because you did what God said, namely, receive Jesus Christ.

2. ASSURANCE OF ANSWERED PRAYER

JOHN 16:24

Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.

EXPLANATION OF ASSURANCE 2

Christians pray in the name of Jesus Christ, because he is the Mediator between God and man. The name 'Jesus' means 'Saviour' and the name 'Christ' means 'Anointed' to be our Prophet, Priest and King.

1. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ because he has earned our righteousness

By dying in our place for our sins he was made to be sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21a). Therefore our sins are atoned for and removed from us (1 Peter 2:24). And therefore our separation from God has been abolished (1 Peter 3:18a). That is why we *have become completely 'righteous'* (completely forgiven) in God's eyes (Psalm 103:3; Hebrews 8:12).

When God looks at us he sees only the righteousness of Jesus Christ, because we are 'in Christ'. The Bible says, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come (2 Corinthians 5:17)!" The Bible says that we are indissolubly united to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and our life is now hidden with Christ in God (Colossians 3:3).

God hears our prayers, because we are righteous. "The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are

attentive to their prayers, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil (1 Peter 3:12).

2. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ because he has revealed to us the character, words and deeds of God

We Christians know God personally and intimately, because we know Jesus Christ. The Bible teaches that he who has seen the visible Jesus Christ has seen the invisible God (John 14:9-10; Colossians 1:15). Of course, what Christians see is the image of Jesus Christ through the testimony of thousands of eye-witnesses that have been recorded in the Bible. The Bible teaches that he who knows Jesus Christ, knows God (John 8:19). He who believes in Jesus Christ, believes in God (John 12:44). He who accepts (receives) Jesus Christ, accepts (receives) God (John 13:20; Matthew 10:40). But the Bible also warns that he who rejects Jesus Christ, rejects God (Luke 10:16). That is why *God only hears the prayers of Christians* who pray in the name of Jesus Christ. He also hears the prayer of non-Christians when they accept (receive) Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Lord (Romans 10:13).

3. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ because he has revealed to us the will of God

God hears our prayers when we *pray in accordance with God's will* (1 John 5:14). He certainly does not hear (and answer) prayers that are against his will (James 4:3). Through Jesus Christ Christians have direct access to God in heaven (Ephesians 2:18) and at any time and under any circumstance they may approach God with freedom and confidence. Christians will find grace and help in their time of need (Ephesians 3:12; Hebrews 4:16).

3. ASSURANCE OF VICTORY

1 CORINTHIANS 10:13

No temptation (or: trial) has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted (or: tried) beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted (or: tried), he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

EXPLANATION OF ASSURANCE 3

1. Trials and temptations

The words: 'trial' (test) and 'temptation' (seduction) are translations from the same Greek word (peirasmos). A *trial (test)* is something which God deliberately designs to make Christians stronger and wiser (James 1:2-4,12). But a *temptation (seduction)* is something which Satan designs to make Christians weaker and cause them to fail (fail).

Christians can be tempted by their own sinful nature in them (James 1:13-15), by the sinful world around them (1 John 2:15-17) and by the Satan above them (*Read* Lucas 4:2,13).

2. Also when you are tempted (tested) you may trust God

God is greater than all your temptations (or: trials).

He will never allow that any temptation becomes greater than your ability to resist it! He will never allow that any trial becomes greater than your ability to bear it! God is also faithful and righteous. With every temptation he provides a way out or a possibility to resist the temptation. With every trial he provides a way to cope with the trial.

God delivers from temptations (and trials).

In the Lord's Prayer Jesus Christ taught Christians to pray: "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one" (Matthew 6:13). This does not mean that God deliberately leads Christians into temptations! God never tempts anyone (James 1:13).

This prayer means that Christians ask God to help them when they are tempted. They ask God not to allow them to do what they are inclined to do by their sinful nature, namely, to give in to the temptation. Christians acknowledge that temptations from their sinful nature, the sinful world and Satan can only be resisted with God's help!

When Christians trust in God and depend on God, they may pray with confidence: "Lord, please do not allow me to fall into a situation where I will be tempted. Save me from the evil one and his temptations. Then God will certainly deliver him from the temptation!"

God uses temptations as trials.

However God may allow you to be tempted by your own sinful nature, by the sinful world (e.g. internet, TV, magazines, bad friends) or by the devil. Why? Because while it is the intention of the devil, the evil world and your sinful nature to use this temptation to break you down and cause you to fall (fail), it certainly is the intention of God to use this temptation to build you up and give you an experience of victory!

From the viewpoint of the devil, the sinful world and your sinful nature, a particular event may be a temptation (seduction), but from the viewpoint of God, that same event is always a trial (test)! God desires that you pass (succeed) the test! In such situations you may pray: "Lord, give me your grace not to fail the test, but to pass the test by resisting the temptation!"

An example from the Bible: God allowed Satan to test Job to the uttermost, but Job trusted in God and in the end became a stronger and more mature believer (James 1:2-3).

God may decide not to intervene in a temptation (or trial). When temptations cannot be resisted. God may also allow you to follow your sinful nature and fall into the temptation. In such cases God decides not to intervene and not to take action. This usually happens to non-Christians who live apart from the God of the Bible. It also happens to Christians who live independent from the God of the Bible, for example, by never praying (James 4:2). God has the perfect right not to intervene when a person gets tempted! An independent and self-righteous person cannot count on God's faithfulness and help. Because God withdraws himself from such people, temptations (seductions) will become too strong for them. No one can escape the power of temptations by means of his own power! When people deliberately suppress the truth (in the Bible) or exchange the truth for a lie (another religion), God will definitely give them over to the sinful desires of their hearts, to shameful lusts and to a depraved mind (Romans 1:24-28). Without the God of the Bible no one can gain victory over sin!

3. What can you do to gain victory over temptations?

God provides the following *ways of escape*:

Flee from the temptation

Christians must flee from the following temptations (seductions): sexual immorality (Genesis 39:12; Proverbs 4:14-15, 23-27; 5:1-23; 1 Corinthians 6:18), idolatry (serving a god of another religion) (1 Corinthians 10:14), love for money (1 Timothy 6:9-11) and from the burning desires of youth (2 Timothy 2:22; cf. 1 Peter 4:3-4).

Submit to God

Submit yourself immediately to God (cf. Hebrews 2:18). Seek God immediately in prayer (Matthew 7:7-11; James 4:8). Resist the devil and he will flee from you, because God will deal with him (James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8-9).

Seek help

Seek the help of a Christian friend (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10).

Set mind on Bible

Set your mind immediately on God and the things above (Colossians 3:1-4). Memorise specific Bible verse and use them (meditate on them and stand on them) when you are confronted with lies, negative thoughts and feelings (Ephesians 6:16) and impure imaginations (Psalm 119:9,11).

Do the right thing

Respond immediately to temptations to do evil in the way of the world by doing things in the Christian way (Luke 6:27-28; Matthew 5:38-42). For example, do positive things with your hands and serve others (John 8:3-11).

Command the evil one to leave

Make use of your spiritual authority and command the evil one to go away in the name of Jesus Christ (Matthew 4:3-4; Acts 16:18).

Watch and pray

Watch and pray, especially when you are tired or experience spiritual conflict (Matthew 26:41).

Avoid certain things

Avoid wrong ambitions (1 Timothy 6:9-10) and wrong habits (Job 31:1).

Say: 'No'!

Say immediately: "No!" Refuse seductive proposals (Genesis 39:9-10) and cruel plots (John 8:3-8).

4. ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

1 JOHN 1:9

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

EXPLANATION OF ASSURANCE 4

1. Confess your sins

The word: 'confess' literally means 'to say the same thing' as God. It means that when God puts his finger on a specific sin in your life, you do not generalise it, but agree with him and acknowledge that specific sin by name. You agree with what the Bible says is 'sin'. When you confess your sins to God, you not only confess the wrong things which you have done, but also the right things which you have neglected to do!

2. God will certainly forgive all your sins and cleanse you from all unrighteousness

When God forgives sin he removes both the guilt and the shame which accompanies the sin.

'Guilt' is a judicial concept and expresses the fact that we have transgressed against a sinless (holy, righteous and perfect) God. We know and feel that we fall short in our relationship to God. 'Guilt' expresses knowledge and feelings about the wrong relationship to God.

'Shame' is a social concept and expresses the fact that we feel humiliated in the eyes of other sinful (unholy, unrighteous, imperfect) people, even when we ourselves have caused the evil! We feel attacked in our (twisted and false) sense of honour in relationship to other sinful people. We know and feel that we fall short (fail) in our relationship to other sinful people. We blame other people for the evil we do and refuse to take responsibility for our own evil. Shame is actually false guilt!

Jesus Christ died as a sacrifice of atonement for our sins. Through this sacrifice of atonement Jesus Christ removed God's holy and righteous anger against our sins and reconciled us to God (Romans 3:25a; 5:9-10). Jesus Christ carried the punishment for our sins (Isaiah 53:5). He forgave us our sins (Psalm 32:5; Micah 7:18-19). We are no longer guilty in God's eyes. He will never condemn us (John 5:24). He will never doom us (Romans 8:1). He has given to us the righteous state of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:21). When God looks at us he only sees us 'in Jesus Christ'.

There is no need to feel ashamed of our sinful past. God will never bring our sins into remembrance (Hebrews 10:17-18)! Instead, God welcomes us with open arms (Luke 15:20-24).

When God forgives sin, he also removes the consequences of sin.

God's forgiveness does not mean that he always removes all the consequences of our wrong doings. For example, God forgave David's adultery, but the child that was born died (2 Samuel 12:13-14).

Nevertheless there will always be an inner purification from sin (Psalm 51:9; Isaiah 1:18). God again gives us a good conscience (Hebrews 9:14). He again creates in us a clean heart and a steadfast spirit (Psalm 51:12-14). He again gives us hope, encouragement, joy and his unfailing love (Psalm 32). And he again renews our behaviour (Psalm 51:15). He again gives us the possibility to live right (Read John 8:11).

When God forgives sin, he also removes the enslaving power of sin.

God breaks the power of enslavement to sinful habits (drugs, eating too much, alcohol, sexual immorality, telling lies, corruption, laziness, etc.). Delivered from the enslavement to sin, we are able to dedicate ourselves to God and serve him (Romans 6:6,13,19).

3. God is faithful and righteous

Because God is perfectly righteous, he must punish sin, but he also provided a way to be justified from sin. And because God is faithful, he will justify (forgive) everyone who confesses his sin to him.

5. ASSURANCE OF GOD'S GUIDANCE

PROVERBS 3: 5-6

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.

EXPLANATION OF ASSURANCE 5

1. Trust God with all your heart

'To trust God' means that you have made God the fixed foundation of your life. It means that you rely completely on God to save you, to keep you, to build you and to guide you. You entrust every area of your life to his care. It is not possible to build a building on half a foundation. Likewise it is not possible to build a strong Christian life on half a trust in God. A person who trusts God with half a heart does not really trust God. He will tend to trust more on his own insight and wisdom than that of God. Christians must fight against the tendency to rely on their own view of what is right and what is wrong or to rely on what other imperfect (sinful, unholy, unrighteous) people suggest. Christians must stop viewing the world from a pure human point of view, and begin to view the world from God's point of view. God's perspective on everything on earth will change your perspective and give you new hope, faith and love (Psalm 73:16-17).

2. Always set the LORD before your eyes

How do you do this practically?

By not being ashamed of being a Christian or doing things in the Christian way (Matthew 10:32-33).

By studying the Bible about the issues that occupy you or about the decisions that you need to make (Acts 17:11).

By praying before you speak or act (Nehemiah 1:11).

By focussing on what pleases God and what glorifies him (1 Corinthians 10:31).

3. God makes your ways straight

God can make our plans succeed (Proverbs 16:3)

God can cause our enemies to make peace with us (Proverbs 16:7).

God can open closed doors and closed hearts (Colossians 4:2-4).

"Nothing is impossible for God" (Jeremiah 2:17,27).