

## QUIET TIME

### Theme: Christian fellowship

- 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 understand.

- 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<sup>BS</sup> 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

- Think about James 5:16.  
Pray for one another.
- Pray every day for someone or something specific and wait in expectation for what God is going to do (Psalm 5:3).

## STUDY

### Theme: How Christians fellowship

Read study 42 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: Help one another

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: **Galatians 6:1-10**

## 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.

### 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)

### 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.

## 42. How Christians fellowship

**What is the distinguishing characteristic of a Christian fellowship? In John 13:34-35 Jesus says, “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” The distinguishing characteristic of a Christian fellowship is love as Jesus Christ loves us. Love is the clearest characteristic that must distinguish Christians from all other religions! Love attracts people to Jesus Christ and to the Christian fellowship! How can you love as Jesus Christ loves you?**

### CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

#### A. Relationships within the Christian fellowship

##### 1. Christian fellowship is characterised by relationships within the Body: with the Head and with the other members

With whom do Christians have a confidential relationship?

Read 1 Corinthians 1:9; 12:12-13; 12:25; Ephesians 3:12; 1 John 1:3.

Christians have the privilege and possibility to fellowship with the Triune God: with God the Father, on the basis of what Jesus Christ has accomplished and through the work of the Holy Spirit. Christians also have the possibility and privilege to fellowship with other Christians in the Body of Christ.

As a Christian, you cannot think yourself separate from Jesus Christ or from the Church. The Church is the Body of Christ, Christ is the Head of the Body and Christians are the members of the Body. The Body of Christ only functions when every member carries out the will of the Head! Jesus Christ as the Head does not allow the members to separate themselves from the Body! He does not allow the Body to function independently from him!

##### 2. Christian fellowship is characterised by relationships in a group

What do Christians do when they gather together?

Read Acts 2:42; 5:42; Ephesians 5:19; 1 Timothy 4:13.

Most Christians regularly meet together in large and smaller groups. During their gatherings they tell the good news about Jesus Christ and they study the Bible. They also worship God, sing, make music, pray, talk and eat together. The larger and smaller group are indispensable for Christian fellowship!

##### 3. Christian fellowship is characterised by relationships with responsibilities towards one another

*The best way to understand Christian fellowship is to study ‘the one another responsibilities’ in the Bible. The Bible teaches: “Love one another”, “teach one another”, “serve one another”, etc. These commands are for all Christians in the world. All Christians therefore have the same responsibilities towards one another. And when Christians practise their responsibilities towards one another, they love as Jesus loved them.*

### RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

*What are these ‘one another responsibilities’? They are responsibilities in the areas of attitude, speaking and acting. We will study these responsibilities and suggest some practical applications of these responsibilities.*

#### B. The most essential responsibility

Read John 13:34-35; John 15:12; 1 Thessalonians 3:12  
The most essential and highest responsibility of Christians is to love one another as Jesus Christ loves them!

*The command to love.*

This is a command of Jesus Christ and therefore not an option! Christians have no choice; they must exercise love.

*The standard in love.*

Christians must love, not as the world loves, not as non-Christians love one another, but as Jesus Christ loves them. This is the standard of love.

*The first in love.*

Jesus Christ loved us first (1 John 4:19). He loved us before the creation of the world (Ephesians 1:4). He loved us before we were born, before we heard the gospel (Romans 10:14-17) and even before we understood what sin, righteousness and judgement was (John 16:8-10).

*The self-sacrifice in love.*

Jesus Christ loves us like a shepherd loves his sheep, seeking us when we are lost and carrying us over the shoulder near his heart when we are weak and hurt. He leads us to the best green meadows and quiet waters. He protects us against lions and bears (John 10:9-10).

Jesus Christ loves us like a parent loves his child with compassion (Psalm 103:13). He loves us like a friend always wanting to do things together with us (John 15:14). He loves us with self-sacrificial love (John 10:11). Yes, he loves us with an eternal, unchangeable love (Jeremiah 31:3). The love of Jesus Christ is the norm and standard of Christian love.

### *The gift of love.*

Love is a command of Christ (it must be done), but is also a gift from the Spirit of Christ (it can be done) (Romans 5:5). Jesus Christ never commands us Christians to do something without enabling us to do it!

### *The attraction of love.*

Christian love is the greatest attraction for people in the world. Because of the love of Christians for one another “everyone will know that you are my disciples.”

*Possible applications.* Love is patient, kind and not bitter (unforgiving) towards people who wrong you (1 Corinthians 13:4-8). Christians ought to show love to people who are socially outcast, helpless or even hostile. Christians ought to take the initiative and do something in a self-sacrificial way that will build the other up and serve the other.

## **C. Responsibilities with respect to our attitudes**

### **1. Responsibility: Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honour one another above yourselves**

*Read* Romans 12:10.

*Possible applications.* Brotherly love shares its deepest trust, feelings and spiritual unity only with other people who believe in Jesus Christ. Honour means to take the other person serious, accept him and regard him as worthy of greater respect than yourself, except when it is clear that the other person speaks and does evil. It also means that you never gossip, but only talk about the good in the other person.

### **2. Responsibility: Love does no harm to its neighbour**

*Read* Romans 13:8-10.

*Possible applications.* Respect the relationships and marriage of the other. Behave in traffic in a way that others feel safe. Protect the possessions of the other as if they are your own. Do not be envious of his possessions and be content with your own.

### **3. Responsibility: Be kind (friendly) and compassionate to one another (and forgive one another)**

*Read* Ephesians 4:32a

*Possible applications.* Kindness is helping one another where you can, without being critical or blunt. Mercy triumphs over judgement (James 2:13).

### **4. Responsibility: Bear with each other and forgive one another**

*Read* Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:13

*Possible applications.* Bear with the peculiarities, oddities and weaknesses of the other, while being appreciative and encouraging about his strengths. Forgive him wholeheartedly just as the Lord has forgiven you. Never keep a list of wrongs (Hebrews 8:12). Realise that if you do not forgive, the Lord will also not forgive you (Matthew

6:14-15). Pray for the one who wronged you and take the initiative to relate in a positive way to him.

## **5. Other responsibilities with respect to our attitudes**

- Accept one another (Romans 15:1-7)
- Greet one another with a holy kiss (Romans 16:16)
- Do not become conceited, provoking and envying each other (Galatians 5:26)
- Submit to one another (accept one another's authority) (Ephesians 5:21)
- Live in peace with each other (1 Thessalonians 5:13)
- Try to be kind to each other and to everyone else (1 Thessalonians 5:15)
- Consider the other better than yourself (in some areas); be willing to be the least in the group (Philippians 2:3; 1 Peter 5:5-6)

## **D. Responsibilities with respect to our speaking**

### **1. Responsibility: Stop passing judgement on one another. Do not offend each other**

*Read* Romans 14:13

*Possible applications.* The weak in faith must stop criticising and judging the strong in faith and the strong in faith must stop looking down upon (despising) the weak in faith. Christians do not force one another to express their faith in the same way or to necessarily have the same spiritual experiences. Do not force one another to eat the same food or to regard the same day as special. Instead of criticising and judging one another, Christians appreciate the diversity among Christians and encourage one another. Never gossip about anyone, because you will separate close friends (Proverbs 16:28).

### **2. Responsibility: Do not lie to each other**

*Read* Colossians 3:9

*Possible application.* Be sincere in relationships and honest in money. Speak only when it is the truth, when it builds the other up and when you can say it in love (Ephesians 4:15,29).

### **3. Responsibility: Teach and admonish (warn) one another with all wisdom**

*Read* Colossians 3:16; Romans 15:14.

*Possible applications.* Teach one another in the house fellowships (house churches) and small groups, for example by sharing your quiet times and your discoveries during Bible studies with one another. Every mature Christian (a disciple) should teach others to obey all that Jesus Christ commanded (Matthew 28:19; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 5:11). The apostle Paul was confident that Christians can be competent to instruct one another (Romans 15:14).

Some mature Christians are called and appointed to the office of teacher in the congregation (Matthew 23:34; 1 Timothy 3:2; 5:17; Titus 1:9; James 3:1).

Some Christians are given the spiritual gift of teaching to equip others to teach (Romans 12:7; 1 Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4:7-12).

And Christians must also reckon with false teachers that infiltrate into the Church (1 Timothy 1:3; 4:1-5; 2 Peter 2:1).

‘To admonish’ means to put (engrave) God’s Word into the other’s mind by meditation and memorisation (Deuteronomy 6:6-7). Rebuke one another with the truth and in love under four eyes (Matthew 18:15).

#### **4. Responsibility: Spur one another on to love and good works. Encourage one another to come to the meetings**

*Read* Hebrews 10:24-25

*Possible applications.* Regard the mutual relationships and activities in the world wide Church as well as the local congregation as important. Participate in a Christian meeting every week (e.g. the worship service, the discipleship training or a ministry to others).

#### **5. Other responsibilities with respect to our speaking**

- Sing Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with one another (Ephesians 5:19)
- Comfort and encourage one another (1 Thessalonians 5:11)
- Correct and encourage one another (Hebrews 3:12-13)
- Do not slander one another (James 4:11)
- Don’t grumble against one another (James 5:9)
- Confess your sins to each other (James 5:16)

### **E. Responsibilities with respect to our deeds**

#### **1. Responsibility: Have equal concern for each other**

*Read* 1 Corinthians 12:25

*Possible applications.* Use your God-given abilities (natural talents, spiritual gifts, capabilities, experiences) and God-given opportunities to serve others.

Help the weak and develop the strong without showing favouritism. “Do not show partiality in judging” (Deuteronomy 1:17; cf. Malachi 2:9). “Do not pervert justice or show partiality. Do not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and twists the words of the righteous” (Deuteronomy 16:19).

#### **2. Responsibility: Carry one another’s burdens, but carry your own load (pack)**

*Read* Galatians 6:2 (Greek: burden) and Galatians 6:5 (Greek: load or pack)

*Possible applications.* Support the other in the difficulties that are too great for him to carry alone. Such ‘burdens’ may be tragedies, crises and losses.

But every Christians must carry his own ‘load (pack)’. This means that every Christian is responsible for his own thoughts, attitudes, motives, convictions, faith, decisions, choices and values. He remains responsible for his own words, reactions, deeds and behaviour. He is also responsible for what he does with his time (priorities), talents, body and possessions.

#### **3. Responsibility. Be hospitable to one another**

*Read* 1 Peter 4:9

*Possible applications.* Give food and shelter to Christian workers who are travelling. Make your home available for Christian meetings. Share your life and possessions with the needy, the poor and the lonely (the widows, orphans and foreigners).

#### **4. Other responsibilities with respect to our actions**

- Wash one another’s feet (John 13:14)
- Serve one another in love (Galatians 5:13)
- Each should use whatever gift he has received to serve others (1 Peter 4:10-11)
- Have fellowship with one another by walking in the light (1 John 1:7)

### **F. Practise your responsibilities**

#### **1. Summary of Christian fellowship is love**

Christian fellowship consists of practising the ‘one another responsibilities’, i.e., the mutual Christian responsibilities in the areas of attitudes, speaking and acting towards one another. Therefore, let love be your greatest distinguishing characteristic!

#### **2. But do not turn these one another responsibilities into new laws!**

The temptation for Christians is to turn the above list of Christian responsibilities into laws, which would be hard to keep simultaneously. No Christian can bring all these responsibilities into practice at the same time. God expects you to grow in one or more of these responsibilities. But keep your personal calling and the spiritual gifts which God gave you in mind.

*Suggestion:*  
*Choose one or two of these Christian responsibilities and practise them for say a month.*