

GOALS FOR THE GROUP LEADER

Help the group members to believe:

1. that sin has penetrated God's very good creation
2. that sin is the cause of suffering and death
3. that all human beings are born with a sinful nature and need salvation

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 stand in awe of God.

Theme: God is holy

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

Isaiah 6:1-8

¹ In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. ² Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying.

³ And they were calling to one another:

"Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory."

⁴ At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.

⁵ "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty."

⁶ Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. ⁷ With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for."

⁸ Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?"

And I said, "Here am I. Send me!"

➤ *What is the meaning of the word 'holy'?*

Christians must distinguish (differentiate) between 'the holy' and 'the common', between the unclean and the clean (Leviticus 10:10; Ezekiel 44:23). 'To measure' is a symbolic action which represents separating the holy from the common (Ezekiel 42:20; Revelation 11:1-2).

Thus, the temple was holy, because it was an ordinary building that was separated from ordinary use and was dedicated to special use.

The word 'holy' has two aspects:

- *'Holy' means to separate* from what is wrong, evil and ungodly.
- *'Holy' means to dedicate* to what is right, good and godly.

'Holy' means perfection in character and behaviour.

Character and behaviour is 'holy' when they are not only separated from what is evil, but when they are also dedicated to what is good. The first aspect without the second means that it is not yet 'perfect'! To live separated from this world without living dedicated to God within this world is not yet 'perfect' in God's eyes! Perfection in character and behaviour must consist of separation and dedication. It is God who must determine from what you need to separate and to what you need to dedicate yourself to!

➤ *Holiness and God*

God is holy. God is perfect in character and behaviour. He is separate from evil in all its forms. He not only hates much unholiness, but also a little unholiness. God is completely dedicated to all his divine characteristics (attributes) He is dedicated to truth, fairness, goodness and godliness. He is perfectly righteous and will punish all forms of unrighteousness. You will find no corruption with God! God is dedicated to love and to whatever promotes love. His words and deeds are driven by love. God is dedicated to fulfil his plan with this present world. He is perfect in accomplishing his will. His eternal plan with the universe and with man will be carried out completely. That is why the angels are praising God's holiness!

➤ *Holiness and fellowship*

When Isaiah stands in the presence of the holy God he becomes very much aware of his own unholiness. He calls out: "Woe to me! I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips." The holy God cannot and will not associate or fellowship with unholy people!

And yet God desires to associate and fellowship with human beings! The only way in which people can fellowship with God is when God has taken away their unholiness. This no man can do by himself. Only the God of the Bible can do this. In verse 6 God symbolically makes atonement for Isaiah's sin.

'Atonement' in the Bible means:

- to satisfy God's holy and righteous demand (law) to punish sin
 - to remove God's holy and righteous indignation (anger) against sin
 - and to restore the broken relationship with God
- After God has made atonement for Isaiah's sin, Isaiah may stand in the holy presence of God and fellowship with God without fear.

If you desire to have fellowship with the holy God, then atonement must first be made for your sins. And if you want to be a Christian, then you are called, not to be sexually impure, but to live a holy life (1 Thessalonians 4:7). Christians dedicate themselves to walk on the Way of holiness (Isaiah 35:8).

➤ *Holiness and service*

The holy God cannot and will not use an unholy person in his spiritual service. An unholy prophet cannot represent people with the holy God! After God has made atonement for Isaiah's sin, God can and will use Isaiah in his service to people in the world. If we desire that God uses us with people in this world, then atonement must first be made for our sins.

3. Worship

Let everyone in the small group take a turn to worship God (in one or two sentences) as the holy God, the One who is perfect in character and behaviour.

II. INTRODUCTION THEME (1 min.)

The theme for this meeting is:

The fall (the first Adam)

Read or explain in your own words.

In the first book in the Bible (Genesis) we read about the creation of the heavens (the universe) and the earth. After the completion of the creation God said that everything was 'very good'! The first people lived as image bearers of God in God's very presence.

In the last book of the Bible (Revelation) we read about the restoration unto the new heaven (the new universe) and the new earth. Why must there come a new heaven and new earth? What has happened to God's original creation?

When we look around us today we see that everything in creation has changed. There is unrighteousness, hatred, terrorism, wars, selfishness and a complete lack of love for God or one's neighbour. There are also earthquakes, landslides, droughts, floods, forest fires, pollution of the earth and atmosphere, sickness, epidemics and death.

What has happened to God's original very good creation? The Bible reveals to us that there has been a fall into sin, which affects every human being as well as the whole creation! The fall into sin has ruined God's first creation. What happened at the fall into sin and what are the consequences?

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: The fall into sin

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| Day 1 ^{BS} | Genesis 3:1-24
The fall into sin |
| Day 2 | Genesis 4:1-12
The wages of sin is death |
| Day 3 | Isaiah 59:1-2
Sin brings separation between man and God (cf. Psalm 66:18) |
| Day 4 | Galatians 5:17-21
Sin causes struggle |
| Day 5 | Romans 1:18-32
God already judges deliberate transgressors before they die |
| Day 6 | Romans 2:1-16
After death comes God's final judgment day |
| Day 7 | John 3:18-21 and 36
Without Jesus Christ man remains condemned and lost |
| Day 8 | Romans 3:9-20
All people need salvation |
| Day 9 | Psalm 32:1-11
If you refuse to confess your sins |
| Day 10 | Romans 6:13-19
No longer offer the parts of your body to sin |

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: The problem of suffering

- What is godlessness, unrighteousness and believing in lies?
- What do people think 'sin' means and what is the meaning of 'sin' in the Bible?
- What does 'death' mean to you and what does it mean in the Bible?
- Why do some of God's judgements already take place now in human history?

- Why will there also be a last judgment day?

2. Commitment

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

- “How do you experience in your own life the fall into sin?”

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 previous Bible verses

Let pairs of group members review each other's first three memorised Bible verses.

2. Memorisation of the new Bible verse

Explain the meaning of the new Bible verse.

THE FALL INTO SIN Romans 3:23

For all have sinned
and fall short of the glory of God.

Romans 3:23 (NIV)

3. Memorisation of the Bible books

The second half of the 12 historical books:

2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther.

VI. BIBLE STUDY (45 min.)

Theme: The fall into sin

1. Bible Study

Make use of the 5-step Bible Study method and study:

Genesis 3:1-24.

¹ Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’”

² The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, ³ but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’”

⁴ “You will not surely die,” the serpent said to the woman. ⁵ “For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

⁶ When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable

for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. ⁷ Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

⁸ Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. ⁹ But the LORD God called to the man, “Where are you?”

¹⁰ He answered, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.”

¹¹ And he said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?”

¹² The man said, “The woman you put here with me— she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.”

¹³ Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?”

The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

¹⁴ So the LORD God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, “Cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life.

¹⁵ And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring (Hebrew: seed) and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”

¹⁶ To the woman he said, “I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.”

¹⁷ To Adam he said, “Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You must not eat of it,’ “Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life.

¹⁸ It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field.

¹⁹ By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.”

²⁰ Adam named his wife Eve (Hebrew: life), because she would become the mother of all the living.

²¹ The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. ²² And the LORD God said, “The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever.” ²³ So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. ²⁴ After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

2. Emphasis

The fall into sin is a very serious matter! It affects every single human being and the whole creation. All people need salvation. Also the creation needs to be liberated from its bondage to decay.

3. Explanation to the group leader

Genesis 3 is not a literary story or myth, but a historical reality. Man himself passed this history on to the following generations – in pure form in Israel, but in a mutilated form in the rest of the world.

3:1-7. Emancipation from God

Genesis 2:15-17 is a commandment and a prohibition from God to man. Before the fall into sin, man had knowledge of good and evil because God told him what was good and what was evil. God intended man to have this knowledge. 'Good' was to remain dependent on God, to obey God and not to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. 'Evil' was to cut yourself loose from God, to disobey God and to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. That is why God holds man completely responsible for his choices and deeds and calls him to account. Man cannot shift the blame to one another or to the Satan.

After the fall into sin man gained more knowledge of good and evil, because he determined it himself and experienced its consequences (Genesis 3:22). God did not intend man to have this knowledge. Satan had held out false hopes to man that he would become like God knowing good and evil (Genesis 3:5). This was a cunning half truth and thus a lie! Man emancipated himself from God and began to determine what must be regarded as 'good' and what as 'evil' completely independent from God (Judges 21:25; Isaiah 5:20). Man made himself equal to God in a certain sense. Instead of submitting himself to God, man became a law unto himself. He determined what is right and what is wrong without reference to God and God's Word. But Satan is a liar, because it is impossible to become independent from God!

3:8-15a. Man's will is no longer completely free

Before the fall into sin man was the only creature created in God's image and thus had a completely free will and choice whether he would obey God or not (Genesis 2:16-17)!

After the fall into sin no one has a completely free will, because the will of every man has been perverted. With his will man can no longer choose for God and against sin (Romans 8:5-8). Man and his will have become slaves of sin (John 8:34; 2 Petrus 2:19)!

The nature of fallen man is now sinful

Before the fall into sin man had been created in the image of God – that is, without sin.

After the fall into sin man is born in the likeness of fallen Adam (Genesis 5:1-3) – with a sinful nature. He is born as a sinner, has a sinful nature, that is, he has a natural inclination to do what is sinful (what is wrong, evil and ungodly) (Job 14:4; 15:14; Psalm 51:5). This condition only leads to death and the condemnation of people (Romans 5:12,17-19).

The consequences of the fall into sin

The consequences of the fall into sin are: God's curse that consists of separation from God (i.e. man feels guilty and hides himself from God)(Genesis 3:8-9); separation from people (i.e. man feels shame and covers his nakedness) (Genesis 2:25; 3:7), the increase of pain (Genesis 3:16), painful toil (Genesis 3:17), loss of eternal life (Genesis 3:22), murder (Genesis 4:8), illegal marriages (Genesis 4:19), revenge killing (Genesis 4:24), spiritual and moral depravity of man (Genesis 6:5), the apparent meaningless of existence (Ecclesiastes 1:14), the bondage of the whole creation to decay (Genesis 3:17-18; Romans 8:20-21), the transitoriness and death of everything and finally the last judgement of God (Hebrews 9:27).

Another consequence of the fall of man into sin is the enmity of the devil against God and man (Genesis 3:15a). Throughout history the devil tries to destroy God's work of salvation.

A final consequence of the fall into sin is suffering. Throughout history men, women, children and even other creatures suffer.

3:15b-24. All people are in need of salvation

In his unimaginable mercy God comes to fallen man with a *promise of salvation*. Although the devil will have a certain measure of victory, in the end man will conquer through the Seed of the woman (Genesis 3:15b)! This is the first promise and prophecy in the Bible and in human history about the coming Saviour, Jesus Christ!

The killing of some animals so that their skins could serve as clothes for Adam and Eve was an act of mercy. God clothed them with the skins of animals (cf. Romans 13:14). Later animals were sacrificed as a symbol that their blood made atonement for the sins of people (Leviticus 4:20; Hebrews 9:12-14; Hebrews 10:1-4).

Also banning the man and the woman from the Garden of Eden was an act of God's mercy, because now it would be impossible for man to eat from the tree of life (Genesis 3:23-24) and so prolong his fallen state for ever. Before the fall into sin man was allowed to eat from the tree of life. But after the fall into sin man was prohibited to do

this. Man had already received one divine characteristic (to determine in complete independence what is good and what is evil). Now God hindered man from receiving another divine characteristic (immortality).

Also the whole creation is in need of salvation

Due to the fall of man into sin, the whole creation became subjected to the bondage to decay (Romans 8:19-23) and to apparent meaninglessness of life (the book of Ecclesiastes).

Just like man, the whole creation became a slave to transitoriness, decay and death. The destiny of the creation is completely bound to the destiny of fallen man. The only hope for the creation is to be liberated from this bondage to slavery together with man.

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.