

GOALS FOR THE GROUP LEADER

Help the group members to understand:

1. that the messianic prophecies in the Old Testament predict the life and work of Jesus Christ
2. that the New Testament describes the life and work of Jesus Christ and Christians

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. Definition of worship

Read.

Worship is more than merely singing songs of praise.

Worship is an *attitude* of awe, adoration, submission and dedication to God, *expressed* in different forms of prayer and our daily life-style

Until now we have especially taught the *characteristics* of the God we worship. In the coming meetings we will concentrate more on the *expression* of our worship.

3. Meditation

Worship is to adore God.

Theme: To adore God's love

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

- *God's being is love.*

Romans 5:8-10

⁸But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

⁹Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! ¹⁰For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!

1 John 4:7-10,19

7Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹This is how God showed his

love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. ¹⁰This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for (or: as the one who would turn aside his wrath, taking away) our sins. ¹⁹We love because he first loved us.

God loves us in different ways:

- God loves us as *a shepherd* loves his lost sheep. He seeks us until he finds us.
- God loves us as *a fireman* loves people in danger. He risks his own life by entering the burning house in order to deliver us from eternal damnation (cf. Isaiah 43:2).
- God loves us as *a father and a mother* loves their children. He cares, feeds, protects and educates them (Hosea 11:3-4).
- God loves us as *a friend* loves his friends. He longs to be with us and do good things together with us (John 13:13,15).
- Above all, God loves us as only God can love. He loves us not only with feelings, with compassion, but with deeds, with self-sacrifice. He proves his love by giving up Jesus Christ to die in our place (Romans 5:8). Christ gave his life to save us from eternal doom.

- *God loved us first.*

God is always the first in his thoughts, words, plans and deeds towards us! Even before the creation he gave Jesus Christ for us (1 Peter 1:20) and already decided to choose us and win us for himself (Ephesians 1:4). Before we heard of him he sent someone to tell us the gospel (2 Thessalonians 1:13-14). Before we accepted him, he worked through his Spirit in us. He made us understand the truth in our minds. He convinced us of the truth in our hearts so that we believe the truth. And he moved our wills to accept him (Luke 24:45; Acts 16:14).

And now that he has won us, we may answer his love with our love. God desires that we love him as Jesus Christ loves us.

- *God loves us with an everlasting love.*

Jeremiah 31:3

³ The LORD appeared to us in the past, saying: "I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness."

God loves us today as much as he loved us in the beginning. And he will love us tomorrow as much as he

loved us in the past when Christ died on the cross in our place! God's love does not swing up and down like the love of people who are so much determined by their circumstances and moods. God's love is constant and eternal.

➤ *God's love transforms us.*

Romans 5:5

⁵And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

God's love not only touches our emotions, but changes our life. His love causes us to love other people, even unfriendly and unlovable people. He makes it possible that we love our enemies.

We are only able to love when God has poured out his love into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. Although natural man possesses some amount of natural love: like affection (Greek: *storge*) for parents and children, or friendship (Greek: *filia*) for friends and marital love (Greek: *eros*), his unselfish and self-sacrificial love (Greek: *agape*) was lost and his other natural loves were distorted when he fell into sin.

This supernatural unselfish and self-sacrificial love is the very nature of God and can only come to man from God (1 John 4:7-8). God gives it to man when he is born-again by the Spirit.

The other three natural loves need this supernatural love of God in order to remain healthy affection, friendship and marital love. Without God's supernatural love, the natural loves of man become distorted and corrupted: affection of a parent can turn into laying a claim on the children; affection of the children can turn into unhealthy dependence on the parents; friendship can become exclusive; and marital love can become immoral. Christians need the perfect love of God in their hearts in order to love as they should.

The very nature of the God of the Bible is love and he remains the source of all forms of true and genuine love in the world.

4. Worship

Let everyone in the small group take a turn to adore God (in one or two sentences) for his love for you.

II. INTRODUCTION THEME (1 min.)

The theme for this meeting is: The life of Christ

Read or explain in your own words.

1. God's being is unfathomable

We can only repeat what God himself has told us about himself and his divine nature! No one can fathom or define the nature of God. But we can know God and speak about his nature to the extent that he has revealed this to us in the Bible.

2. God reveals himself as One God

He is the only True and Living God. But he has revealed himself within the history of the world as *one divine being with three inner distinctions*: the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

3. The invisible God has taken on the visible nature of man

By taking on the human nature in Jesus Christ, God has revealed himself in his creation and in human history. The Messiah, Jesus Christ, is 'God with us' (Immanuel).

4. His life and ministry

Jesus Christ was born in approximately 4 B.C. as a child of the virgin Mary. He grew in wisdom (mentally) and stature (physically), and in favour with God (spiritually) and men (socially) (Luke 2:52).

When he was 30 years old, he began his public ministry. He was baptised by John the Baptist "to fulfil all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15) (i.e. to reaffirm his resolution to die as a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of others and to validate John's ministry). He was tempted by the devil. He called his first disciples to follow him and learn from him. He did great signs among people and taught them with authority. He especially proclaimed the kingdom of God (Mark 1:15). His public ministry continued from about December 26 A.D. to May 30 A.D.

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 life of Christ as Prophet, Priest and King

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| Day 1 | Luke 1:26-38
Announcement of the birth of Jesus |
| Day 2 | Luke 2:1-20
The birth of Jesus (about 4 B.C.) |
| Day 3 | Matthew 4:17-25
Jesus Christ as Prophet |
| Day 4 | Hebrews 7:11-28
Jesus Christ as Priest |
| Day 5 | Revelation 1:4-6
Jesus Christ as King |
| Day 6 | Luke 2:40-52
The childhood of Jesus |
| Day 7 | Matthew 4:1-11
The preparation of Jesus in the desert of Judea (26 A.D.) |
| Day 8 | John 1:35-42
The Early Galilean and Judean Ministries: Bethany, Cana, Jerusalem (26-27 A.D.) |
| Day 9 | Matthew 9:35-38
The Great Galilean Ministry: Capernaum, Galilee (Jan 28 A.D.) |
| Day 10 ^{BS1} | Peter 2:4-12
Also Christians are prophets, priests and kings |

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 fifth continuous theme in the Bible: the prophecies about Jesus Christ

- How was the prophecy in Isaiah 7:14 initially fulfilled within 3 years during the Old Testament period (Isaiah 7:1-17) and how was it later fulfilled during the New Testament period (Matthew 1:22-23)?
- How was the prophecy in Isaiah 42:1-7 fulfilled in Jesus Christ (Matthew 12:15-21)?
- How was the prophecy in Deuteronomy 18:15-19 fulfilled in Jesus Christ as Prophet?
- How was the prophecy in Psalm 110:4 fulfilled in Jesus Christ as Priest?
- How was the prophecy in Isaiah 9:6-7 fulfilled in Jesus Christ as King?

2. Commitment

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

- Jesus is asking you: “Who do you say that I am?” (Matthew 16:15),

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.

THE LIFE OF CHRIST John 1:14

The Word became flesh
and made his dwelling among us.
We have seen his glory,
the glory of the One and Only,
who came from the Father,
full of grace and truth.

John 1:14 (NIV)

3. Memorisation of the Bible books

The 4 Gospels and 1 historical book:
Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and Acts

4. Review and back-review of memorisation verses

Emphasize the necessity to review the 5 last memorised verses every Day and to back-review all the other previously memorised Bible verses once every 3 weeks. The total number of memorised verses determines how many verses you back-review every day. In the beginning you only back-review 1 or 2 a day, but later 5 verses out of every 100 verses you have previously memorised.

VI. BIBLE STUDY (45 min.)

Theme: Being a Christian means being a prophet, priest and king

1. Bible Study

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

1 Peter 2:4-12

⁴As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him— ⁵you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ⁶For in Scripture it says:

“See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.” (Isaiah 28:16)

⁷Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe,

“The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone (or: cornerstone),” (Psalm 118:22) ⁸and,

“A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.” (Isaiah 8:14)

They stumble because they disobey the message—which is also what they were destined for.

⁹But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. ¹⁰Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

¹¹Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. ¹²Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the Day he visits us.

2. Emphasis

Christ desires every Christian to be a prophet, priest and king.

3. Explanation for the group leader

2:4-5. The Church is symbolised by a house. But the Church is not a building of stone. The Church is a community or body of people in whom the Holy Spirit lives. Jesus Christ is the Living Capstone (the stone at the top of an arch that holds the arch together) or Cornerstone (the stone at the corner that determines the whole layout of the building). Christians are the living stones of that house (the living members of that body).

Discuss with one another what the functions of living stones are.

2:5. Christians are called to be holy priests that bring spiritual sacrifices that are pleasing to God. Think about the following sacrifices:

- the sacrifice of a broken spirit or broken and contrite heart when you have committed sin (Psalm 51:16-17).
- a thank offering for God when he has delivered you from trouble (Psalm 50:14-15)
- your body (life) as a living, holy and God-pleasing sacrifice every Day (Romans 12:1)
- a financial gift in support of a worker in God’s kingdom (Philippians 4:15-18)
- (a sacrifice of) intercession for other people (Hebrews 7:24-25)
- a sacrifice of praise, of lips that confess his name (Hebrews 13:15)

2:6-8. Only by faith or trust in Jesus Christ will you be built into this house. “The one who trusts in him will never be put to shame”!

But unbelief (in Christ) or disobedience (to his Word) causes you to stumble all the time and even to fall.

Discuss with one another the indissoluble connection between faith and obedience.

2:9-10. In the Old Testament God said to his people whom he called out of slavery in Egypt: “You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Exodus 19:4-6).

Now in the New Testament God’s Word says about Christians that are called out of spiritual and moral darkness: “You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people (i.e. not God’s people), but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy” (1 Peter 2:9-10)! And the last book in the Bible says: “To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood (i.e. by his death on the cross), and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father – to him be the glory and power for ever and ever” (Revelation 1:5-6). Christians in the New Testament period are called to be God’s chosen people that have the task to be prophets, priests and kings on earth!

It is thus very clear that God's Old Testament people, called 'a chosen people, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation' are *continued and enlarged (extended)* to include the believers from all other nations in the world to form God's New Testament people! God's Old Testament people are called 'the Church' (Greek: ekklesia) (Psalm 107:32) and also God's New Testament people are called 'the Church' (Greek: ekklesia) (Matthew 16:18). God's kingdom (kingship) over believers in Israel during the Old Testament period is extended to God's kingdom (kingship) over believers in every nation of the world during the New Testament period! During the Old Testament period only a few people were instituted as prophets, priests or kings, through whom God reigned. But during the New Testament period every Christians is called to be a prophet, priest and king (three tasks in one person). A Christian is called as a prophet to declare what God has said and done. He is called as a priest to bring the spiritual sacrifices mentioned above. And he is called as a king to fight the spiritual war against the sinful desires that war against his soul (verse 11).

The New Testament teaches 'the office of the believer' to be a prophet, priest and king.

The prophetic task of the believer is to declare the teachings and wonderful deeds of Jesus Christ to your family members, friends, colleagues, neighbours and even to people in other towns and countries. His prophetic task includes strengthening, encouraging and comforting others (1 Corinthians 14:3).

The priestly task of the believer is to bring spiritual sacrifices to God. For example, in self-denial and with wholehearted willingness he dedicates his time and possessions to serve other people. He prays regularly, not for himself, but for other people, especially those who are oppressed and persecuted because they are Christians. He listens with empathy to others and offers spiritual and moral advice, offering pastoral help where needed.

The royal task of the believer is to conquer and reign over the sinful nature inside himself, over the temptations in the world around him and over the evil spirits in the air above him. He stands up for justice and righteousness, especially for the poor, the weak, the widow and orphan,

the foreigner and the women trodden down in some cultures. He deliberately teaches, exemplifies by his own example and spreads through his ministry the culture of the kingdom of God, as it is taught in the Bible.

Discuss with one another other prophetic, priestly and royal tasks of Christians.

2:11-12. 'Sanctification' means deliberate abstinence from every kind of immoral desire and living out the Christian life in the midst of non-Christians and even anti-Christians. Christians are persecuted by every other religion in the world precisely because Jesus Christ is the only Prophet, Priest and King in the world that calls his followers to repent (change their thinking about God, others and themselves) and that demands living a righteous and holy life. One does not become a Christian by joining a particular religion (e.g. by saying a particular confession or by doing certain religious duties like praying, fasting, giving and making pilgrim's journeys for example to Jerusalem). One can only become a Christian by being born-again. Jesus says: "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again" (John 3:3)!

Non-Christians must be able to see the good deeds of Christians, so that they will be able to acknowledge (willingly or unwillingly) that the God of the Bible is right. They will acknowledge Jesus Christ (wholeheartedly or reluctantly) 'on the Day he visits them', that is, either the Day he comes to them with the message of the Bible or the final judgement day.

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.