

## GOALS FOR THE GROUP LEADER

### Help the group members to accept:

1. that a believer is justified by grace through faith and not by the works of the law
2. that the believer ought to live a righteous life by grace through faith and within the limits of the moral law

## 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 morally perfect

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

#### Deuteronomy 10:17-18

<sup>17</sup> For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. <sup>18</sup> He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the alien, giving him food and clothing.

#### Deuteronomy 16:18-19

<sup>18</sup> Appoint judges and officials for each of your tribes in every town the LORD your God is giving you, and they shall judge the people fairly. <sup>19</sup> 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.

#### ➤ *God is impartial*

You are partial when you are more patient and friendly to some people than others; when you harbour prejudices against certain people; when you show favouritism to some people (e.g. the rich, the powerful or the famous).

You are prejudiced when you judge someone without facts or when you deliberately ignore the facts that contradict your judgement.

God shows no partiality to the poor. He shows no favouritism to the great (Leviticus 19:15). He does not discriminate anyone. He relates to people from every

race, culture, social position and ability (Acts 10:28, 34-35).

#### ➤ *God accepts no bribe*

People who worship their own made gods often bribe the priests with gifts. Psalm 115 warns that people who worship idols ultimately become just like their idols. Their gods are corrupt and accept bribes. So their worshippers also become corrupt and receive bribes!

God is incorruptible! You can never buy him to take your view of things! He will not show you a favour when you for example give money to the church, when you perform certain rituals like a long fast and prayer time, or when you do good works. The living God cannot be manipulated! He relates to people on his own conditions and not on theirs.

#### ➤ *God defends the cause of the weak*

There are many people who believe in 'the survival of the fittest', or in 'might makes right'. They oppress widows and single women, old people and orphans and exploit foreigners and the poor.

In contrast, God defends the cause of the weak and loves the alien by taking care of him. For those who have no father, he becomes a heavenly Father. For those who have no husband, he becomes a Protector. For the alien he becomes a Friend. Those who need a hug, he gathers up in his arms (cf. Hosea 11:3-4). God gives people food, clothing and a roof above their heads. God will eventually punish the oppressor, exploiter and the extortioner.

#### Isaiah 5:8-9, 11-12, 20-23

<sup>8</sup> Woe to you who add house to house and join field to field till no space is left and you live alone in the land.

<sup>9</sup> The LORD Almighty has declared in my hearing: "Surely the great houses will become desolate, the fine mansions left without occupants.

<sup>11</sup> Woe to those who rise early in the morning to run after their drinks, who stay up late at night till they are inflamed with wine.

<sup>12</sup> They have harps and lyres at their banquets, tambourines and flutes and wine, but they have no regard for the deeds of the LORD, no respect for the work of his hands.

<sup>20</sup> Woe to those who call evil good and good evil,

who put darkness for light  
and light for darkness,  
who put bitter for sweet  
and sweet for bitter.

<sup>21</sup> Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes  
and clever in their own sight.

<sup>22</sup> Woe to those who are heroes at drinking wine  
and champions at mixing drinks,

<sup>23</sup> who acquit the guilty for a bribe,  
but deny justice to the innocent.

➤ *God has absolute norms and values (standards)*

God has a spiritual and moral system of values. God is always holy, that is, separated from what is evil, wrong, unholy and godless; and dedicated to what is good, right, holy and godly. His moral system is never relative, never dependent on the circumstances or the period of time in which people live. God's moral values are always absolute! All God's words mean exactly what they say. He wants people to understand what he intends to say. God's system of values is expressed in his commands and prohibitions and is not dependent on any human culture in the history of the world. His system of values are the fixed point and absolute standard for what is 'right' and 'good' and 'true' in every culture in history!

Whoever transgresses God's system of values, will never experience peace and will have to give an account before God's judgement seat. But those who obey God's system of values will have a good conscience, will experience peace and will dwell securely. They will know what God thinks and they will know how to behave with other people.

### 3. Worship

Let everyone in the small group take a turn to worship God (in one or two sentences) as the morally perfect God.

## II. INTRODUCTION THEME (1 min.)

### The theme for this meeting is: The law and grace (Moses)

*Read or explain in your own words.*

God established his covenant with Abraham in 2092 B.C. when Abraham was 75 years old. According to the Hebrew text of Exodus 12:40-41 the Israelites lived 430 years in Egypt (1877 – 1447 B.C.). Thus, God added the law to the covenant 645 years after the establishment of the covenant.

God is and remains the God of the covenant. When he gave the law 645 years later via Moses to Israel, he did not replace the covenant (of grace) which he made with Abraham with another covenant (of the law).

### 1. God's law as guide

*God added the law to the covenant in order to teach his people how they should live as God's covenant people and to preserve them from destruction.*

No where in the Old Testament and New Testament is the law a method to be justified (saved) and so become a member of God's people!

In both the Old Testament as well as the New Testament the law consists of a collection of God's rules, in which God teaches them how to live and consequently receive God's blessings instead of God's curses (cf. Exodus 20:1-17; Deuteronomy 28:1-2,15).

### 2. God's law as judge

*God added the law to the covenant to show people that they really are sinners and lost and need a Saviour.*

Both the Old Testament and the New Testament teach people what 'sin' is and how great their sin is. The law teaches that people are already condemned and lost, unless atonement has been made for their sins.

## 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 law and grace

Day 1 <sup>BS</sup>	Exodus 20:1-17 The moral law in the Old Testament
Day 2	Romans 13:8-10 The moral law in the New Testament (cf. Mark 12:28-34)
Day 3	Romans 5:1-11 You can only experience God's grace when you believe in Jesus Christ
Day 4	Romans 9:6-18 God's grace is a gift. You cannot earn it
Day 5	Colossians 2:13-15 Jesus Christ has fulfilled the law
Day 6	Ephesians 2:11-18 The ceremonial law has been fulfilled and has been set aside
Day 7	Galatians 3:19-25 Goal of the law: it is put in charge until the first coming of Christ
Day 8	1 Timothy 1:8-11 Goal of the law: it causes people to know what sin is
Day 9	Hebrews 7:11-28 The priesthood in the ceremonial law has been fulfilled
Day 10	Hebrews 9:8-28 The sacrifices in the ceremonial law have been fulfilled

#### 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: God's law and God's grace

- Why was the law added to the covenant of grace in the time of Moses?
- What constitutes the moral law in the Bible?
- What is the purpose of the moral law?
- What constitutes the ceremonial law in the Old Testament?
- What was the purpose of the ceremonial law in the Old Testament?
- What constitutes the civil law of Israel?
- What was the purpose of the civil law?
- How did Jesus Christ fulfil the law?
- What does it mean 'to live under the law'?

##### 2. Commitment

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

- "How do you live? Do you live as someone 'under the law' or 'under grace'?"

##### 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 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 LAW Romans 13:8

Let no debt remain outstanding,  
except the continuing debt to love one another,  
for he who loves his fellowman  
has fulfilled the law.

**Romans 13:8** (NIV)

##### 3. Memorisation of the Bible books

*The 5 poetical books:*

Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs.

*The 5 great prophetic books:*

Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel.

#### VI. BIBLE STUDY (45 min.)

##### Theme: The Ten Commandments

##### 1. Bible Study.

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

##### Exodus 20:1-17

<sup>1</sup> And God spoke all these words:

<sup>2</sup> "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

(1) <sup>3</sup> "You shall have no other gods before me.

(2) <sup>4</sup> "You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. <sup>5</sup> You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, <sup>6</sup> but showing love to a thousand (generations) of those who love me and keep my commandments.

(3) <sup>7</sup> "You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.

(4) <sup>8</sup> "Remember the Sabbath Day by keeping it holy. <sup>9</sup> Six days you shall labour and do all your work, <sup>10</sup> but the seventh Day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. <sup>11</sup> For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath Day and made

it holy.

(5)<sup>12</sup> “Honour your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you.

(6)<sup>13</sup> “You shall not murder.

(7)<sup>14</sup> “You shall not commit adultery.

(8)<sup>15</sup> “You shall not steal.

(9)<sup>16</sup> “You shall not give false testimony against your neighbour.

(10)<sup>17</sup> “You shall not covet your neighbour’s house. You shall not covet your neighbour’s wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour.”

## 2. Emphasis

- The moral laws were given in the context of salvation. The moral laws were not given as a means of justification (salvation), but as the rule how God’s saved people should live.
- The Ten Commandments (the moral laws) were given together with the ceremonial laws and civil laws to Israel during the Old Testament period, which was a period of preparation for the coming of the Messiah. That is why some moral laws still contain ceremonial aspects (like the seventh day) and cultural aspects (like idols, servants and domestic animals).
- The first four commandments emphasise the relationship to God and the last six commandments emphasise the relationship to one’s neighbour. Jesus summarises the Ten Commandments in Matthew 22:37-40 and Mark 12:29-31.

## 3. Explanation for the group leader

**20:3. The first commandment** – prohibits polytheism, idolatry, animism, spiritism and occultism and commands the worship of the Only True and Living God, the God of the Bible, who revealed himself in Jesus Christ.

### ➤ *Worship only the True and Living God*

The first commandment prohibits the worship of the other so-called ‘gods’ of the other religions. It also prohibits the worship of nature, spirits and demons who are different spirits than the Holy Spirit (Deuteronomy 18:9-12). The LORD is the Only True and Living God (Isaiah 43:10b-11; 44:6; 45:5, 21b, 22) and believers must be dedicated to him alone.

Although followers of the other religions worship specific ‘gods’, these gods are not the Only True and Living God. These gods have been made by humans from created materials, have been devised in the religious mind of humans or are distortions of the One True and Living God. Before and after the LORD there exists no god! The New Testament affirms the Old Testament (Mark 12:29-30; 1 Korintiërs 8:6).

### ➤ *The One True and Living God revealed himself in Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:15)*

God the Son and God the Father are One (John 10:30). Whoever receives God the Son receives God the Father (Matthew 10:40). Whoever rejects God the Son rejects God the Father (Luke 10:16). Whoever does not honour God the Son does not honour God the Father (John 5:23). Whoever denies God the Son does not have God the Father, but whoever acknowledges God the Son, also has God the Father (1 John 2:23) (See also John 8:19; 12:44; 13:20; 14:9; 15:23; 1 John 4:3; 5:12).

### ➤ *The punishment for transgressing the first commandment*

In other parts of the Old Testament judicial laws in Israel are applied to those who transgress the first commandment. Believers may not mention the gods of the other religions in their worship of God (Exodus 23:13). People who bring sacrifices to other gods are banned out of the community of believers (Exodus 22:20). Every false prophet or any family member, friend or city that draws people away from the LORD must be put to death (Deuteronomy 13:1-18; 18:20). Sorcerers, mediums and spiritists must be cut off from the community (Exodus 22:18; cf. Leviticus 20:6, 27). Although the first commandment remains perfectly valid, the judicial punishments for transgressing the first commandment belonged to the State of Israel and only during the Old Testament period. Jesus fulfilled the law, established the principles of the kingship or kingdom of God and will be the Judge in the final judgement (cf. Luke 10:16; John 5:22-23).

### ➤ *Summary of first commandment*

Jesus Christ summarised the first commandment in the commandment to love God with all your being (Mark 12:30).

**20:4-6. The second commandment** – prohibits making images of any god and commands the worship of God in spirit and in truth.

### ➤ *Worship the One True and Living God in spirit and in truth*

God gave the second commandment just after Israel left Egypt, where they had seen how the Egyptians worshipped idols. These idols resembled an eagle in the sky, a bull on earth and a fish in the water. Although by nature human beings try to make God visible, they are

prohibited to worship anything that can be touched, seen or heard. The One True and Living God is Spirit and he must be worshipped in spirit and in truth, not with external ceremonies and insincerity (John 4:23-24).

Christians may have a clear picture in their mind of who God is and what he is like, but only by getting to know Jesus Christ well. Whoever has seen Jesus Christ has seen God the Father (John 14:9). Christians make the invisible God visible, not by making images or pictures of him, but by proclaiming Jesus Christ as he revealed himself in the Gospels, by developing a close personal relationship with Christ and by being transformed into the likeness of Christ.

➤ *The destruction of idols in their own possession*

The believers during the Old Testament period were commanded to destroy all idols in their midst. They had to break down the altars, smash their sacred stones, cut down their Asherah poles and burn their idols with fire (Deuteronomy 7:5). They slaughtered the pagan priests, they ground stone idols to dust and scattered them over the graves of the common people and burned every idolatrous object (the teraphim or house gods) (2 Kings 23:4-24). Also the believers during the New Testament period burned their sorcery books publicly (Acts 19:19).

Although the second commandment remains perfectly valid, the judicial requirement to destroy all idolatrous objects belonged only to the Old Testament State of Israel. From the first coming of Christ people who become believers in Christ must destroy all idolatrous objects in their own possession and be an example to idolaters in their own country of worshipping the God of the Bible in spirit and in truth.

**20:7. The third commandment** – commands the correct use of the name of God.

➤ *Cursing in the name of the LORD*

Every person in Israel that used the name of the LORD in his cursing blasphemed the LORD and had to be stoned by the whole community (Leviticus 24:14-16). Using God's name in cursing is a serious transgression!

The Jewish teachers (rabbis) wrongly interpreted the word 'to blaspheme'. They taught that it meant 'to mention'. Thus a false tradition arose in Israel in which it was forbidden to speak the name of the LORD (Hebrew: JaHWeH)! When the Jews read the Old Testament and come to the word 'JaHWeH', they replace it verbally with the word 'Lord' (Hebrew: 'Edonai) out of respect for the LORD's name. Ignorant western believers thought that God's name was pronounced 'Jehovah' ('JeHoWaH'), which is a combination of the consonants: JHWH (LORD) and the vowels: e, o and a (Edonai).

But throughout the Bible God does not forbid the speaking of his name and everyone used the name of God. What God forbids is the misuse of his name! Christians may certainly pray to the LORD and speak of the LORD using his name!

➤ *Prophesying falsely in the name of the LORD.*

Anyone claiming to be a prophet and proclaiming things in God's name which God had never spoken had to be killed (Deuteronomy 18:20).

There are three good tests to find out whether a person is a real prophet in the sense of 'the mouthpiece' of the One True and Living God.

○ *First. He had to be a prophet before the first coming of Christ!*

Prophets as mouthpieces of God only existed until the first coming of Christ (cf. Matthew 11:13; Hebrews 1:1-2a)! Every prophet claiming to be the mouthpiece of God after the first coming of Christ is a false prophet!

○ *Second. His words had to agree completely with the words of all the other prophets in the Bible!*

There are many similarities and no contradictions in the books of the more than 18 Old Testament prophets. This cannot be said of the books of persons who claim to be prophets after the first coming of Christ!

○ *Third. His prophecies had to be fulfilled!*

(Deuteronomy 18:21-22). Hundreds of prophecies in the name of the LORD have already been fulfilled (cf. the Gospel of Matthew). But there is no proof that even one prophecy of these other prophets has been fulfilled!

➤ *Swearing by the name of the LORD.*

People are forbidden to swear falsely by the name of the LORD (Leviticus 19:12). In a legal court witnesses are sometimes asked to swear with their hand on the Bible that they would speak the truth. A Christian may refuse to swear on the bases of Christ's words: "Simply let your 'Yes' be 'Yes', and your 'No' be 'No; anything beyond this comes from the evil one" (Matthew 5:33-37). A Christian may simply promise to speak the truth.

**20:8-11. The fourth commandment** – commands the correct use of the 'Day of rest'.

➤ *The Day of rest during the Old Testament period.*

After God had completed the creation in six divine creation days, he rested on the seventh day. In contrast to the first six creation days, the seventh Day had no end. It lacked the formula: "And there was evening, and there was morning – the 7<sup>th</sup> day" (Genesis 2:1-4)! This seventh divine Day serves as an example for two important issues: the temporary Day of rest on earth and the eternal rest in heaven.

### (1) *The temporary Day of rest on earth*

#### ○ *The first purpose of the Day of rest*

The fourth commandment not only forbids the wrong use of the Day of rest (i.e. to continue with one's ordinary work), but also commands the right use of the Day of rest. On the seventh Day believers should rest and get refreshed (Exodus 23:12). The Christian may ask himself: "What can I do to rest and get refreshed?" The answer may be different things for different people. This is the first purpose of the Day of rest.

#### ○ *The second purpose of the Day of rest*

On the seventh Day Christians should also gather together with other believers in a sacred assembly to serve the LORD (Leviticus 23:3). The Christian should ask himself: "Where and how do I celebrate in a sacred assembly together with other Christians?" This is the second purpose of the Day of rest.

But in the first century A.D. the Pharisees had turned the temporary Day of rest into a Day of virtually doing nothing! It had completely lost its original intention. After the exile (538 B.C.) the Jewish teachers of the law had hidden the fourth commandment under a pile of 39 prohibitions on the Sabbath. Jesus accused them that they had set aside the commands of God in order to observe their human traditions and rules (Mark 7:9).

#### ➤ *The Day of rest during the New Testament period*

##### ○ *The third purpose of the Day of rest*

The Day of rest was intended to be a Day of constructive activity! Jesus had fulfilled the law (Matthew 5:17) and this included giving the fourth commandment its full meaning.

In Mark 2:18-22 Jesus says that Christians who live in his presence ought to feast instead of to fast. They ought to rejoice instead of mourn. The first coming of Jesus Christ inaugurated a complete new period and a new way of serving God! The ceremonial fasting days and Sabbath days belonged to the past. Joy and constructive service belong to the present new period!

Jesus says: "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27). The Sabbath was instituted after the creation of man in order to be a blessing for man and not a burden. Jesus also said: "So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath" (Mark 2:28). Jesus has complete authority to determine how this Day should be used.

Jesus also says: "Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil. To save life or kill (Mark 3:4)?" The third purpose of the Day of rest is to do good and save other people's lives. With regard to God people do 'good'

when they seek God, love him, worship him and serve him (cf. Micah 6:8). And with regard to other people they do 'good' when they help lost people to be saved, help saved people to be build up, help broken people to be healed and help oppressed people to be set free (Isaiah 58:6-12).

Jesus Christ was resurrected on the first Day of the week, the Sunday. In the New Testament Christians let go of the ceremonial aspects of the fourth commandment (to literally keep the seventh Day of the week). They transmitted the purposes of the Day of rest on the seventh Day (the Saturday) in the Old Testament to the first Day of the week (the Sunday) in the New Testament. 'The seventh day' illustrated *the end* of the physical creation, but 'the first day' illustrated *the beginning* of the spiritual recreation. On the first Day of the week Christians celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ (Mark 16:2), the outpouring of the Spirit of Christ (Leviticus 23:15-16; Acts 2:1) and the inauguration of the Church (cf. Acts 20:7, 1 Corinthians 16:2).

#### (2) *The eternal rest in heaven*

After Christians have lived their lives on earth, they may enter God's 'Sabbath-rest' (Hebrews 4:8-11). This Sabbath-rest represents 'heaven' before the second coming of Christ and 'the new earth' after the second coming of Christ. In heaven and later on the new earth Christians may rest forever from their earthly struggle, trials and labour (Revelation 14:13)!

**20:12. The fifth commandment** – maintains family life and commands children to honour their parents.

#### ➤ *The punishment for not honouring your parents*

The judicial laws of the Old Testament punish the transgressors of the fifth commandment heavily. Whoever attacks or curses his father or mother must be put to death (Exodus 21:15,17). A stubborn and rebellious son, who in spite of discipline refuses to obey his parents, but lives a loose life, must be stoned to death by the elders of the town. The evil had to be purged from among the people. This severe punishment serves as a warning for others (Deuteronomy 21:18-21).

#### ➤ *The punishment for not obeying the authorities*

The Old Testament also gave the name 'father' to the rulers of the land, to prophets and to teachers (Genesis 45:8, 2 Kings 2:12). Whoever refused to listen to the priest or the judge who stands in the service of the LORD had to die. This evil had to be purged from Israel. All the people would hear about it and be afraid to do such things (Deuteronomy 17:12-13).

#### ➤ *Obeying parents and honouring parents*

The New Testament teaches that all children (who are still under age and dependent on their parents) must

obey their parents in everything that is not against God's Word and also honour their parents (Colossians 3:20; Ephesians 6:1-3). But when a child has become a grown-up, then he no longer stands under the authority (to obey) of his parents, but directly under the authority of Jesus Christ. Compare Jesus as a child (Luke 2:49-51) with Jesus as a grown-up (Mark 3:31-35).

Nevertheless, grown-up children still have the duty to honour their parents, by for example, providing them with the real necessities of life (1 Timothy 5:4,8), by seriously considering their advice and by taking the initiative to maintain a good relationship with their parents.

➤ *Obeying and honouring the authorities*  
God has instituted all the bearers of authority<sup>1</sup>. "Every man must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgement on themselves" (Romans 13:1-2).

Rulers (government rulers)<sup>2</sup> hold terror for those who do wrong, but not for those who do right (Romans 13:3-4).

➤ *In the Bible God has instituted seven authority-submission relationships:*

- (1) The authority of God in Christ over all and everything (Matthew 28:18; Acts 5:29)
- (2) The authority of man over the creation (fauna, flora, environment, etc.) (Genesis 1:28)
- (3) The authority of a husband over his wife (Ephesians 5:22-24; cf. Colossians 3:18-19 and 1 Peter 3:1-7) and the authority of men in the congregation (1 Timothy 2:11-12; cf. 1 Corinthians 14:33-38)
- (4) The authority of parents over their under aged children (Colossians 3:20-21; cf. Ephesians 6:1-4)
- (5) The authority of the government over its citizens (1 Peter 2:13-14; cf. Romans 13:3-7 and Acts 4:19-20)
- (6) The authority of employers over employees (Ephesians 6:5-9; cf. Colossians 3:22 – 4:1 and 1 Peter 2:18-23)
- (7) The authority of (spiritual) leaders (the elders) in the congregation over the members of the congregation (Hebrews 13:7,17; cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:12)

**20:13. The sixth commandment** – prohibits the deliberate murder of people and maintains the inviolability of life.

<sup>1</sup> Romans 13:1 Greek plural: *exousai* (the bearers of authority)

<sup>2</sup> Romans 13:3 Greek plural: *archontes* (the rulers/government)

'Life' is a gift from God (the Creator). God forbids the taking of life of other people, except in the cases where God clearly demands the taking of life. 'Suicide' is also forbidden, because God does not differentiate between your life and that of another person.

➤ *Capital punishment has not been abrogated in the Bible*

In the Old Testament God has instituted the death penalty (Genesis 9:5-6) for several different offences:

- *Deliberate murder*. Whoever deliberately murders another person, must be put to death by the governing authorities (Leviticus 24:17; cf. Genesis 9:6). A person guilty of murder may not be set free by paying a ransom, but must be put to death (Numbers 35:31).
- *Kidnapping*. Whoever kidnaps another person must be put to death (Exodus 21:16).
- *Guilt through neglect*. Whoever cause the death of a person through gross neglect must be put to death or pay the penalty demanded by the injured party (Exodus 21:28-30).
- *False prophets* and everybody else who lead people into idolatry (Deuteronomy 18:20; cf. 13:1-18).
- *Mediums* and all who visit spiritists (Leviticus 20:27).
- *Blaspheming God*. Using the name of the LORD when they curse (Leviticus 24:14).
- *Sexual abuse*. Adultery, homosexuality, rape, incest and bestiality are explicitly prohibited by God and were punishable with death in the Old Testament (Leviticus 18:11,17,22,23; Leviticus 20:10,13,15,17,19; Deuteronomy 22:25-27). In the New Testament sexual immorality (sex before marriage) and adultery (sex outside marriage) are condemned and will be punished by God himself (Hebrews 13:4; Romans 1: 24, 26-27).
- *Manslaughter*. Someone who killed another person by accident may not be put to death (Exodus 21:12-14).
- *Self-defence*. Someone who in self-defence killed an opponent may not be put to death (Exodus 22:1).

➤ *In the New Testament the death penalty has not been abrogated*

God has delegated his authority to the government 'to carry the sword', i.e. to execute the death penalty (Romans 13:3-4).

➤ *Revenge belongs only to God*

The Old Testament penal laws are not simply valid in the New Testament period, because Jesus Christ has fulfilled the law. The penal law: "Eye for eye, tooth for tooth" (Leviticus 24:19-20; Exodus 21:23-25; Deuteronomy 19:18-21) was originally intended as a guide for the government in Israel to punish a transgressor in a complete just and fair way. But individuals have interpreted this as a rule for personal revenge (blood revenge and family revenge). That is why Jesus Christ and the apostle Paul emphatically prohibited all actions

of revenge. People had to overcome evil by doing good (Matthew 5:38-42; Romans 12:17-21; cf. 1 Peter 2:18-23).

➤ *Uncontrolled anger is a form of killing*

Unrighteous and uncontrolled anger is a form of killing (Matthew 5:21-22). It kills another person's character, reputation and sense of honour. Often anger is the cause of murder.

**20:14. The seventh commandment** – prohibits sexual immorality and maintains the Christian marriage.

➤ *Unlawful sex*

Adultery, homosexuality, rape, incest and bestiality (sex with an animal) is explicitly prohibited by God and were under the Old Testament penal laws punishable with the death penalty (Leviticus 18:11,17,22,23; Leviticus 20:10,13,15,17,19; Deuteronomy 22:25-27).

In the New Testament period these transgressions fall directly under God's condemnation and punishment (Romans 1:18-32). Note, that the Bible does not condemn someone's sexual disposition or inclination (heterosexual or homosexual), but it does condemn all unlawful expression of these sins in words or in deeds! Likewise, God condemns the unlawful expression of the sinful inclination to worship other gods, to misuse the name of God in cursing, to neglect the Day of rest by working, to rebel against parents, to murder others, to rape women, to steal, to lie and to have forbidden desires.

➤ *Sex before and outside marriage*

In the Bible sex before marriage (sexual immorality) and all forms of unlawful sex outside marriage (adultery) is explicitly prohibited by God. Under the Old Testament penal law they are punishable with the death sentence (Deuteronomy 22:20-24).

In the New Testament period they fall directly under God's condemnation and punishment (Hebrews 13:4). God may give them over to a depraved mind, shameful lusts and a degrading life-style (Romans 1:24,26,28) and to venereal diseases, mistrust in marriage, terrible quarrels and even murder.

Every man must know how to acquire (win) his wife in a holy and honourable way and not in passionate lust like the heathen (1 Thessalonians 4:3-5). Every man and woman must wait with sex until they are married and may only have sex within their own marriage.

Uncontrolled sexual thoughts and imaginations are a form of adultery (Matthew 5:27-28)

➤ *Marriage and divorce*

The Christian marriage is not a mere social institution, but a divine institution at the creation before the fall into sin (Genesis 2:24) and has been reaffirmed by Jesus Christ (Matthew 19:4-6) and the apostle Paul (Ephesians 5:31) after the fall into sin.

In the Bible a lawful marriage always took place in the presence of God, family and friends. There is a ceremony in which God himself is the main Witness (Malachi 2:14) and in which God himself unites the couple to one another (Matthew 19:5-6). There is a public procession (Matthew 25:1) and a public feast in the presence of family and friends (Matthew 22:1-3). There is a definite leaving of one's parents before they become one in body (Genesis 2:24). They must leave the authority of their parents, the financial dependence on their parents, their emotional ties with their parents and, where necessary, the wrong religious practices of their parents.

Christian marriage is for life and may not be separated by anyone (cf. Matthew 19:4-6). God hates divorce (Malachi 2:15-16), but because the degeneration of man has increased, God allows two grounds for divorce:

- Adultery through physical or spiritual immorality (Matthew 5:32; 19:9), or through violent treatment (Malachi 2:16).
- Adultery through spiritual incompatibility after one of the partners has become a believer in Christ (1 Corinthians 7:12-16).

A Christian may not date or marry a non-Christian or an unbeliever (1 Corinthians 7:39; 2 Corinthians 6:14).

**20:15. The eighth commandment** – prohibits theft and maintains respect for another person's possessions.

➤ *The correct managing of possessions*

God is the only lawful Possessor of everything (1 Chronicles 29:11-12). He wants people to be content when they have food and shelter (1 Timothy 6:8). God gives possessions to people for their own use, to share and to give away to the poor (1 Timothy 6:17-19). People must not gather treasures here on earth, but gather treasures in heaven (Matthew 6:19-21).

➤ *The wrong management of possessions*

God forbids theft, robbery, extortion, withholding wages and dishonesty or corruption (Leviticus 19:11,13,35,36). The Old Testament penal laws required returning the stolen property together with a fine worth the amount of the stolen property to the original owner. Damages were included in the rent (*Read* Exodus 22:1-15).



In the New Testament former thieves are exhorted to work with their own hands, so that they may support themselves and also have something to share with the poor (Ephesians 4:28).

Christians should not support people who refuse to work (2 Thessalonians 3:10; cf. Matthew 7:6).

**20:16. The ninth commandment** – prohibits every form of lies and maintains the good reputation of others.

➤ *The wrong use of the tongue*

Spreading false rumours, lies and giving false testimony are strictly forbidden (Exodus 23:1; Leviticus 19:11; Deuteronomy 19:18-20). Every person will have to give an account of every careless (worthless) word they have spoken (Matthew 12:34-37). Evil deliberations, false testimony and slander come out of the heart of a person and makes him (morally and spiritually) unclean (Matthew 15:18-20). Other sins of the tongue are: quarrelling, gossip, insolent speech, arrogant speech, boastful speaking and approving unrighteousness (Romans 1:29-32). Do not forget that Satan is the father of all lies (John 8:44b)!

➤ *The correct use of the tongue*

God desires that people speak the truth in love and that they only speak wholesome words that benefit and build others up (Ephesians 4:15,29).

An accusation against a Christian leader (an elder) must be supported by at least two witnesses (1 Timothy 5:19).

**20:17. The tenth commandment** – prohibits wrong desires and ambitions and maintains contentment.

People who are greedy for money and riches fall into temptations and traps and into many foolish and harmful desires (like luxury, power and glory; or like gambling, speculating, chance games, dishonesty, deceit, fraud, corruption, murder, etc). They pierce themselves with grief and wander away from the faith (1 Timothy 6:9-10; James 5:1-5).

Everything man can desire in this world irrevocably passes away, but he who does the will of God lives forever (1 John 2:15-17). All people entered naked into this world and will also leave this world naked. God desires people to be content with their basic needs (food, clothing and shelter) (1 Timothy 6:7-8).

Although desire is a very strong force in man (James 1:14-15), God gives grace to Christians to resist every temptation or trial (Greek: peirasmos) on earth (1 Corinthians 10:13).

## 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.