

GOALS FOR THE GROUP LEADER

Help the group members to believe:

1. that Jesus Christ has been resurrected from the dead and lives
2. that the resurrection of Jesus Christ guarantees the resurrection of 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. Meditation

Worship is to practise the presence of Christ.

Theme: To practise being aware of God's nearness

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

➤ *God is omnipresent.*

Psalm 139:7-10

⁷ Where can I go from your Spirit?

Where can I flee from your presence?

⁸ If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths (Hebrew: Sheol), you are there.

⁹ If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea,

¹⁰ even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.

God really exists, is present and near. He is omnipresent. But we are not always aware of his reality, presence or nearness! It takes practice to become more and more aware of his reality, presence and nearness and to maintain that awareness.

➤ *Enter consciously into God's presence.*

Psalm 27:4

⁴ One thing I ask of the LORD, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple.

We need to ask and seek one thing: to live with a conscious awareness of God's presence and to focus our attention on him. How do you do that practically?

- (1) Begin your prayer and worship by being quiet and concentrate on consciously entering into God's presence.
- (2) Gaze upon the beauty of the LORD. Think consciously about one of his attributes or characteristics. Allow the Holy Spirit to explain this attribute or characteristic in the Bible to you.

What does this characteristic mean to God himself?

What does this characteristic mean to you personally?

What does this characteristic mean to the world outside the Church?

➤ *Walk consciously with God.*

Psalm 16:8

⁸ I have set the LORD always before me.

Because he is at my right hand,

I will not be shaken.

Enoch and Noah walked with God (Genesis 5:24; 6:9). God called Abraham his friend (James 2:23). And Jesus calls his disciples his friends (John 15:15). So do what they do: walk with God. Be his friend. How do you do this practically?

(3) Set the LORD consciously before your eyes.

(4) Involve him deliberately in the daily events of your life: in the plans you make, in your relationships with people and in your work.

(5) Believe that God is really standing at your side. Note the many times he prevented you from stumbling, doubt, insecurity, fear, even death, etc.

(6) Meditate on the fact that God sees everything you do, hears everything you say or pray, knows everything about you and your circumstances and feels what you feel. The God of the Bible wants to be involved in your personal life!

God's presence means different things for you at different times and in different circumstances. Sometimes God is there to rebuke, correct and exhort you. Sometimes he is there to encourage, strengthen and spur you on. And sometimes he is there to reveal something new to you and guide you in the way you should go.

Sometimes he closes a door and another time he opens a door (Revelation 3:7-8). He is present to make all things work for your good (Romans 8:28). He will never leave

or forsake you (Hebrews 13:5-6). In this all he is in the process to realise his eternal plan with your life, namely, to make you more and more Christ like (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Make it the goal of your life to practise the presence of God and to live in the conscious awareness of his reality, presence and nearness

3. Worship

Worship God for 3 minutes in absolute silence and practise the presence of God.

II. INTRODUCTION THEME (1 min.)

The theme for this meeting is: The resurrection life of Christ

Read or explain in your own words.

On the first Day of the week (Sunday) in April in the year 30 A.D., on the third Day after his crucifixion, Jesus Christ was resurrected from the dead.

1. His resurrection does not concern his divine nature

Jesus Christ has a divine nature from all eternity, but took on the human nature in time. He was and is the Son of God from all eternity: before the creation, before his incarnation, during his life on earth, during his death and after his resurrection. According to his human nature he died, but according to his divine nature he did not die.

Revelation 1:18 says: "I am *forever* the Living One (present continuous time); I was dead (past tense), and behold I am the Living One (present continuous time) for ever and ever." As the eternal Living One according to his divine nature Jesus Christ only died according to his human nature. The essential nature of Jesus Christ is life, just as that of God the Father (John 5:26; 14:6). Jesus Christ is also the Source of eternal life for everyone who believes in him (John 11:25-26).

2. His resurrection concerns his human nature

As the Son of Man, that is, in his human nature, Jesus Christ passed through two periods: the period after his birth and the period after his resurrection (Romans 1:3-4).

➤ *The first period of his being human was from his birth in the line of David to his death on the cross.*

His human nature was then characterised by being completely 'flesh' that is, he had a weak, vulnerable, mortal human nature (Romans 1:3). Through his birth from the virgin Mary his divine nature took on the fallen and weak human nature of man, with the exception of sin (2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 5:15). This was his state of humiliation (cf. Isaiah 53:2-10a).

➤ *The second period of his being human is from his resurrection onwards.*

By his resurrection he discarded his perishable (mortal), lowly, weak physical body due to sin and death in this world. His human body was completely transformed into an imperishable (immortal), glorious, strong and spiritual body (Romans 1:4; cf. 1 Corinthians 15:40-42; Philippians 3:21).

Note: Jesus Christ will never lay aside his human nature in its glorious state!

3. His resurrection is the beginning of his sovereign reign

Before his resurrection Jesus Christ as Son of God had authority to cast out demons, to heal the sick, to raise the dead and to calm the storm. But at his resurrection from the dead Jesus Christ was appointed in a position of absolute sovereignty and clothed with triumphant authority that completely surpasses what characterised his human nature before the resurrection. "All power in heaven and earth has been given to me" (Matthew 28:18). After his resurrection his human nature is a sovereign reign in the absolute power of the Holy Spirit! His human nature was completely transformed and is since the resurrection from the dead characterised by such an endowment of the Holy Spirit and such a control of the Holy Spirit that he is completely identified with the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:17)!

Compare the resurrection of Christians with the resurrection of Christ: at the resurrection from the dead Christians will receive an imperishable, glorious, powerful and spiritual body' (1 Corinthians 15:44)!

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 resurrection of Christ and Christians

Day 1	Mark 8:31-33 Jesus predicts his resurrection
Day 2	Matthew 28:1-10 The resurrection of Jesus
Day 3	Matthew 28:11-15 Bribing the soldiers to lie
Day 4 ^{BS}	1 Corinthians 15:1-8 The eyewitnesses of his resurrection
Day 5 ^{BS}	1 Corinthians 15:12-20 If there were no resurrection
Day 6	Philippians 2:9-11 The first result of the resurrection
Day 7	John 2:18-22 The second result of the resurrection

- Day 8 Ephesians 1:20-23
The third result of the resurrection
- Day 9 Romans 6:4-7
The fourth result of the resurrection
- Day 10^{BS} 1 Corinthians 15:42-54
The fifth result of the resurrection

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 resurrection of Christ and Christians

- How do you explain the seeming contradictions in the descriptions of the resurrection of Jesus in the Gospels?
- What are the facts that convince you to believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ?
- What is the importance of eyewitnesses of the resurrection of Jesus Christ?
- What is the result of the resurrection of Jesus Christ according to John 2:19-22 and Mark 14:57-58?
- What are the consequences of Jesus Christ being the Head over everything for the Church?
- In which way does the resurrection of Jesus Christ help you to live a holy life?
- How do you view the resurrection of your own body in the future?

2. Commitment

Let the group members consider the following questions and record their answers:

- “Do you believe that Jesus Christ has risen from the dead and lives?”
- “Are you convinced that the purpose of Jesus’ resurrection is that you want to, can and will live a new life here and now?”
- “What is your response to the fact that your future resurrected body will be like Christ’s glorious resurrected body?”

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

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST 2 Corinthians 5:15

And he died for all,
that those who live
should no longer live for themselves
but for him who died for them
and was raised again.

2 Corinthians 5:15 (NIV)

3. Memorisation of the Bible books

The last 6 letters of Paul:

1&2 Thessalonians, 1&2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon

VI. BIBLE STUDY (45 min.)

Theme: The future resurrection of Christians from the dead

1. Bible Study

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

1 Corinthians 15:1-58

¹Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. ²By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.

³For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴that he was buried, that he was raised on the third Day according to the Scriptures, ⁵and that he appeared to Peter (Greek: Cephas), and then to the Twelve. ⁶After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, ⁸and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

⁹For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. ¹⁰But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. ¹¹Whether, then, it was I or they, this is what we preach, and this is what you believed.

¹²But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? ¹³If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁴And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your

faith. ¹⁵More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. ¹⁶For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. ¹⁷And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. ¹⁸Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. ¹⁹If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men. ²⁰But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. ²²For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. ²³But each in his own turn: Christ, the first fruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. ²⁴Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. ²⁵For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶The last enemy to be destroyed is death. ²⁷For he “has put everything under his feet (Psalm 8:6).” Now when it says that “everything” has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ. ²⁸When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all. ²⁹Now if there is no resurrection, what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized for them? ³⁰And as for us, why do we endanger ourselves every hour? ³¹I die every day—I mean that, brothers—just as surely as I glory over you in Christ Jesus our Lord. ³²If I fought wild beasts in Ephesus for merely human reasons, what have I gained? If the dead are not raised, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die (Isaiah 22:13).” ³³Do not be misled: “Bad company corrupts good character.” ³⁴Come back to your senses as you ought, and stop sinning; for there are some who are ignorant of God—I say this to your shame. ³⁵But someone may ask, “How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?” ³⁶How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. ³⁷When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. ³⁸But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body. ³⁹All flesh is not the same: Men have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another and fish another. ⁴⁰There are also heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies; but the splendour of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the splendour of the earthly bodies is another. ⁴¹The sun has one kind of splendour, the moon another and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendour. ⁴²So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; ⁴³it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; ⁴⁴it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.

If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. ⁴⁵So it is written: “The first man Adam became a living being” (Genesis 2:7); the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. ⁴⁶The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. ⁴⁷The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from heaven. ⁴⁸As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the man from heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. ⁴⁹And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven. ⁵⁰I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. ⁵¹Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—⁵²in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. ⁵³For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. ⁵⁴When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory (Isaiah 25:8).” ⁵⁵“Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?” (Hosea 13:14) ⁵⁶The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁵⁸Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.

2. Emphasis

- Jesus Christ lives! Christians do not venerate a dead prophet lying in his grave. They worship the resurrected Christ who conquered death!
- Also Christians shall conquer death! Paul speaks here (and in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18) only of the resurrection of Christians and not of the resurrection of non-Christians (John 5:28-29).

3. Explanation for the group leader

15:1-4. The gospel message includes the resurrection from the dead

The message must be proclaimed and it must be received! The gospel message will only save people when they hold firmly to it. A faith that only believes in the history of the resurrection is futile! The heart of the gospel is that Jesus Christ died for our sins and that he was resurrected from the dead (cf. Acts 2:23-24; 3:15; 4:10; 5:30, etc.). ‘Resurrection’ does not mean that your body is temporary raised from the dead in order to die again (cf. Lazarus in John 11), but means that your body is permanently resurrected from the dead and will never die again!

The true gospel must be ‘according to the Scriptures’ (cf. 1 Corinthians 4:6). The understanding of the message of the Bible must be based on God’s revelation and not on the opinion of natural science or of a religion that denies the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

15:5-8. The eyewitnesses of the resurrection of Christ

After his resurrection Jesus Christ appeared to many eyewitnesses. What counts within history as a science is the number of eye-witnesses and the character of these witnesses!

15:9-11. The apostles proclaimed the resurrection from the dead

Paul regards himself as ‘the least of all the twelve apostles’ of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:9), ‘the least of all God’s people’ (Ephesians 3:8), ‘the worst of sinners’ (1 Timothy 1:15-16), even as ‘nothing’ (2 Corinthians 12:11). Nevertheless God’s grace in his life was not in vain. God’s grace caused him to work harder than any other apostle. All the apostles in the Bible proclaimed Jesus Christ, his substitution death and his resurrection from the dead.

15:12-22. The great significance of the resurrection

The faith of religious people who deny the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is absolutely in vain! Such people remain lost and are to be pitied more than anyone else (15:19)!

But Jesus Christ has been resurrected from the dead and that changes everything. All natural people (unbelievers and non-Christians) that remain bound to Adam are spiritually dead, will die physically at the end of their life on earth and will suffer eternal death of body and spirit at the final judgment. But all people bound by faith to Jesus Christ have been made spiritually alive from the moment they believe, their spirit (soul) will be translated immediately into the presence of Christ when they die physically and also their body will be resurrected and experience eternal life at Christ’s second coming.

15:23. The order in the resurrection of the body

The physical resurrection has a chronological order. The body of Jesus Christ is the first to be resurrected from the dead.

By his second coming Jesus Christ will have put all his enemies under his feet. Then he will also conquer the very last enemy: physical death. All people who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out, either to eternal life or to eternal death (John 5:38-39; cf. Acts 24:15). There will be no other physical resurrections.

15:24-28. Up to his second coming Jesus Christ will destroy all dominion, authority and power of human rulers on earth or spiritual rulers in the air. Then the

kingdom of God will have reached its final and eternal phase (Matthew 25:34; Revelation 11:15).

After his second coming, Jesus Christ will hand the kingdom of God in its final phase over to God the Father. “God the Son will be made subject to God the Father.” Then Jesus Christ will have completed his reign as King, High Priest and Prophet in the present kingdom on earth. He will have completed his distinct function within the Triune Godhead (the Trinity) as Mediator between God and man. Beyond the second coming of Jesus Christ there is the eternal kingdom (in the new heaven and the new earth). Jesus Christ does not disappear, but will continue to be the visible image of the invisible God (Revelation 22:4) and reign together with God the Father on his throne for all eternity. The throne of the eternal kingdom is called ‘the throne of God and of the Lamb’ (2 Peter 1:11; cf. Revelation 22:1,3; 2 Samuel 7:13; Isaiah 9:7).

15:29. 1 Corinthians 15:29 is an obscure text. Apparently some people had themselves baptised for the dead, but did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. Why and who they were we do not know. Christians may not build any theology on this one historically obscure text!

15:30-33. Paul must have had a very difficult struggle with his enemies in Ephesus (Acts chapter 19). The reality of the physical resurrection from the dead causes Christians to quit living under the motto: “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.” When Christians fellowship with bad people or with people who twist God’s Word, they themselves become bad and begin to twist God’s Word. Paul warns Christians not to be misled by people with strange beliefs. Instead he calls them to repentance.

15:35-49. The nature of the resurrection body

Our present perishable (mortal), lowly, weak physical body is nevertheless ‘the seed’ of our future ‘resurrected body’. Each seed in creation has a particular unique body, a kind of species, just as God gave it (1 Corinthians 15:38; Genesis 1:11). There are unique earthly bodies and unique heavenly bodies (verse 40). The physical human body has not yet received the quality it would receive at the resurrection from the dead. It must first die physically before it can be resurrected (verse 36; cf. John 12:24)! “Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God” in its final phase (verse 50).

At the resurrection God will give each human body its own (unique) glory. Our present human body is perishable (mortal), but our future resurrected body will be imperishable (immortal) (2 Timothy 1:10)! Our present human body has no special honour, but our future resurrected body will be glorious. Our present human body is weak, but our future resurrected body will be powerful (15:42-43).

Our present human body is earthly. We have been created 'a living soul' with a body and spirit (Genesis 2:7) and we live on earth as life on earth is possible. When we die our earthly body is sowed into the earth and disintegrates again to dust (Genesis 3:19).

At the resurrection of our body, the dust or elements of our original material body is raised to life in another kind of body, in 'a spiritual body'. The same body is sown in one quality (a natural body) and raised in another quality (a spiritual body), but it remains the same body (verse 44)! The resurrected body remains 'a body', but it is a completely renewed and transformed body (cf. Philippians 3:21). It will be completely controlled by the Spirit of Christ (cf. 2 Corinthians 3:17-18). Resurrected Christians will then be perfectly spiritual and live spiritually (1 John 3:2).

Before the physical resurrection, the spirit (or: soul) of Christians already share in the fruit of Christ's completed work of salvation. Although the Christian still lives in a perishable body, he increasingly lives the new life. He is no longer a slave of sin (Romans 6:4b,6). He has already been resurrected spiritually from spiritual death (John 5:24-25; Ephesians 2:5) and eternal death (John 11:26).

But after the physical resurrection, also the resurrected body of the Christian will share in the fruit of Christ's completed work of salvation. The Christian will then live a perfect (sinless, holy and righteous) life in his imperishable resurrected body in the very presence of God (Christ) on the new earth!

Our present perishable body still bears the image of Adam. And Adam was 'a soul', a created living being, a temporary earthly being. But our future resurrected body will bear the image of Christ (Philippians 3:21). And Christ is 'a life-giving spirit' (verse 45). Christ is never called 'a soul', but 'a spirit', because he does not just live, but gives life in the sense of the resurrected life. He gives life as God the Father does (John 5:21). He gives spiritual, born-again life (John 5:24-25) and he gives physical, resurrected life (John 5:28-29). He gives the resurrected life to our mortal bodies through the Holy Spirit that lives in us (Romans 8:11). So much power comes from Christ that all perishable bodies of those who believe in him will be resurrected and they will live for ever.

Adam was of the dust of the earth and 'became' a living soul at the creation. Likewise all natural people become living souls and bear the likeness of the man from the earth.

Christ was from heaven and 'became' a life-giving spirit at his first coming. He became a life-giving spirit, not due to his own resurrection from the dead, but because he was the Mediator between God and man, mediating the

new spiritual and resurrected life to believers! Christ came from heaven and believers will bear the likeness of the man from heaven (verse 47-49).

15:50-58. The resurrection day

Our present perishable body (flesh and blood) now already lives in the kingdom of God (under the kingship of Christ) in its present phase (Matthew 21:43; Luke 17:21; Colossians 1:13). But our present physical body cannot yet inherit the kingdom of God in its final phase. Only via the resurrection of the body (verse 50) and the final judgement (Matthew 25:34) can we enter the kingdom of God in its final perfect phase.

Although the physical resurrection from the dead was known during the Old Testament period (Job 17:13-16; Job 19:25-27; Psalm 16:10; Hosea 13:14; Isaiah 25:6-8; Isaiah 26:19; Daniel 12:2,3,13; Psalm 49:14-16), the order of events at the physical resurrection from the dead was 'a mystery'. Then it was revealed by the apostle Paul. (1) First the resurrection of Jesus Christ at his first coming (verse 23). (2) Then the resurrection of all dead people (John 5:38-39) and the simultaneous transformation of all still living Christians at his second coming (verse 52). The bodies of the resurrected believers (from the Old and New Testament periods) will be imperishable and the bodies of the transformed Christians at the end time will be immortal (verse 53).

It is noteworthy that in 1 Corinthians 15 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 Paul speaks about the resurrection of only believers.

Physical death will then be conquered forever. Also sin and the influence of the law on sin will be conquered forever!

Because the resurrection of the body is a reality, Christians should stand firm and not allow anyone or anything to make them stumble. They should always give themselves fully to the work of the Lord, because they know that their labour in the Lord is not in vain (15:58)!

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.