

GOALS FOR THE GROUP LEADER

Help the group members to believe:

1. that God promised specific assurances to Christians
2. that they must consciously practise to live with these assurances

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 consciously dedicate yourself to shelter with God.

Theme: To consciously shelter with God

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

Psalm 91:1-16

¹ Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.

² I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust."

³ Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence.

⁴ He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.

⁵ You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day,

⁶ nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday.

⁷ A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you.

⁸ You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked.

⁹ If you say, "The LORD is my refuge," and you make the Most High your dwelling,

¹⁰ no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent.

¹¹ For he will command his angels concerning you

to guard you in all your ways;

¹² they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.

¹³ You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent.

¹⁴ "Because he loves me," says the LORD, "I will rescue him;

I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name.

¹⁵ He will call on me, and I will answer him;

I will be with him in trouble,

I will deliver him and honour him.

¹⁶ With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation."

- Verse 1-4. How is sheltering with God described?
- Verse 5-8. What is promised to those who shelter with God?
- Verse 9-13. Who does God use to protect you?
- Verse 14-16. What is promised to those who love God?

3. Worship

Let everyone in the small group take a turn to worship (in one or two sentences) God as the One with whom you may take shelter and feel completely save.

II. INTRODUCTION THEME (1 min.)

The theme for this meeting is: Assurances

Read or explain in your own words.

The Christian Faith promises assurances. 'Faith' is being sure that everything God promised in the Bible and what Christians expect to see will certainly happen!

When Christians 'believe' they prove that they see realities which other people cannot yet see (Hebrews 11:1,13,27).

The Christian Faith is not based on doubtful possibilities or on chance or fate, but is based on absolute certainties. These certainties are promised by no one less than God himself.

Only the God who revealed himself in the Old Testament prophets and Jesus Christ has given such certainties!

In this study we will study five certainties with which Christians must live. These certainties give every Christian a good start in his new life.

- (1) Assurance of salvation
- (2) Assurance of answered prayer
- (3) Assurance of victory
- (4) Assurance of forgiveness
- (5) Assurance of God's guidance

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: Assurances

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| Day 1 | John 10:24-30
God never lets go of you! |
| Day 2 | Hebrews 8:12
God puts your sins behind him
(cf. Isaiah 43:25; 44:22; Micah 7:18-19) |
| Day 3 | Hebrews 4:14-17
God helps you in your time of need |
| Day 4 | Psalms 32:8-9
God promises to teach you the way you should go (cf. Psalm 143:8-10) |
| Day 5 ^{BS} | 2 Timothy 1:3-14
God is able to guard what you have entrusted to him ¹ |
| Day 6 | Romans 8:31-39
If God is for you, then you are more than conquerors! |
| Day 7 | 1 John 5:14-15
God hears you when you ask according to his will |
| Day 8 | 1 Peter 1:3-7
God will complete what he began
(cf. Philippians 1:6) |
| Day 9 | Isaiah 43:1-2
God is your only Saviour from trouble
(cf. Revelation 17:14) |
| Day 10 | John 5:24-29
You have been resurrected spiritually and will be resurrected physically |

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 2 Timothy 1:12 What the believer entrusted to God +
2 Timothy 1:14 What God entrusted to the believer

1. Discussing the study

Discuss the study with reference to the questions mentioned below:

Theme: The five Christian assurances

- Why is the assurance of salvation so important? What is the effect when someone has no assurance of salvation?
- How do you explain the fact that you do not always receive what you pray for?
- What is the secret of victory over temptations (trials)?
- Why is the assurance of forgiveness so important? What is effect when someone has no assurance that all his sins are really forgiven?
- Tell one another how God has guided you.

2. Commitment

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

- “Why are the five Christian assurances important for you?”

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.

ASSURANCE OF SALVATION Philippians 1:6

being confident of this,
that he who began a good work in you
will carry it on to completion
until the Day of Christ Jesus

Philippians 1:6 (NIV)

VI. BIBLE STUDY (45 min.)

Theme: God is able to guard what you have entrusted to him

1. Bible Study

Make use of the 5 step method and study:

2 Timothy 1:3-14.

³I thank God, whom I serve, as my ancestors did, with a clear conscience, as night and Day I constantly remember you in my prayers. ⁴Recalling your tears, I long to see you, so that I may be filled with joy. ⁵I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also.

⁶For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. ⁷For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline. ⁸So do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner. Rather, join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God. ⁹He has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, ¹⁰but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Saviour, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. ¹¹And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher. ¹²That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet this is no cause for shame, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until that day.

¹³What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. ¹⁴Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

2. Emphasis

Verse 12 does not speak of what God has entrusted to Paul, but what Paul has entrusted to God! Paul has assurance because God keeps what Paul has entrusted to God safe in heaven!

3. Explanation for the group leader

1:3 Conscience

“God whom I serve with a clear conscience”. The word ‘serve’ includes worship as well as action.

In order to have a clear conscience there must be a complete correspondence between your outward behaviour and inward conviction. People who pretend can never have a good conscience.

God guides you through the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17), through the Holy Spirit (John 16:13-15), through Christian leaders (Hebrews 13:7), through counsellors (Proverbs 15:22) and through your conscience. Your conscience testifies to God’s will (Romans 2:14-15) and either accuses or acquits your behaviour (Romans 2:15). It evaluates and judges your thoughts, motives, attitudes, words, deeds and behaviour (2 Samuel 24:10; 2 Corinthians 1:12). Your conscience functions before, during and after your action (Genesis 3:7-8).

The Bible speaks of ‘a good conscience’ (Acts 23:1; 1 Timothy 1:19; Romans 13:5); ‘a cleansed conscience’ (Hebrews 9:14), ‘a guilty conscience’ (Hebrews 10:22); ‘a seared conscience’ (1 Timothy 4:1-2; cf. Ephesians 4:18-19); ‘a weak conscience’ (1 Corinthians 8:7-12); a over-sensitive heart or conscience (cf. 1 John 3:19-20); ‘a defiled conscience’ (1 Corinthians 8:7) and a corrupted conscience’ (Titus 1:15).

1:5 Sincere faith

Paul speaks about the sincere faith of Timothy, which first lived in his grandmother and mother. Never underestimate the great influence of grandparents and parents who are sincere Christians!

During the New Testament period there were pagans who accepted the monotheism of Judaism and attended the synagogue, but who did not obligate themselves to keep the whole Jewish (ceremonial) law. In particular the males did not submit to physical circumcision. They were called ‘God-fearers’ or ‘worshippers of God’ (Greek: *sebomenoi*) (Acts 16:14). But when they came to faith in Jesus Christ, they were called ‘believers in the Lord’ (Greek: *pistoi*) (Acts 16:15).

In the New Testament the word ‘believers’ denoted Christians (2 Corinthians 6:15). At the beginning of Paul’s second missionary journey Timothy’s mother is called ‘a Jewish believer’ (Acts 16:1). She was not a Gentile who became a believer, but a Jew who became a believer. The grandmother and mother of Timothy became believers in the Lord Jesus Christ not later than the end of the first missionary journey of Paul. They probably lived in the same house.

Timothy was acquainted with the Bible (the Old Testament) from childhood (2 Timothy 3:15). Paul called Timothy ‘his beloved child’ (2 Timothy 1:2) because Paul was his spiritual father. He probably led Timothy to faith during his first missionary journey (47 A.D.). Since Paul’s second missionary journey (50 A.D.), Timothy travelled together with Paul (Acts 16:1-3). Timothy spent about 14 years together with Paul (note the ‘with him’ principle) and was well acquainted with Paul’s teaching, way of life, purpose, faith, patience, love,

endurance, persecutions and sufferings (2 Timothy 3:10-11).

1:6 The gift of God

Probably at the beginning of his second missionary journey Paul recruited Timothy in Lystra to travel together with him Acts 16:1-3). Paul together with the counsel of elders (Greek: presbyterion) lay hands on Timothy as a symbolic act that the Holy Spirit had given Timothy a spiritual gift (1 Timothy 4:14). This spiritual gift (Greek: charisma) consisted of the products of God's special grace (cf. Romans 6:23; 11:29; Ephesians 4:7), such as faith (Philippians 1:29), hope, love, peace that passes all understanding (Romans 5:1-5), eternal life, etc. They must refer to gifts that God bestows on the elect and on them alone: every spiritual blessing, adoption to sonship, the riches of God's glorious grace, redemption through his blood, forgiveness of sins and knowing the mystery of his will (Ephesians 1:3-10)! And the spiritual gift may consist of a special ability (cf. Ephesians 4:11-12; 1 Peter 4:10) that enabled Timothy to carry out his tasks as an apostolic representative (e.g. a missionary who plants and builds up new congregations).

Timothy travelled many years with Paul. In 63 A.D. Paul wrote his first letter to Timothy and in 64 A.D. his second letter. Paul knew the flame of Timothy's gift was burning low. By nature Timothy was timid (1 Corinthians 16:10); in some aspects a young man (1 Timothy 4:12; 2 Timothy 2:22); had some physical problems (1 Timothy 5:23); faced hard opposition (1 Timothy 1:3-4,19-20; 6:3-10; 2 Timothy 2:14-19,23) and probably suffered together with his teacher Paul (2 Timothy 4:6; cf. Hebrews 13:23). Paul urged Timothy not to get discouraged, but to fan the flame of the Holy Spirit into a blazing fire. He should not allow difficult circumstances to extinguish the Spirit's fire (1 Thessalonians 5:19).

1:7 Power and self-discipline

The Holy Spirit given to each believer is not a Spirit of timidity (fear, hesitance, shyness), but of power (cf. dynamite) and self-discipline. Paul urges Timothy to make use of this power which would never fail him. The word 'self-discipline' means 'to have a sound mind', 'to maintain a mental balance'. If you fear Satan and his persecution more than God and his ability to help in all circumstances, then you have lost your sound mind. Then you think that the enemy is stronger than God.

1:8 Not ashamed

Timothy must not be ashamed to identify with Jesus Christ, with the gospel or with Paul (the figure head of those who proclaim the gospel). Timothy must also not shrink from oppression and persecution, but remain willing to suffer for the gospel – of course depending on

the power which God grants him: "Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit" (Zechariah 4:6).

1:9 Calling

The calling unto salvation (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14) on the one hand and the calling to a Christian life style (Ephesians 4:1) and to a particular Christian task (verse 9) on the other hand are grounded in God's eternal counsel (plan). God's work of salvation cannot be thwarted and God's calling how to live and what to do in life will be carried out effectively (cf. Romans 1:1,5).

God calls Christians to walk (behave) worthy of their calling and to offer their body and spirit as instruments of doing what is right in God's eyes (Romans 6:13,19).

The basis of God's calling within time (human history) lies in God's eternal purpose and grace. God's purpose (plan, goal, will) for the creation stands fixed and firm from before the creation (Romans 8:29-30; 9:11; Ephesians 1:11). Also God's grace has been given to believers in Jesus Christ before the creation (2 Timothy 1:9)! These truths were only revealed in time (in human history) at the appearance of Jesus Christ (i.e. at his first coming) (cf. 2 Timothy 4:1,8).

1:10 Death and life brought to light

Jesus Christ has destroyed 'death', that is, has robbed death from its power. The death of Jesus Christ two thousand years ago has enormous consequences for Christians today, for their death and their life!

(1) '*Spiritual death*' (Ephesians 2:1-3) is no longer a reality for Christians! The characteristics of the old sinful nature have been crucified. Christians know and fellowship with Jesus Christ and their spirit will be perfectly transformed to be like that of Christ (1 John 3:1-3) and will enter Christ's presence when their body dies (John 11:25; Revelation 20:4-6).

(2) '*Physical death*' is no longer a punishment for Christians and Christians need not have anxiety for their physical death (Hebrews 2:15)! At the second coming of Jesus Christ physical death as a spiritual power (Hebrews 2:14) will be finally conquered and cast into hell (Revelation 20:14).

(3) '*Eternal death*' (the second death, hell) is also no longer a threat to Christians (John 11:26; Revelation 2:11).

Jesus Christ brought imperishable life to light by the proclamation of the gospel. This eternal life consists of personally knowing and fellowshiping with God through Jesus Christ for ever (John 17:3).

'Immortality' consists of the complete transformation of the mortal body of the Christian so that it becomes like Christ's glorious body (Philippians 3:21) and it consists of the transformation of the whole physical universe (Acts 3:21; Romans 8:19-21; Revelation 21:1).

1:12 Deposit kept save with God

Bible translations translate this verse differently:

- (1) "I am convinced that God is able to guard *his deposit* (his possession that he has entrusted to me) for that Day (the last day)" (Good News Bible).
- (2) "I am convinced that God is able to guard *my deposit* (my possession that I have entrusted to him) for that Day (the last day)." (NASB, NIV, Living Bible).

The second translation has preference. It is not Paul, but God who guards this deposit. Therefore it is more likely that it is Paul's deposit entrusted to God to keep. Paul also says that he trusts God, that is, God is trustworthy and can be entrusted with such a deposit.

Paul's deposit consists of his complete and perfect salvation (life and immortality)! In principle this eternal life has already been given to the Christian (cf. John 3:16; 10:28). His salvation has already begun, continues throughout life and will be perfected at Christ's second coming (the last day). At the second coming this deposit will be returned to the Christian in absolute perfection!

"The imperishable, unspoiled and unfading inheritance (our complete and perfect salvation) is kept in heaven for us and is shielded by God's sovereign power until the last time (the last day) (1 Peter 1:4-5; cf. Colossians 3:3-4).

That is why Paul says that he is convinced that God is able to guard his deposit as a security until the last day.

When Jesus died physically, also he entrusted his spirit into the hands of God the Father (Luke 23:46). At his resurrection from the dead his deposit (his spirit) was returned and united to his resurrected body (cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:14).

1:13 The pattern of sound Christian teaching to which Christians are entrusted

"What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching." Through his life and ministry Paul has given to Timothy the 'standard model' or 'pattern' of sound Christian living and teaching. Timothy may fill in the details, but must remain faithful to the standard Paul has set!

The slogan, "It doesn't matter what you believe, as long as you believe" is absolutely false! The slogan, "Everyone is saved by his own faith" is likewise false!

The sound Christian teaching is very important in the Bible (1 Timothy 1:10; 6:3; 2 Timothy 4:3; Titus 1:9,13; Titus 2:1,8).

To the Christians in Rome Paul wrote, "You wholeheartedly obeyed the form (or pattern) of teaching to which you were entrusted" (Romans 6:17).

This form or pattern of Christian teaching must be the model for all Christians in the world and for all ages in history. The Lord Jesus Christ taught it to the apostles (John 14:26; 16:13-15) and they taught it to the congregations and recorded it in the New Testament (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:1-4). It consists of the correct and fixed form or pattern of Christian teaching, which is clearly seen in the Letter to the Romans and which the apostle Peter knew well (2 Peter 3:12,14-16).

This correct and fixed form or pattern of Christian teaching is God's rule for Christian doctrine and Christian practice. It determines Christian convictions and Christian behaviour. It teaches the only way to salvation: to the state of justification and holiness (namely, through faith). It teaches the only way to a holy life (namely, through obedience). It teaches the inseparability of justification and sanctification. It teaches everything that is necessary for Christians to believe and to do.

In Acts 20:24-27 the apostle Paul says that God has given him the task to proclaim the gospel of God's grace, which at the same time is the gospel of God's kingdom. It includes the proclamation of the whole will of God and not merely a selective part of the Bible. It teaches clearly the relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament and the relationship between God's Old Testament people (Israel) and God's New Testament people (the Church). It teaches that The Church does not terminate or replace Israel, but that Israel is continued and enlarged to include believers from all the Gentile nations (Ephesians 3:2-6)! It teaches all the important Christian doctrines and ethical standards. It teaches the central place of Jesus Christ, his death and his resurrection. It teaches the necessity of being born-again, of repentance (changing your thinking about God, Christ and yourself), of faith and of obedience (Romans 1:5). It teaches all the characteristics of the kingdom (kingship) of God and the kingdom of God culture that must replace all the sinful human cultures of the nations in the world. It teaches the destructive reality of sin and the necessity of salvation through Jesus Christ. It teaches that Jesus Christ is the only Way to the God of the Bible and salvation. It teaches that there is only one Body of Christ (and not many human devised denominations) and what leadership in the Church must look like (not a hierarchy, but a presbytery)! It teaches the importance of the Bible

as the only Word of God and that Christians should not go beyond what is written in the Bible, etc.

Whoever neglects or rejects this form or pattern of sound Christian teaching (the whole will of God) falls into liberalism and false teaching.

Romans 6:17 does not say that this form or pattern of teaching has been delivered to Christians, so that they may interpret and follow it as they like. No, it says that Christians have once for all (at their regeneration) been delivered to this form or pattern of teaching! 'Delivered' means 'handed over into the custody of another authority (e.g. the police). In Romans 6:17 this authority is God himself and specifically his whole will as revealed and formulated in the Bible. Christians have been delivered into the custody of God and the Bible, so that the revelation of God in the Bible would determine the beliefs, convictions, behaviour and commitment of Christians for ever!

This form or pattern of teaching is completely objective. It has not been devised by any man (1 Corinthians 2:9-10; Deuteronomy 29:29). This form or pattern of teaching is also not dependent of the subjective interpretation of man.

Christians are not delivered over passively to this form or pattern of teaching. After their regeneration and salvation from the slavery of their old sinful nature, Christians have wholeheartedly become obedient to this form or pattern of teaching.

In order to grasp this correct and fixed form or pattern of teaching in the Bible, Christians must do much Bible study. They must not simply base their beliefs on unrelated Bible texts, but on the comprehensive study of the whole Bible!

"Christians must keep the form or pattern of sound Christian teaching with faith and love in Christ Jesus (verse 13). Therefore also the way in which Christians pass this form or pattern of teaching to others is important. It must be done by trusting God and by loving people.

1:14 The pattern of sound Christian teaching entrusted to Christians

"Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you." God has entrusted the unchangeable gospel (cf. Galatians 1:6-9) and the sound Christian teachings to Timothy and to all other Christians.

In verse 14 it is not Paul who entrusts his deposit (his complete salvation) to God (as in verse 12), but it is God who entrusts his deposit (the Christian message in its correct and fixed form or pattern) to Christians. Timothy and all other Christians have the important task to guard God's deposit (trust) inviolate (in tact) and to defend it against every attempt to change or destroy it. That is why Paul sets the rule: "Do not go beyond what is written' in the Bible (1 Corinthians 4:6)!

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.