

## GOALS FOR THE GROUP LEADER

### Help the group members to realise:

1. that God wants all Christians to grow to spiritual maturity and fruitfulness
2. that every Christian ought to grow to the next stage of growth

## 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 devote yourself to God to grow and bear fruit.

**Theme: Dedication to God to grow spiritually and bear fruit**

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

➤ *Growing is a miracle.*

God is the Creator of the smallest thinkable life and of all growth.

### Psalm 139:14

<sup>14</sup> I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

When one thinks about how fantastic God has created the body, that it continues to grow and renew itself, one can only be amazed. If the created piece of art – the human body – is so wonderful, how much more wonderful is the Creator of the body? Consider the following facts:

#### (1) Cells

The human body contains an uncountable number of cells. One kilogramme of your body weight contains about 2 000 000 000 000 cells! Each cell contains 10 very tiny power stations that produce all the energy needed for the body to function in work and even top sport! Every power station is smaller than 1 micrometre (one thousandth of a millimetre)! These power stations are so tiny and yet they produce so much energy!

#### (2) Lungs

The human lungs consist of a great number of tiny air-sacs (alveoli). Scientists estimate that there are more than 600 000 000 air-sacs built into your lungs. The walls of these air-sacs contain tiny blood vessels that absorb the oxygen in the air into the bloodstream and transport these to every part of the body. The walls of these air-sacs are so artfully folded into the small space of the lungs that when unfolded they cover a football field! By means of microscopes we can observe these cells and air-sacs. But WHO created such tiny organisms?

➤ *Things that hinder spiritual growth.*

### Psalm 1:1-3

<sup>1</sup> Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers.

<sup>2</sup> But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates Day and night.

<sup>3</sup> He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.

### Jeremiah 17:5-9

<sup>5</sup> This is what the LORD says:

“Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength and whose heart turns away from the LORD.

<sup>6</sup> He will be like a bush in the wastelands; he will not see prosperity when it comes. He will dwell in the parched places of the desert, in a salt land where no one lives.

<sup>7</sup> “But blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him.

<sup>8</sup> He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green.

It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit.”

<sup>9</sup> The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure.

Who can understand it?

Spiritual growth is hindered by associating with the wrong people or by putting trust in their human theories. For example: believing the propaganda of other religions and cults; doing religious acts of worship like praying,

fasting, giving, and going on pilgrim's journeys; or giving to another human being the first place in your life.

➤ *Things that promote spiritual growth.*

Spiritual growth is made possible by reading, studying and meditating God's Word (the Bible) every Day and by putting your trust only in God and his Word when you pray. Spiritual growth will take place when you submit to the control of the Holy Spirit.

➤ *The consequences of spiritual growth.*

The consequences of spiritual growth will be the following: You will persevere in difficult situations and you will not fear opposition. You will remain fresh as a person. You will always bear fruit in season. And you will experience God's blessing on all your undertakings (Psalm 1:1-3).

### 3. Worship

Let everyone in the small group take a turn to praise God for the wonder of growth. Which aspect of spiritual growth would you like to ask from God or commit to God?

## II. INTRODUCTION THEME (1 min.)

### The theme for this meeting is: Spiritual growth

*Read or explain in your own words.*

#### 1. Growth is necessary

Jesus and the apostles all stress the necessity of spiritual growth.

#### 2. God's sovereignty with regard to spiritual growth

The parable of the self-growing seed (Mark 4:26-29) emphasises God's sovereignty with regard to spiritual growth. Not you, but God alone is the Creator and Sustainer of spiritual growth in your life. In a complete sovereign way he establishes his kingdom (kingship) or his reign in your heart and determines its progress in your life and also in that of others in the world. This parable is a warning against too much human enthusiasm, human idealism and human impatience with regard to God's work. People sometimes ask: "Why does God not establish (the last and final phase of) his kingdom sooner in this dark and broken world?" As a result such people get discouraged and pessimistic; they start to doubt and lose their zeal and perseverance. This parable wants to change our pessimism into optimism and a trustful idealism.

Wherever God's Word is sown, one Day there will be a harvest! God has built this secret power into each tiny seed. His Word will never return empty to him. (Isaiah 55:10-11). Even if there is much we do not understand, God's

plan and programme cannot and will not fail! Believe this, because without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6).

### 3. Human responsibility with regard to spiritual growth

The fact that God is responsible for spiritual growth does not exclude another fact, namely, that God wants every Christian to co-operate with him (1 Corinthians 3:6-9). The parable of the sower (*Read* Mark 4:1-20) emphasises the human responsibility with regard to spiritual growth. The measure of spiritual growth is dependent on your response to God's Word and your response to God's Word is dependent on the condition and attitude of your heart.

Your responsibility with regard to spiritual growth consists of the following 7 principles:

- (1) Growth is based on God's Word (and not one or another spiritual book) (Luke 8:11).
- (2) Growth is dependent on hearing God's Word (Matthew 13:23),
- (3) on understanding it (Matthew 13:19,23),
- (4) on accepting it (Mark 4:20),
- (5) on having a clean and pure heart (Luke 8:14-15),
- (6) on holding on to it (retaining it) throughout all difficult circumstances (Luke 8:15) and
- (7) on producing a crop by perseverance (Luke 8:15; Matthew 13:23).

Mark speaks about the possibility of producing an increasing crop: 30, 60 and 100 fold (Mark 4:20). He says that the measure of the crop is dependent on the size of the measure you use when you measure the Word of God into your own life and into other people's lives (Mark 4:24-25)! That is why understanding this parable is the key to understanding all other parables (and even understanding much of the Bible) (Mark 4:13).

## 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: Spiritual growth

- |                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| Day 1               | Jeremiah 17:5-8<br>God is the Source of all growth                   |
| Day 2               | John 15:1-8<br>The most important sources for bearing much fruit     |
| Day 3               | Psalms 92:12-14<br>Growing from youth till old age                   |
| Day 4               | 1 Corinthians 2:14 – 3:15<br>Growing from immaturity to fruitfulness |
| Day 5 <sup>BS</sup> | Hebrews 5:11 – 6:8<br>Growing from infant to teacher, without arrest |

- Day 6 Psalm 1:1-6  
God's Word as source for spiritual growth
- Day 7 Matthew 13:3-23  
Growing by hearing, understanding, accepting, retaining and persistent fruit bearing
- Day 8 Colossians 3:5-17.  
Growing by weeding and planting
- Day 9 1 Timothy 4:12-16  
Growing in doctrine and life
- Day 10 1 John 2:12-14  
Growing strengths

#### 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: Spiritual growth: why and how?

- What is the message of the parable of the sower (Mark 4:1-20)?
- What is the importance of the measure you use (Mark 4:24-25)?
- What is the message of the parable of the self-growing seed (Mark 4:26-29)?
- Which are the three stages of spiritual growth for every Christian?
- What does a new believer need?
- What should the goal of a new believer be?
- What characterises a mature believer?
- What should the goal of a mature believer be?
- What characterises a spiritual worker?
- What should the goal of a spiritual worker be?

##### 2. Commitment

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

- "In which stage of spiritual growth are you now?
  - The infant stage. How do you want to grow to spiritual maturity (i.e. to become a disciple of Jesus Christ)?
  - The mature stage. How do you want to grow in producing fruit (i.e. to become a worker in God's kingdom)?
  - The servant stage. How do you want to glorify God in your life (i.e. to win the lost and build up the saved)?

##### 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.  
Memorise this verse in the Bible version of your choice.

#### SPIRITUAL GROWTH Psalm 1:3

He is like a tree planted  
by streams of water,  
which yields its fruit in season  
and whose leaf does not wither.

Psalm 1:3 (NIV)

##### 3. Review of the Bible books

##### All 27 books of the New Testament

- The 4 Gospels:* Matthew, Mark, Luke, John
- The 1 Historical book:* Acts
- The 13 Letters of Paul:* Romans, 1&2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, 1&2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon
- The 8 General Letters:* Hebrews, James, 1&2 Peter, 1&2&3 John, Jude,
- The 1 Apocalypse:* Revelation

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

##### Theme: Growth does not acknowledge a standstill

##### 1. Bible Study

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

##### Hebrews 5:11 – 6:8

Hebrews 5

<sup>11</sup>We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. <sup>12</sup>In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! <sup>13</sup>Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. <sup>14</sup>But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

## Hebrews 6

<sup>1</sup>Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death (or from useless rituals), and of faith in God, <sup>2</sup>instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. <sup>3</sup>And God permitting, we will do so.

<sup>4</sup>It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, <sup>5</sup>who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, <sup>6</sup>if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because (or while) to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.

<sup>7</sup>Land that drinks in the rain often falling on it and that produces a crop useful to those for whom it is farmed receives the blessing of God. <sup>8</sup>But land that produces thorns and thistles is worthless and is in danger of being cursed. In the end it will be burned.

## 2. Emphasis

It is necessary that you need to grow to the next stage of spiritual growth.

## 3. Explanation for the group leader

*The Letter to the Hebrews* is probably directed to a Christian Jewish community in Rome (cf. Hebrews 13:24) who continued to hold on to certain non-conformist Jewish practices, such as elaborate ritual ablutions ('baptisms').

[According to 'The apostolic tradition of Hippolytus' a candidate for baptism took a ritual bath on Thursday and was baptised on Sunday. That is why Hebrews 6:2 talks about: "instruction about baptisms" (plural)", i.e. a doctrine of ceremonial ablutions.]

### 5:12.

A 'teacher' is a person who helps a spiritual infant to grow to spiritual maturity.

'Milk' is a symbol for spiritual food which all new Christians need, namely, the elementary teachings about Christ as for example: repentance, faith and baptism. Milk is a completely balanced food, easy to absorb and to digest, but first needs to be produced by 'the mother' and administered by the mother.

Viewed spiritually, a teacher must first study God's Word, wrestle with it, understand it and make it practical before he is able to pass it on to spiritual children in the form of easy teachings ('milk'). Every Christian starts his spiritual growth with milk, but after some time he needs to eat solid food.

### 5:14.

'Solid food' is a symbol for spiritual food which all Christians need to grow towards spiritual maturity, namely, 'the whole will of God' (Acts 20:27) (e.g. all the important teachings in the Bible). There is a great variety of solid food. It is not easy to take in, because it needs to be cut and chewed (that is, it needs to be studied and understood). It is also not easy to digest (that is, to apply).

Viewed spiritually, the mature Christian needs to study and understand the Bible by himself and continue to make it practical in his life. Another person (like a spiritual mother or father) cannot do this for him. A mature Christian must take responsibility for his own spiritual growth. He must no longer depend on a teacher (or pastor). Mature Christians train themselves in spiritual growth only by constant use of the Bible.

## 6:1-2. The elementary teachings about Christ

The receivers of the Letter to the Hebrews had received the gospel on the basis of their Jewish teachings and practices, which were based on the Old Testament teachings and practices. Although their teachings and practices received new meaning in the light of the New Testament gospel, there was a real danger that they would backslide from the Christian Faith back into their old Jewish religion.

Under pressure of people who remained Jews, these Jewish converts to Christ could have felt forced to let go of those things that especially characterised the Christian Faith and practices. They could have again adopted things that especially characterised the Jewish Faith and practices.

The elementary teachings about Christ, as well as the teachings in the Old Testament, the teachings of the Pharisees and the teachings of the Essenes (a Jewish sect at Qumran) consisted of the following:

### ➤ (1) *Repentance*

(cf. Jeremiah 3:12-13) (Mark 1:14-15; Acts 3:19)

### ➤ (2) *Faith*

(cf. Genesis 15:6; Habakkuk 2:4) (Romans 1:16; Hebrews 11:6)

### ➤ (3) *The instruction about Jewish ablutions (the word 'baptisms' is in the plural)*

(Compare Numbers chapter 19 with Hebrews 9:13; Mark 7:4 and Luke 11:38). The 'baptism' of Jesus and his disciples was considered as 'a matter of ceremonial or ritual washing' (John 3:22-26).

➤ (4) *The laying on of hands*

- The laying on of hands was a sign of transmitting the guilt of sin from the sinner to the sacrificial animal which would make atonement of sins (Leviticus 1:4; 16:20-22).
- The laying on of hands is a sign accompanying intercession for and blessing of children (Matthew 19:13-15; Mark 10:16).
- The laying on of hands is a sign of God's appointment of a believer to an office involving a task and authority:
  - The appointment of the Levites for service in the temple in the place of the firstborn sons of the Israelites (Numbers 8:10-19).
  - The appointment of Joshua as the (military) leader of Israel (Deuteronomy 34:9; Numbers 27:18,19,23).
  - The appointment of deacons in the congregation (Acts 6:6; cf. 13:23).
  - The appointment of Paul as apostle (someone sent out by Jesus Christ). His appointment was accompanied by the return of his sight and by being filled with the Spirit (Acts 9:15-17).
  - The appointment of Timothy as a worker with authority in the congregation of Ephesus. Timothy was not a modern 'pastor', but rather a modern missionary who built up this congregation. The functions of shepherd-overseers, managers and teachers were executed by the elders of the congregation (Acts 20:28; 1 Timothy 4:14; 5:17; 1 Peter 5:1-2). Timothy probably functioned as one of these elders. His appointment was accompanied by receiving a spiritual gift as equipment for his task.

- The laying on of hands is a sign of having received the Holy Spirit and this also means a sign of being incorporated into the Body of Christ (Acts 8:14-17; 19:6; cf. 1 Corinthians 12:13). It is also a sign of being filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:17).

The laying on of hands by Christians does not bring about the baptism or the filling with the Holy Spirit, because that is something only Jesus Christ does (Mark 1:8; passive voice in Ephesians 5:18).

- The laying on of hands is a sign accompanying intercession for the healing of the sick (Luke 4:40; Mark 6:5; Acts 28:8), the blind (Mark 8:23-25; Acts 9:12) and the crippled (Luke 13:11-13).

The laying on of hands does not bring about the healing, because all healing, whether by prayer, doctors or medicines, is divine healing!

➤ (5) *The hope in the resurrection of the dead*  
(cf. Job 19:25-27; Acts 24:14-15)

➤ (6) *The last (eternal) judgement*  
(cf. Ecclesiastes 12:14; John 5:28-29).

By continuing to do these external practices (religious ceremonies) Jewish Christians may convince themselves that they are still Christians! But what distinguishes them from other Jews who also do these very same things?

The writer of the Letter to the Hebrews urges the Jewish Christians not to focus on external practices within Christianity that are similar to the external practices within Judaism, but rather to focus on the Christian teachings that lead to spiritual maturity.

The teaching that leads to spiritual maturity consists mainly of understanding the Old Testament (the preparation) in the light of the New Testament (the fulfilment)!

The four Gospels do not teach that the Messiah must still come for the first time, but teach that the Messiah (Jesus Christ) had already come (cf. Acts 1:1-3); that he died as a sacrifice for the atonement for sins (cf. Acts 2:22-24); that since his resurrection from the dead he is the only High Priest that baptises people with the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 2:33) and that he is the Saviour and Lord (cf. Acts 2:36). The Jewish Christians must focus on Jesus Christ and what he wants Christians to become (cf. Acts 13:38-39).

The book of Acts does not focus on how the historical nation of Israel came into being (cf. the book of Joshua), but on how the historical Christian Church came into being. The Church first consisted of mainly Jewish Christians (Acts 2:36-42). But then the Church expanded to include the Gentile Christians (Acts 13:46-48).

The Letters to the Romans and Galatians teach justification (salvation), not by the works of the Jewish law, but by faith in Jesus Christ and by what he accomplished by his death and resurrection.

And the Letter to the Hebrews teaches how Jesus Christ has fulfilled the whole Old Testament ceremonial law (the temple, the priests, the sacrifices) (Matthew 5:17; Hebrews 10:1)!

## 6:4-6a

<sup>4</sup>It is impossible for those who have *once*<sup>1</sup> (in their lives) been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, <sup>5</sup>who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, <sup>6</sup>if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance.

### ➤ *Once enlightened.*

This is an expression which suggests Christian baptism with water. Compare Ephesians 5:14 (a verse from a baptismal song). The expression ‘enlightenment’ was already used to express Christian baptism with water during the second century A.D. in Rome (Justinus. First Apology, 61:12v; 65:1). This enlightenment (just as baptism) is something that happens only once (once for all).

The expression ‘those who have once been enlightened’ is an indication that these people had once understood the gospel and had once been baptised with water.

### ➤ *Tasted the heavenly gift.*

This is an expression which suggests the Lord’s Supper. A ‘metaphor’ is a descriptive term to an object to which it is not literally applicable. The ‘light’ metaphor and the ‘food’ metaphor were already used by Philo of Alexandria (30 B.C. – 50 A.D.). Also the apostle Paul uses these two expressions together. God’s Old Testament people were “baptised into Moses in the cloud and in the sea” and “ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink” (1 Corinthians 10:1-6).

The expression ‘heavenly gift’ is pointing to ‘every spiritual blessing in Christ’ (Ephesians 1:3), of which the Lord’s Supper is the sign and seal.

### ➤ *Shared in the Holy Spirit.*

This expression does NOT mean ‘born again by the Holy Spirit’! People that have been born again by the Holy Spirit (John 3:3-8) have as fruit continual renewal (Titus 3:5-7), sanctification and glorification (Romans 8:6-16). They do not backslide and cannot backslide into unbelief or into another religion (John 10:28; Philippians 1:6).

‘To share in the Holy Spirit’ is to share in the blessings of the Holy Spirit within the congregation, such as ‘the goodness of the Word of God’ and ‘the powers of the coming age’. Such people have heard the preaching of the Bible in the congregation week after week and have seen its powerful effect on other people. In the apostolic age they have even witnessed how God testified to the work of the apostles by signs, wonders and various miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will (Hebrews 2:4; 2 Corinthians 12:12).

<sup>1</sup> All the verbs are in the aorist tense: once enlightened, once tasted, once shared, and thereafter have once fallen away.

An example was Simon the Sorcerer who heard the preaching of the gospel, was baptised with water and was astonished by the great signs and miracles he saw (Acts 8:13). Nevertheless, Simon was not born again. His heart was not right with God; he had not repented of his wickedness; he was still full of bitterness and a captive to sin. He had tried to manipulate God the Holy Spirit by buying the gift consisting of the Holy Spirit with money so that he may sell it again to others (Acts 8:18-23).

### ➤ *It is impossible for those who fall away to brought back to repentance.*

These words do NOT mean that there is no forgiveness of sins and restoration of fellowship possible for those people who sin after they have been baptised with water (cf. 1 John 1:9 – 2:2a)! The Bible clearly distinguished between unintentional sins (Hebrews 5:2) and deliberate sins (Hebrews 2:1-3; 10:26-31). Here the context shows that the deliberate sin of these Jews was a well-considered apostasy from the Christian Faith (and returning to the Jewish Faith).

Deliberate apostasy is humanly speaking irreparable – the Christian Church cannot bring such people back to Christ. The test for genuine Christian Faith is to continue and persevere in the Christian Faith and life. Such people are the genuine citizens of God’s covenant people or God’s kingdom.

People that are in danger of falling away from the Christian Faith are people with a sinful, unbelieving heart that turn away from the living God. They harden their hearts by sin’s deceitfulness (Hebrews 3:12-13).

The people that fall away are people that have heard and understood the gospel (the message about Jesus Christ and his completed work of salvation) and have for some time been involved in the Christian activities like baptism with water, the Lord’s Supper and the preaching of the Word. But for some reason or another they have again rejected the message and have returned to their former religion (Hebrews 6:4-6; cf. 2 Timothy 4:10). They have never been born again (cf. Johns 1:11-13).

The people that fall away are people that have become nominal ‘Christians’. They “deliberate keep on sinning” (i.e. missing God’s goal or purpose, falling short of God’s glory) (Hebrews 10:26-31). Everyone who continues to live in Jesus Christ will not continue to sin. Everyone who continues to sin has not seen or known Jesus Christ. A person who continues to sin is of the devil, but a person who is born of God will not continue to sin and cannot continue to sin, because he has been born again (1 John 3:6-9).

The people that fall away are people who sin against the Holy Spirit. They see the mercy of Jesus Christ and his power to save people, to heal people and to set people free from evil spirits and yet they deliberately close their eyes and hearts against these proofs of the truth of the Christian Faith. They ascribe the work of Jesus Christ to the devil (Matthew 12:24,31-32). They exchange the truth about God (as revealed in the Bible) for a lie (as revealed in other religions) (Romans 1:25). They continue to harden their hearts against Jesus Christ and his Holy Spirit. Whoever continues to harden his heart will ultimately become what he wants and what he does – he will become a hardened person (cf. Matthew 13:13-15; *read* Romans 1:28-32; Galatians 6:7-8).

The people that fall away are people who have the spirit of the antichrist, who deliberately deny God the Son and God the Father (1 John 2:22-23; 4:1-6; 5:16b).

The genuineness of someone's faith and therefore of his being born again is shown in the fruit of the Holy Spirit he bears (Galatians 5:22-23) and in the times of testing. Compare the seed sown on the rocky places that only last for a short time (Mark 4:5-6,16-17). The readers of the Letter to the Hebrews went through a period of oppression and persecution (Hebrews 10:32-34). The writer of the Letter to the Hebrews urges them to remain victorious amidst these trials. In this way they would prove that they were good soil that produces a crop useful to those for whom it is farmed.

**6:6b.**

“because (or: while) to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.”

The people, who deliberately deny Jesus Christ, put themselves in the same position as those who were present at his crucifixion (people such as the Jewish

Sanhedrin and the Roman government of Pontius Pilate). They knew the claims of Jesus Christ, but nevertheless deliberately rejected them. They had crucified Jesus and subjected him to public shame. The Bible teaches that people can reach a point of no return. They can reach a point when it becomes impossible to repent and believe in Jesus Christ (cf. Genesis 6:3; Matthew 13:13-15).

**6:7-8.**

‘Useful and blessed or worthless and cursed’. Only God knows what is in the heart of every man: whether he is genuinely born again or not. But the visible fruit in the life of a person eventually reveals the invisible condition and attitude of the heart (Isaiah 5:1-7; Matthew 7:16-19; 12:33-35).

The continuous rain of God's Word brings forth visible good fruit from the good soil (the person born again). But the bad soil (the person not born again), that continues to produce only thorns and thistles, will in the end be burned (Hebrews 12:29; cf. Revelation 21:8).

John the Baptist proclaimed: “Produce fruit in keeping with repentance” (and being born again) (Luke 3:8).

**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.