

GOALS FOR THE GROUP LEADER

To help the group accept:

1. that all Christians have a place in the Body of Christ
2. that they all receive a task in the Body of Christ and in the kingdom of God
3. that they all receive a certain measure of Christ's grace in order to fulfil their task

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 dedicate yourself to a task within God's kingdom.

Theme: *Serving in a variety of tasks*

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

Mark 13:33-37

³³ Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come. ³⁴ It's like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with their assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch. ³⁵ "Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back—whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. ³⁶ If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. ³⁷ What I say to you, I say to everyone: 'Watch!'"

Matthew 24:45-51

⁴⁵ "Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? ⁴⁶ It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. ⁴⁷ Truly I tell you, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. ⁴⁸ But suppose that servant is wicked and says to himself, 'My master is staying away a long time,' ⁴⁹ and he then begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards. ⁵⁰ The master of that servant will come on a Day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. ⁵¹ He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the

hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Jesus Christ gives to each Christian a task (Mark 13:34), that is, a task that differs from the tasks of others. It is important for Jesus Christ to find you occupied with your task when he suddenly and unexpectedly returns. Then Jesus will call you a faithful and wise servant.

"What is the task that Jesus Christ has entrusted to you at this time of your life?"

Colossians 3:23

²³ Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters.

3. Worship

Let everyone in the small group take a turn to worship God (in one or two sentences) by dedicating himself to the task God has entrusted to him. Or ask God to entrust a task to him.

II. INTRODUCTION THEME (1 min.)

The theme for this meeting is: The gifts of the Spirit and our tasks

Read or explain in your own words.

God gives to each Christian a task in the Body of Christ. He also gives to each Christian a certain measure of his grace to fulfil the task which Christ has entrusted to him.

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 gifts of the Spirit and our tasks*

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| Day 1 | 1 Corinthians 12:4-11
The variety of spiritual gifts (cf. also verse 28-31) |
| Day 2 | Ephesians 4:7-13
The gifts which equip the congregation |
| Day 3 ^{BS} | 1 Corinthians 12:12-31
The variety of tasks |
| Day 4 ^{BS} | 1 Corinthians 13:1-13
The way spiritual gifts ought to be used |
| Day 5 | Galatians 6:1-5
The task of restoring an erring person |
| Day 6 | 1 Timothy 4:1-7
The task of promoting sound teaching |

- Day 7 2 Timothy 2:1-7
The task of being a soldier, athlete or farmer
- Day 8 Hebrews 13:1-3
The task of remembering the persecuted Christians (cf. also Hebrews 10:33-34)
- Day 9 1 Corinthians 14:1-25
When exercising spiritual gifts intelligible communication is essential
- Day 10 1 Corinthians 14:26-40
Order within the Christian meetings is essential

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 gifts of the Spirit

- What is a spiritual gift?
- What is the difference between a spiritual ability and a spiritual office (function)?
- What is the difference between a spiritual gift which is natural in character and a spiritual gift which is supernatural in character?
- What is more important than the exercise of spiritual gifts?
- How can you discern a spiritual gift God has given to you or to someone else?
- What are God's purposes for spiritual gifts?
- What is the relationship between a variety of spiritual gifts and a variety of tasks in the congregation?

2. Commitment

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

- "In which tasks in the congregation are you interested?"
- "To which task in the congregation would you like to dedicate yourself in the coming year?"

Discuss your preference with the other group members (and eventually with the elders of the congregation).

Decide to get involved in several different tasks during the coming year in order to get acquainted with them.

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.

MY TASK Colossians 4:17

Tell Archippus:
See to it that you complete the work
you have received in the Lord.

Colossians 4:17 (NIV)

VI. BIBLE STUDY (45 min.)

Theme: The Unity within variety

1. Bible Study

Make use of the 5 step method and study:

1 Corinthians 12:12-31; 13:1-8

1 Corinthians 12

¹² Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³ For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. ¹⁴ Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.

¹⁵ Now if the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. ¹⁶ And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸ But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. ¹⁹ If they were all one part, where would the body be? ²⁰ As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

²¹ The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!"

²² On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³ and the parts that we think are less honourable we treat with special honour. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, ²⁴ while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together,

giving greater honour to the parts that lacked it, ²⁵ so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. ²⁶ If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it.

²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. ²⁸ And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues. ²⁹ Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? ³⁰ Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? ³¹ Now eagerly desire the greater gifts.

And yet I will show you the most excellent way.

1 Corinthians 13

¹ If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. ² If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. ³ If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

⁴ Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

⁸ Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away.

2. Emphasis

- The Bible emphasises unity (one Body of Christ) amidst a variety of tasks and gifts.
- Only love will hold all the different members and all the different tasks in the congregation together.

3. Explanation for the group leader

12:12-13

This is an illustration with practical applications.

Jesus Christ and his Church are inseparable. The Church is his Body. A Christian only becomes a genuine member of the Body of Christ when he is born again.

By hearing the gospel and by believing in Jesus Christ he is sealed (baptised) with the one and same Spirit into the Body of Christ (cf. Mark 1:8; Acts 11:14-18;

1 Corinthians 12:13; Titus 3:3-7) and is thus included into Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:13).

12:14-17

Every member belongs to the Body of Christ, because he or she constitutes an indispensable part (member) of the Body. This is not his work, but the work of the Spirit of Christ!

12:18,24

God is the One who composes the Body (1 Corinthians 12:24). He determines how a biblical congregation is compiled:

- Christ is the Foundation (1 Corinthians 3:10) and the Builder, Owner and Head of the worldwide Church and of every independent congregation (Matthew 16:18).
- The Holy Spirit regenerates every believer and makes them a member of the One Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-13).
- A congregation must be led by a council of elders (1 Timothy 4:14) and the Bible commands how the members ought to conduct themselves in the congregation (1 Timothy 3:14-15).
- A congregation has seven goals how it ought to be built up and function (cf. lesson 21, Ephesians 4:1-16).
- God gives to each member his or her own place in the congregation and in the worldwide Church just as he determines! This is not the responsibility of the elders or members of the congregation (1 Corinthians 12:18).
- Christ gives to each Christian a certain measure of grace, which may include a spiritual gift (Ephesians 4:7) (cf. footnote 1).
- Christ gives to each Christian his or her own task (Mark 13:34).
- God dwells in the Church through the Spirit (Ephesians 2:19-22).

12:19-27

Christians need one another within the local congregation. But also the congregations in the world need one another (cf. 2 Corinthians 8:13-15).

Feelings of inferiority or superiority do not belong in the Christian Church. Every member is unique. Every Christian is precious in God's eyes (Isaiah 43:4). Jesus

Christ bought every Christian with his own blood (1 Peter 1:18-19; Acts 20:28).

Some members receive enough respect. But other members need to receive more encouragement and honour in the congregation.

The members ought to have equal concern for one another. This can best be done within small groups in the congregation who come together on a regular basis to urge one another to love and good works (Hebrews 10:24-25).

Within these small groups members bear responsibility and are accountable towards one another (they are 'accountability groups'). They may make an agreement what should be accounted for.

The members of the congregation ought to remember Christians in the persecuted and suffering Church (Hebrews 13:3) and ought to joyfully accept oppression and suffering themselves (Hebrews 10:34).

12:28

God gives to each Christian a task (Mark 13:34; cf. 1 Corinthians 12:5).

But God does not necessarily give *'each'* Christian in the world a spiritual gift.¹

¹ The word 'each'. Christians differ with each other whether every Christian in the world receives a spiritual gift or not.

- The word 'each' / 'each one' can have general meaning – in the sense of 'every person that has ever lived' (Romans 2:6) or 'every person that repents and believes' (Acts 2:38; Romans 12:3; 14:12). Some Christians therefore believe that the word 'each' in 1 Corinthians 7:7, 12:7, 14:26 and 1 Peter 4:10 means that each and every Christian has received a spiritual gift.
- The word 'each' can have limited meaning – in the sense of 'every one belonging to a particular group': every hypocrite (Luke 13:15); every one in the crowd (John 6:7); every Christian that had need (Acts 4:35). Therefore the word 'each' in 1 Corinthians 7:7, 12:7, 14:26 and 1 Peter 4:10 has limited meaning in the sense of 'every Christian in the Body of Christ whom the Spirit in a sovereign way has given an ordinary or special spiritual gift' (1 Corinthians 12:11,28-30). Therefore it is not absolutely necessary that the Holy Spirit gives a spiritual gift to each Christian in the world!
- 'Grace' is more than a spiritual gift. Ephesians 4:7 says that "to each one grace has been give as Christ apportioned it". This means that God's grace is more than a spiritual gift. Each Christian has received grace (Greek: charis), but not necessarily each Christian has received a spiritual gift (Greek: charisma). Every Christian has received a special measure of the extraordinary effects of God's grace. This may be a God-given ability to lay a spiritual foundation (1 Corinthians 3:10), a God-given power to work hard

He gives to Christians within the Body of Christ different gifts of the Spirit in order to help them to carry out their tasks.

Some spiritual gifts are functions or offices to which God calls and appoints them: for example, the function or office of elder, teacher or missionary.

Other spiritual gifts are special abilities that enable some Christians to equip other Christians for their works of service (Ephesians 4:12).

The purpose of the spiritual gifts are to serve one another (1 Peter 4:10), to build up the Church (1 Corinthians 14:12), to equip other Christians (Ephesians 4:12) and to glorify God (1 Peter 4:12).

No Christian receives all the spiritual gifts. And no Christian, who receives a spiritual gift, receives everything that particular spiritual gift can offer.

Finally, it is possible that a particular congregation possesses all the spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 1:7) and yet is 'carnal' in God's eyes (1 Corinthians 3:1-4)!

12:31

The way that is more excellent than the possession and use of spiritual gifts is love!

Christian love is more than merely a mystic feeling. It has very practical characteristics, as patience and kindness.

13:1-3

Christian love is contrasted with seven things the people of the congregation of Corinth desired and thought to be very important: the speaking in tongues, prophesying, fathoming all mysteries, possessing all knowledge, exercising faith that performs miracles, manifesting philanthropy and suffering martyrdom. The Bible teaches that if Christian love is absent, all these spiritual gifts are useless!

(1 Corinthians 15:10), a God-given power in situations of weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9) or a God-given ability to do missionary work among the heathen (Galatians 2:9). It may also be a God-given specific ability or function (a spiritual gift) (Ephesians 4:11; 1 Peter 4:10-11).

- 'Love' is more than a spiritual gift. By comparing 1 Corinthians 12:31a with 1 Corinthians 31b Paul shows that love is a more excellent way than desiring a spiritual gift. This means that if a specific spiritual gift is lacking in a Christian's life or even in a Christian congregation, love may never be lacking! While specific (ordinary or extraordinary) gifts (abilities or functions or offices) of the Holy Spirit is given in a sovereign way to certain Christians within the Body of Christ, love is a gift of the Holy Spirit given to all Christians without exception (Romans 5:5; Titus 3:5-6)!

Although not every Christian necessarily receives a spiritual gift, every Christian must love. Although not every member in the congregation receives a particular specific task (or function/office), every Christian must serve.

The supernatural love, which God shows to Christians and which he pours out in the hearts of Christians, has the following characteristics (Romans 5:5²).

13:4

(1) *Love is patient.* Love can wait to act.

‘Patience’ is the love that is not enforced on another. It can wait to be kind (friendly), wait to give, wait to talk and wait to express love. It is the love that can wait to give love at just the right moment.

(2) *Love is kind.* It is friendly. It takes the initiative to act.

‘Friendliness’ is the love that keeps looking for a way to help others. It does not pass an opportunity to do good. It is the love that is friendly and tender instead of critical and repulsive.

(3) *Love does not envy.* It is generous.

‘Generosity’ is the love necessary when you compare yourself with another. It is not jealous when the other person can do something better than yourself. It is the love that appreciates and esteems the other when praise and honour is due.

(4) *Love does not boast.* It does not brag. It is modest.

‘Modesty’ is the love needed *after you have acted*. After you have been patient, friendly and generous, you do not brag about what you have done. It is the love that simply forgets what it has done. It is the love that estimates its own abilities, merits and accomplishments in a modest manner. It does not exaggerate.

(5) *Love is not proud.* It is not self-sufficient or puffed up with its own importance. It is humble.

‘Humility’ is the love needed *before you act*. Before you are patient, friendly and generous, you are not arrogant with regard to what you can do or want to do. It is the love that has a realistic view of its own strong and weak points. It does not advertise itself, but concedes what it does not know and cannot do.

13:5

(6) *Love is not rude.* It does not hurt another’s feelings, is courteous, tactful and has good manners.

‘Courtesy’ is the love needed in all relationships. It is the love in small matters. It is thoughtful and thinks before it speaks or acts. It considers the other’s needs and feelings.

(7) *Love is not self-seeking.* It is unselfish.

‘Selflessness’ is the love that is needed with the exercise of your rights and interests. It does not stand on its own rights, e.g. position or possessions. It does not seek its own interests, e.g. preference or pleasure. It is the love that seeks to promote the interests of Christ, Christians and others.

(8) *Love is not easily angered.* It never feels offended. It is meek.

‘Meekness’ is the love needed when you are being irritated and are in conflict with another. It is the love which submits itself to words that wound and behaviour that offends, because it submits to Christ’s sovereignty in every situation. It is the love that deliberately turns away from a bad temper, anger and hot-tempered reactions. Meekness is not quickly provoked to respond negatively. It does not quickly regard another’s words or acts as meant to be a personal attack. Meekness is that inward power that rather suffers injustice than causes injustice to another. Jesus was meek (1 Peter 2:21-23).

(9) *Love keeps no record of wrongs.* It is forgiving.

‘Forgivingness’ is the love that is needed in broken relationships. It does not keep a list of the wrongdoings and wrong sayings of the other. It does not allow bitterness to enter one’s life, because bitterness defiles many other people (Hebrews 12:15). Love does not take revenge and never resurrects an old grievance or bad memory. God forgives (Isaiah 38:17; 43:25; 44:22) and will never bring the other’s sins into remembrance (Hebrews 8:12).

13:6

(10) *Love does not delight in evil, but rejoices with the truth.* It is sincere.

‘Sincerity’ is the love needed amidst weaknesses and failures. It is the love that takes into account that you yourself have weaknesses and failures. It does not rejoice when the other falls. It does not gloat when the other fails. Instead, it rejoices when the other makes progress in knowing God and in doing what is right in God’s eyes.

² Romans 5:5 because God poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

13:7

(11) *Love always protects.* It is protective.

‘Protection’ is the love needed amidst carelessness and indifference. It is the love that keeps every form of evil and threat away from the other. It covers whatever is unpleasant in the other (Proverbs 10:12; 17:9). It seeks to protect the other’s good reputation and refuses to gossip about others.

(12) *Love always trusts.* It is trusting.

‘Trust’ is the love needed amidst suspicion and distrust. The people who influence you positively are the people who show that they trust you. Distrust suspects the motives and intention of the other to be bad without knowing the facts. In an atmosphere of suspicion and distrust people shrivel up.

But trust has a good opinion of the other. It thinks highly of the other and never distrusts the thoughts and feelings of the other unless there is a very good reason for distrust.

It is willing to be vulnerable by entrusting the other with one’s deepest convictions and feelings and by sharing one’s own problems, shortcomings and failures. The other person can misuse this knowledge against you, but because you love the other, you trust the other.

(13) *Love always hopes.* It is hopeful.

‘Hope’ is the love needed amidst self-righteousness. A self-righteous person thinks that he is always right. Soon everybody else is wrong. He does not expect that the other person can or will change. Even worse, he actually does not want the other person to change, because then he can maintain that he is always right.

But hope is a positive and concrete expectation that things can change. Love never gives another person up as hopeless or incorrigible, but expects God to act and change the other. Hope never thinks that a situation is hopeless, but believes that God will attain his best plan through all these problems.

(14) *Love always perseveres.* It is persistent.

‘Perseverance’ is the love needed amidst opposition. It is love measured on a time scale. e.g. often the very long time that things are going against one. It is the love that persists doing what is right in God’s eyes. It never gives up doing good works, bearing fruit and running the race of faith irrespective whether there is opposition or temptation. Genuine love always perseveres and does not acknowledge ‘time-out’, because genuine love is never simply a whim of the moment, but the essential power of a Christian to live his daily life.

13:8

(15) *Love never fails.* It never comes to an end.

The love of which only the God of the Bible is the Essence and the Source never ends! Love in the Bible is not a mystic feeling, an overpowering feeling or a temporary feeling. Love in the Bible has been revealed. It can be defined and has practical characteristics. It can be exercised and controlled. It is not something originating in the heart of fallen man, but is given by God to those who belong to him (Romans 5:5). Love must be asked from God (Luke 11:9-13).

The love of which God himself is the Essence and Source (1 John 4:7-8), which God gives as a gift (Romans 5:5), which Christians may receive and exercise and which is the distinguishing mark of Christians, is always available, never fails, never stops to have good influence and always satisfies those who possess it. This love (Greek: agape) simply does not pass away, because God himself is love and he never passes away!

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.