

## GOALS FOR THE GROUP LEADER

Help the group members to see:

1. that God speaks and acts in human history. God always speaks the truth and is faithful in everything he does
2. that in the struggle between ‘the seed of the snake’ and ‘the seed of the woman’ God always remains faithful to his promise of salvation

## 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 adore God.

**Theme: God is faithful**

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

In this lesson we are going to use the words in the Bible concerning God himself to worship him. Let each group member take a turn to read one of these Bible verses and the group leader explains the verse. After reading and explaining all the Bible verses let each group member pray a short prayer worshipping God with the words said about God. (There are 8 Bible verses for 8 group members).

#### Numbers 23:19

God is not a man, that he should lie,  
nor a son of man, that he should change his mind.  
Does he speak and then not act?  
Does he promise and not fulfill?

#### Psalms 25:10

All the ways of the LORD are loving and faithful  
for those who keep the demands of his covenant.

#### Psalms 33:4

For the word of the LORD is right and true;  
he is faithful in all he does.

#### 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

<sup>23</sup>May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>24</sup>The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.

#### 2 Timothy 2:12b-13

<sup>12</sup>if we endure,  
we will also reign with him.  
If we disown him,  
he will also disown us;  
<sup>13</sup>if we are faithless,  
he will remain faithful (i.e. to his threats),  
for he cannot disown himself.

#### Hebrews 10:23

Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.

#### Hebrews 11:6

And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

#### Hebrews 13:5-6

<sup>5</sup>Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.” <sup>6</sup>So we say with confidence, “The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?”

God remains true to his words (decisions, promises and threats) and to his way of doing things. The weakness of man and the opposition of Satan cannot hinder God’s promises and plan.

### 3. Worship

*Let* everyone in the small group take a turn to worship God (in one or two sentences) as the unfathomable God, whom we may personally know.

## II. INTRODUCTION THEME (1 min.)

**The theme for this meeting is: God speaks and acts in every nation in human history**

*Read or explain in your own words.*

God reveals himself not through religious or philosophical myths, but by speaking and acting in human history!

*You get to know God by listening to his words and observing his actions in human history.* God's words and acts are recorded in the Bible and are explained and applied by the Holy Spirit. God also works in your personal life, because he would like to make your life significant in human history! God wants to involve you in the history which he is making. That is why we must learn to listen to his voice and learn to recognize his work in our lives.

## 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: God speaks and acts in human history**

Day 1 <sup>BS</sup>	Genesis 6:5-14; 7:17-24 God destroys people with a flood
Day 2 <sup>BS</sup>	Genesis 9:8-17 God gives the rainbow as a sign
Day 3 <sup>BS</sup>	Genesis 11:1-9 God scatters the nations across the whole earth
Day 4	Psalms 33:4-19 God makes history within human history
Day 5	Genesis 12:1-3 God makes his covenant with Abraham
Day 6	Genesis 15:1-21 God reveals to Abraham what was going to happen in the future
Day 7	Exodus 3:1-15 God speaks out of a burning bush
Day 8	Exodus 12:29-42 God rescues Israel out of slavery in Egypt
Day 9	Exodus 16:1-20 God cares for his people in the desert
Day 10	Exodus 31:1-5 God gives talents of creativity

## 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 first continuous thread (in the Bible): The messianic line of descent**

- How does God reveal himself to people?
- What is the significance of the first promise of God to people (Genesis 3:15)?
- How does the devil try to cut the messianic line of descent throughout history between Adam and Christ?
- How does God speak to you in these days?
- How does God involve you in human history?
- What is the significance of human history?

## 2. Commitment

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

- "Search yourself and find out whether there is hostility in your mind, heart or life-style against God. What does God want you to do?"

## 3. Personal sharing

*Discuss* personal growth and commitment. Who would like to share a difficulty or blessing in his/her personal life? What are your thoughts or feelings?

## V. MEMORISATION (5 min.)

### 1. Review previous Bible verses

*Let* pairs of group members review each other's first five memorised Bible verses.

### 2. Memorisation of the new Bible verse

*Explain* the meaning of the new Bible verse.

#### GOD SPEAKS AND ACTS Isaiah 14:24

The LORD Almighty has sworn:  
'Surely, as I have planned, so it will be,  
and as I have purposed,  
so it will stand

**Isaiah 14:24** (NIV)

### 3. Memorisation of the Bible books

*The 5 major prophetic books written by the 4 major prophets:*

Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel and Daniel. (Lamentations is a poetical book).

## VI. BIBLE STUDY (45 min.)

**Theme: God speaks and acts in human history**

### 1. Bible Study

*Make use of the 5 step Bible Study method and study:*  
Genesis 6:1-14; Genesis 9:1-17, Genesis 10:1-32,  
Genesis 11:1-9 and Genesis 11:10-32.

### 2. Emphasis

#### ➤ *God's history of salvation*

In God's history of salvation God has dealt with people in such a way that he accomplished his eternal purpose with them: the Messiah finally came! Throughout the Old Testament period there was a constant threat to destroy the messianic line of descent. But all the time there was also God's faithfulness in preserving his covenant and caring for the continuation of the messianic line of descent. The messianic line of descent was not broken by the depravity of the human race during the time of Noah, nor by the disaster of the flood, the confusion of languages or the politics of the kingdoms of the world! The messianic prophecies in the Old Testament were all fulfilled!

#### ➤ *The world's secular history*

Thus, also in the *world's secular history* God acts in such a way that he accomplishes his goal with humanity and all the nations in the world.

### 3. The explanation of the first Bible passage

#### Genesis 6:1-14

<sup>1</sup> When men began to increase in number on the earth and daughters were born to them, <sup>2</sup> the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful, and they married any of them they chose. <sup>3</sup> Then the LORD said, "My Spirit will not contend with man forever, for he is mortal (Or: My spirit will not remain in man forever, for he is corrupt); his days will be a hundred and twenty years."

<sup>4</sup> The Nephilim were on the earth in those days—and also afterward—when the sons of God went to the daughters of men and had children by them. They were the heroes of old, men of renown.

<sup>5</sup> The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. <sup>6</sup> The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain. <sup>7</sup> So the LORD said, "I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth—men and animals, and creatures that move along the ground, and birds of the air—for I am grieved that I have made them."

<sup>8</sup> But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.

<sup>9</sup> This is the account of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God. <sup>10</sup> Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth.

<sup>11</sup> Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight and was full of violence. <sup>12</sup> God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways. <sup>13</sup> So God said to Noah, "I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth. <sup>14</sup> So make yourself an ark of cypress wood; make rooms in it and coat it with pitch inside and out.

#### 6:1-2 The sons of God and the daughters of men

This is not a myth about mixed marriages between good angels and evil people producing half gods. Such myths prevailed among the Arabs, Phoenicians, Greeks and Germans.

The expression 'sons/children of God' is in the Bible not only used of angels (Job 1:6), but also of people (Deuteronomy 32:5) and in particular pious people or believers (Psalm 73:15)! In our context (Genesis chapters 4-5) the expression 'the sons/children of God' refers to the believers (the descendants of Seth) and 'the daughters of men' refers to unbelievers (the descendants of Cain). The Bible relates that these two generations did not continue to live separate from each other. The result was mixed marriages between believers and unbelievers. The seed of the woman and the seed of the devil were being mixed. Mixed marriage between believers and unbelievers have always been forbidden in the Bible (Deuteronomy 7:3-4; 1 Corinthians 7:39; 2 Corinthians 6:14).

#### 6:3 God judged this mixture of believers with unbelievers

God says (in the Hebrew text): "In their disobedience my Spirit as the source of their human spirit (cf. Genesis 2:7) will not for ever remain in them. They are flesh (sinful and mortal) and only 120 years will be given to them (to repent)." The 120 years does not refer to the shortening of human life to a maximum of 120 years, because after the flood several people became much older than 120 years: Noah became 950 years (Genesis 9:28), Shem became 600 years (Genesis 11:10-11), Abraham became 175 years (Genesis 25:7), Isaac became 180 years (Genesis 35:28) and Jacob became 147 years (Genesis 47:28). The 120 years is meant to be a period of delay of God's judgement that would come through the flood.

#### 6:4 The giants were on the earth in those days

The Nephilim weren't half gods that emerged from mixed marriages between angels and people, because God's judgement strikes only people (verse 3: 'My Spirit will not contend with *man* forever'). Verse 4 only

mentions that there were giants on earth before the flood. These giants were people with a very large body and were called 'tyrants' (heroes of old, men of renown), because they were very strong and did not always use their strength in the right way. Such people still existed after the flood (Numbers 13:33; Deuteronomy 1:28). Goliath was about 3 metres tall (1 Samuel 17:4).

#### 6:5-7 The depravity of people and God's grief

The respite of 120 years came to an end and still people had not repented. On the contrary, the wickedness of people on earth was great and everything they devised was only evil all the time. Humanity did not become better, but rather worse! Their corruption and depravity increased all the time.

The expression: 'The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth' is a very strong anthropomorphism, because a completely perfect God does not regret his decisions (Numei 23:19)! God's eternal plan and decisions (decrees) consists not only of promises and threats, but also takes man's attitude and response towards him into account!

'God's remorse' is on the one hand God's merciful and gracious reaction towards people who repent and submit to him. When people repent (Jeremiah 18:7-8; Jeremiah 26:2-3,13,19) God in loving compassion will change his initial threat to uproot, tear down and destroy. He will not inflict the disaster he had planned.

'God's remorse' is on the other hand God's holy and righteous reaction towards people who persist in sin and doing evil. When people remain disobedient (Jeremiah 18:9-10) God in holy indignation and painful grief will change his initial promise to build up and plant. He will carry out his threat!

Thus, God's eternal holy character and righteous decisions (decrees) include the responsibility of man! The people who lived before the flood did not repent and that is why God wiped them from the face of the earth just like a man wipes a dish and turns it upside down (2 Kings 21:13).

#### 6:8-9 The historical account of Noah

From Genesis 2:4 onwards God's history of salvation concentrated on the extension of the human race on earth. But from Genesis 6:9 onwards God's history of salvation concentrated on the extermination of the human race, so that God could continue the messianic line through Noah.

Noah was a righteous man (he stuck to God's norms), blameless (irreproachable) among the people of his time, and he walked with God (he had a close and confidential relationship with God) (cf. Psalm 25:14).

#### 6:11-12 The earth had become corrupt

The earth had become corrupt in God's sight and was full of violence. So God decided to destroy the earth with a flood.

### 4. The explanation of the second Bible passage

#### Genesis 9:1-17

<sup>1</sup> Then God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth.

<sup>2</sup> The fear and dread of you will fall upon all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air, upon every creature that moves along the ground, and upon all the fish of the sea; they are given into your hands. <sup>3</sup> Everything that lives and moves will be food for you. Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything.

<sup>4</sup> "But you must not eat meat that has its lifeblood still in it. <sup>5</sup> And for your lifeblood I will surely demand an accounting. I will demand an accounting from every animal.

And from each man, too, I will demand an accounting for the life of his fellow man.

<sup>6</sup> "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man.

<sup>7</sup> As for you, be fruitful and increase in number; multiply on the earth and increase upon it."

<sup>8</sup> Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him: <sup>9</sup> "I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you <sup>10</sup> and with every living creature that was with you—the birds, the livestock and all the wild animals, all those that came out of the ark with you—every living creature on earth. <sup>11</sup> I establish my covenant with you: Never again will all life be cut off by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth."

<sup>12</sup> And God said, "This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come: <sup>13</sup> I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth. <sup>14</sup> Whenever I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds, <sup>15</sup> I will remember my covenant between me and you and all living creatures of every kind. Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life. <sup>16</sup> Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth."

<sup>17</sup> So God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant I have established between me and all life on the earth."

#### 9:1 A repetition of God's original commandment

After the destruction of all people except Noah's family by the flood, God blessed Noah and his sons and gave

them the same commandment he gave to Adam and Eve: “Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth” (cf. Genesis 1:28). God never lets go of his original plan to fill the earth with people who would bear the image of God.

### **9:2-5a The relationship between people and animals**

There is a change in how people should rule over the birds, animals and fish. The fall of man in sin also affected the relationship of people to the birds, animals and fish. People are sometimes threatened or even killed by the animals. In order to limit the danger of animals, God puts fear for man in the animals and gives man power over the animals.

There is also a change in what God allows as food (Genesis 1:29-30). The rule of man over the animals now includes permission to eat the animals. Man may now eat meat.

Before the flood people must have already killed animals in order to make clothes for themselves (Genesis 3:21) and in order to bring animal sacrifices to God (Genesis 4:4). Now, however, people may also kill animals to serve as food for them.

The only limitation laid upon man was that he may not eat meat that has its lifeblood still in it. People may not eat the luke-warm meat of animals that had just been killed, because there was still blood (and therefore ‘life’) in the meat. The Bible clearly teaches that “the life of a creature is in the blood” (Leviticus 17:11-14) and “the blood is the life or soul” of the animal (Deuteronomy 12:23). When an animal is killed, its blood takes time to flow away. That is why the blood is also called ‘the life’.

Animals that have killed people must be put to death, because God demands an accounting from every animal or man that kills another man (cf. Exodus 21:28). God gives responsibility and demands accountability!

### **9:5b-7 The relationship between people**

The death penalty is an institution of God and no man or government has the right or authority to change God’s institution! God demands an accounting from everyone who sheds the blood of another human being. “Anyone who strikes a man and kills him shall surely be put to death” (Exodus 21:12). God takes the life of man into his protection against the attacks of animals and the attacks of other people. God demands the blood or life of the murdered man from the hands of the murderer by means of other people that had to kill the murderer. These words are not merely a historical statement that may be set aside today. It is an instruction from God! God acts as the Protector of life, but also as the Avenger of shed blood.

The Old Testament does not yet give instructions about how the death sentence should be applied. Blood revenge was still a lawful institution and a permitted means to avenge murder (Numbers 35:19-21; Deuteronomy 19:12-13). But the New Testament abolished the institution of blood revenge by teaching that only the government must execute the death penalty (Romans 13:3-4).

Why did God protect the life of Cain, who murdered his brother Abel before the flood (Genesis 4:14-15), but instituted the death penalty after the flood? The reason is probably that violence and murder increased so much after the flood that God put a restraint on blood revenge by instituting the death penalty. Later legislation determined that manslaughter may not be punished with the death penalty (Exodus 21:13; Deuteronomy 19:5). Although the civil laws of Israel in their original form do not apply to Christians without due consideration, their underlying principles remain valid. The government must punish deliberate murder with the death penalty. The government may not abolish the death penalty or put it out of use by granting a free pardon.

### **9:8-17 The covenant regarding the protection of life and its sign**

#### ➤ *The covenant and its sign*

God promised that there would never again be a flood that would destroy all the earth. God gave the rainbow as the sign of this covenant. Just as God makes use of the existing practice of circumcision among several nations to serve as the sign of the covenant of grace (Genesis 17:11-12), so he makes use of the existing rainbow as the sign of the covenant of creation.

#### ➤ *The extension of the flood*

What God says about the extension of the flood (across the whole earth or across that part of the earth to which man had spread) (Genesis 6:17; 7:4) cannot be reproduced with certainty (cf. similar expressions in 1 Kings 4:34; Jeremiah 34:1; Daniel 2:39; 1 Samuel 17:46 and Romans 10:18).

#### ➤ *The time of the flood*

Because the biblical genealogical period between the flood and Abraham only comprises 292 years, while the known history of Babylon and Egypt goes back as far as 3000 years B.C., also the time of the flood cannot be determined by means of biblical genealogy.

## 5. The explanation of the third Bible passage

### Genesis 10:1-32

#### The table of nations on the earth

This is a summary chapter about the inhabitants of the earth. They are all descendants of Noah and his sons after the flood. In the time of Peleg (his name means: division) the earth was divided among the nations (verse 25), i.e. the nations spread out over the earth (verse 32). Verse 5 is a summary: The people “spread out into their territories by their clans within their nations, each with its own language.” This was the time of the first tyrants on earth (like Nimrod), their kingdoms and their great cities (like Babylon and Nineveh).

## 6. The explanation of the fourth Bible passage

### Genesis 11:1-9

<sup>1</sup> Now the whole world had one language and a common speech. <sup>2</sup> As men moved eastward (or: from the east, or: in the east), they found a plain in Shinar (Babylonia) and settled there.

<sup>3</sup> They said to each other, “Come, let’s make bricks and bake them thoroughly.” They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar. <sup>4</sup> Then they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth.”

<sup>5</sup> But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower that the men were building. <sup>6</sup> The LORD said, “If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. <sup>7</sup> Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other.”

<sup>8</sup> So the LORD scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. <sup>9</sup> That is why it was called Babel (Babylon. ‘Babel’ sounds like the Hebrew for ‘confused’)—because there the LORD confused the language of the whole world. From there the LORD scattered them over the face of the whole earth.

Genesis 11:1-9 is an elaboration of Genesis 10:25 just as Genesis chapter 2 is an elaboration of Genesis 1:17.

#### 11:4. The tower of Babel

‘A tower that reaches to the heavens’ is a description of a building from the viewpoint of people in that time. Such a tower could function as a beacon to find the way back to the city. The people of that time chose to live together in one place and make a name for themselves, that is, they wanted to be like God (cf. Genesis 3:5). Thus the building of this great city and its high tower was a deliberate rebellion against God’s expressed

commandment after the flood to spread and fill the earth with people (Genesis 9:1; cf. Genesis 1:28).

Natural man (i.e. man without God) strives to complete independence from God and to unity of people (including their language). This would enable people to continue their godless endeavours and carry out the many forms of evil they devised.

But the God of the Bible does not allow his plan to be frustrated by people! God acts within the history of people in order to carry out his plan and accomplish his purpose with all people. In Babel he confused the language of people. He caused them to speak many different languages, so that they could not understand one another and consequently could not work together. From Babel God scattered the nations with their different languages in all directions.

#### 11:5. God intervened in human history

“But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower that the men were building.” ‘God’s descent’ is a human way of saying that God intervened in the affairs of people on earth. God is omnipresent and does not need to go to a particular place to act.

God’s intervention is his judgment and punishment for disobeying his commandment to inhabit the whole earth. But God’s intervention is at the same time an act of mercy towards people, because he does not allow the degeneration of man to develop out of hand. God’s intervention in human history proves that God will eventually see to it that his purposes with this world and its people will be carried out!

#### 11:6. God restricted human liberty

“If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them”. The unity of language made deliberation and consultation possible. By confusing the language of people God paralysed man’s operations against God. If their first united act against God would succeed, they might think that they could do what they liked. Thus it was an act of love towards man that God did not allow man to continue on the way of deliberate rebellion against him. By restricting human liberty God preserved the human race from destruction.

#### 11:7. The nature of God

“Come let us go down” is the way the Old Testament expresses that God is ‘One divine being that has a plural differentiation’ (cf. Genesis 1:26; 3:22). The New Testament expresses this with the words: “the one name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19).

## 7. The explanation of the fifth Bible passage

### Genesis 11:10-32

#### The genealogies in the Bible

All human beings on earth are descendents from Adam (Acts 17:26); and therefore also from Noah.

The genealogies in the Bible only contain the most important names and the most important periods of time in every generation.

“When A was x years old, he became the father (rather: ancestor) of B. And after A became the father (rather: ancestor) of B, A lived another y years, and A became the father (rather: ancestor) of other sons and daughters”.

The meaning is this: “A (an important person) was x years old when he became the father of a son and in a direct line of this son B (the next important person) was born. And after A had become the father of this son (the ancestor of B), A lived another y years and produced other sons and daughters.”

The number of generations between A and B is therefore not known! And therefore the number of years between A and B cannot be calculated! So we must conclude that the names and the number of years between important members of a family in the genealogies of the Bible are incomplete!

This also happens in the genealogy of Jesus Christ. Four names (Ahaziah, Athaliah, Joash and Amaziah) (cf. 1 Chronicles 3:11-12) are missing from the genealogy in the Gospel of Matthew (Matthew 1:8-9). And between Zerubbabel and Jesus Christ the Gospel of Luke has 9 names more than the Gospel of Matthew (Luke 3:23-27).

According to the classical calculation that makes use of the numbers in the genealogies of the Bible, Shem was born in 1558 after Adam. Then the flood took place in 1656 after Adam. Only 4 generations later Peleg was born in 1757 after Adam – thus 101 years after the flood. ‘Peleg’ means ‘division’, because in his time the nations were spread out over the earth (Genesis 9:19; 10:25,32;

11:4,8-9). Although 4 generations would be enough for 100 years, a period of 100 years between the flood and the tower of Babel would be far too short for the human race to develop into nations that spread out over the face of the earth (Genesis 11:1-9)! Therefore we must conclude that the periods of time between the generations in the genealogies in the Bible are incomplete! It is impossible to calculate the time between Adam and the patriarchs from the information given in the genealogies of the Bible!

#### The history of the world and the history of salvation

The period of the general history of the world as part of God’s revelation ends with Genesis 11:26. Genesis 1:1 to 11:26 contains God’s revelation with regard to the whole human race and its history.

The period of the special history of salvation as part of God’s revelation begins with Genesis 11:27. Genesis 11:27 to the end of the Old Testament contains God’s revelation with regard to God’s people and her history before the first coming of Christ.

The Old Testament reveals the progress of God’s history of salvation amidst the history of the world – the progress of God’s promise of salvation from Adam to Abraham amidst the continuing sin in this world. Through Abraham God is going to continue his original promise of salvation (Genesis 3:15)!

### 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.