

KINGDOM.

LESSON 32

1	PRAYER
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Group leader. *Pray* for God's guidance through his Spirit, for awareness of his presence and for listening to his voice. Commit your group and this lesson about preaching God's kingdom to the Lord.

2	SHARING (20 minutes) [QUIET TIMES] PROVERBS 27, 28, 29 and 31
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Take turns and share (or read from your notes) in short what you have learned from one of your personal times with God out of the assigned Bible passages (Proverbs 27, 28, 29 and 31). Listen to the person sharing, take him serious and accept him. Do not discuss what he shares. Take notes.

3	MEMORISATION (5 minutes) [KEY VERSES IN ROMANS] (12) ROMANS 8:38-39
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Review two by two.

(12) Romans 8:38-39. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

4	BIBLE STUDY (85 minutes) [THE LETTER TO THE ROMANS] ROMANS 8:18-39
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Introduce. Make use of the five steps method of Bible study to study **Romans 8:18-39** together.

The salvation of Christians, which was *purposed* by God the Father, *merited* by Christ the Son, *applied* by the Holy Spirit and *proclaimed* by Christians in the gospel (Romans 1:16) is absolutely certain!

Salvation of Christians is purposed by God the Father in eternity. The salvation of Christians is *grounded* in God's eternal purpose of election, which is his unmerited and unchanging love for those who come to faith in Jesus Christ. When we were still sinners, enemies of God and completely lost (Romans 5:6,8,10), God has loved us first (1 John 4:19)!

Salvation of Christians is earned (acquired) by God the Son in time (in salvation history). The salvation of Christians has been *earned* by Christ's sacrifice of atonement on the cross and is presently *realised* by Christ's sovereign reign and unceasing high priestly work (Hebrews 7:25).

Salvation of Christians is applied by God the Holy Spirit in the present time. The salvation of Christians is *applied* to individual hearts and lives, where it is made a reality. This is done through the Holy Spirit that comes to dwell in the Christians.

Salvation of Christians is now proclaimed by Christians. The salvation of Christians is *revealed and proclaimed* in the gospel in the Old Testament (Romans 3:25) and the New Testaments (Romans 16:25-26).

Salvation of Christians is certain. In Romans 8:18-39, Paul continues to *teach* the security and assurance of believers in Christ.

- The salvation of Christians is grounded in the hope that eventually all things will be renewed (Romans 8:18-28)!
- The salvation of Christians is grounded in the fact that Christians are the objects of God's eternal plan of salvation (Romans 8:29-30)!
- The salvation of Christians is certain, because God is for them and has given to them everything required to complete his eternal purpose for them (Romans 8:31-34).
- The salvation of Christians is secure, because the love of God for them is infinite and unchangeable (Romans 8:35-39)!

STEP 1. READ.	GOD'S WORD
LET US READ Romans 8:18-39 together. Let us take turns to read one verse each until we have completed the reading.	

STEP 2. DISCOVER.**OBSERVATIONS**

Consider. WHICH TRUTH IN THIS PASSAGE IS IMPORTANT FOR YOU?

Or WHICH TRUTH IN THIS PASSAGE TOUCHES YOUR MIND OR HEART?

Record. Discover one or two truths that you understand. Think about them and write your thoughts in your notebook.

Share. (After the group members have had about two minutes to think and write, take turns to share).

Let us take turns to share with one another what each of us has discovered.

(Remember: In every small group, the group members will share different things)

8:18-28

Discovery 1. Christians are secure (save and assured), because even in the present sufferings, they are sustained by hope in the renewal of all things, by the help of the Holy Spirit and by realising God's sovereign control of every circumstance.

Three facts encourage Christians amidst their present sufferings. The future renewal of everything, the present intercession of the Holy Spirit and the eternal sovereign control of God over everything that happens. God is working *for, in and over* Christians!

- Romans 8:18-25 teaches that God is working for the future of Christians. Hope in God's future renewal of everything, including the resurrection of their mortal bodies, sustains Christians amidst their sufferings.
- Romans 8:26-27 teaches that God is working in the present of Christians. The Holy Spirit continually helps Christians in their weakness. He especially intercedes for them, praying according to God's perfect will for the very needs, they cannot express in words.
- Romans 8:28 teaches that God is working above the circumstances of Christians. With sovereignty God controls everything that happens to them during their life.

8:29-30

Discovery 2. Christians are secure, because they are the objects of God's eternal plan of salvation.

Christians are predestined to the attainment of eternal life (cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:13-15; 2 Timothy 1:9). God's eternal purpose for Christians is their *complete* salvation from beginning to end! God's electing love is *the beginning* of their salvation and God's pre-eminent glory is *the final goal* of their salvation. All the parts of God's plan of salvation are inseparably connected. The people whom he chose (foreknew and predestined), he calls, justifies and glorifies! Their sanctification that leads to glorification is the result of God's plan of salvation. Therefore actual sanctification in the life of Christians is the evidence of their election (Ephesians 1:4-5). Thus, God works out everything in conformity with his eternal purpose (Ephesians 1:11; Romans 9:11; Isaiah 14:24,27).

8:31-34

Discovery 3. Christians are secure, because God is for (not against) them and has given to them everything needed to complete his eternal purpose for them.

If God is *for* Christians, who can be *against* them? If God has set them free from the law of sin and death (from the dominating and controlling power of their sinful nature), if God has renewed them by his indwelling Spirit, if God recognises them as his own children and heirs, if God has predestined them to justification, holiness and final glorification, then who can be against them (Romans 8:31)?

If God has done the greater, will he leave the lesser undone? If God has completed his work of salvation *through* Jesus Christ, he will certainly complete his work of salvation *in* Christians (his chosen ones) (Romans 8:33)! If God in his eternal purpose gave his own Son, Jesus Christ, for Christians, he will certainly in time give to Christians everything they need for the completion of their salvation! God's infinite love for Christians cannot and will not fail Christians (Romans 8:32)! If God is the Final Judge who justifies those whom he has chosen, then not a single accusation against Christians will remain standing! The four reasons why no one can condemn Christians anymore are Christ's death, resurrection, enthronement and continual intercession (Romans 8:33-34).

8:35-39

Discovery 4. Christians are secure, because the love of God for them is infinite and unchangeable.

Christians are "more than conquerors" over people, because no human being can separate them from God's infinite love for them. No one whom Christians face in the world can hinder God from accomplishing his eternal purpose with Christians! God not only deprives sufferings, which people inflict on Christians, from doing any real or permanent harm to Christians, but he even uses these sufferings in a sovereign way to contribute to the ultimate good of Christians! The sufferings, which Christians suffer, enlarge the final glory of their victory (Romans 8:35-37).

Christians are “more than conquerors” over things, because nothing in creation can separate them from God’s infinite love for them. Nothing Christians face in the secular world, in the spirit world, in the present or future world is able to separate them from God’s love for them! In order to prevent despondency from even the possibility of getting a foothold, Paul adds that “no created thing” shall be able to separate Christians from God’s love for them!

STEP 3. QUESTION.

EXPLANATIONS

Consider. WHICH QUESTION ABOUT ANYTHING IN THIS PASSAGE WOULD YOU LIKE TO ASK TO THIS GROUP?

Let us try to understand all the truths in Romans 8:18-39 and ask questions about the things we still do not understand.

Record. Formulate your question as clearly as possible. Then write your question in your notebook.

Share. (After the group members have had about two minutes to think and write, let each person first share his question.)

Discuss. (Then, choose a few of these questions and try to answer them by discussing them together in your group.)

(The following are examples of questions the students might ask and some notes about the discussion of the questions.)

8:18-25

Question 1. How does hope sustain Christians amidst their sufferings?

Notes. Romans 8:18-25 describes God’s work for the future of Christians. Christians are sustained amidst their present sufferings by the hope in God’s promised future renewal of everything, including the resurrection of their mortal bodies.

(1) The subjection of the present creation to frustration and decay is temporary.

God subjected the whole material and irrational creation to “frustration” (emptiness, futility, purposelessness, transitoriness) (Greek: *mataiotés*) (cf. Ephesians 4:17, empty words 2 Peter 2:18), that is, to share in the curse of fallen man. The present creation is transitory, is bound to decay and therefore groans under its purposelessness. It groans because it does not achieve the purpose, which God intended for it. The various parts of creation groan together as a grand symphony of sighs (Romans 8:22).

However, its groaning is not hopeless, but is like the groaning of an expecting mother. It knows that after the agony of its travail, glory will certainly come. Also Christians groan inwardly and wait eagerly for the revelation of this future glory (the new earth)! Christians have the Holy Spirit as “the first fruits” or “the first down payment” (deposit, pawn, pledge), which guarantees that they will possess this future inheritance of glory (Romans 8:23).

(2) The future renewal of all things is a matter of hope, an absolute future certainty and future reality!

In the future, at the renewal of all things (cf. Matthew 19:28; Acts 3:21; Isaiah 65:17; 2 Peter 3:13), the whole creation will be liberated from its bondage to decay and share in the future glory of Christians. Hebrews 12:26-29 teaches that at the second coming of Christ the whole creation will be “shaken” (Greek: *seió*, shake, tremble). “Whatever can be shaken will be removed”. God will consume everything that is unworthy of him in the white heat of his holiness and purity (Hebrews 12:29). Christ’s angels will (destroy or) weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil (Matthew 13:41).

However, “whatever cannot be shaken will remain”. God’s kingdom that Christians share with Christ is unshakeable (Hebrews 12:28). Heaven and earth will be renewed, heaven with its perfect conditions will come down to earth and earth will become the home of Christians (2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1-5). The world will be clothed in new beauty. The mountains will turn into fertile fields (Isaiah 29:17) and deserts will rejoice and blossom (Isaiah 35:1-2; Isaiah 32:15-16). The harmony of heaven will descend on to the new earth, so that whatever still works at cross-purposes, tearing one another up and choking one another to death, will then live and work in harmony. For example, the wild animals will dwell in peace together (Isaiah 11:1-9). Christians will be manifested in their true character as sons of God (Romans 8:19). The full glory of their adoption as sons will then be completely realised, especially in the resurrection of their physical bodies (Romans 8:23).

Christians are characterised by having hope (that is, a very certain expectation) in this future renewal of all things! Christians are saved by faith and their salvation is sustained by hope, that is, their present salvation is conditioned/determined by hope and oriented/directed towards hope. Christians know that the salvation they now possess is incomplete and that the future final and complete salvation is a matter of hope (expectation) as well as a matter of future certainty and reality! Although Christians cannot see the object of their hope with their human eyes, this future renewal of all things is nevertheless a certain future reality! That is why Christians wait patiently for this future, that is, Christians can bear the present sufferings on earth with endurance (Romans 8:25).

8:26-27

Question 2. How does the Holy Spirit sustain Christians amidst their sufferings?

Notes. Romans 8:26-27 describes God’s work in Christians. Christians are sustained amidst their present sufferings by the continual help of the Holy Spirit. They are sustained in all kinds of weaknesses, especially by his pleading

(intercession) for them. The Holy Spirit prays in accordance to the perfect will of God for the very needs which Christians cannot express in words or do not even realise that they have these needs.

(1) The Holy Spirit helps Christians in all their weaknesses.

“In the same way” (Romans 8:26) means, just as hope in the glorious future sustains Christians in their present sufferings, likewise the Holy Spirit helps Christians in their present weaknesses. The Spirit is represented as humbly taking upon himself a part of the burden of sorrows, which Christians bear and as continuously coming to the aid of Christians. The weaknesses may be any kind of weakness (Hebrews 4:15; 2 Corinthians 12:5): either the ordinary sufferings of a broken world or the specific sufferings for Christ’s sake. It is certainly not restricted to their weakness in the matter of prayer!

(2) The Holy Spirit helps Christians especially in the needs, which they can’t express in words or do not realise they have.

There is always moral and spiritual failure on the part of Christians, so that they fall short of what they ought to be, do or pray. Christians do not always know what they ought to pray for, that is, what prayer suits a particular situation. Although they know what to pray for *generally*, they often do not know what to pray for in a *specific* need, difficulty or situation. They are not sure if the content of their prayer is in harmony with God’s will (cf. 1 John 5:14). Christians often do not even know the deeply hidden needs of their own heart. Therefore they cannot express them in their prayers.

But the Holy Spirit knows the real needs of Christians, both the needs Christians cannot express in words as well as the needs they do not even know they have. As a true Advocate (Representative of Christ), the Holy Spirit identifies himself with the real needs of Christians and intercedes with God the Father that these needs be met! Because the Spirit’s way of thinking is God’s way of thinking, the Spirit’s intercession is *perfect* and *always effective*! The pleading (intercession) of the Spirit in the Christian to God *can never fail*!

- That is why not a single genuine Christian is ever lost (Romans 8:29-30; John 18:9).
- That is why nothing happens to a Christian that does not first have God’s permission (Matthew 10:29).
- That is why nothing happens to a Christian, that does not genuinely contribute to the attainment of God’s perfect plan for him (Romans 8:28)!
- That is why no seduction (temptation) or trial is ever too big (1 Corinthians 10:13).

8:28-30

Question 3. How does God’s sovereign control of every circumstance sustain Christians amidst their sufferings?

Notes. Romans 8:28-30 describes God’s work above Christians. Christians are sustained amidst their present sufferings by God’s sovereign control of everything that happens to them.

(1) God has sovereign control over the particular circumstances of Christians.

Christians are not immune or exempted from suffering. Nevertheless, they know that to those who love God, all things work together for good; that is, to those who are called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28). This is a great comfort, encouragement and assurance only for Christians, for those who love the God of the Bible continuously.

Christians know this comfort, encouragement and assurance by personal experience, by the experience of also other Christians and by the teachings of the Bible. Both good and bad circumstances and events cooperate together to attain God’s perfect plan. Many events in the life of a Christian are evil in themselves, but due to God’s perfect love, grace and wisdom, God makes even those evil things work together for good to both the individual Christian and to the progress of his kingdom and glory. Ultimately, there is nothing that does not contribute to the good for a Christian!

“The LORD works out everything for his own ends – even the wicked for a day of disaster” (Proverbs 16:4).”I bring prosperity and create disaster” (Isaiah 45: 7). “I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth” (Romans 9:17).

(2) God has sovereign control over the complete salvation of Christians.

The glorification of believers. God has an eternal plan for his creation, for history and for every Christian and that plan cannot and will not fail (cf. Isaiah 14:24,27)! From the beginning God chose Christians to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit and through belief in the truth. He called them to this through the gospel, so that they might share in the glory of Jesus Christ (cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14 and Romans 8:29-30). God has an eternal purpose, in which he chose certain people to be saved and in which he predetermined them to be conformed to Christ’s likeness (Romans 8:29; cf. Ephesians 1:4).

God carries out his eternal plan in time (cf. Ephesians 1:10). What God had purposed in eternity, he carries out in time. God is always first, not only in what he purposed in eternity, but also in what he carries out in time. The first coming of Jesus Christ took place “when the time had fully come” (Galatians 4:4). At some time in human history, God takes the initiative to call those people whom he chose in eternity (2 Timothy 1:9-10). He calls them by means of other Christians whom he sent out to preach the gospel. He calls them through the outward call of the gospel that is preached and

through the inner call of the Holy Spirit that regenerates them and gives them faith (Acts 13:48; 16:14; 18:27; Ephesians 2:8-9; Philippians 1:29; Hebrews 12:2) to receive Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.

The outward call through the gospel is not always effective (cf. Matthew 10:14; Matthew 22:14). There are always people who hear the gospel, but do not respond to it or even reject it. But *the inner call of God is always effective* (cf. Romans 1:7)! That is why John 6:44 and 37 teaches that, when God draws people to Christ in his sovereign way, they will certainly come to Christ and they will certainly be saved! And that is why Romans 8:29-30 teaches that the person God calls is justified and the person that is justified is also glorified. God in his sovereignty controls the complete salvation of Christians from beginning to end!

The pre-eminence of Jesus Christ. There is one final end that is more ultimate than the glorification of believers and that is the pre-eminence of Christ (Colossians 1:18)! Christ will always remain the “firstborn among many brothers” (Romans 8:29). Jesus Christ never considers himself completely apart from the people that he came to save (Hebrews 2:11). That is why Christians are called “his brothers”. But among all these brothers, Christ is pre-eminent! That is why Jesus Christ is called “the Firstborn”.

The expression “First-born” is admirably suited to describe Jesus as the one coming forth from God to found the New Community of saints, the brotherhood of Christians, the Church. Jesus Christ is the First of this New Community! The purpose of God in the salvation of people was not simply that people should be holy and happy, but that through their holiness and happiness, the glory of Jesus Christ should be displayed everywhere and forever. Jesus Christ, and not the elected Christians, is the central point of God’s history of salvation in the universe. “The Holy Spirit will glorify Jesus Christ” (John 16:14)! The glory of Jesus Christ is the manifestation of the glory of God the Father in its highest form. The highest goal of both the creation and the salvation is the glory of God (Romans 11:33-36)! Soli Deo Gloria!

8:31-34

Question 4. How does God’s vindication of Christians sustain them amidst their sufferings?

Notes. Romans 8:31-34 describes God’s work for Christians. Christians are sustained amidst their present sufferings by God’s vindication (God defends them against accusations, clear them from blame and declare that they are right).

(1) God is for Christians!

God gave Jesus Christ to believers! Therefore God will also graciously give to believers all things that are required to complete their salvation! The result is that Christians have the assurance that they will certainly be preserved from apostasy and deadly sins. A promise of salvation, which does not include holiness, includes nothing! In the Bible, salvation is utterly contradictory and irreconcilable to sin. Salvation includes the certainty of holiness. The very end of salvation is holiness! Therefore, God’s promise and work of salvation (justification) includes God’s promise and work of holiness. God’s justification of sinners is unthinkable without God’s sanctification of sinners! When God has given his greatest gift, Jesus Christ, to Christians, he will certainly give them every other gift needed to complete their salvation. God’s infinite love for Christians cannot fail Christians and will not fail Christians (Romans 8:31-32)!

(2) God declares Christians to be right.

If God is the Final Judge who declares that those whom he chose are right (when God justifies them), then no accusation counts anymore!

There is nothing one should dread more than sin. But if sin has been pardoned and removed in justification, then there is nothing left to fear! There is no one that can summon Christians to the bar of justice. Although the conscience of Christians still upbraids them, it no longer terrifies them (1 John 3:19-20)! Although Christians as God’s children show sorrow for their sins (2 Corinthians 7:9-11), they do not despair like the lost (Revelation 6:15-17). Although Christians still commit particular sins (1 John 1:8,10), they confess their sins and are completely forgiven and cleansed (1 John 1:9).

There are four reasons why no one can condemn (doom) Christians anymore.

- The sacrificial death of Christ made atonement for sins and removed the ground for condemnation.
- The resurrection of Christ is the evidence that God has accepted his sacrifice of atonement and that all his claims about himself are valid.
- The ascension and enthronement of Christ indicates that he is the sovereign Director of all events in the past, in the present and in the future and of every aspect of the personal life of a Christian.
- The permanent high priesthood of Christ (Hebrews 7:24-25) and his continual intercession as the Advocate of Christians with God the Father in heaven (1 John 2:1-2; Hebrews 4:14-16) is the evidence that he purposes to save all Christians completely. In his intercession for Christians he guarantees that the benefits of his death are applied to the lives of Christians, pleads their cause before God and sees to it that God’s endless supply of grace keeps coming to their lives (Romans 8:33-34; John 1:16).

8:35-39

Question 5. How does God's love sustain Christians amidst their sufferings?

Notes. Romans 8:35-39 describes God's love for Christians. Amidst all their suffering (within the present creation and history of the world) God's love sustains Christians. No-one and nothing in this life or in death can separate a Christian from God's love for him. Christ has overcome the world and remains the conqueror (Greek: *nenikéka*) (perfect tense) (John 16:33) and Christians are "more than conquerors or "are gaining a glorious victory" (Greek: *hupernikaó*) (present tense) (Romans 8:37) through him who love them once and for all time (aorist tense)!

STEP 4. APPLY.

APPLICATIONS

Consider. WHICH TRUTHS IN THIS PASSAGE ARE POSSIBLE APPLICATIONS FOR CHRISTIANS?

Share and record. Let us brainstorm with one another and record a list of possible applications from Romans 8:18-39.

Consider. WHICH POSSIBLE APPLICATION DOES GOD WANT YOU TO TURN INTO A PERSONAL APPLICATION?

Record. Write this personal application down in your notebook. Feel free to share your personal application.

(Remember that people in every group will apply different truths or even make different applications of the same truth. The following is a list of possible applications.)

1. Examples of possible applications from Romans 8:18-39.

8:18. Consider your present sufferings in the light of the future glory.

8:20-21. Although the present creation is subjected to frustration and bound to decay, Christians have nevertheless been given the cultural commission in Genesis 1:28, to care for God's creation and to preserve God's creation.

8:23-24. Realise that you have been saved by faith (from the guilt, power and doom of sin) in order to ultimately be completely saved (also from physical death).

8:26-27. The Holy Spirit in you intercedes for you from the earth, while Christ intercedes for you from heaven. The Holy Spirit prays for your unexpressed needs from within you to God. Jesus Christ prays for the fulfilment of God's plan and purposes for your life and changes all your imperfect prayers on earth into perfect prayers in heaven (cf. Revelation 8:3-5).

8:28. Believe that everything that happens to you has God's permission and will ultimately accomplish God's plan and purposes for your life. Of course you can only believe this, when you have been called by God and love God.

8:29-30. Never doubt that God has called you, has justified you, and will sanctify you completely, that is, will glorify you. He will complete the good work, which he began in you (Philippians 1:6).

8:31-32. Believe that when God has given the greatest gift (his Son, Jesus Christ) to you, then he will not withhold any good thing from you!

8:33-34. Believe that when God has declared that you are right (has justified you), no accusations (of men or of against you will be able to stand (also not on the Last Judgement Day)(Hebrews 8:12)!

8:35-39. Be absolutely convinced that there is no one and nothing in the whole creation or in the history of this world that can separate you from God's love for you!

2. Examples of personal applications from Romans 8:18-39.

The hope that God has given to me from Romans chapter 8 sustains me in my sickness, sufferings and persecutions persecution. All these sufferings are temporary. When God has renewed the universe, there will be no more sickness, suffering, persecutions or death. Then the perfect conditions of the new heaven will come down on the new earth and Christians will share in the glory of Christ forever!

The love of God for me sustains me in my sufferings of sickness or persecution. Nobody and nothing in the universe can separate me from God's infinite and unchangeable love for me! That is why I am more than a conqueror over people, things and events that try to harm me. I am gaining a glorious victory. God's love for me uses even the setbacks and difficulties in my life to fulfil his perfect plan for my life.

STEP 5. PRAY.

RESPONSE

LET US TAKE TURNS TO PRAY ABOUT ONE TRUTH THAT GOD HAS TAUGHT US in Romans 8:18-39.

(Respond in your prayer to what you have learned during this Bible study. Practise to pray only in one or two sentences. Remember that people in every group will pray about different issues.)

5

PRAYER (8 minutes)

**[INTERCESSION]
PRAY FOR OTHERS**

Continue to pray in groups of two's or three's. Pray for one another and for the people in the world (Romans 15:30; Colossians 4:12).

(Group leader. Give the group members this preparation for at home in writing or let them copy it down).

1. Commitment. Be committed to make disciples, build the Church and preach the kingdom.
2. Preach, teach or study Romans 8:18-39 with another person or group of people.
3. Personal time with God. Have a quiet time from half a chapter of **Isaiah 1, 2, 3 and 4** each day.
Make use of the favourite truth method. Make notes.
4. Memorisation. **(13) Romans 10:9-10.** Daily review the last 5 memorised Bible verses.
5. Teaching. Prepare **the parable of “the rash builder”** and **the parable of “the reckless king”** in Luke 14:28-33.
Make use of the six guidelines for interpreting parables.
6. Prayer. Pray for someone or something specific this week and see what God is doing (Psalm 5:3).
7. Update your notebook on preaching God’s kingdom. Include your notes on quiet time, your memorisation notes, your Bible study notes and this preparation.