



# FAMILY CONNECTIONS

Find time to explore these questions as a family after each session.

## Session 1

- How interested are you in politics?
- What do the terms *Republican Party* and *Democratic Party* mean to you, in terms of the respective political beliefs of each party?
- Is God a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or bigger than them all? Explain.

## Session 2

- What does it mean to be a good citizen?
- How does voting rank on the list of good citizenship behaviors? Explain.
- What role does God play in the political process?
- Does God care whether we participate in the political process?
- Is it a sin not to vote? Why or why not?

## Session 3

- What is your opinion of politicians in general? On what do you base your opinion?
- Some politicians get caught in lies and bad personal decision making. What factors contribute to causing these behaviors to happen?
- At what point does a politician's personal sins disqualify him or her from further public service?
- Are forgiveness and reconciliation possible for politicians who lie and make bad personal decisions? Why or why not?

## Session 4

- When have you heard an explicitly political viewpoint expressed in church, whether by an individual in conversation, by the preacher in a sermon, or in another way? What one word best describes how this viewpoint made you feel?
- Are some political topics more appropriate than others for discussion at church?
- Is it possible that there could be situations in which the church would be morally wrong *not* to talk about a political issue? Why or why not?
- What are the dangers of having political conversations in the church? What are the benefits of having political conversations in the church?



# SONG LYRICS

## Peter (What I Said)

What I'm saying, friend, may surprise you  
Though I trust you will listen and hear  
I'm not out to make you angry  
We both know beneath our anger lies our fear  
It sounds so simple and it's so complicated  
Not gentle, not just a warm feeling  
Many will die in the name of peace  
But war will not lead us to healing

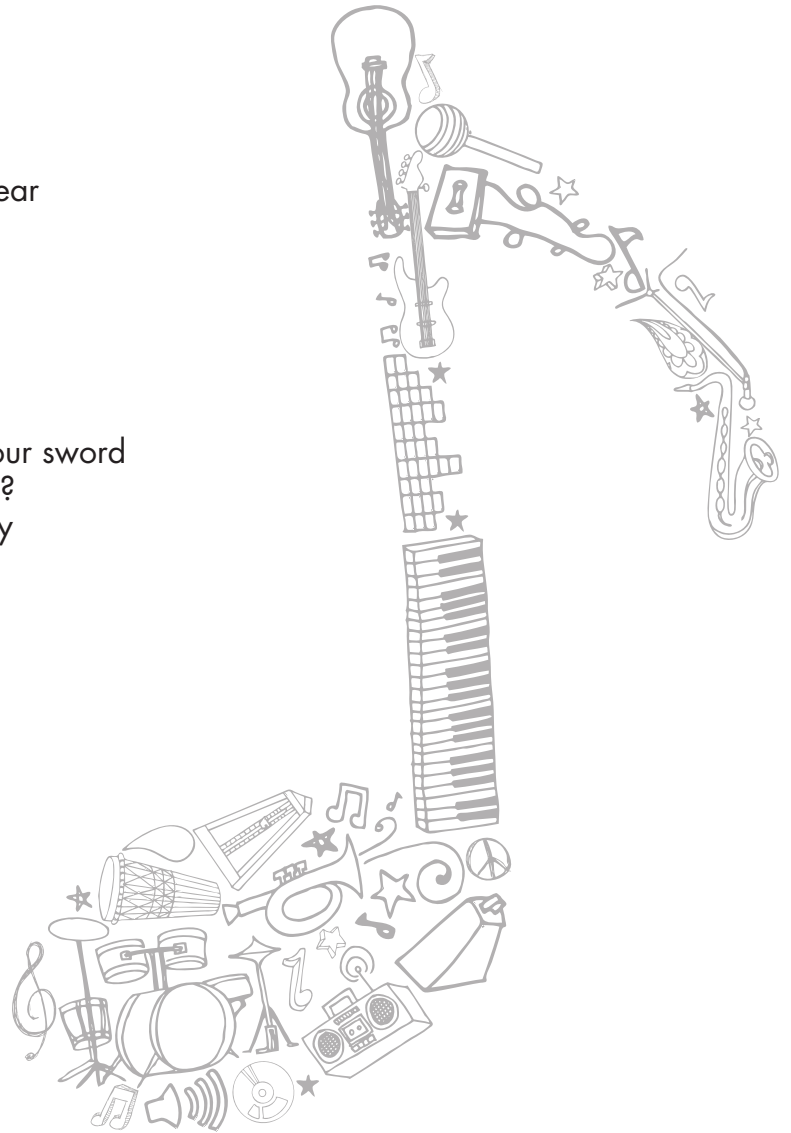
### Chorus:

And I meant what I said, Peter, put down your sword  
Did you forget or did you think I was joking?  
This is not why I'm here, Peter, not to destroy  
The world is already so broken  
Maybe you think I'm a fool  
Maybe a fool's what I am  
Maybe I will die for nothing  
And nothing will change in the end

Yes, I am scared and I'm angry  
That we live in this occupied land  
Where the Romans can kill us at random  
But the Romans do not rule my hands  
There are so many lives on the line here  
This is not some philosopher's game  
And if you draw your sword Peter  
You may not raise that sword in my name

God bless the children of Abraham  
God bless the Romans who reign  
God bless the peacemakers and warriors  
Who each think the other insane

But I meant what I said, Peter, put down your sword  
Did you forget or did you think I was joking?



To learn more about David LaMotte's music and work, visit [davidlamotte.com](http://davidlamotte.com). This song is available on iTunes or can be ordered on CD through [cdbaby.com/cd/lamotte](http://cdbaby.com/cd/lamotte).

Words and music by David LaMotte, © 2002 Lower Dryad Music/ASCAP. Used by permission.



© 2011 Geneva Press

Permission to reproduce this page granted to purchasers of this material.

Web Resource 1a  
690505



# SCRIPT



## Roles:

Narrator  
Jesus  
Chief Priests  
Scribes  
Elders

**Narrator:** The chief priests, scribes, and elders sent some Pharisees and followers of Herod to bait Jesus, hoping to catch him saying something incriminating. They came up and said,

**Chief Priests:** Teacher, we know you have integrity, that you are indifferent to public opinion, don't pander to your students, and teach the way of God accurately. Tell us: Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not?

**Narrator:** Jesus knew it was a trick question, and said,

**Jesus:** Why are you playing these games with me? Bring me a coin and let me look at it.

**Narrator:** They handed Jesus a coin.

**Jesus:** This engraving—who does it look like? And whose name is on it?

**Scribes and Elders:** Caesar.

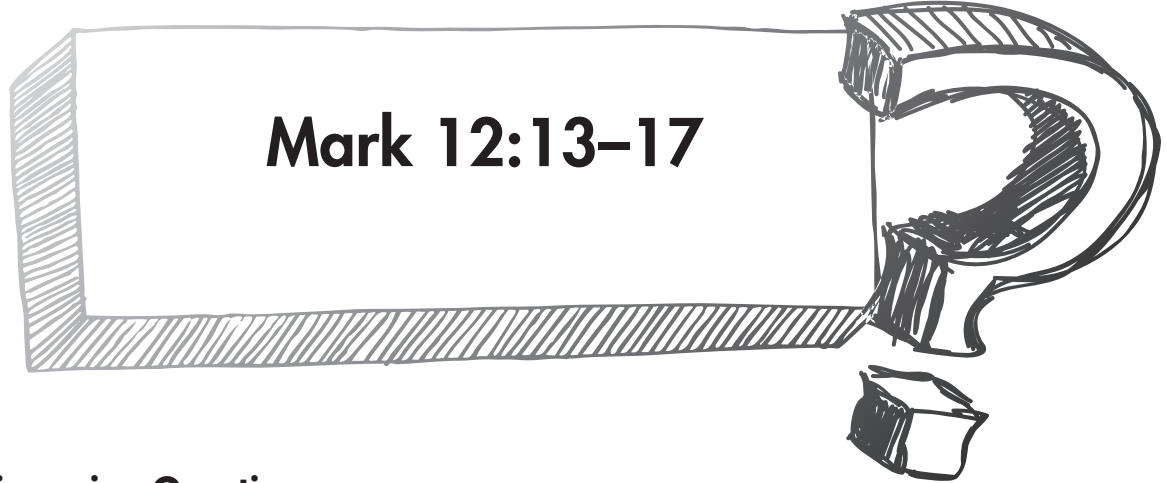
**Jesus:** Give Caesar what is his, and give God what is his.

**Narrator:** The mouths of the chief priests, scribes, and elders hung open, speechless.

Adapted from Mark 12:13–17. Scripture taken from THE MESSAGE, Copyright © 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996. Used by permission of NavPress Publishing Group.



## SESSION 1 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



### Discussion Questions

In what ways were the questions from the chief priests, scribes, and elders (vv. 14–15) a trap?

In the first sentence of verse 14, Jesus' opponents compliment and flatter him. Do you think they are being sincere in their flattery? Why or why not? What are they trying to accomplish by complimenting Jesus?

How does Jesus' answer (v. 17) help him avoid the trap set by his opponents?

Does Jesus' answer mean that God and the emperor are equals? Why or why not? How do the emperor's "things" relate to God's "things"?

If this session's question was rewritten to apply to Jesus' place and time, it would look something like this: "Is God a Roman or a Palestinian?" How does Mark 12:13–17 help you respond to this question?

How does Mark 12:13–17 help you respond to the question *Is God a Republican or a Democrat?*



# BARMEN DECLARATION LITANY

**One:** Let us worship God.

**Group 1:** "I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one comes to the Father, but by me" (John 14:6).

**Group 2:** "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber. . . . I am the door; if anyone enters by me, he will be saved" (John 10:1, 9).

**Leader:** Jesus Christ, as he is attested for us in Holy Scripture, is the one Word of God which we have to hear and which we have to trust and obey in life and in death.

**All:** We reject the false doctrine, as though the church could and would have to acknowledge as a source of its proclamation, apart from and besides this one Word of God, still other events and powers, figures and truths, as God's revelation.

**Leader:** "Fear God. Honor the emperor" (1 Peter 2:17).

**Group 1:** Scripture tells us that, in the as yet unredeemed world in which the church also exists, the State has by divine appointment the task of providing for justice and peace.

**Group 2:** Scripture fulfills this task by means of the threat and exercise of force, according to the measure of human judgment and human ability.

**Leader:** The church acknowledges the benefit of this divine appointment in gratitude and reverence before him.

**Group 1:** The church calls to mind the Kingdom of God, God's commandment and righteousness, and thereby the responsibility both of rulers and of the ruled.

**Group 2:** The church trusts and obeys the power of the Word by which God upholds all things.

**All:** We reject the false doctrine, as though the State, over and beyond its special commission, should and could become the single and totalitarian order of human life, thus fulfilling the church's vocation as well. . . .

**Group 1:** "Lo, I am with you always . . ."

**Group 2:** "to the close of the age." (Matt. 28:20)

Adapted from the Theological Declaration of Barmen (8.10–8.12, 8.22–8.25), in the *Book of Confessions* (Louisville: Office of the General Assembly, Presbyterian Church [U.S.A.], 2007, pp. 249–250).





# INTERVIEWS

## **Person 1—**

What is the nicest, most generous, most selfless thing that you have ever done for \_\_\_\_\_?

Name:

Thing:

## **Person 2—**

What is the nicest, most generous, most selfless thing that you have ever done for \_\_\_\_\_?

Name:

Thing:

## **Person 3—**

What is the nicest, most generous, most selfless thing that you have ever done for \_\_\_\_\_?

Name:

Thing:

## **Person 4—**

What is the nicest, most generous, most selfless thing that you have ever done for \_\_\_\_\_?

Name:

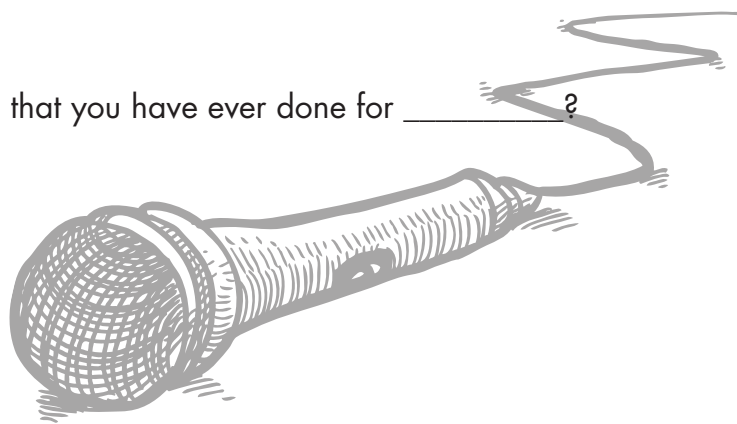
Thing:

## **Person 5—**

What is the nicest, most generous, most selfless thing that you have ever done for \_\_\_\_\_?

Name:

Thing:





## SESSION 2 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### Romans 13:1–10



#### Discussion Questions

Paul begins this passage by saying that “governing authorities . . . that exist have been instituted by God.” Do you agree? Why or why not? How do we reconcile this statement with evil or corrupt governments?

How do you feel about Paul’s assertion that government is “God’s servant for your good” (v. 4)?

Paul argues that his readers should be good citizens not just out of fear of punishment, but for another reason (v. 5). What is this reason, and do you agree? Which is the more important reason to be a good citizen? Why?

Why is Paul so concerned that his readers obey the governing authorities and pay their taxes—that is, be good citizens?

If Paul were writing in the United States today, what other specific behaviors might he include under the heading of being a good citizen?

Between verses 7 and 8, Paul moves from the subject of paying taxes to the subject of loving one another. In what ways can love for others be connected to paying taxes and otherwise being a good citizen?

Based on this Scripture passage, how would Paul have answered the question *Is it a sin not to vote?*

Is It a Sin Not to Vote?



## SESSION 2 FAITH STATEMENT

God's redeeming work in Jesus Christ embraces the whole of human life: social and cultural, economic and political, scientific and technological, individual and corporate. It includes the natural environment as exploited and despoiled by sin. It is the will of God that the divine purpose for human life shall be fulfilled under the rule of Christ and all evil be banished from creation.

—Confession of 1967, Inclusive Language Text (9.53)

**FAiTh**







## ROMANS 3:9–20

1

**Part 1:** So where does that put us?

2

**Part 2:** Do we Jews get a better break than the others?

3

**Part 3:** Not really.

1

**Part 1:** Basically, all of us, whether insiders or outsiders, start out in identical conditions, which is to say that we all start out as sinners.

**All:** Scripture leaves no doubt about it:

2

**Part 2:** There's nobody living right, not even one, nobody who knows the score, nobody alert for God.

3

**Part 3:** They've all taken the wrong turn; they've all wandered down blind alleys.

2

**Part 2:** No one's living right; I can't find a single one.

1

**Part 1:** Their throats are gaping graves, their tongues slick as mudslides. Every word they speak is tinged with poison.

**All:** They open their mouths and pollute the air.

3

**Part 3:** They race for the honor of sinner-of-the-year, litter the land with heartbreak and ruin,

2

**Part 2:** They don't know the first thing about living with others.

1

**Part 1:** They never give God the time of day.

3

**Part 3:** This makes it clear, doesn't it, that whatever is written in these Scriptures is not what God says about others but to us to whom these Scriptures were addressed in the first place!

1

**Part 1:** And it's clear enough, isn't it, that we're sinners, every one of us, in the same sinking boat with everybody else?

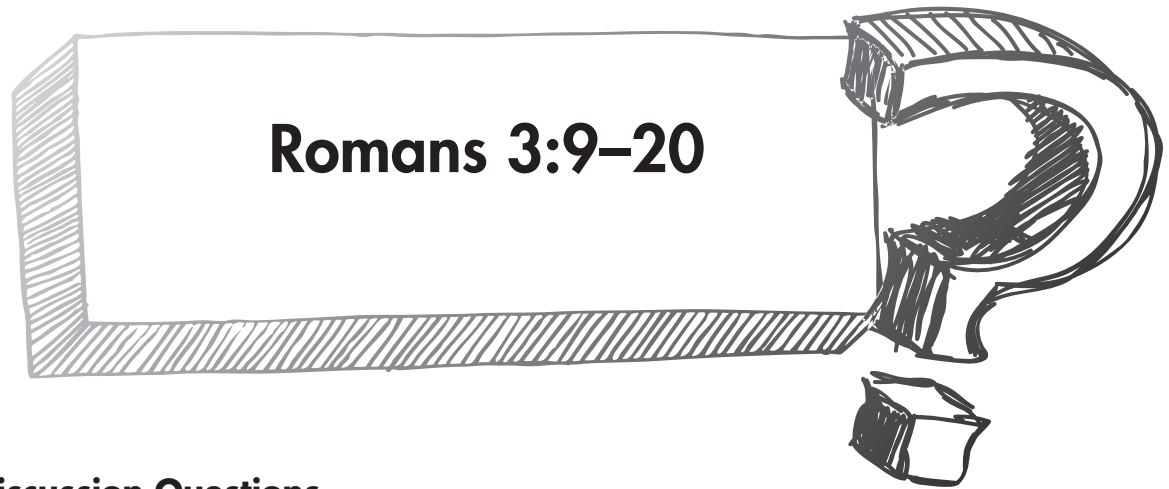
**All:** Our involvement with God's revelation doesn't put us right with God.

2

**Part 2:** What it does is force us to face our complicity in everyone else's sin.

Adapted from Romans 3:9–20. Scripture taken from THE MESSAGE, Copyright © 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996. Used by permission of NavPress Publishing Group.

## SESSION 3 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



### Romans 3:9–20

#### Discussion Questions

Romans 3:9–20 picks up in the middle of a long argument Paul is making in response to people who think they're better than others because they belong to one particular group or another. Paul will have none of this. What force does Paul say we're all under the power of?

What's the definition of *sin*?

In verses 10–18, Paul quotes several different passages from the Old Testament. What one word describes the tone of these verses? How do they make you feel?

These verses quoted from the Old Testament refer to specific parts of the body to show different ways that humans sin: throats, tongues, lips, mouths, feet. What kinds of sins do we commit with these body parts? What body parts are missing from this list?

When you think about your own behavior and your sins, who is most affected by the wrong that you do: yourself, others, or God?

Read verse 20 again. If no one can be justified in God's sight by doing good deeds, what hope does any of us have?

Based on this Scripture passage, how would Paul have answered the question *Why do some politicians lie and make bad decisions in their personal lives?*

In view of Romans 3:9–20, how should we react to the sins committed by some politicians?



## SESSION 3 FAITH STATEMENT

### **Q. 20. Was the image of God lost when we turned from God by falling into sin?**

Yes and no. Sin means that all our relations with others have become distorted and confused. Although we did not cease to be with God, our fellow human beings, and other creatures, we did cease to be for them; and although we did not lose our distinctive human capacities completely, we did lose the ability to use them rightly, especially in relation to God. Having ruined our connection with God by disobeying God's will, we are persons with hearts curved in upon ourselves. We have become slaves to the sin of which we are guilty, helpless to save ourselves, and are free, so far as freedom remains, only within the bounds of sin.

—*Study Catechism: Full Version*

**FAiTh**



# OPENING CONVERSATION

Describe a time when you really wanted something and it required persuading someone else to give it to you or help you get it.

- What argument(s) did you make to state your case?
- What strategies did you use in your conversation?
- Did you succeed? Why or why not?
- What did you learn from the experience?

Describe a time when you really wanted something and it required persuading someone else to give it to you or help you get it.

- What argument(s) did you make to state your case?
- What strategies did you use in your conversation?
- Did you succeed? Why or why not?
- What did you learn from the experience?





## ACTS 4:23–31

**Narrator:** As soon as Peter and John were let go, they went to their friends and told them what the high priests and religious leaders had said. Hearing the report, they lifted their voices in a wonderful harmony in prayer:

**All:** Strong God, you made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them. By the Holy Spirit you spoke through the mouth of your servant and our father, David:

Why the big noise, nations?

Why the mean plots, peoples?

Earth's leaders push for position,

Potentates meet for summit talks,

The God-deniers, the Messiah-defiers!

For in fact they did meet—Herod and Pontius Pilate with nations and peoples, even Israel itself!—met in this very city to plot against your holy Son Jesus, the One you made Messiah, to carry out the plans you long ago set in motion. And now they're at it again! Take care of their threats and give your servants fearless confidence in preaching your Message, as you stretch out your hand to us in healings and miracles and wonders done in the name of your holy servant Jesus.

**Narrator:** While they were praying, the place where they were meeting trembled and shook. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak God's Word with fearless confidence.



Adapted from Acts 4:23–31. Scripture taken from THE MESSAGE, Copyright © 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996. Used by permission of NavPress Publishing Group.



# Is It OK or Not OK to Talk about Politics at Church?

## SESSION 4 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### Acts 4:23–31

#### Discussion Questions

The Scripture passage begins, “After [Peter and John] were released . . .” This tells us right off the bat that the people of this very early Christian congregation took great risks and put themselves in real physical danger by doing the work of the church. How would your life be different if you could be thrown in jail for confessing faith in Christ?

What other examples of people can you think of who have been or are being persecuted for professing their faith?

After Peter and John tell their friends about their experiences, the people immediately begin to pray. What feelings and emotions are expressed in the prayer?

The church’s prayer in verses 24–30 is very political: it speaks of kings and rulers and calls out certain political figures by name. How is this prayer like or unlike the prayers in your congregation’s worship services?

What does the prayer in verses 24–30 ask God for? What evidence can you find in the passage that the prayer was answered?

The prayer begins, “Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth . . .” (v. 24). If God is creator and ruler of everything, what does this tell us about whether politics has a place in church?

What does the Scripture passage have to say about the issue of talking about politics in church? If it is OK to talk about politics at church, what are the limits to this sort of talk?





## SESSION 4 FAITH STATEMENT

In a broken and fearful world the Spirit gives us courage to pray without ceasing, to witness among all peoples to Christ as Lord and Savior, to unmask idolatries in Church and culture, to hear the voices of peoples long silenced, and to work with others for justice, freedom, and peace.

—A Brief Statement of Faith (lines 65–71)

FAiTh





## CLOSING LITANY

**Part 1:** Let us worship God.

**Part 2:** To be reconciled to God is to be sent into the world as God's reconciling community.

**Part 3:** This community,

**All:** the church universal,

**Part 3:** is entrusted with God's message of reconciliation and shares God's labor of healing the enmities which separate people from God and from each other.

**Part 1:** Wherever the church exists, its members are both gathered in corporate life and dispersed in society for the sake of mission in the world.

**Part 3:** In each time and place, there are particular problems and crises through which God calls the church to act.

**All:** The church,

**Part 2:** guided by the Spirit,

**Part 1:** humbled by its own complicity

**Part 3:** and instructed by all attainable knowledge,

**All:** seeks to discern the will of God and learn how to obey in these concrete situations.

**Part 1:** God has created the peoples of the earth to be one universal family.

**Part 2:** In his reconciling love, God overcomes the barriers between sisters and brothers

**Part 3:** and breaks down every form of discrimination based on racial or ethnic difference, real or imaginary.

**All:** The church is called to bring all people to receive and uphold one another as persons in all relationships of life:

**Part 2:** in employment,

**Part 1:** housing,

**Part 3:** education,

**Part 1:** leisure,

**Part 2:** marriage,

**Part 3:** family,

**Part 2:** church,

**Part 1:** and the exercise of political rights.

**All:** God's reconciliation in Jesus Christ is the ground of the peace, justice, and freedom among nations which all powers of government are called to serve and defend.

**Part 1:** The church,

**Part 2:** in its own life,

**Part 1:** is called to practice the forgiveness of enemies

**Part 3:** and to commend to the nations as practical politics the search for cooperation

**All:** and peace.

**Part 2:** The reconciliation of humankind through Jesus Christ makes it plain that enslaving poverty in a world of abundance is an intolerable violation of God's good creation.

**Part 1:** Because Jesus identified himself with the needy and exploited, the cause of the world's poor is the cause of his disciples.

**Part 2:** In the power of the risen Christ

**Part 3:** and the hope of his coming,

**All:** the church sees the promise of God's renewal of human life in society and of God's victory over all wrong.

Adapted from the Confession of 1967, Inclusive Language Version (9.31, 9.32, 9.35, 9.43, 9.44, 9.45, 9.46)  
(Louisville: Office of Theology and Worship, Presbyterian Church [U.S.A.], 2002).



© 2011 Geneva Press

Permission to reproduce this page granted to purchasers of this material.

Web Resource 4e  
690505