

GOALS FOR THE GROUP LEADER

Help the group members:

1. to explain the gospel
2. to witness about what Jesus Christ now means to them. “Out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks” (Matthew 12:34)

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 consciously submit to the testimony of the Holy Spirit who lives in you.

Theme: To praise and thank God because he caused the Great Witness of Jesus Christ to dwell in our hearts

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

John 15:26-27

²⁶ “When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father—he will testify about me. ²⁷ And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.

John 16:13-15

¹³ But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. ¹⁴ He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. ¹⁵ All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you.”

‘The Counsellor’ or ‘the Advocate’ means: ‘Someone who represents another’. The Holy Spirit (and no human religious leader) represents Jesus Christ on earth! The Holy Spirit is everything Jesus Christ would have been if he were still with us on earth (John 16:7)! The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus Christ (Romans 8:9-10). He witnessed about Jesus Christ during the Old Testament period (1 Peter 1:10-12). He still witnesses about Jesus

Christ (John 15:26), speaks the words of Jesus Christ to us (John 16:13) and glorifies Jesus Christ (John 16:14). The Holy Spirit convicts and convicts the people on the earth of sin, because they do not believe in Jesus Christ. He convicts and convicts people of righteousness (salvation) that has become a reality in Jesus Christ. And he convicts and convicts people of judgement if they continue to reject him (John 16:8-11). The Holy Spirit reminds the apostles of all the words which Jesus Christ spoke when he was still with them on earth and that is why the apostles could write down the inspired words that has become the Bible (John 14:26; cf. 2 Timothy 3:16). He also reminds Christians of the words of Jesus Christ (John 14:26).

Because the Holy Spirit dwells in the heart and body of Christians, Christians are also witnesses of Jesus Christ (John 15:27). ‘Witnessing’ means telling other people about who Jesus is and what he has done!

3. Worship

Let everyone in the small group take a turn to worship (in one or two sentences) God as the One who causes his Great Witness about Jesus Christ (the Holy Spirit) to dwell in our hearts and lives.

II. INTRODUCTION THEME (1 min.)

The theme for this meeting is: Witnessing

Read or explain in your own words.

‘Witnessing’ is telling other people who Jesus Christ is and what he has done. This includes what he has done for you personally and what he is doing now in your life. “Out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks” (Matthew 12:34)!

“He who has the Son has life. He who does not have the Son of God does not have life” (1 John 5:11-12). Whoever has life always has something important to share about Jesus Christ. But whoever does not have life has nothing worthwhile to say about Jesus Christ.

A Christian need not fear people. He acknowledges that Jesus Christ is not only his Saviour, but also the Lord (Master, King) in his heart and life. He is always prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks him to give the reason for the hope that he has (1 Peter 3:14-16).

The only Source of Christian witnessing is the Spirit of Jesus Christ. He works in the minds, hearts and lives of

people, who have received Jesus Christ and live with Jesus Christ every day.

‘Witnessing’ is telling someone the good news about Jesus Christ (the gospel). Witnessing is telling how Jesus Christ gripped hold of your life and how you submitted to him. This is called a personal salvation testimony.

But ‘witnessing’ is also telling what Jesus Christ recently did for you. It can be sharing an answer to your prayer, sharing what Jesus Christ said to you through reading the Bible or your quiet time, or sharing what he did for you. Witnessing is telling how God is transforming your life.

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: Witnessing

Day 1 Isaiah 44:6-8

Witnessing is: telling about God who knows what is going to happen

Day 2 Mark 1:40-45

Witnessing is: telling what Jesus Christ has changed in your life

Day 3 Mark 2:13-17

Witnessing is: introducing your friends to Jesus Christ

Day 4 Mark 5:1-20

Witnessing is: telling your family what Jesus Christ has done for you

Day 5 Mark 8:34-38

Witnessing is: not being ashamed to talk about Jesus Christ

Day 6^{BS} Acts 5:17-20

Witnessing is: talking about everything concerning the new life

Day 7 Acts 20:24-27

Witnessing is: to proclaim the whole will of God

Day 8 Hebrews 11:24-27

Witnessing is: letting your faith speak by means of your actions (cf. Hebrews 12:1-3)

Day 9 Isaiah 55:10-13

A witness believes that no word of God will return empty to him

Day 10 Matthew 10:16-33

A promise to those who come out for their faith in Jesus Christ

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: Explaining the gospel and witnessing

- What are the most important parts of the message of the gospel?
- How would you explain the gospel to others?
- Let a few people give a short testimony (for example: how they came to faith in Jesus Christ; or how God answered a prayer; or what God has done in the past week).

2. Commitment

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

- “How would you tell the gospel to someone?”

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.

WITNESSING

Matthew 10:32

Whoever acknowledges me before men,

I will also acknowledge him

before my Father in heaven.

Matthew 10:32 (NIV)

VI. BIBLE STUDY (45 min.)

Theme: The task of evangelisation belongs to the congregation

1. Bible Study

Make use of the 5 step method and study:

Acts 5:12-42

¹²The apostles performed many signs and wonders among the people. And all the believers used to meet together in Solomon’s Colonnade. ¹³No one else dared

join them, even though they were highly regarded by the people. ¹⁴ Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number. ¹⁵ As a result, people brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that at least Peter's shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by. ¹⁶ Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by impure spirits, and all of them were healed.

¹⁷ Then the high priest and all his associates, who were members of the party of the Sadducees, were filled with jealousy. ¹⁸ They arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail. ¹⁹ *But* during the night an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail and brought them out. ²⁰ "Go, stand in the temple courts," he said, "and tell the people all about this new life."

²¹ At daybreak they entered the temple courts, as they had been told, and began to teach the people. When the high priest and his associates arrived, they called together the Sanhedrin—the full assembly of the elders of Israel—and sent to the jail for the apostles. ²² *But* on arriving at the jail, the officers did not find them there. So they went back and reported, ²³ "We found the jail securely locked, with the guards standing at the doors; but when we opened them, we found no one inside." ²⁴ On hearing this report, the captain of the temple guard and the chief priests were at a loss, wondering what this might lead to. ²⁵ Then someone came and said, "Look! The men you put in jail are standing in the temple courts teaching the people." ²⁶ At that, the captain went with his officers and brought the apostles. They did not use force, because they feared that the people would stone them.

²⁷ The apostles were brought in and made to appear before the Sanhedrin to be questioned by the high priest. ²⁸ "We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name," he said. "Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood." ²⁹ (*But*) Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than human beings!" ³⁰ The God of our ancestors raised Jesus from the dead—whom you killed by hanging him on a cross. ³¹ God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Saviour that he might bring Israel to repentance and forgive their sins. ³² We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him."

³³ When they heard this, they were furious and wanted to put them to death. ³⁴ *But* a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, who was honoured by all the people, stood up in the Sanhedrin and ordered that the men be put outside for a little while. ³⁵ Then he addressed the Sanhedrin: "Men of Israel, consider carefully what you intend to do to these men. ³⁶ Some time ago Theudas appeared, claiming to be somebody, and about four hundred men rallied to him. He was killed, all his followers were dispersed, and it all came to nothing. ³⁷ After him, Judas the Galilean appeared in the days of the census and led a band of people in revolt. He too was

killed, and all his followers were scattered. ³⁸ Therefore, in the present case I advise you: Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. ³⁹ But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God."

⁴⁰ His speech persuaded them. They called the apostles in and had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

⁴¹ The apostles (*therefore*) left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. ⁴² Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah.

2. Emphasis

The sovereignty of God and the courage of the apostles are really important.

Every time the enemy tried to hinder their witnessing, God intervened and helped them to witness! No one and nothing in this world will ultimately prevent the Christians from proclaiming the gospel in the whole world as a testimony to the nations (Matthew 24:14), because God fights for them (Deuteronomy 1:30). Time and again God changes a difficult and even an impossible situation into a victory for the gospel.

Note especially the word 'but'.¹

(1) 5:19

In Acts 5:12-20 the enemies threw the Christians into jail. It seemed as if the enemies had won and the Christians could no longer proclaim the gospel. "**But** during the night an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail and brought them out." God turned a difficult situation into a victory. The enemies could not control them.

What a contrast! The enemies shut the doors, **but** God opens closed doors (Revelation 3:7-8)!

(2) 5:22

In Acts 5:21-26 the Sanhedrin was called together to conduct a mock trial during the night. The Sanhedrin was the highest ruling religious and judicial power among the Jews. It could punish people severely. **But** on arriving at the jail, the officers did not find the Christians there, because God had sent them back to teach the people. The doors of the jail were locked and the soldiers guarded the door. Yet when they opened the doors, there was no one inside the jail they could drag to court! God sees to it that Christian witnessing will continue!

¹ Greek: 'de' – a conjunction that indicates a contrast

What a contrast! The enemies wanted great publicity with their mock trial of Christians, *but* God brought great embarrassment to the government.

(3) 5:29

In Acts 5:27-32 the Sanhedrin accused the apostles of disobedience. They had previously forbidden them to speak about Jesus Christ, but the apostles continued to preach Christ. They accused the apostles of setting the government in a bad light with the people. *But the apostles replied, "We must obey God rather than men!"* God in Christ had previously commanded Christians to proclaim the gospel in the whole world (Mark 16:15) and to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:18-20). No one on earth has a higher authority than God! Therefore Christians witness even to governments (cf. Matthew 10:17-20)! They proclaimed the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. They spoke about the necessity to repent and about the forgiveness of sins. They said that God gives his Holy Spirit to people who obey him.

What a contrast! The enemies threatened, *but* the Christians witnessed boldly and courageously!

(4) 5:34

In Acts 5:33-39 the enemies became very angry against the apostles and wanted to put them to death. *But* God moved one of their own members, the famous teacher called Gamaliel, to defend the apostles! Gamaliel warned the government against acting against the Christians, because it might even prove that the government was fighting against God himself!

What a contrast! The enemies wanted to kill the Christians, *but* God uses one of the enemies to keep the Christians alive!

(5) 5:41

In Acts 5:40-42 the enemies flogged the apostles. According to 2 Corinthians 11:24 they received 39 lashes with a whip. A whip was made of leather thongs with pieces of bone and stone tied to them, so that they could tear open the backs of people! And once more the government forbade them to speak about Jesus Christ. The apostles *therefore*² rejoiced because they had been worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name of Jesus Christ. "Day after Day in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ."

What a contrast! The enemies forbade the Christians to witness, *but* the Christians refused to stop witnessing!

3. Explanation for the group leader

5:16. The shadow of Peter

This Bible passage is best translated as follows: "More believers were added to the Lord, crowds of men and women, so that they brought their sick into the street ... so that the shadow of Peter might fall on some of them as he passed by."

This description has nothing to do with superstition among the people, but is rather a historic description of their faith in Jesus Christ and in God performing miracles through Jesus Christ and his apostles. 'Superstition' is a misdirected fear towards something mysterious or a misdirected faith in some religious practice. 'Faith' is not directed towards things or practices, but towards Jesus Christ and his promises!

Events like this had happened before. A woman touched the cloak of Jesus and was immediately healed. Jesus said to her, "Your faith (in me) has healed you" and not, "Your superstition (in touching my cloak) has healed you" (Read Mark 5:27-30).

In Gennesaret people placed the sick in the marketplace and begged Jesus to allow them to touch even the edge of his cloak. All who touched him were healed (Mark 6:55-56)!

A Roman military officer believed that Jesus Christ had the authority to heal his servant from a great distance by speaking just one word. And Jesus said, "I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith (in me and my authority)" (Read Matthew 8:8-10).

These events are the visible proof of the faith which people have in Jesus Christ.

In the same way God had decided that the shadow of Peter (Acts 5:16) should have the same effect as the movements of the hands of Jesus and his apostles in other cases. God allowed extraordinary miracles to happen though Paul, so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them (Acts 19:10-11). These miracles of the apostles were *the result* of peoples' faith in Jesus Christ and his authority to heal rather than *the cause* of their faith.

The people believed in the gospel which the apostles proclaimed (and this transformed them: they were born-again). That is why they also had faith to bring their sick people to Paul. The means which God used to heal the people: words, movement of the hands, handkerchiefs, aprons, the shadow of Peter and even no contact at all, is not important for Jesus Christ. All power (authority) in heaven and on earth has been given to Jesus Christ! What is important for Jesus Christ is the faith people put in him!

² Greek: 'men' – a conjunction that indicates continuity

5:29. Every human authority on earth is limited

God in Jesus Christ is the only absolute authority on earth and also in heaven! This does not mean that particular people on earth have no authority. God has instituted seven authority-submission relationships among people on earth. All believers in Jesus Christ must submit to these authorities instituted by Jesus Christ.

(1) The authority of God over all people and everything.

God has absolute authority. He is the highest and final authority. All people and everything belong to him (Psalm 24:1). All events are under his control. He reigns forever (Psalm 145:13; Psalm 146:10). The resurrection and enthronement of Jesus Christ has put all angels, heavenly and earthly authorities and powers in submission to him (1 Peter 3:22). All authority and power in heaven and on earth has been given to Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:18). Therefore everyone must submit to his authority!

James 4:7 says, "Submit to God." All people, whether they believe in him or not, must submit to the God who revealed himself in the Bible and in Jesus Christ. If they will not do it willingly, they will have to do it unwillingly at his second coming (Philippians 2:9-11). All leaders and positions of power on earth must submit to the God of the Bible and to his commands. God has created people for his honour and glory (Colossians 1:16). He invites all people to get to know him, love him, obey him and serve him. The highest goal for all people on earth is to glorify the God of the Bible (Romans 11:36).

(2) The authority of people over the creation.

God has given (delegated) limited authority to people over his creation. Psalm 8:4-6 says, "What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honour. You made him the ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet." God has given to man the responsibility to care for his creation (Genesis 1:28; 2:15-16).

But the authority of man over creation is limited. People may not do with God's creation what they like! They may not pollute the environment. They may not destroy the sources of water, the trees (Deuteronomy 20:19-20) and the different species of animals. People may not claim to possess the land on which they live. They must give room to the alien and foreigner in their midst (Deuteronomy 10:18). They may not kill other people in so-called revenge killings or in so-called religious holy wars.

(3) The authority of the husband over his wife.

God has given limited authority to the husband to serve his wife by loving her and leading her. And God has given limited authority to the wife to serve her husband by helping him and by following him (Colossians 3:18-19).

A man may only exercise his authority within marriage by love, service and meekness. And a woman may only exercise her authority within marriage by love and respect. God has designed and instituted marriage and therefore he has the authority to determine the prerequisites for marriage and the relationship within marriage. The traditional or modern cultures of man may not change what God has instituted!

(4) The authority of parents over children.

God has given limited authority to parents over children. They may expect obedience from their children as long as their children are children still (i.e. not yet grown-up and emancipated). The children must obey their parents in everything that is not against the Bible.

But the authority of parents is limited. Fathers may not exasperate, embitter or discourage their children (Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:20-21). Parents must exercise their authority in a way that encourages their children. And when necessary, parents may discipline (punish) their children (Proverbs 13:24).

God has instituted the relationship between parents and children within a family. The traditional and modern cultures may not change what God has instituted!

(5) The authority of the government over its citizens is limited.

God has given a limited authority to the government over its citizens, in a political, judicial and financial sense. People must acknowledge the authority which God has set over them for the sake of God (1 Peter 2:13-14). Christians must obey the rulers of their country in everything that is right in God's eyes.

But also the authority of the government is limited, because Christians must obey God more than they obey people (Acts 5:29). When the government demands anything that is against God's will as expressed in the Bible, the citizens must respectfully resist the government.

(6) The authority of employers over its employees is limited.

God has given employers a limited authority over its employees. In the times of the Bible there were still many slaves. Many slaves and even some masters became Christians. The Bible teaches that even slaves must obey their earthly masters in everything that is not against the Bible (Colossians 3:22).

But also the authority of employers over employees is limited, because God demands that masters give to their slaves what is right and reasonable, because masters know that they too have God as the Great Employer and Master in heaven! God will reward or punish employers in the same way as they treated their employees (Colossians 4:1). When employers demand things from their employees that are against the Bible, the employees must respectfully resist their employers.

(7) The authority of spiritual leaders over their spiritual followers

God has given to the leaders of the Christian Church (the elders of the congregations) a limited authority over the members of the congregations. Christians must submit (yield) to the authority of the leaders whom God has appointed and who keep watch over the members (Hebrews 13:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:12).

But also the authority of Christian leaders is limited. The elders may not lord it over the people whom God entrusted to their care (Matthew 20:25-28; 1 Peter 5:1-4)! Spiritual leaders may not be authoritarian, but instead must lead people by their good example, for example, by obeying the Bible themselves! (Hebrews 13:7) and by walking in front and serving instead of ruling.

5:32. The witnesses of Jesus Christ

The 12 apostles of Jesus Christ were called to be the witnesses of Jesus Christ (Acts 1:8). They were not called to be witnesses of one or another church denomination, church leader, teaching (doctrine) or spiritual experience!

Throughout history Satan has been trying to change the contents of the gospel so that it would shift more and more away from Jesus Christ and more and more towards some selfish ambition of people (a reputation of fame, a position of power, a maker of money, etc.)! Watch against all false witnesses!

The apostles of Jesus Christ were among the first disciples of Jesus Christ. They had followed Jesus Christ from the beginning of his public ministry unto his ascension into heaven. They were appointed to be the eye-witnesses of everything Jesus Christ did and the ear-witnesses of everything he taught. They were witnesses of the 6 trials before the Jewish and the Roman authorities (Acts 2:23; 5:30). They were witnesses of his crucifixion (Acts 3:18) and resurrection (Acts 2:32). And they were witnesses of his exaltation to the right hand of God at his ascension into heaven (Acts 5:31). Any person who denies these historical events, deliberately refuses to acknowledge historical facts and thereby rejects the testimony of God and God himself (John 5:23; 1 John 2:23).

Also the Holy Spirit testifies about Jesus Christ and glorifies Jesus Christ in the midst of every group of true Christians (John 16:14). God has given his Holy Spirit as the Great Witness in the minds and hearts of those believers who obey him (cf. Romans 8:13-16). Only Christians who live obedient lives can have assurance of their salvation!

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.