

# **WITNESS**

## Home Group Series

August - October 2017



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*FGA MELBOURNE  
MEMBERS GUIDE*

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# OVERVIEW

**Series passage:** *“Oh, taste and see that the Lord is Good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him.”* Psalm 34:8 (ESV)

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*INVITE OTHERS TO TASTE AND SEE THAT THE LORD IS GOOD*

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## INTRODUCTION TO THE "WITNESS" SERIES

Australia is in a post-Christian era which means that people are often closed to the gospel. But in reality, they still desperately need the Lord. As followers of Jesus, on the other hand, we have been commanded by Christ to be his witnesses. The key to witnessing is to understand how God wants us to reach this generation in a way they can receive the Good News. The easiest way to do that is to live authentically with Christ and with others, and boldly grab opportunities to share his goodness with those who are yet to meet Him. In this way, we can invite them to “taste and see that the Lord is good” (Ps. 34:8).

The Witness Home Group Series gives us four keys explaining how we can fulfil Jesus’ command to be faithful witnesses of the Gospel of the Kingdom (Matt. 28:18-20). Witnessing is not just a task for gifted evangelists, philosophers or debaters who are able to argue their point well, or only for preachers who can clearly present the gospel to the masses. It should be our very own lifestyle flowing from genuine relationship with God, lived out in a way that others can see the reality of God’s love and power. This should be apparent in both our family life and outworking in a church community. By making ourselves available those who don’t know Christ and intentionally becoming involved in their lives, we can more easily bridge the risky and often uncomfortable gap to share the truth about God.

God has entrusted His story to each one of us. Let’s make it our aim to use this series to align our hearts with God’s heartbeat for humanity.

### Rationale and linkage to 2017 Anchor Verse

FGAM’s theme for 2017 is “Move In FAITH”. A description of this theme can be found in Appendix I. The anchor verse for this year is taken from Acts 1:8 “...you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” (ESV).

The Witness series is a practical series aimed to eliminate the daunting feeling and burden often associated with witnessing. We need to reveal to others the practical reality of God working in our own life to be a way that draws others into the Kingdom so that too can taste and see that the Lord is good.



# Session 1: Live

## Live deep with God

**Key passage:** “When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.” Acts 2:1-2 (ESV)

### A. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF THE SESSION

In Acts 1:8 Jesus tells his noteworthy disciples (and us) that we are to be witnesses. We are currently living in the end parts of that verse (i.e. Witnesses “to the ends of the earth”). Witnessing for Christ can be and should be a natural extension of our relationship with God, lived out.

This series provides four simple keys to make a life of witness in reach of every believer. You don’t have to be good at debating, apologetics, or even know your Bible very well. Rather the keys are to:

1. Foster a genuine relationship with God
2. Live that out in a way others can see the living God working in your life, as well as in your church community.
3. Be willing to be involved in other people’s lives.
4. Risk stepping out and sharing the gospel with others.

In this series, we hope you will be encouraged to put down your barriers and inhibitions about witnessing and come along the journey of a fresh look at being a witness that is Faithful to the Mission.

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*In this session, we will discuss living out an authentic deep walk with God*

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### B. SCRIPTURE READING (Acts 2:1-2)

### C. MAIN POINT

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*Our main goal in witnessing is to invite people to “taste and see the Lord is good”*

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When someone shares of their experience at a good restaurant or recommends a particular product that they have found to work for them, their story can be very persuasive. You have seen the positive effect it had on their lives and it lures you to try it for yourself. This principle is not very different to witnessing for Christ. It is out of our personal experience of walking with God that we can testify to his goodness and we can naturally share and invite others to taste and see how good he is.

In the key passage for today, we see the key to how people with no money, education or particular influence became powerful witnesses for God. It was God who initiated the encounter in this group of believers, by pouring out his Holy Spirit. Just as it was promised in Acts 1:8, “...and you will be my witnesses...”. They were not witnesses to religion, but witnesses to a living God. Their ability to witness was directly in response to God’s action in their lives. We are commanded by Jesus to do likewise.

Authentic life with God is one where we find joy and fulfilment and a deep sense of purpose. Is that present in your own life? Perhaps it is time to take this first crucial step to invite God to move more in your own life, before you can be an authentic witness of his goodness.

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*God has entrusted his story to each one of us. Let's make it our aim to use this series to allow God to align our hearts with His heartbeat for humanity.*

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## D. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

**1. When you hear or read about the command to be witnesses for Jesus, what do you think this means? How does it make you feel? Take time with this question as it will help your Home Group understand each other and their current views on witnessing.**

**2. What are some of the ways you connect with God in your daily life? How do you feel the Holy Spirit guiding you?**

**3. What are some of the ways that we block God out? How can we intentionally allow the Holy Spirit to be more active in our lives?**

## E. APPLICATION

Reflect back on your answer for Discussion Question #3. Choose one aspect to take action on to allow God more into your life. Pray and prayer of commitment ask the Holy Spirit to empower you to live out your relationship with him in a fresh way.

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### *One Bless One*

*As you interact with God this week, share it with someone else. They don't have to be a non-believer, just take the opportunity to encourage them by sharing what God has done for you.*

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## F. LOOKING FORWARD

In the next session, we will look at living openly and transparently before others.

# Session 2: Show Up

## Live openly and transparently before others

**Key passage:** *"Even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love, he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight."*

Ephesians 1:4-8 (ESV)

### A. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF THE SESSION

The first step in being a witness for God, that we looked at last week, is having a genuine relationship with God and being dynamically led by the Holy Spirit. As we will see this session, the next step is to live out your relationship in a way that others can see the reality of God working in your life. In our culture, living openly and transparently is often not the case. Sadly, we can easily form a fixed idea of what our Christian (religious) life should look like, and we are very good at portraying that image to those around us, whether it is true or not. The usual components include a regular quiet time with God, a romantic and productive relationship with our spouse, always feeling, hope-filled, joyful and bubbly. While these things are not wrong, they are often overly idealistic and fail to reflect the reality of the struggles in life we all face. We can't be true to ourselves, the Lord, or others if we are witnesses to a lifestyle that we never live up to. We need to reset and get real with each other. At the same time, the Church needs to be a safe place where we can honestly share our struggles (even in our relationship with God) and have people to encourage us without judgement, and pray and contend with us for God's breakthrough.

If we can be real about where we are at and let God move in us, even in our brokenness, such authentic Christianity on display will be the fertile ground for the Holy Spirit to move and draw others to Himself. It will sow hope in their hearts that they can also come to God in their brokenness so that he will move in their lives too. Its only through encounters with God they can "taste and see that God is good." Remember, everyone is called to be a witness.

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*Courage is as simple and profound as being yourself before God and others.*

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### B. SCRIPTURE READING (Ephesians 1:3-14)

### C. MAIN POINT

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*Having a private authentic walk with God is not enough to be a witness, we must live openly.*

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As we read today's scripture passage, "Even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him" (Eph. 1:4), it reminds us that God has destined us for perfection. Perhaps this is why perfection is something we all strive for. If we are honest, however, we can often feel frustrated and discouraged about our own brokenness, mistakes, even to the point of

feeling helpless at times. Because of this godly desire (and in a sense holy expectation) to be perfect, we are tempted to take the shortcut by pretending perfection when it isn't really there. Why? Often it is with the aim of being accepted and win respect from others, or to feel secure in our sense of identity. Sometimes it is to keep others at a distance from what is really going on inside.

Reality is often very different. Living in this broken world, added to our own sin and self-centred lifestyles shows we are far from perfect. Jesus knew this, which is why he often challenged the religious people and community leaders to be honest about their spiritual state (e.g. the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector, Luke 18:9-14).

Think again. It is ONLY by the amazing grace of God that we will be presented spotless and blameless before him. One of the ways God's grace becomes more active that in our lives is when we live openly before others. Being honest about our struggles, combined with prayer and wise counsel, can bring true freedom and the sanctification that we are looking for.

Today's session is all about living open lives before others, so that they can see God move in key moments our lives, and then God can use us to show his goodness to others.

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*Massevot (stones) are key moments in your life that are there to point towards God*

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## D. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1. Why is openness and transparency important to the Kingdom of God?**
- 2. How can God use some of the broken/less showy areas of our lives to show his goodness?**
- 3. OPTIONAL: Work on some "stones" that are markers for your life for when God showed up.**

## E. APPLICATION

Break up into twos or threes. Take time for each person to share about one thing they are struggling with now and pray for each other. Pray for God's grace and power to be released into each situation so that you can be witnesses to others of his goodness.

Pray for people who you know need the Lord. Pray for divine appointments.

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### *One Bless One*

*Before the next home group session take the opportunity to share with someone who doesn't know Christ a time you were struggling and God came through for you.*

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## F. LOOKING FORWARD

Next session we will look at how to relate well with people who don't know God.



# Session 3: Relate

## Engage in other people's lives - listen and be involved

**Key passage:** *“For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.”* Matthew 25:35-36 (ESV)

### A. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF THE SESSION

Being involved in other people's lives is costly. It takes our energy, time and emotional strength to be there for others. If you are a manager or involved in discipling or helping others you will know this very well. Be encouraged, you are imitating Christ, just as we are called to do. Part of discipleship is to help others to do likewise (1 Cor. 11:1).

Discipleship is helping people grow in their experience of God and in their knowledge and obedience to the Lord. The first step is giving this life with Jesus a go. It is a nice theory but yet to be proven. We invite God to be part of our lives. The second step is where we actively battle with God in the complexity of life's struggles. We can go through the refiner's fire, but what we find is good soil for discipleship as the concept of being a disciple is put into practice. If you press in your walk with God will become something precious and sacred as you discover God in new ways. The third stage is living out your life knowing how good God is. It is no longer Christian clichés but your life will point others to the life of Jesus. Whatever stage you are at now God is inviting you to grow.

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*Your time, energy and cost spent into other people's lives is an investment into the Kingdom of God and you will reap eternal rewards.*

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### B. SCRIPTURE READING (Matthew 25:31-46)

### C. MAIN POINT

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*How will we share the good news with others?*

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Before we start the discussion, read Matthew 28:18-20 aloud. Ask yourselves, how seriously do we take the Great Commission? In the first two sessions, we focussed on our own walk and lives. This session we need to take the command to GO and to use all that we have to live for God. People desperately need God, and we have the answer in Christ. Today's key passage from Matthew 25:35-26, reminds us that when we go in his name we are doing things for others as if they were Jesus himself. If we are struggling to find motivation to reach out, or lay our own life down, draw inspiration from Christ who is the one who gave up all for us. Hebrews 12:2, reminds us to look to Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith. To endure patiently the things that happen, knowing that that we have not sacrifice to the point of shedding our blood as he did for us.

The best way to witness is through building relationship with others. This is where discipleship begins. We can use our influence in their lives, but importantly we must listen and relate to them. Making a space in our hearts for their needs and their silent cries.

The second step is to get involved. Just as Jesus was involved in so many people's lives, we need to be prepared to be involved in other's lives too. Being involved doesn't mean forcing your ways or opinions



onto others, but seeing how you can practically help them at their place of need. We need to use discernment and be led by the Holy Spirit.

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*The key steps to being fruitfully involved in others' lives is to listen, care and relate well. The second step is to become involved.*

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## D. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What can we do to relate better with others who aren't Christian?
2. How can you, the church and God help those in need? What tangible ways can you be involved in someone else's life? (it might be helpful to think of common scenarios, or existing scenarios)

3. OPTIONAL: What is tough about sharing the Gospel?

## E. APPLICATION

If you were challenged by today's session. Confess to God where you are at. If needed, ask for forgiveness for not being intentional about sharing the gospel according to Jesus' command. Recommit your life to him and ask him to be alert to needs around you and opportunities to share about God's goodness. He loves to answer this prayer.

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### *One Bless One*

*WWJD became a global catchphrase at the end of last century, challenging us to stop and think in the situation what would Jesus do. This time, let's take it a step further. The next time someone is sharing their problems with you ask what would I do if this person were Jesus?*

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## F. LOOKING FORWARD

Next, in the next session, we look at the role between risk-taking and advancing the gospel.

# Session 4: Risk

## Trust God by leaving the familiar and stepping into the unfamiliar

**Key passage:** *"For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again. You also must help us by prayer, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many."* 2 Corinthians 1:8-11 (ESV)

### A. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF THE SESSION

Hopefully through studying the past three sessions you have been learning that being a witness is more than just telling someone about Christ. The people in Acts lived by the same principles:

1. LIVE – Get swept up in God's great love, and go deep with Jesus.
2. SHOW UP – live an open and transparent life that demands an explanation.
3. RELATE – be interested in other peoples' lives by listening and getting involved.

This final session is part of sharing the gospel is about RISK – trusting God by leaving the familiar and stepping into the unfamiliar. Following the example of the early church. There are some of us who love to be with people but never want to talk about Jesus. We are afraid that if we bring the topic up people will shy away from us, or we may be labelled as pushy or "one of those" and be rejected. We avoid God's redemption story to avoid awkwardness or separation. However, think about it, are we really friends with someone if we are unable to talk about what matters most to us?

Witnessing is incredibly powerful as it is the Holy Spirit that ultimately draws people to him. Our responsibility is to be available, bold and courageous to be sensitive to the Spirit's leading. Let us not get stuck in the familiar as the Israelites did, we don't need God in that place. As God had a far bigger and better dream for the Jews so he does for us. Let us move on with God. We will be surprised how God can use us.

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*When we get the chance to partner with God in what matters most to him we recognise what a privilege it is.*

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### B. SCRIPTURE READING (2 Corinthians 1:8-11, Acts 1:8)

### C. MAIN POINT

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*Safety and blessing are not the ultimate goals of a good Christian life. It is only by risking it all we'll discover what God is truly like.*

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We naturally want to stick to the things we know and trust in. There is something that feels so safe about the familiar. Our risk adverse society applauds this as “wisdom”. Moving out of our comfort zone takes a deliberate choice. Paul and Barnabas seemed to know it was their privilege to share the gospel. Being the most extreme risk takers in the New Testament, they left their known environment and were sent out in the power of the Spirit (e.g. Acts 13).

God, also, has taken incredible risks to make the gospel accessible to us, even to the point of having Jesus die for us without the assurance that we would recognise or even acknowledge what he has done. Throughout the biblical narrative we see men and women trusting God by leaving their comfort zones and responding to God’s risky call. When we step out it forces us to look upwards rather than inwards for strength. We then have the privilege to experience the thrill and unspeakable satisfaction in the knowledge that comes with obeying the Lord and seeing him touch others. That sense of God’s pleasure as his grace is poured out through us cannot be put into words. The reward of risk taking is not just for the Kingdom, or for the people we seek to reach, but it is one of the most rapid ways to bring transformation in our own lives. Let us not stay safe, within our comfort zone, rather let us use the safety and blessing God has given us and risk for God.

When you commit to living intentionally for the gospel, you are saying yes to experiencing the Kingdom of God operating through you to transform other peoples’ lives for ever.

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*God calls all of us believers to risk ourselves to align with his heartbeat for humanity.*

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## D. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. **What risks to you currently take in any aspect of your life? Why do you take those risks?**
  
2. **What are some of the risks you’ve taken for the Gospel of Jesus Christ?**
  
3. **OPTIONAL: What can your home group do to close off the witness series and take a risk with your friends and family for the sake of the gospel of Jesus Christ?**

## E. APPLICATION

Ask God to show you specific faces of people to pray for, who need to hear about what a life with Jesus could be like. Share the names with the group and pray together. Not only commit to pray for them, but make it a point within the next month to reach out to them and apply the principles taught in this series. Also ask God to lead you to places and people where you can apply the teaching by being transparent and taking risks reaching out to people.

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*One Bless One*  
*Read through and then pray this prayer from your heart*  
*“Father would you use me to be a witness? Would you give me your heart and your eyes? Please allow me to have conversations that will encourage people to keep searching for you. In Jesus’s name, Amen.”*

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NOTES: