

# BLESS

As for us, we cannot  
help speaking about  
what we have seen  
and heard.

Acts 4:20

This book belongs to:



BLESS

Grace Fellowship



Fall 2022  
Grace Fellowship  
Brooklyn Park, MN  
findgrace.com

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# THANK YOU FOR BRINGING BLESS-INGS TO EVERYONE!

We want everyone to experience grace. We help people experience grace personally and practically when we share how Jesus has impacted our own lives.

CS Lewis once said, "The primary purpose of the church is to draw people to Christ." We now have the tools to help our church fulfill this mission.

We are so excited you are joining us for one of the most essential discipleship experiences we have taken as a church. Our team has been preparing for this series and group study for over a year. In addition, our church has participated in the nationally recognized Church Evangelism Cohort in partnership with the Billy Graham Center for Evangelism and Wheaton College. This training provided the essential framework, BLESS, that every follower of Jesus should learn and apply to one's daily walk with God.

Our staff took time to get away and entirely focus on this area of spiritual growth and have been working for months to apply these disciplines to our regular daily rhythms. We have prayed over the Scriptures, the messages, and the group experiences in hopes that it is as life-changing for our congregation as we know it has been for our staff.

Thank you for joining us on the journey.

We are blessed to be a blessing,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joe Boyd". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial "J" and "B".

Joe Boyd  
Lead Pastor  
Grace Fellowship



**BE IN PRAYER**



**LISTEN WITH COMPASSION**



**EAT TOGETHER**



**SERVE IN LOVE**



**SHARE A STORY**

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We're so glad you've decided to go through the B.L.E.S.S. experience with your small group. We are better when we are learning and growing together.

To get the most out of this experience, we will focus on three essential environments God uses to grow and mature us in grace.

## **1. SUNDAY WORSHIP**

The worship services will be aligned to bring celebration and worship to the Lord. The messages will be biblically based and include examples of practical ways to love, serve and share Jesus with others who do not have a relationship with Him (yet).

## **2. PERSONAL STUDY TIME**

Who God is and what He is saying to you is revealed in the Bible. Prepare for your weekly study time in the SCRIPTURE section by clearing away distractions. This will make a way for you to read, listen, understand, and respond to what God is teaching you. Find a consistent place, at a consistent time to get the most out of your time in personal study.

Each week there will be Bible verses to look up and read. Spend time asking the Lord, "what does this mean", "what do You want me to learn and how do You want me to apply it to my life" Do not rush through this time but allow pauses for the Holy Spirit to teach you. If possible do not use a study Bible but allow the Holy Spirit to guide you through scripture.

Close your time with God in prayer. P.R.A.Y. is a helpful pattern for prayer. You may also want to record your requests and answers to prayer.

**P=PRAISE** Start by praising God. Tell Him who He is to you and what you are thankful for. This will get your heart in the right place as you begin connecting with God. Psalm 100:1-5

**R=REPENT** Next, move into a short time of repentance. Admitting to God your faults and allowing Him to convict you of the things that are wrong in your life. This is the natural response of a sinner in the presence of a sinless God. Isaiah 6:1-5



**A=ASK** Prayer requests are what most people think of when they envision prayer, and that is the third step in this method. Paul teaches us that we should confidently present our requests to God. Philippians 4:6-8

**Y=YIELD** The final step is to spend time yielding to God. Stopping and quieting your heart to hear from God. This is probably the most difficult step in prayer, but it's worth the effort to make it a habit. Matthew 6:9-10

### **3. GROUP TIME**

We learn and grow far more when we share with a caring and committed group of Christ followers. Your small group will provide you an opportunity to share what God is teaching you and how His Spirit is leading you through this series.

The aim for each week is to read God's Word and to connect the truth of God to the realities of life. Sharing life includes:

- Christ-centered conversation marked by open and honest dialogue
- Bearing one another's burdens and celebrating one another's joys
- Encouraging one another to consistently help people connect with Jesus.
- Lots of fun, support, and care

Most often group time is 1.5-2 hours and includes:

- Connect with each other - gather, check in, announcements (10-15 minutes)
- Share – a time for all to share the experience they had engaging in one of the B.L.E.S.S. practices since the last group meeting (15-20 minutes)
- Discussion - questions on how to embrace and apply the B.L.E.S.S. material (30-40 minutes)
- Care & Prayer – Hear prayer requests and pray for one another (15-20 minutes)
- Moving Out – review ideas (in the study book) on how to move forward in the next week to engage in the most current B.L.E.S.S. point. This section will be discussed at the following meeting. (5-10 minutes)

## **SERVE THROUGH LOVE OUR CITY DAY, OCTOBER 1, 2022**

Just as Jesus modeled serving others rather than seeking to be served, the B.L.E.S.S.S model includes a focus on 'Serve in Love' that we will embrace. At Grace we set time aside each year to purposefully focus on serving our local communities and neighbors on Love Our City Day. We do this by identifying practical projects that a small group can do in a few hours' time. Through these acts of service, we hope people's hearts will be opened to the love of Jesus.

This year each group will identify and organize their own Love Our City project. Members of your group have a unique connection to neighbors, co-workers, and local community. You each know who is hurting, what their needs are, how to bless them in ways that will bring the love and care of Jesus to friendships and community relationships. Whether washing windows or cleaning out a garage for someone, painting a room or raking a yard for a different family or buying groceries and taking them to shut ins, or co-workers in need, through your practical help conversations and relationships can be fostered.

Love Our City Day is Saturday, October 1, 2022. The day will begin at Grace Fellowship at 9:30am with a Rally and Send off. When deciding what to do please discuss the skills, resources (who has access to what) and the length of time required to complete your project. Identify the supplies needed and bring them with you. The ages and abilities of those serving should also be considered so all are comfortable to participate. So that we can see the impact on our cities, please register your project on the Grace website: [www.findgrace/loveourcity](http://www.findgrace/loveourcity)  
The opportunities are many, the workers are few!

Since the very beginning of our story with God, He has demonstrated His deep love for us through His blessing. In turn, we have the incredible opportunity to be a blessing to others (Genesis 12:2) B.L.E.S.S. focuses on five practices we can engage in daily to help others connect with Jesus.

## THE FIVE B.L.E.S.S. PRACTICES ARE:



### BE IN PRAYER

Pray for people who do not yet know Him, and that God would prepare your life as well as theirs. Ask God, “How do you want to grow and use me to bless the people in the places where you have sent me?”



### LISTEN WITH COMPASSION

Listen to the Spirit, and for evidence of God’s work in people’s lives. Ask questions that invite others to tell their stories, reveal their hearts and discover the truth.



### EAT TOGETHER

Share meals, coffee, and life with people who do not yet know Jesus.



### SERVE IN LOVE

Be attentive of the opportunities God provides you to care for people and attend to their needs.



### SHARE A STORY

Once you build a relationship and earn trust, look for ways to share a story of how Jesus has transformed, or is transforming your life and the world.

Where do we begin to 'Be in prayer' for people who do not yet know God? We may know many people who fit in that category, but during this series we each will identify five people to specifically pray for. We'll do this by using a FRANCLIST.

## WHAT'S A FRANCLIST?

It's a list of names, organized in groups of people including:

- Friends
- Relatives
- Acquaintances
- Neighbors
- Co-workers

In deciding the one person to identify in each category, you might consider who you want to invite to a backyard BBQ, attend a sports game with, or ask to join you for a church service.

Specifically, select the people in your life who don't believe in Jesus, who do not trust in Him, who do not know Him as their Savior. There might be people on the list who have never heard the story of Jesus (as far as you know). It might include some people who once confessed faith in Christ but have since fallen away from Him. It might include people who practice other religious traditions and people who say they do not believe in God at all.

Through this series and after it concludes pray that all on your list will come to know Jesus and the joy, peace, love and life He has for them. Pray for God to send someone into their lives who will speak the gospel to them in a way that they can hear it as good news for them. Pray that they will be open to hearing such news. Pray and ask God to send you to be the bearer of that news.

"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

**Romans 10:13-15**

# WHAT IS YOUR TEMP

Thanks to LifeWay Research, we now have data indicating the church's evangelistic temperature. The research says 51 percent of churchgoers have not shared their Christian faith within the last six months. If asked, we would say we want all people to know Jesus as their Savior and Lord. Most church attenders have a sense of urgency of evangelism; the problem, however, is moving from theory to action. So, how are we doing? How are you doing? We each need an honest self-evaluation of what our 'temperature' is, to know when we need to elevate our daily engagement to help people connect with Jesus.

## THE TEMPERATURE CARD

The Temperature Card is a tool used to measure personal progress in relationships or spiritual conversations. We will use the temperature card during the B.L.E.S.S. series to track our growth as Christ influencers.



# WE ARE BLESSED TO BE A BLESSING

*I am counting every blessing  
Counting every blessing  
Letting go and trusting  
When I cannot see  
I am counting every blessing  
Counting every blessing  
Surely every season  
You are good to me*

**-Rend Collective**

*From the song: Counting Every Blessing*

## **INTRO**

Since the very beginning of our story with God, He has demonstrated His deep love for us through His blessing. In turn, we have the incredible opportunity to become a blessing to others. In the following weeks, we'll focus on the five BLESS practices and how they help us connect people with Jesus. This week we'll look at ways God blessed His people throughout Scripture. In Genesis, we see the mission God gave Abram and the blessings Abram received by living a life of faith. God also gave us a mission through the words of Jesus—to go and make disciples of all nations. With this command we receive a wonderful assurance from Jesus, “and surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:18-20).

## **LISTEN TO THE MESSAGE**

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# MESSAGE NOTES

We should be talking to God about our neighbors before we are talking to our neighbors about God.



**PRAYER TIME**

**A SPACE TO RECORD YOUR PERSONAL & GROUP TIME PRAYERS**



**P.RAISE  
R.EPENT  
A.SK  
Y.IELD**

## PRAYER

As you begin your time together, spend time praying for your group. Pray that the Holy Spirit would begin to reveal to you ways in which you can be challenged to live a life on mission, helping people connect with Jesus.

## SHARE

Spend some time getting to know your fellow group members, especially if this is one of your first times meeting together.

- What brought you to this group?
- In what ways do you hope to be challenged through this study?

## WHAT IS YOUR TEMPERATURE?



## FOR DISCUSSION

1. What do you think are some of the greatest barriers that prevent people from seeing the ways they are blessed?
2. What are some of the common ways that our culture defines “being blessed?” Do these ever contradict what Scripture says?
3. Do you think it is important to be aware of how God has blessed us as we set out to bless others? Why?
4. Review Moving Out and how you can put your faith in motion.

## HOW TO PUT YOUR FAITH IN MOTION

1. This week take an inventory of the ways you have been blessed. Before beginning, read Matthew 5 and reflect on who Jesus calls blessed—it isn't who we would normally consider blessed. Keep this "upside-down" way of looking at blessings in mind as you think of the blessings in your own life.
2. Find a way to intentionally bless someone this week. Pray that God would provide opportunities, and be especially aware of ways you might bless someone who you may not normally notice in your day-to-day interactions. Here are some ideas to get you started. Add more as they come to mind.
  - Find out your colleague's favorite coffee drink and buy it for them.
  - Offer to watch a neighbor's kids while they run errands or go on a date.
  - Write a note of appreciation to a friend or someone who serves your family in some way.
  - Pay for the meal of the person behind you in the drive-through lane.
  - Let someone know that you are praying for them or pray with them.
  - Ask someone what their greatest encouragement and discouragement has been recently.
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_

# B

# BE IN PRAYER

*To say that “prayer changes things” is not as close to the truth as saying, “Prayer changes me and then I change things.” God has established things so that prayer, on the basis of redemption, changes the way a person looks at things. Prayer is not a matter of changing things externally, but one of working miracles in a person’s inner nature.*

**-Charles Spurgeon, Pastor**

## **INTRO**

When we hear the word “cultivate”, a certain agricultural picture may come to mind. You might think of soil being prepared, turned over and broken loose so that it is ready to receive a seed and foster the growth of new crops. Hearts can be cultivated in the same way, and prayer is the means by which this happens. As we pray, our own hearts are cultivated and God prepares us to see opportunities to join Him in helping people connect with Jesus. As He brings about this awareness in us, He will also begin to equip us to do this work. We begin to see our opportunities and abilities grow as we pray that God would use us. As we pray, the hearts of others are also cultivated. We are brought into the much larger work that the Holy Spirit is doing in people’s hearts and lives. We can witness hearts softened and minds opened to receive the Good News of Jesus Christ.

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*We cannot think of the Holy Spirit in impersonal terms. His 'presence' is not some mystical gas or the arrival of some nondescript energy force. His presence is very personal. He lives in us personally. He works in us personally. He moves in and among us personally.*

**-Daniel Henderson, Pastor**

## COMPLETE THIS SECTION BEFORE YOUR GROUP TIME

Read Colossians 4:2-4

1. These verses were part of a letter Paul wrote to the church in Colossae while imprisoned. If you were in prison, what do you think you'd be asking for in prayer? As a person facing extreme hardships, are you surprised by how Paul is encouraging his readers to pray?
2. What are some characteristics of a person who is devoted to something? What does it look like to be devoted to prayer?
3. What do you think Paul meant in asking that he be able to proclaim his message clearly?

# PERSONAL STUDY TIME

4. Why do you think Paul prayed for “open doors” as opposed to creating his own doors for the message to be received? What is the difference between the two?
5. What do you think our role is in seeking out open doors? Can we passively wait for them to be revealed to us or do we need to take action in order to find open doors for our message?



# PRAYER REQUESTS

A SPACE TO RECORD YOUR PERSONAL & GROUP TIME PRAYERS



P.RAISE  
R.EPENT  
A.SK  
Y.IELD

## **PRAY**

Spend some time as a group praying God would begin to help you identify a few people you could bless. Pray that He will show you opportunities and give you the ability to bless these people. Pray that their hearts would be open to transformation through Jesus.

## **SHARE**

How did taking an inventory of your blessings go last week? Did you find it challenging or relatively easy?

Did you have an opportunity to bless a neighbor or someone else in the past week? Share your experience.

What stood out to you in your Personal Study Time?

## **FOR DISCUSSION**

1. Why do you think being in prayer is the first of the BLESS practices?
2. Why do you think it is so difficult for us to devote ourselves to prayer? Are there any misconceptions we have about prayer that contribute to lack of devotion?
3. What are some of the barriers that might come up as you begin praying regularly for people near us? How can we, as a group, support each other as we begin “being in prayer” for these individuals?

Review Moving Out and how you can put your faith in motion.

## HOW TO PUT YOUR FAITH IN MOTION

Take some time to think about Friends, Relatives, Acquaintances, Neighbors, and Colleagues (also known as “FRANC”) who do not know God.

Ask God to bring to mind 3 to 5 people for your FRANC list.

Write their names below:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

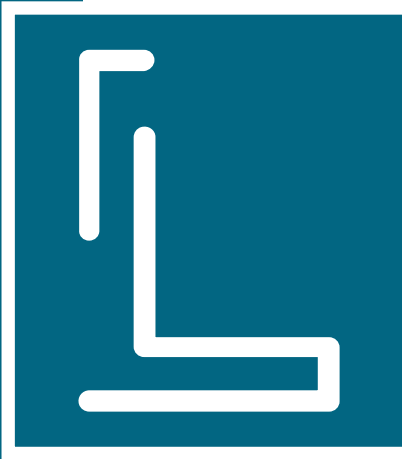
Here are some ways you can pray for these individuals:

(Insert the person’s name that you’re praying for in the blank)

- Pray for \_\_\_\_\_ to become thirsty for God. (John 7:37-39)
- Pray for \_\_\_\_\_ to become open to change. (2 Corinthians 7:10)
- Pray for \_\_\_\_\_ to clearly experience God’s love. (1 John 4:7-10, 19-21)
- Pray for \_\_\_\_\_ to develop deep spiritual rootedness in Christ. (John 15:5; Colossians 2:6-7)

Just as we are praying for others, here are some ways we can be in prayer for ourselves.

- Pray that you would trust in the Lord and not try to bless others through your own strength. (Proverbs 3:5)
- Pray that God would open a door for the message to be heard. (Colossians 2:3)
- Pray that God would provide opportunities to speak boldly. (Acts 28:31)



# LISTEN WITH COMPASSION

*Open up our eyes to see the wounds that bind all of humankind. May our shutter hearts greet the dawn of life with charity and love.*

**-Brother**

*From the song: The Brilliance*

## INTRO

Listening with compassion means we don't just hear the words someone is saying to us. We are active listeners who begin to understand the needs this person has, the past that has shaped their present, and how we might be able to bring the hope of Jesus into their life. Listening with compassion requires more than just a listening ear—although that is very important. It also requires a heart that is open to using these conversations to be a blessing to others.

Listening often goes against what we're inclined to do when we're in conversation with another person. Being a good listener requires practice and intentionality and doesn't typically come naturally, but it is worth practicing! The better we become at listening, the more comfortable people will be around us, and the more likely they'll be to open up and share their story with us.

As followers of Christ, listening to the Holy Spirit is also vital when we are helping people connect with Jesus. The Holy Spirit is God's gift to us, and He is the one who is at work in the people's lives on our prayer list. When we follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit, He reveals opportunities to listen to others and serve them in love.

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*Christians have forgotten that the ministry of listening has been committed to them by Him who is Himself the great listener and whose work they should share. We should listen with the ears of God that we may speak the Word of God.*

**-Dietrich Bonhoeffer**  
*Life Together*

## COMPLETE THIS SECTION BEFORE YOUR GROUP TIME

Read Mark 9:14-27

1. Jesus seemed to have a way of asking questions to help people tell their story and reveal their heart. In Mark 9:21, Jesus asked a father whose son suffered with seizures, “How long has he been like this?” Do you think that Jesus knew the answer to this question? Why did Jesus ask it?
2. What are some questions that we could use to draw out stories from someone, especially as it relates to their spiritual journey?
3. Which of these—listening to God, listening to others, or listening for an opportunity—do you think is the most challenging? Why?

# PRAYER REQUESTS

**A SPACE TO RECORD YOUR PERSONAL & GROUP TIME PRAYERS.**

P.RAISE  
R.EPENT  
A.SK  
Y.IELD



## **PRAY**

Whether your group chooses to begin your time in prayer or close in prayer, spend time praying over the conversations that are taking place with those you are seeking to bless. Pray that the Holy Spirit would give you opportunities to listen as well as speak into people's lives.

## **SHARE**

If you haven't done so already, share with the group who is on your FRANC prayer list. What intentional actions have helped you to "be in prayer" for these people?

What stood out to you in your Personal Study Time?

## **FOR DISCUSSION**

This week, we're going to begin by discussing ways we're called to be good listeners. To become better listeners, we need to be doing three things while we are listening.

1. We need to be listening to God.

How can we position ourselves to be better listeners to God?

Can you think of a time when God directed you to speak to someone you normally wouldn't have? Did you follow through? If not, what kept you from doing so? If you did follow through, how did the experience go?

2. We need to be listening to others.

Can you think of a time when you didn't feel like you were being heard? What did that feel like? How do you tend to respond when you don't feel heard?

Who is the best listener you know? What makes them a good listener? How does that person make you feel?

What are the attitudes that keep us from being good listeners? Which of the following reasons contribute the most to us being poor listeners?

- Too busy to give undivided attention.
  - More concerned about what we have to say than what others have to say.
  - Not really caring about the other person, but only how their “stuff” intersects with ours.
  - Distracted by our phone.
  - Thinking we can multi-task while listening.
3. We need to listen for an opportunity.
- Often, when we are engaging with people, we find ourselves doing so with an agenda. Are there types of agendas that are good? Are there agendas that might get in the way of helping people connect with Jesus?

Review Moving Out and how you can put your faith in motion.

## HOW TO PUT YOUR FAITH IN MOTION

Spend some time thinking through your week. Are there any places in your schedule that can be made available to “listen with compassion?” Here are some ideas and space to add more of your own:

- Take a walk around your neighborhood with the intention of striking up a conversation if the opportunity presents itself.
- If you find yourself waiting for an appointment, standing in line at the store, or on the sidelines of a sporting event resist the urge to pull out your phone. Instead, seek opportunities to engage with the people around you.
- If you are feeling inconvenienced by a neighbor, family member, friend, or stranger, ask God to show you how to take time to “listen with compassion.”

• \_\_\_\_\_

• \_\_\_\_\_

• \_\_\_\_\_



# EAT TOGETHER

*I'm convinced that our dinner tables have the potential to be the most "missional" places in all of our lives. Perhaps before we invite people to Jesus or invite them to church, we should invite them to dinner.*

**–Barry D. Jones, Pastor**

## **INTRO**

Imagine a table. It might be set with a tablecloth, patterned dishes and silverware. Or perhaps there are simply paper plates, plastic cups, and forks. Now imagine the chairs set up around this table, the people sitting in them, the laughter and conversations being passed back and forth just like the dishes of food passing between hands. Or perhaps there isn't laughter but the tough things of life being discussed - brokenness making its way out into the open.

When we sit around a table and share a meal with others we have the opportunity to move a relationship from acquaintance toward friendship. The table can be a great equalizer. Everyone has a place and an opportunity to be heard and known while sharing in the intimacy of a meal. Eating together provides an opportunity to develop relational bridges, discover people's stories, and discern the next steps in helping them connect with Jesus.

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*Most people are deeply attracted to someone who will listen to them. Being available means being willing to focus my attention on the person or people God has placed in front of me.*

**-Paul Borthwick**  
*Everyday Witness*

## COMPLETE THIS SECTION BEFORE YOUR GROUP TIME

Read Luke 5:27-32

1. Tax collectors were despised in the Jewish community, and for good reason! They often collected more money than was required from Rome and became very wealthy because of it. What did Jesus see in these individuals that others did not? Why did he choose to associate with them?
2. Why do you think Levi felt the need to throw a party with Jesus invited as the guest? Wouldn't you think he would have set up a lecture hall for his friends to listen to Jesus? What is so important about this relational component leading the way?
3. How did Jesus' posture toward tax collectors like Levi ultimately result in them leaving behind their sinful ways and following him? What can we learn from his example?

4. What do you think Levi and his friends thought of the Pharisees? What do you think are some of the perceptions people today have of “religious folks?” How could eating together begin to change these perceptions?
5. Jesus faced criticism for eating with tax collectors and other “undesirable” individuals. What can we learn from his response in verses 31-32? How can this response compel us to reach out to and spend time with those that are far away from Jesus?
6. Jesus was obviously able to associate with people from all walks of life. What needs to be in place in our own lives so that we can do the same?



# PRAYER TIME

**A SPACE TO RECORD YOUR PERSONAL & GROUP TIME PRAYERS**



P.RAISE  
R.EPENT  
A.SK  
Y.IELD

## **PRAY**

Whether your group chooses to begin your time in prayer or close in prayer, spend time praying over the meals that will be shared with people who need to hear the good news of Jesus. Pray that compassionate conversation would occur and that people would feel heard, known, loved, and accepted.

## **SHARE**

How well did you “listen with compassion” this week? Was there a specific moment when you were able to set aside distractions and listen to someone else’s story? Share the details of this encounter with the group.

What stood out to you in your Personal Study Time?

## **FOR DISCUSSION**

1. Why is the practice of hospitality and eating together so powerful?
2. How can the BLESS practices we have discussed so far be brought into “eating together?” How could they deepen the time spent together over a meal?
3. What do you see as some of the challenges to the practice of “eating together?” Are there any hesitations you’re feeling about this practice?
4. Review Moving Out and how you can put your faith in motion.

## HOW TO PUT YOUR FAITH IN MOTION

1. Pray that God would provide opportunities to share a meal with the people on your prayer list. Pray that He would equip you to develop relational bridges through the practice of eating together.
2. Eat with someone this week! Here are some ways to do it:
  - Invite a neighbor or friend over/out for dinner.
  - Ask a colleague out for lunch.
  - Ask a friend you are praying for to go out for coffee.
  - Buy ingredients for ice cream sundaes and invite neighbors over for an ice cream party.
  - When the holidays draw near, think of someone you could invite over to your celebration.
  - Organize a block party or neighborhood gathering.
  - Other ideas:
    - \_\_\_\_\_
    - \_\_\_\_\_
    - \_\_\_\_\_
    - \_\_\_\_\_
    - \_\_\_\_\_
3. As you share time with others over a meal, be mindful of how you can listen with compassion and develop relational bridges, discover their story, and discern next steps.



# SERVE IN LOVE

*Let my life be the proof, The proof of Your love  
Let my love look like You and what You're made of.  
How You lived, how You died, love is sacrifice.  
So let my life be the proof, the proof of Your love.*

**-For King and Country**

*From the song: The Proof of Your Love*

## INTRO

In Luke 5, Jesus was teaching in a home, and people were crowding in to hear his words. There was no room to move, no way to squeeze in any closer. A paralyzed man, having heard of the miracles that Jesus had performed, wished to see Him. He had a glimpse of hope that he might be released from his disability, but it was still unreachable because of the crowd.

Then we see an act of service by some of his friends. They create a way for the paralyzed man to meet Jesus. These friends carry the man up to the roof, they dig through the roof and create an opening, and then they lower him down so that he is right in front of Jesus. These friends created a way for the paralyzed man to not only meet Jesus but experience His love, forgiveness, and healing first-hand.

When we serve in love, we have the opportunity to do the same thing. Sometimes our service looks very practical—shoveling someone’s driveway, bringing a meal during sickness, or helping to complete a home improvement project. Other times our service looks more like being present during moments of crisis or being willing to answer the hard questions someone has about faith.

However we serve, when we do it in love we are providing a way for the “roof to be opened” so that someone has the opportunity to meet Jesus. We are helping remove barriers and obstacles so that they can experience His love, forgiveness and healing first-hand.

## LISTEN TO THE MESSAGE

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*The only way you can serve God is by serving other people.*

**-Rick Warren, Pastor**

## COMPLETE THIS SECTION BEFORE YOUR GROUP TIME

Read Luke 5:17-26

1. What role did the men carrying the mat have in bringing the paralyzed man to Jesus? How did they remove the obstacles that were in his way?
2. Serving others sometimes comes at great cost. For example, the men in the story had to cut a hole in a roof that would most likely need to be repaired. What are some of the costs we may pay when we serve others in love?
3. How did Jesus serve the paralyzed man in love?

4. What is our role and what is God's role in serving others? How do they differ?
  
5. There are several examples in Scripture of people helping others meet Jesus by serving in love. As you read these verses, why is it so important that we serve others in love?
  - Jesus Heals Many (Mark 1:32-34)
  - A Blind Man at Bethsaida (Mark 8:22-26)
  - Jesus Forgives and Heals a Paralyzed Man(Matthew 9:1-2)
  - Jesus Raises a Dead Girl (Matthew 9:18-19)
  - A Demon-Possessed Man(Matthew 9:32-33)
  - The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)



**PRAYER TIME**

**A SPACE TO RECORD YOUR PERSONAL & GROUP TIME PRAYERS**



**P.RAISE  
R.EPENT  
A.SK  
Y.IELD**

## **PRAY**

As a group, spend time praying that the Holy Spirit would reveal ways that you can serve people in love. Also, pray you would seek out these opportunities and be willing to serve even when it might put you outside of our comfort zones.

## **SHARE**

Did you have the opportunity to eat with someone you have been praying for this week? How did it go? In what ways was your relationship deepened?

What stood out to you in your Personal Study Time?

## **FOR DISCUSSION**

1. Think about a time when someone served you. How did this experience impact you? In what ways did the act of service deepen the relationship you had/have with this person?
2. In our current culture, what perceptions do people have about Christians? How can our serving in love impact the perceptions people have of Christians? How can it impact the perceptions of the people on our prayer list?
3. Before coming to Christ we are all, in a sense, “on the mat”—paralyzed and unable to reach God. When you think about the people on your prayer list, what are some ways that they are spiritually and maybe even physically on the mat?
4. What are some of the hesitations or barriers we may have when it comes to serving others in love? In what ways can we overcome these barriers?

Review Moving Out and how you can put your faith in motion.

**HOW TO PUT YOUR FAITH IN MOTION**

There are so many ways that we can serve others in love. Take some time to think of ways that you can serve the people on your prayer list and record your ideas below.

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As you focus on serving in love this week choose one or two ways to serve the people on your prayer list.

Draw on the things you may have learned as you have listened and eaten together. In these conversations, people will often reveal to you how best to serve them.



**FOR NEXT WEEK**

Go to [www.iamsecond.com](http://www.iamsecond.com). Take time to watch a few videos of people's stories and be ready to discuss one or two that stuck out to you.



# SHARE A STORY

*Everybody's got a blank page  
A story they're writing today  
A wall that they're climbing  
You can carry the past on your shoulders  
Or you can start over  
Regrets, no matter what you've gone through  
Jesus, He gave it all to save you  
He carried the cross on His shoulders  
So you can start over*

**-Flame**

*From the song: Start Over*

## **INTRO**

Stories hold a lot of power. They have the power to change opinions, create empathy, provide clarity, and bring transformation. Our personal stories are unique and essential tools in helping others understand how Jesus impacts lives in real and tangible ways. Through stories, people can begin to believe that change is possible and hope is personal. They can start to understand what love looks like and that true, lasting, selfless love can be theirs to experience through a relationship with Jesus Christ.

The final practice of BLESS is to share a story. Sometimes a personal story of how God worked in our lives is the best one to share. Other times, someone else's story will connect most strongly with the person we're trying to reach. Either way, we are presenting our listeners with a gift when we share a story.

Sharing stories can sometimes take us outside of our comfort zone as we open up about how Jesus has worked in our lives. As we think about stories to share, we can be comforted by the fact that the Holy Spirit is at work as we share. He is the one that will ultimately soften hearts so His message can be heard. We can trust Him to work through us as we come alongside the work that He is already doing in the hearer's heart.

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*Because God gave you your makeup and superintended every moment of your past, including all the hardship, pain, and struggles, He wants to use your words in a unique manner. No one else can speak through your vocal cords, and equally important, no one else has your story..*

**-Chuck Swindoll, Pastor**

## COMPLETE THIS SECTION BEFORE YOUR GROUP TIME

Read Acts 22:3-16

1. What was Paul's life like before his encounter with God? In what ways was he far away from God? Do you think he recognized this distance from God before his encounter on the road? Why do you think it was hard for Paul to see how far he was from God?
2. How did God use Ananias in Paul's story? (See Acts 9:10-19) What reasons did Ananias have to avoid being involved in Paul's story? Were his fears reasonable?
3. How did Paul use his personal story to help others meet Jesus?

# PRAYER TIME

A SPACE TO RECORD YOUR PERSONAL & GROUP TIME PRAYERS



P.RAISE  
R.EPENT  
A.SK  
Y.IELD



## **PRAY**

As a group, spend some time praying that God would show you opportunities to love others by sharing a story of His work in your life. Pray for boldness as you take this step of faith.

## **SHARE**

Did you have an opportunity to serve someone from your prayer list in love? What did you do? How did it go?

As we begin talking about the importance of story, think back to some of the iamsecond stories you watched this week. Which one did you find most impactful?

What stood out to you in your Personal Study Time?

## **FOR DISCUSSION**

1. Why do you think stories are so powerful? In what ways do stories help build relationships?
2. What unique experiences, perhaps hard and difficult, has God given you that help you identify and connect with other people?
3. There is a way to tell a life story where we are the heroes, and another way to tell the story with God as the hero. Which is more common? Which is more truthful?
4. What might keep us from sharing our story? Fear of rejection? The feeling that our story isn't "powerful enough?" Other?

Review Moving Out and how you can put your faith in motion.

## **HOW TO PUT YOUR FAITH IN MOTION**

When you think about the people on your prayer list, what story from your own life, or the lives of others, could you share that would help them understand the transforming power of Jesus?

Take time to think about and write down some stories from your life. Think about how God has worked in the situations where you have experienced pain, hopelessness, or fear. What did your life look like before, during, and after these specific times? How did Jesus meet you during these times?

Pray that God would give you an opportunity to share a story with the people on your prayer list that would help them understand the transforming power of Jesus. Pray that He would encourage you to seek out and take advantage of these opportunities even when it means stepping outside of your comfort zone.



LET'S GO!

BLESS

OTHERS

*As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.*

**-Acts 4:20**

## **INTRO**

Our journey through the B.L.E.S.S series is coming to an end. AND the living out of B.L.E.S.S. is just starting and never ends. We want to blend B.L.E.S.S into our lives so that we are continually engaging with others and the gospel story.

The Style Inventory is a tool to help each of us understand how we most easily and naturally share our story and the invitation to know Jesus. Knowing the ways that are comfortable for us to share, can reduce our concerns about 'not doing it right' or 'making it awkward'. God has given each of us unique experiences in our faith and uniquely designed us to tell others about Jesus.

The hope is that this series has spurred us on to be intentional with the people God has put in our lives. To use opportunities to bring Jesus, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, into our experiences with others. To B.L.E.S.S. others.

## **LISTEN TO THE MESSAGE**

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*Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message,  
and the message is heard through the word about Christ.*

**–Romans 10:17**

**COMPLETE THIS SECTION BEFORE YOUR GROUP TIME**

There are examples of stories throughout the Bible. As you think about sharing your story, what do you see in these:

**ZACCHAEUS**

Zacchaeus' story reveals how a person's life changes

- Read Luke 19: 1-10

What was Zacchaeus' story before meeting Jesus?

What was Jesus's response to Zacchaeus?

How did Zacchaeus' life change?

How would you tell Zacchaeus' story using the pattern of before, during, after?

**PETER**

Peter's story reveals how God forgives us throughout our relationship with Him.

- Peter follows Jesus: John 1: 40-42
- Peter denies Jesus: John 18: 15-17, 25-36
- Peter is remembered: Mark 16: 6-8

How would you tell Peter's story to someone needing forgiveness? What did Peter go on to do in ministry?

**YOUR STORY**

Write a piece of your story with a beginning, middle and end. Practice telling it in 2-3 minutes.

**IDENTIFY YOUR STYLE**

Give each item a score.

Scoring:

3 = Very Often    2 = Often    1 = Sometimes    0 = Not Usually

\_\_\_ 1. In conversations, I like to approach topics directly without much small talk or beating around the bush.

\_\_\_ 2. I have a hard time leaving bookstores or online libraries without getting a bunch of books that will help me better understand issues being debated in society.

\_\_\_ 3. I often tell stories about my personal experiences to illustrate a point I am trying to make.

\_\_\_ 4. I am a “people person” who places a high value on friendship.

\_\_\_ 5. I enjoy including or adding new people to activities I am involved in.

\_\_\_ 6. I see needs in people’s lives that others often overlook.

\_\_\_ 7. I do not shy away from putting a person on the spot when it seems necessary.

\_\_\_ 8. I tend to be analytical.

\_\_\_ 9. I often identify with others by using phrases like “I used to think that too” or “I once felt the way you do.”

\_\_\_ 10. Other people have commented on my skill in developing new friendships.

\_\_\_ 11. To be honest, even if I knew the answers, I would rather have someone better qualified than me explain Christianity to my friends.

\_\_\_ 12. I find fulfillment in helping others, often in behind-the-scenes ways.

\_\_\_ 13. I do not have a problem confronting my friends with the truth even if it risks hurting our relationship.



\_\_\_ 14. In conversations, I naturally focus on the questions holding up a person's spiritual progress.

\_\_\_ 15. When I tell people how I came to Christ, I have found they have been interested in hearing it.

\_\_\_ 16. I would rather delve into personal life issues than abstract theological concepts.

\_\_\_ 17. If I knew of a high-quality outreach event that my friends would enjoy, I would try to bring them.

\_\_\_ 18. I prefer to show love through my actions more than with words.

\_\_\_ 19. I believe genuine love often means telling someone the truth, even when it hurts.

\_\_\_ 20. I enjoy discussion and debate on difficult issues.

\_\_\_ 21. I intentionally share my mistakes with others when it helps them relate to the solutions I have found.

\_\_\_ 22. I prefer getting involved in discussions concerning a person's life before dealing with the details of their beliefs.

\_\_\_ 23. I tend to watch for spiritually strategic events to bring people to, like Christian concerts, outreach events, and seeker services.

\_\_\_ 24. When people are spiritually closed, I have found that my quiet demonstration of Christ-like love sometimes makes them more receptive.

\_\_\_ 25. A fitting motto for me is: "Make a difference or a mess, but do something."

\_\_\_ 26. I often get frustrated with people when they use weak arguments or poor logic.

\_\_\_ 27. People seem interested in hearing stories about things that have

**IDENTIFY YOUR STYLE**

\_\_\_ 28. I enjoy long talks with friends.

\_\_\_ 29. I am always looking for a match between the needs and interests of my friends and the various events, books, etc., they would enjoy or benefit from.

\_\_\_ 30. I feel more comfortable physically assisting a person in the name of Christ over getting involved in religious discussions.

\_\_\_ 31. I sometimes get in trouble for lacking gentleness and sensitivity in the way I interact with others.

\_\_\_ 32. I like to get at the underlying reasons for the opinions people hold.

\_\_\_ 33. I am still amazed at how God brought me to faith in Him and am motivated to tell people about it.

\_\_\_ 34. People generally consider me an interactive, sensitive, and caring person.

\_\_\_ 35. A highlight of my week would be to take a guest to an church event.

\_\_\_ 36. I tend to be more practical and action oriented than philosophical and idea oriented.

**MY SHARING STYLE IS:**

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## TALLY YOUR SCORES TO DISCOVER YOUR SHARING STYLE

<p><b>Confronting</b></p> <p>#1 _____</p> <p>#7 _____</p> <p>#13 _____</p> <p>#19 _____</p> <p>#25 _____</p> <p>#31 _____</p> <p>TOTAL: _____</p>	<p><b>Intellectual</b></p> <p>#2 _____</p> <p>#8 _____</p> <p>#14 _____</p> <p>#20 _____</p> <p>#26 _____</p> <p>#32 _____</p> <p>TOTAL: _____</p>	<p><b>Testimonial</b></p> <p>#3 _____</p> <p>#9 _____</p> <p>#15 _____</p> <p>#21 _____</p> <p>#27 _____</p> <p>#33 _____</p> <p>TOTAL: _____</p>
<p><b>Interpersonal</b></p> <p>#4 _____</p> <p>#10 _____</p> <p>#16 _____</p> <p>#22 _____</p> <p>#28 _____</p> <p>#34 _____</p> <p>TOTAL: _____</p>	<p><b>invitational</b></p> <p>#5 _____</p> <p>#11 _____</p> <p>#17 _____</p> <p>#23 _____</p> <p>#29 _____</p> <p>#35 _____</p> <p>TOTAL: _____</p>	<p><b>Serving</b></p> <p>#6 _____</p> <p>#12 _____</p> <p>#18 _____</p> <p>#24 _____</p> <p>#30 _____</p> <p>#36 _____</p> <p>TOTAL: _____</p>

## QUALITIES OF EACH STYLE

### CONFRONTATIONAL

- Confident, bold, and direct.
- Skips small talk. likes to get right to the point.
- Holds strong opinions and convictions.

### INTELLECTUAL

- Analytical, logical, and inquisitive.
- Likes to debate.
- Concerned with what people think over what they feel.

### TESTIMONIAL

- Clear communicator and listener.
- Transparent sharing of personal life experiences, both triumphs and difficulties.
- Links own experience to that of others.

### INTERPERSONAL

- Conversational and sensitive.
- Friendship oriented.
- Focuses on others and their needs.

### INVITATIONAL

- Enjoys meeting new people.
- Committed, strong belief in commitments.
- Sees outreach events as unique opportunities.

### SERVING

- Sees needs and finds joy in meeting them.
- Shows love through action more than words.
- Attaches value to even menial tasks.



**P.RAISE  
R.EPENT  
A.SK  
Y.IELD**

## **PRAY**

As a group, give thanks for the ways God opened doors for sharing Jesus. Pray for the Spirit's guidance and encouragement to continue to share our stories. .

## **SHARE**

Did you have an opportunity to share your story with someone on your prayer list? How did it go? How did it feel for you to share your story? How did the person respond?

Share the results of the style inventory with each other. How do your results match up with who you are and your past experiences of sharing Jesus with others?

Seeing your style through B.L.E.S.S., what opportunities stand out to you that you may not have seen before? How does knowing your style increase your confidence and comfort?

## **FOR DISCUSSION**

For each of the styles:

- Read the scriptures that illustrates the style.
- Discuss each style as demonstrated in the scripture.
- Who do you know that is an example of the style?
- What could be a person's theme verse for the style?

Confrontational- John the Baptist

- John the Baptist came before Jesus to prepare the way. His words were direct and bold.
- Read Matt 3: 1-10

Intellectual- Paul

- Paul is in Athens observing the idol worship. He engages the philosophers in a debate about idols. He uses reasoning and thought to address the issue of idol worship.
- Read Acts 17: 22-34

## Testimonial- Peter

- Peter, in his first letter, lays out a testimony of Jesus and how baptism relates to the believer.
- Read I Peter 3: 18-21

## Interpersonal- Jesus and the Samaritan Woman

- Jesus meets the Samaritan woman at a well in the hottest part of the day. He is asking for water (vs 7-10) and talking with her about her life.
- Read John 4: 1-26

## Invitational- The Samaritan Woman

- The Samaritan woman, having had her soul thirst quenched by Jesus knowing her, goes to town to tell others.
- Read John 4: 28-30, 39-42

## Serving- Jesus to the Disciples

- Jesus demonstrates how the act of serving opens others to hearing the good news.
- Read John 13: 2-5, 12-15

Review Moving Out and how you can put your faith in motion.

## HOW TO PUT YOUR FAITH IN MOTION

Commit as a group to a monthly check-in on the Temperature and B.L.E.S.S practices. What we make as habits gets our consistent attention and focus. Keep a journal of the ways the group blesses others and the impact of sharing Jesus.













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**B**

**BE IN PRAYER**

**L**

**LISTEN WITH COMPASSION**

**E**

**EAT TOGETHER**

**S**

**SERVE IN LOVE**

**S**

**SHARE A STORY**