



BLESS

Not Ashamed.



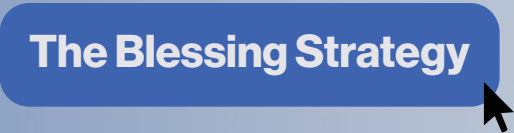
Introduction



“How can my life fit into the story of God’s mission?” When you ask yourself that question, you’re asking what it would look like if God’s purposes were the starting point of your life – it’s a shift in perspective.

This guide will help you understand how to live your life on mission. It will equip you to impact those you live, work, and play with as you use the five simple practices of BLESS. Practicing at least one of these each day will help you live out God’s mission. It’s that simple.

The Blessing Strategy



Our mission to go and make disciples of all nations (Matt 28:18-20) is rooted in the original mission to go and be a blessing to others (Gen 12:1-3). This means that blessing others and seeing people come to know, love, and serve Jesus are linked together!

We believe these five rhythms will help us share Jesus with our family, friends, neighbors, and coworkers in a way that is natural, relational and personal. By listening to God, the voices of the people he has placed in our lives, sharing meals together and serving, we will have the opportunity to share the good news in word and deed, where we live, work and play.

If you do at least one of these BLESS practices every day, you will not only look more like Jesus, but you will help others find Jesus too!

BEGIN WITH PRAYER

I will pray for the people in my life and the places that I'm in.

LISTEN

I will listen to and discover the needs of others and the places where God is at work.

EAT

I will share meals and spend time with people in my life.

SERVE

I will respond to the needs of others and help them in tangible and impacting ways.

STORY

I will share the story of Jesus and what He is doing in my life with others.

How to Bless Your Neighbor | Discussion Questions



1. We are all part of the mission to help people find their way back to God. It might be challenging to think about our role in that mission. If we're not sure what it looks like to be "on mission" then we might be hoping people find their way back to God rather than helping. What is the difference between hoping and helping? Explain.
2. Read 2 Corinthians 5:17-21. What is Jesus saying about God's mission and our role in it?
3. Read Genesis 12:1-3 and Galatians 3:7-9. God has always wanted his people to be blessed to be a blessing to others. What do you think about that insight?
4. Review the BLESS practices; they represent a simple strategy for living our everyday lives on mission. Which of these practices come most naturally to you?
5. Which practices are challenging for you?
6. Is the notion of living your whole life "on mission" a new one for you? If you started living your life in that way, what would be different about your life?
7. Who could you BLESS in your life now? Are there specific ways you could serve them?

BEGIN WITH PRAYER

We believe that prayer is how you discover your mission as well as how you accomplish it. If you're not sure who the people are that God is calling you to bless or where the place is that God is calling you to go, you can begin with prayer. And if you know people or the place you want to impact, begin praying for those people and that place.

God, may Your kingdom come and will be done. Where are You already at work where I live, work, and play? How can I join You? Please provide me with an opportunity today to bless someone or some place. Help me be aware of your presence and your leading today.

PRAYING FOR PEOPLE

- Who do you live, work, and play with?
- Ask God to give you eyes to see how He is at work in this place or person.
- Pray that God would give you the opportunity to join Him. Ask God to give you openness and wisdom as you enter into spiritual conversations.

PRAYING FOR PLACES

- Where does pain exist here? Pray for healing.
- Who makes the decisions here? Pray for integrity.
- Who gathers here? Pray for community.
- Where resources are needed here? Pray for provision.

Luke 6:12-16 | Matthew 6:9-13 | Philippians 4:6-7 | Ephesians 3:16-21

BEGIN WITH PRAYER | Discussion Questions



1. How comfortable are you with prayer?
2. What is your expectation and experience of prayer?
3. Read Luke 6:12-16. What do you notice about this passage?
4. Jesus often withdrew alone to pray to discern his next steps. (see Luke 3:21, 5:16, 9:16a, 22:32, & 22:41). Does Jesus' example encourage or discourage you? Explain.
5. In what ways does prayer change us?
6. Can you identify any barriers that may keep you from beginning with prayer on a daily basis?
7. How could intentionally setting a time to pray for people and places make a difference in your life?
8. What are some places you want to pray for God to provide opportunities?

WEEKLY CHALLENGE

Set apart some time to “Begin with prayer” each day this week and add it to your calendar or set an alarm on your phone.

LISTEN

If we sincerely hope to impact the lives of people around us, then we must first get to know them. Any relationship starts with listening. We need to listen to their hopes, their dreams, and their challenges. Truly listening may be the kindest and most loving gift you can give someone.

LISTEN TO GOD: “God, how do You want me to BLESS the world today? Help me to listen to and discover the needs of others and where you are already at work.” In praying for people and places, listen to God intentionally through spending time in prayer and reading His Word.

LISTEN TO OTHERS: “What is your story?” Before you can help others find Jesus, you need to listen to them first. In your interactions, conversations, and observations today, take the posture of a learner.

LISTEN TO YOURSELF: “Do I have assumptions that influence how I see others?” Lay down your assumptions, and practice being present.

Proverbs 18:13 | Luke 18:35-43 | John 5:1-9 | James 1:19

LISTEN | Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever misheard a lyric of a song? Which one?
2. Christ-followers are known more for talking than for listening. Additionally, as a society, we seem to be losing the skill of listening, treating it as an afterthought instead of a vital part of relationships. The art of having a conversation requires deep thinking and authentic listening, something that can be cultivated and taught. What do you think it takes to be a good listener?

3. Read Luke 18:35-43 & John 5:1-9. If Jesus, the Son of God, stopped to listen to the people around him, what's stopping us?
4. Listening is a humbling act; it requires admitting that perhaps we can't anticipate what the other person wants to talk about or that maybe their needs are different than we'd thought. What does it feel like to actively listen?
5. Have you ever assumed you knew what someone needed, only to find out later that you were wrong? Share your story.
6. What difference does it make to listen to others' needs before you begin serving?
7. What are some things that you could be listening for as you interact with people?

WEEKLY CHALLENGE

Make a plan this week to truly listen to the people in your life by beginning to pray, "Jesus, help me to listen today." Have a conversation where your only goal is to discover what your friend or colleague needs. Share how it goes with your group.

EAT

Jesus often ate with people and shared in their story. There is something about sharing a meal that moves any relationship past acquaintance toward friendship faster than just about anything else we can do. And there are few ways we can better bless the people around us than by sharing a meal.

- Who could you eat with (or have a coffee with)? A co-worker over lunch? A neighbour during the day? A friend or family member over the weekend?
- Is there a place that you regularly visit (coffee shop, gym, etc.)? Who could you intentionally engage with there?
- How intentional are you in living a life that attracts others to want to join in? Are you living an invitational life?

Matthew 9:9-13 | Luke 7:34 | 1 Corinthians 10:31 | Colossians 3:17

EAT | Discussion Questions

1. If you had to eat the same meal once every day for the rest of your life, what would it be?
2. Read Matthew 9:9-13. Why do you think that Matthew followed him? What do you think they discussed at Matthew's house?

3. Read the Henri Nouwen quote below and discuss how it intersects with Jesus' method of "eating with sinners."

"When we invite friends for a meal, we do much more than offer them food for their bodies. We offer friendship, fellowship, good conversation, intimacy, and closeness. When we say, 'Help yourself... take some more... don't be shy... have another glass...' we offer our guests not only our food and drink but also ourselves. A spiritual bond grows, and we become food and drink for one another." - Henri J.M. Nouwen

4. What are the barriers in your life that may keep you from inviting someone to share a meal with you? How might you break down some of those barriers?
5. How often do you share a meal with someone during the week? Are there times that you could invite others to join you that wouldn't be too difficult?
6. What if your Small Group had regular opportunities where instead of a study, you invited those who are far from God and ate together? Partied together? Imagine the love of God that they would feel and the conversations that would arise. Plan an upcoming gathering to do just that.

WEEKLY CHALLENGE

Who has God been calling you to bless and help to find their way back to him? Continue to pray for them, listen to them, and this week, invite them to share a meal with you. Next week share with the group how it went.

SERVE

If you begin with prayer, listen, and eat; there is a good chance that you will discover how you can best serve the person or place to which God has called you. They'll likely tell you how you can best serve them.

- Who can you serve this week?
- Who do you know that has a practical need? Ask them how you can help them.

Mark 10:45 | Philippians 2:3-8 | John 13:1-17 | Matthew 16:24-25 | 1 Peter 4:10-11

SERVE | Discussion Questions

1. What is one task that you hate and like to avoid?
2. Read John 13:1-17. What details stand out to you about this story?
3. Jesus lived in a cultural setting that was considered an honor-shame society. Protecting your name, your reputation, and your dignity is critically important in an honor-shame culture. Your honor was like a social credit rating. The higher your honor score, the more privilege and prestige you enjoy. If you had a high honor score, other people were expected to serve you. What does Jesus' action reveal about the nature of God?

4. What would be some contemporary equivalents to washing another person's feet in our culture today?
5. How can we cultivate a posture of readiness to serve others in big and small ways?
6. When's the last time that someone truly served you or you served someone else? How did that affect you? What did it do to your relationship?
7. What most often keeps you from serving people?
8. How do you think God may be calling you to serve someone? Is there something that you can help them with? Have you asked them? What is one step you can take towards obeying God and serving that person?

WEEKLY CHALLENGE

As you have been praying, listening, and eating, what opportunities has God revealed for you to meet a need around you? Pick a need that you can meet this week and make it happen. Next week share with the group how it went.

Additionally, if you are going through this with a group then pick a need from the people and places you have been praying for and listening to and set a date and plan to meet the need.

STORY

If you do the other BLESS practices – Begin with Prayer, Listen, Eat, and Serve; then there is a good chance you will have the opportunity to share your story. Someone may ask you to explain what makes you different. It is then that you can tell them your story of how Jesus changed your life and is changing your life. Sharing the story of Jesus with others is a vital part of participating in Jesus' mission (Matt 28:18-20).

Tips on how to share the story of Jesus with others:

- Start by sharing how Jesus has made a positive difference in your life.
- Share your story in such a way that demonstrates that Jesus is also at work in their life.
- Don't feel like you have to tell your life story at once. Think "bite-size" stories.

1 Peter 2:9-10 | 1 Peter 3:15 | John 9:1-15 | Matthew 10:16-20

STORY | Discussion Questions

1. What would you say is the greatest barrier that you face in sharing your story of what God has done in your life?
2. Who first shared the Gospel story with you? What stands out to you about that presentation?
3. Read Matthew 10:16-20. What do you notice about this passage?
4. In verses 19-20, Jesus tells his disciples that the Spirit will guide them in their speech. How difficult is it for you to trust that God can guide us in our conversations?
5. D.T. Niles said, "Christianity is one beggar telling another beggar where he found bread". How do you understand that statement?

6. Read John 9:1-15. The newly sighted man from John 9 laid out a simple template for sharing your story. Give everyone a chance to share these three components of their story:
- **My Life before Jesus:** The man declared “I was blind”. What was your life like before you met Jesus? Or if you grew up in church knowing all about Jesus, what was your life like before you got serious about following him?
 - **How I met Jesus:** The man declared, “He put mud on my eyes”. How you met Jesus is an important part of your story. How did you find your way back to God? Did a friend invite you to church, a family member introduce you to Jesus? Did you go through a hard time?
 - **My Life Since I met Jesus:** “Oh, I was blind... But now I see”. What difference has finding your way back to God made in your life? How are you different? What has changed about your perspective? How has knowing Jesus impacted how you walk through both the good and the hard things in life?
7. The story of your life before and after Jesus isn’t something that only happens once, but something that will happen again and again as you learn to follow Jesus in every area of your life and he continues to change you. What is a recent example of how God has changed your life?
8. Where and how is God challenging you to share your story with others about how Jesus is real in your life?

WEEKLY CHALLENGE

To bless people, you don’t need to be a theological expert or a spiritual giant; you need to share your story. Spend some time this week using this template to craft your story: My Life before Jesus, How I met Jesus, My Life Since I Met Jesus. Write it down and allow God to give you the right words. Then pray and be looking for opportunities to share your story.

YOUR NEXT STEP



DAILY Intentionally look for ways to BLESS others.

WEEKLY With people you connect with on a regular basis, commit to asking one another this question, “Who did you BLESS this week?”

LEARN MORE



For a deeper dive into the BLESS Strategy checkout the book [BLESS: 5 Everyday Ways to Love Your Neighbor and Change the World](#) by Dave & Jon Ferguson.

If you want to grow in your understanding of how to Coach someone in their spiritual journey checkout the resources and training at 242community.com/coaching.

If you have discovered that an individual is ready to explore Christianity, invite them to join a Rooted Group with you. 242community.com/rooted

If you don't have others around you to live this out together with, then go to 242community.com/groups to find a group to connect with.

