

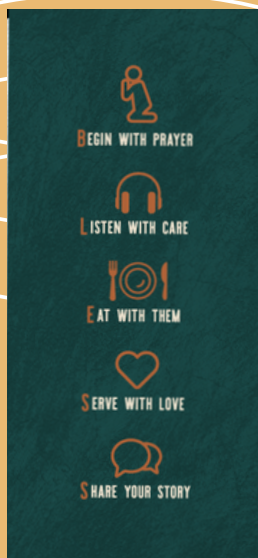


BLESS

THIS JOURNAL BELONGS TO:

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# INTRODUCTION



## BIG AIM

To encourage every person at Hope City to take some dedicated time to reflect on the past year by looking at our efforts to BLESS those around us. BLESS is an acronym to help us think about sharing our hope in Jesus.

Reflecting prepares us to BLESS others with renewed commitment for the opportunities God provides.

## PROCESS

We have been thinking about what activates followers of Jesus to BLESS others. This journal will walk through these BLESS activators to guide our time in God's Word. Several sections will have a video link, as well as scriptures to help focus on the theme. There is a central question and space for response.

This journal can be used one session at a time (5 sessions total) or all in one sitting, perhaps over a half or a whole day away. Some days there are extras if you have more time. You could come to the church on one of the Hope Desk days (our co-working space: [hopecityedinburgh.org/hopedesk](http://hopecityedinburgh.org/hopedesk)) and work through your journal. Another option would be to work through it as a family over the summer.

Our church has all kinds of people and schedules, so there is no one plan that will work for everyone – but there is something about putting away your phone, removing distractions (or having your spouse/friend take the kids for a while), diving into the Bible, and being prompted by the Holy Spirit toward progress for next year.

# THE MECHANICS OF IT



## INTRODUCING BLESS ACTIVATORS

Once I have come to faith in Jesus and have chosen to follow Him in obedience, what helps me share my faith with others?

At Hope City Church, we want to be 'all in' as we multiply followers of Jesus. Part of this looks like BLESSing those around us. We have been trying to discern the different factors that come together to really "activate" a follower in this. We will reflect on each of these factors in turn through this journal.

## PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

Some suggestions on how to be intentional in creating a conducive space and the time to fruitfully reflect as we work through these:



Schedule your time in advance and put it in your diary.



Find a place that minimises distractions.



Make sure you have your Bible, pen, this journal (and perhaps your personal journal, if you are in the habit of using one)



Put your phone on "do not disturb" and put it away



Always begin in prayer and end with prayer for application of what God has taught you.



Return to your thoughts on application again later in the day for reflection.

# SESSION 1



## BLESS ACTIVATORS

### 1. Belief that Jesus commands every believer to "go and make disciples"

**Matthew 28:18-20**

Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'

**2 Corinthians 5:19 –20**

...that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: be reconciled to God.

**Romans 1:16**

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.

### 2. Belief that anyone can come to faith in Jesus as saviour

**John 3:16**

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

**Romans 10: 9-10**

If you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.

**Ephesians 2:8-9**

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast.

# SESSION 1



## OUTLINE

### **Read the background verses for these activators.**

What is God saying to you in these verses/activators?

What do these verses say about our role in sharing the gospel?

### **Watch this video**

Scan QR code and watch a video introduction of the BLESS activators:

What did you hear in this video that applies to you?



[hopecityedinburgh.org/BLESS1](https://hopecityedinburgh.org/BLESS1)

### **Amazing truth:**

God has chosen to use us as his ambassadors and spokespeople in this world.

Reflect on this unique truth and how God often brings the unexpected to faith.

### **Read about Paul's salvation story (Acts 9:1-31).**

God used Ananias as a reluctant, but obedient, witness in this passage where an unlikely man comes to faith. Thank God that he transformed Paul and that He is transforming you. Take a moment to reflect on your own story of coming to faith.

# SESSION 2

## BLESS ACTIVATORS

### 3. Prayer and dependence on the Holy Spirit are essential in BLESSing others

**Ephesians 6:19-20**

Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

**Colossians 4:3**

And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains.

**2 Thessalonians 3:1**

As for other matters, brothers and sisters, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honoured, just as it was with you.

**Acts 1:8**

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.'

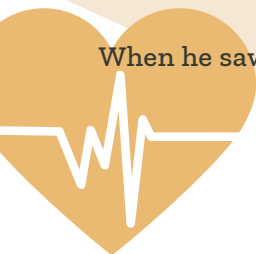
**Romans 8:26-27**

"Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God."

### 4. Compassion for the eternal destiny of others

**Matthew 9:36**

When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.



# SESSION 2



## OUTLINE

### **Read the background verses for these activators.**

What is God saying to you in these verses?

How has prayer been lived out in your daily life?

### **Reflect on how you can depend on the Holy Spirit in your life.**

Jesus has compassion for the eternal destiny of people.

We can pray for people, we can serve people and we can speak to them.

The Holy Spirit does the work in people's hearts.

### **Reflect on who you've been praying for this past year, jotting their names or initials down below.**

Where have you seen God work in their lives? Thank God that prayer makes a difference.

### **EXTRAS**

Video of the One style thinking: Having a relationship with one non-believer - watch just 3 and 1/2 minutes of this video, 25:30-29:00 minute marks:



[hopecityedinburgh.org/BLESS2](https://hopecityedinburgh.org/BLESS2)

Watch Ruth's video on persevering in prayer (2 minutes)



[hopecityedinburgh.org/BLESS3](https://hopecityedinburgh.org/BLESS3)

# SESSION 3



## BLESS ACTIVATORS

### 5. Regular engagement with non-Christians

**1 Peter 3:15-16a**

But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect...

**Romans 10:14**

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?

### 6. Confidence to pursue spiritual conversations and to share my story and the Gospel

**John 14:26**

But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

**1 Corinthians 1:27**

But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.

### 7. Fluency at "speaking naturally about spiritual things, and spiritually about natural things"

**Colossians 4:5-6**

Be wise in the way you act towards outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

**1 Corinthians 9:19, 22-23**

To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.

# SESSION 3



## OUTLINE

**Read the background verses for these activators.**

What is God saying to me about how I am sharing my faith and with whom I am sharing?

**Make a list of all the places you encounter non-Christians (i.e. work, school gate, gym, clubs, etc.).**

How am I speaking about Jesus with those people I am seeing regularly?  
In what ways do I need to be better equipped to share my faith?

### EXTRAS

Watch this video from InterVarsity that describes a way people journey to faith:



[hopecityedinburgh.org/BLESS4](https://hopecityedinburgh.org/BLESS4)

A book that has been helpful to others in Hope City is The 9 Arts of Spiritual Conversation by Mary Schaller and John Crilly.

Read the Primer (short – 12 pages). We would encourage you to take the short one page assessment on page 10 of this PDF to help you identify areas where you could improve in your effectiveness in spiritual conversation.



[hopecityedinburgh.org/BLESS5](https://hopecityedinburgh.org/BLESS5)

Extra challenge – talk over the results with a friend!

# SESSION 4

## BLESS ACTIVATORS

### 8. Support, encouragement and accountability to other Christians in BLESSing others

**Hebrews 10:24**

And let us consider how we may spur one another on towards love and good deeds.

**Colossians 3:16**

Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.

**Philemon 1:6**

I pray that your partnership with us in the faith may be effective in deepening your understanding of every good thing we share for the sake of Christ.



# SESSION 4

## OUTLINE

**Read these verses regarding support and accountability with other Christians.**

In this past year, how have you been giving and receiving support, encouragement and accountability with other Christians for being engaged in personal mission and sharing the gospel?

**Reflect on this past year on your personal mission (BLESS) and sharing.**

What has BLESSing non-believers looked like this past year for you? With whom or what groups have you engaged and in what ways? In what ways did you feel like you were obedient to the Holy Spirit's prompting?

**Let's look at "I" statements in the Activators for this past year.**

Identify 2 or 3 of these statements in which you feel you have been obedient in this past year. Write a sentence prayer of thanks for how God has used you.

1. I believe Jesus commands me to "go and make disciples"
2. I believe absolutely anyone can come to a saving faith in Jesus
3. I pray and depend on the Holy Spirit to help me in BLESSing others
4. I have compassion for their eternal destiny
5. I engage regularly with non-Christians
6. I know how to pursue spiritual conversations and to share my story and the Gospel
7. I feel fluent at "speaking naturally about spiritual things, and spiritually about natural things"
8. I am supported, encouraged, and accountable to other Christians in BLESSing others.



# SESSION 5

## BLESS ACTIVATORS

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**Philemon 1:6**

I pray that your partnership with us in the faith may be effective in deepening your understanding of every good thing we share for the sake of Christ.



# SESSION 5

## OUTLINE

### **Read these background verses.**

In looking forward, what ways would you want to pursue giving or receiving more support, encouragement or accountability with other Christians?

### **Let's look again at "I" statements in the Activators.**

Identify and mark 2 or 3 activators that you would like to grow in this coming year.

1. I believe Jesus commands me to "go and make disciples"
2. I believe absolutely anyone can come to a saving faith in Jesus
3. I pray and depend on the Holy Spirit to help me in BLESSing others
4. I have compassion for their eternal destiny
5. I engage regularly with non-Christians
6. I know how to pursue spiritual conversations and to share my story and the Gospel
7. I feel fluent at "speaking naturally about spiritual things, and spiritually about natural things"
8. I am supported, encouraged, and accountable to other Christians in BLESSing others

Using these 2 or 3 activators that you have identified for yourself, work through the following Start – stop – change questions.

### **Start**

What are those things that you hear God saying to start in BLESSing those around you?

For instance,

Pray for 5 people every morning who are not yet believers in Jesus.

Find a group to join where there are non-believers that I can engage with regularly.

# SESSION 5

## OUTLINE CONTINUED



### **Stop**

What might God be asking you to stop during this season of life?

For example,

I'm head of several parents' groups and involved in several more community groups. They are all good, but I'm so pressed on time, I'm too emotionally and physically drained to meaningfully engage with others. Assess all the groups I'm involved in and stop at least one, so that I can spend more time with several non-Christians.



### **Change**

What do you hear from God that you might need to change in your life?

For example,

I go to the same coffee shop every week and never talk to anyone. Change the coffee shop I go to and see if I find some people I can get to know at the new one.

I feel I spend a lot of time on Social Media and gaming or reading news cycles. I feel God wants me to cut that down to\_\_\_ minutes a day to give me more available time to engage with people.



### **Take a Risk**

What do you hear God saying to you about taking a risk in sharing your faith?

For example:

I've wanted to ask a friend if she is interested in reading the Bible (or reading a Christian book together), but I've been pretty paralysed and haven't asked. I want to take a risk and ask her.

**Start, Stop, Change – take a risk...**



# My NOTES



