



SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE

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The Evangelical Covenant Church

MAKE & DEEPEN DISCIPLES



Initiate. Create. Proclaim.

This guide is an expression of the BLESS materials for ministry in the Evangelical Covenant Church. Additional resources are available at covchurch.org/bless.

The mission of the Evangelical Covenant Church:

We join God in God's mission to see more disciples among more populations in a more caring and just world.

BLESS is an acronym for a relational approach to evangelism founded on the idea that God's people are blessed by God to be a blessing to those around them (Genesis 12:2).

BLESS is a series of missional practices that invite participants to put their faith into action in ways that create opportunities to share about the goodness of God. BLESS prioritizes building authentic relationships, creating a congregational culture of evangelism, and offering tangible application steps each week to bless others.

BLESS is built on five missional practices that help us become intentional and effective in sharing the gospel. These practices are designed to help us bless our family, friends, and neighbors who do not yet follow Jesus, illuminating a path for how we can show and tell people in our life about the goodness of God and walk alongside them as loving companions as they consider giving their lives to Christ.



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MISSIONAL PRACTICES

BLESS develops five missional practices that focus on blessing our family and friends who have not yet given their lives to Christ.

- **Begin with Prayer:** Pray for people in your life who have not yet chosen to follow Jesus. Ask God, “How do you want to use me to bless these people in my life and show them your love?”
- **Listen with Care:** Pay attention to people’s dreams, feelings, and pain. Listen for evidence of God’s work in their lives.
- **Eat Together:** Share meals and life with people in your community who are not currently walking with Jesus. Through the simple act of eating together, we practice hospitality, build community, and deepen relationships.
- **Serve with Love:** Be attentive to opportunities God provides you to lovingly care for people and compassionately attend to their needs.
- **Share the Story:** Once you build relationship and earn trust, look for ways to share the gospel story of Jesus Christ and how knowing him transforms us and the world we live in.

How to use BLESS: This study is recommended for use in a small group or Sunday school setting. It includes two components: a communal piece and a one-on-one with God piece. The communal component is the small group/Sunday school curriculum that you will do in community each week, and the one-on-one with God component is what you will do in between your communal sessions during your alone time with God. Both are integral to the success of this study!

We encourage you to have your Bible accessible to read the passages of Scripture and a journal to write notes, reflections, or prayers throughout this six-week study. Your group may also want to consider meeting one additional time after the final session to connect, share, and encourage one another as you go forth and BLESS others.



week one

INTRODUCTION

Begin Your Time Together with Prayer.

BLESS is a step-by-step process that guides us in fulfilling the Great Commission, Jesus's command to "go and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:18–20). This is not something we can do in our own strength; it requires a conscious dependence upon the Holy Spirit. Fulfilling the Great Commission requires us to love in word and deed, as well as with action and in truth. The mission of the Evangelical Covenant Church continues to be to join God in God's mission to see more disciples among more populations in a more caring and just world. We aim to make disciples who make disciples. We begin this process by praying for others, listening with care, sharing a meal, serving with love, and telling others about Jesus.

Two questions sit at the heart of our Covenant identity: "Where is it written?" and "How goes your walk?" We will use these two questions to guide our engagement each week. We start by asking:

How Goes Your Walk?

(These are weekly reflection questions to begin your small group time.)

- What are your thoughts and feelings about evangelism?
- What have been some of your positive and negative experiences of evangelism?
- Is there anything you need to process in order to be open to what God might be saying to you as we explore the BLESS model of evangelism together?

We will then ask:

Where Is It Written?

We begin by reading the core passages at the foundation of God's call to bless others and our world. As you read, listen for the missional call within the text and how the Holy Spirit is speaking to you.

READ GENESIS 1:27–28

Reflection Questions

- What do you hear God saying to you through this passage?
- Where do you hear a missional invitation in this passage?
- Where do you see the theme of blessing in this passage?

UNPACKING WHAT THIS MEANS FOR US

God blessed Adam and Eve and then commanded them to bless creation by co-sustaining it with God, caring for it as God would. The first vocation God calls humanity to is to care for God's good creation. We are also called to spread God's goodness throughout the earth. Instead, Adam and Eve disobeyed God, chose their own path, and ushered sin into our world. This is the beginning of the gospel story, but it is not the end. God's plan to spread goodness over the earth could not be stopped by sin, the curses it brought, or even the death it caused. Later, God blessed a man named Abram and invited him to spread God's goodness to all people.



READ GENESIS 12:1–3

Reflection Questions

- What do you hear God saying to you through this passage?
- Where do you hear a missional invitation in this passage?
- Where do you see the theme of blessing in this passage?

UNPACKING WHAT THIS MEANS FOR US

God blessed Abram, but not just for Abram's sake. Abram was blessed so that he might become a blessing to others. This blessing wasn't limited to the people near Abram or even to the people who lived during his time. The blessing that would come through Abram was intended to bless all peoples, over all the earth, throughout all of time. That blessing is Jesus, who came through the family line of Abraham. Through Jesus's life, death, and resurrection, the curse of sin and death would be reversed and all of creation would return to the order and goodness that God intended at the beginning. Jesus's words to his followers in Matthew 28 invite us to be a blessing too.

READ MATTHEW 28:18–20

Reflection Questions

- What do you hear God saying to you through this passage?
- Where do you hear a missional invitation in this passage?
- Where do you see the theme of blessing in this passage?

UNPACKING WHAT THIS MEANS FOR US

Jesus commissioned his followers to go and tell the world about the good news of his kingdom. That meant stepping outside their comfort zones, engaging with people, cultures, and traditions that were unfamiliar, and following the Holy Spirit into uncharted territory.

Jesus's commission, however, was not just for his twelve disciples; it is for all who follow Jesus. It is for every nation, race, ethnicity, culture, language, and people group throughout time because God's kingdom is a beautiful, multiethnic mosaic. As children of God, we find unity amid our God-given diversity through our new life in Christ. As Christians, we are sent out with a common mission: to share the gospel and make disciples. We are to make God's name known (the Great Commission) and God's love shown (the Greatest Commandment, Matthew 22:37–40) wherever we go, to the ends of the earth.

The Bible teaches us that one day Jesus will return to establish his perfect, eternal kingdom where fear and doubt, tears and trials, sin and death are no more. In fact, the Bible concludes with that promise in Revelation 22.

READ REVELATION 22:14

Reflection Questions

- What do you hear God saying to you through this passage?
- Where do you hear a missional invitation in this passage?
- Where do you see the theme of blessing in this passage?

UNPACKING WHAT THIS MEANS FOR US

Washing is a theme that is repeated in Scripture. In Revelation the washed robes remind us of the washing of baptism that Jesus teaches his followers to practice in Matthew 28. We are also reminded that we have a role to play in bringing about Jesus's kingdom on earth as it is in heaven and filling it with family, friends, neighbors, and people from all nations, tongues, tribes, and people groups.

Another theme in each of these passages—from Genesis 1 to Revelation 22—is that God blesses us to be a blessing to others!



READ 1 JOHN 3:16–18

Reflection Questions

- What do you hear God saying to you through this passage?
- Where do you hear a missional invitation in this passage?
- Where do you see the theme of blessing in this passage?

UNPACKING WHAT THIS MEANS FOR US

The greatest blessing God has given us is Jesus Christ. John 3:16, which is the heart of the gospel, tells us that God so loved the world that God gave us Jesus. Through Jesus we are forgiven of our sins and freed from sin's power over us. Here, in 1 John 3:16, we learn two tangible ways that we are called to bless others in light of the blessing that Jesus is for us. Jesus's sacrificial love for us makes it possible for us to bless others with sacrificial love. We do this both by practicing solidarity—laying down our lives for our brothers and sisters—and by sharing our material goods with our neighbors in need. God's blessings are not meant to just be spoken; we are called to bless our neighbors in action and in truth.

So how can we be a blessing?

How to BLESS Others

- Begin with Prayer
- Listen with Care
- Eat Together
- Serve with Love
- Share the Story

Over the next five sessions, we will walk through each of these missional practices and follow the Holy Spirit's leading as each practice builds on the others. We will intentionally spend time praying, listening with care to our family, friends, and neighbors who have not yet decided to follow Jesus, and sharing meals. As we pray and build relationships, we will discern opportunities to serve them with love and share the gospel of Jesus Christ. As we build authentic relationships, we trust that the Holy Spirit is already at work and will help us recognize ways we can testify to the goodness of God and the transformative power of the gospel, opening the door to invite others into God's loving family.

Be sure to take time to pray before ending your time together.

This Week's Action Step

Take time to pray, asking God to help you identify three people in your life whom you will commit to praying for throughout this study. These are three people you are looking for opportunities to BLESS and share your testimony with. Once God helps you identify people, write their names down in the space provided below. We are asking you to commit to praying for these people daily over the course of this study.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____



ONE-ON-ONE TIME WITH GOD

Before week two, read and reflect on the following content about why we begin with prayer.

WHY PRAYER COMES FIRST IN EVANGELISM

It is easy to assume that sharing the gospel begins when we start talking about Jesus and all he has done for us. However, this misunderstanding is one of the primary stumbling blocks to evangelism. The good news is Scripture corrects this misunderstanding by revealing that long before we speak, God is already at work.

Beginning with prayer helps us remember Jesus has already done the work, God has a sovereign plan, and the Holy Spirit simply invites us to participate in God's reconciling mission as imperfect people, mere earthen vessels.

Talking to people about Jesus without talking to Jesus about people is insufficient. By praying, we join God in what God is already doing in the lives of others. Beginning with prayer also keeps us from placing too much value on our own words, which can cause anxiety and may make evangelism feel overwhelming. When we find ourselves putting too much stock in our words and delivery, we have forgotten that evangelism is only fruitful because God is at work. When we begin with prayer, we do not have to feel pressure to be perfect because we trust God's perfect will.

Practical Steps: Learning to Pray with Intention and Faith

This section moves prayer from theory into daily practice. Choose a sustainable path, and trust the Holy Spirit to lead you.

- **Pray for the three people God helped you to identify (your BLESS prayer list).**

As you pray, remember these are real people, with real stories, doubts, questions, and wounds. Pray for each person by name. Ask God to help them experience God's loving presence and healing love. Pray for them to authentically encounter God. Pray for their knowledge of God to increase.

- **Pray for spiritual attentiveness and receptivity.** Daily intercession helps our relationships to keep from becoming transactional. Intercessory prayer trains our hearts to see people as beloved children of God who were created with a missional purpose. Pray for the people God helped you identify to be spiritually hungry and open to hearing the good news of the gospel. Pray for them to begin to recognize God's movement around them and within their life.

- **Learn to pray Scripture.** Use Paul's prayer in Colossians 1:9–12 as a prayer template to ask God to lead the people you are praying for to give their life to Christ, putting their faith in Jesus, and to experience the transformative hope of the gospel. Pray, trusting in God's sovereignty and timing.

- **Ask a daily guiding question, like the one below, and follow God's leading.**

Pray: "Lord, how do you want to bless this person through me today?" Be ready to respond with acts of loving-kindness, timely words, and faithful presence.



week two

BEGIN WITH PRAYER

Begin Your Time Together with Prayer.

How Goes Your Walk?

Last week, our action step was to identify the names of three people and commit to praying for them daily.

- How did that go for you?
- What challenges did you encounter?
- In what ways are you encouraged as you continue to pray for your list of three?
- Did anything come up in your reflections since our last meeting that you would like to share?
- How did the one-on-one time with God portion of this study shape you this week?

If you were unable to do this beforehand, take a few minutes to pray and ask God to help you to identify three people. Once you have identified three people whom you will commit to praying for throughout this study, please write their names on your BLESS bookmark.

Why We Begin with Prayer

Long before we were taught the lesson or heard the words that helped us decide to follow Jesus, someone, most likely many people, prayed for us to find new life in Christ. Evangelism begins with prayer, not strategies, scripts, or tracks. Before we speak to people about God, we speak to God about people. This was true for us, and it is true for the people we hope to share the gospel with as well.

When our evangelism begins with prayer, wonderful things happen:

- We experience the power of God.
- Others experience the power of God.
- We are blessed as we pray.
- Others are blessed through our prayers.
- We yield our will to God's and cultivate a conscious dependence upon the Holy Spirit.
- Others are drawn closer to Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Where Is It Written?

READ COLOSSIANS 1:3–12

Reflection Questions

- What do you hear God saying to you through this passage?
- Where do you hear a missional invitation in this passage?
- Where did you hear the theme of prayer in this passage?

UNPACKING WHAT THIS MEANS FOR US

The Apostle Paul begins the book of Colossians in prayer. In this passage, he prays, giving thanks to God for disciples who point others back to God and for the fruitful ministry of one of his own disciples, Epaphras. This passage, and the book of Colossians, are a testament to the power of prayer.

The Apostle Paul prayed for and discipled Epaphras, who became a key leader in the church of Colossae. Epaphras sought Paul's help when he noticed a dangerous trend: many new believers were struggling or even turning away from the faith they had first received. False teachers—both inside and outside the church—were promoting blending cultural and worldly philosophies with orthodox teaching



about Jesus. This distorted message led many believers to slip back into old patterns of life. Epaphras described this crisis to Paul, and Paul responded with a pastoral letter while he was incarcerated in Rome. That letter is the book of Colossians, written to encourage Christians in Colossae and to help them understand the true gospel of Jesus Christ.

Paul wrote this letter to bless his siblings in Christ, even though he had never visited the church. This means Colossians is a book in our Bible because a person whom Paul prayed for and discipled (Epaphras) went home and told his community about Jesus. Epaphras was one of the first people in Scripture to BLESS others with the good news of the gospel. He heard it, lived it out, and shared it with his family, friends, and neighbors. Epaphras bore a faithful witness that led many to faith, and his report inspired Paul to write a letter that impacted the faith of many more.

The theme of prayer is woven throughout Colossians. Later, Paul affirmed Epaphras's faith, leadership, and commitment to begin with prayer, writing, "He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured" (Colossians 4:12). Epaphras offers a model for us today. From him—and from the apostle who discipled him—we learn how and why we always begin with prayer.

Lessons we glean from Paul and Epaphras about blessing others through prayer:

- Prayer is missional. As we pray, we join God in God's mission to see more disciples among more populations in a more caring and just world.
- We are called to individual and communal prayer. Notice how verse 3 reads: "We always thank God...when we pray for you." There is power in praying in community.
- We bless our family, friends, and neighbors who do not yet follow Jesus when we focus our prayers for them on their

knowledge and understanding of God's will (Colossians 1:9).

- As we pray for our neighbors to follow Jesus, we also ask God to lead them to live fruit-bearing lives that point others back to God. We are ultimately praying to help make disciples who make disciples (Colossians 1:10–11).

BLESS prayers are deeply relational and rooted in the hope of the gospel (Colossians 1:3–7).

Discussion Questions

- How does seeing prayer as participation in God's mission change the way you pray?
- In what ways could your prayers become more outward-focused on God's work in the world?
- What differences have you experienced between praying alone and praying with others?
- When you pray for friends, family, or neighbors who don't follow Christ, what do you usually pray for?
- What might it look like to pray specifically for their knowledge of God and alignment with God's will to increase?
- Why is it important not only to pray that someone comes to know Jesus, but also to pray that they will live fruit-bearing lives that point others back to God?
- How does remembering the hope of the gospel shape the way you pray for real people in your life?

Be sure to take time to pray before ending your time together.

This Week's Action Step

Continue to be committed to praying for the three people God helped you identify last week. Write notes in your journal or phone of ways you notice God moving through your prayers for these three people.



ONE-ON-ONE TIME WITH GOD

Before Week Three, read and reflect on the following:

We begin with prayer because:

- **Prayer acknowledges God as the author of salvation.** Evangelism begins with God's love, plan, and desire to draw all people to himself. God, not our human effort, is what drives evangelism. Jesus said, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them" (John 6:44). Prayer places us in agreement with God, allowing us to be used by God and freeing us from the burden of feeling like we are responsible for—or even capable of—producing faith in others.
- **Prayer aligns our hearts with God's heart.** Before God works through us, the Holy Spirit works within us. God reshapes our motives, attitudes, and perspectives. As we pray, we begin to see others as God sees them, with compassion, empathy, and love. Paul models this posture in Colossians 1:9.
- **We pray for gospel transformation, not just oral conversions.** Paul prays for endurance, wisdom, and joyful obedience: "So that you may live a life worthy of the Lord...bearing fruit in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God" (Colossians 1:10). Prayer reminds us that transformation is a Spirit-led process, not a one-time conversion event.
- **Prayer trains us to depend on God rather than our own ability.** Our confidence is in God, not our eloquence (1 Corinthians 3:7).
- **Prayer helps us discern where God is already at work.** Through prayer, we gain spiritual attentiveness, recognizing open doors and hearts that are prepared to receive (James 1:5).
- **Prayer releases fear and cultivates peace.** When we think about evangelism, we may feel anxious or fear rejection. Beginning with prayer helps us alleviate these worries (Philippians 4:6).

A Training Foundation for the Whole Journey

Beginning with prayer is the foundation for the entire BLESS pathway. Beginning with prayer allows us to listen with care, eat together as we share life, serve in love, and share the story faithfully. Each of the succeeding steps flows from a life rooted in prayer.

BLESS is designed to create faithful disciples, not expert evangelists. Prayer keeps our hearts tender, our motives pure, and our hope centered on the transformative power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. As we learn to consistently begin with prayer, we discover that evangelism is not about our words, strategies, or eloquence; it is something God does through us as people who are led by the Holy Spirit.

As a wise Christian writer observed, prayer does not change God—it changes us. As we are changed through prayer, may our hearts yearn for our family, friends, and neighbors to experience the redemptive love of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. May we pray for opportunities to share the gospel and intercede on behalf of the names on our BLESS list. The discipline of beginning with prayer invites us to remember that we join God in God's mission to see more disciples among more populations in a more caring and just world.

Reflection Questions

- How is God changing me as I pray for my BLESS list?
- What new thing am I realizing about prayer?
- Who prayed for me to give my life to Christ?



week three

LISTEN WITH CARE

Begin Your Time Together with Prayer.

How Goes Your Walk?

Last week our action steps were to continue in prayer for the three people God has placed on our hearts and minds, and to write down how we noticed God moving through our prayers.

- What were some of the ways you noted God's movement in the three people you are praying for and in yourself?
- In these first two weeks, have you developed any habits or rhythms when it comes to praying for the people you have committed to pray for? What are those habits or rhythms?
- Did anything come up in your reflections since our last meeting that you would like to share?
- How did the one-on-one time with God portion of this study shape you this week?

Today we will focus on the second missional practice of BLESS—listen with care. Listening with care is not just about hearing; it is about our posture, intentionality, and exhibiting a nonanxious presence. When we listen with care, we demonstrate the love of God, creating relationships where trust, safety, and intimacy emerge.

Where Is It Written?

Read Acts 8:26–38.

Reflection Questions

- What do you hear God saying to you through this passage?
- Where do you hear a missional invitation in this passage?
- Where do you hear the theme of listening in this passage?

UNPACKING WHAT THIS MEANS FOR US

Listening with care helps us see where God is already at work. When we share the gospel, we do not bring God to people, we join in what God is already up to. In this passage Philip joins God in God's mission to see more disciples among more populations by listening with care. Philip's humble posture allowed him to listen to the Ethiopian eunuch in ways that empowered Philip to help the man gain clarity and a deeper understanding of God's word. As Philip listened with care, he recognized Spirit-led opportunities to help break down barriers that were keeping the Ethiopian man from giving his life to Christ.



As Philip listened, he saw how God was already at work in the official's life well before he arrived. Before meeting Philip, the Ethiopian was already reading Scripture, asking questions about God, and engaging in worship. In many cases, the people we are praying for and looking for opportunities to bless are like the Ethiopian. They are people who have already engaged with God on some level, whether they have read the Bible, participated in worship, asked questions about God, or simply know the truth that there is a God. Others may be discerning whether they can give their life to Christ, and their discernment process would be aided by a prayerful companion, attuned to the Spirit, who will walk alongside them and listen with care. Being a faithful companion could be exactly what they need to help them process a difficult question or vulnerably share a lingering concern that is keeping them from deciding to follow Jesus. The Holy Spirit might be prompting you to be this faithful companion for someone. The Holy Spirit might be inviting you to embody the same posture and response as Philip.

Some of the people we are praying for and hoping to bless will need more time and active engagement than just a listening presence. No matter what is needed, we gain missional clarity when we listen with care. We also get the opportunity to see how God is already at work within their lives, in ways that they may or may not have recognized. As we patiently walk with the people we are praying for and listen to them with care, we will begin to discern opportunities the Holy Spirit is providing for us to bless them by sharing the gospel.

Listening Exercise: **"Walk Alongside the Chariot"**

Listening with care is not passive; it is active obedience. It requires attention, restraint, and prayerful awareness. Listening with care creates a safe environment where people feel free to share their concerns, questions,

and reservations. Evangelism is relational. It requires discernment, humility, patience, presence, and trust. When we listen with care, we train ourselves to accompany others at the pace of God's timing, not our own. Remember, evangelism is never about us leading others to Christ through our own efforts, strategies, or words. It is about how God is at work as we learn to listen with care to the Holy Spirit and those we are praying for.

Practice time! Pair up and begin by having one person share while the other practices listening with care. This should take about ten minutes. Take another ten minutes and switch roles.

Step 1 — Attentive Presence (2 minutes)

Silently invite the Holy Spirit to help you listen. Maintain soft eye contact and an open posture. Notice the other person's tone, pace, and nonverbal cues.

Step 2 — Open the Door with a Philip-Like Question (2 minutes)

Ask a gentle, curiosity-driven question such as, "What has been on your heart lately?" or, "What part of Scripture has been speaking to you?" Avoid leading questions.

Step 3 — Reflective Responses (3 minutes)

Offer a brief reflection that mirrors what you hear:

Content: "You're saying..."

Feeling: "You seem (hopeful/uncertain/grieved)."

Meaning/Value: "This really matters to you because..."

Summarize: "Here's what I'm hearing so far..."

Step 4 — Holy Questions (2 minutes)

Offer one brief follow-up: "Would you like to say more about that?" or "Where do you sense God in this?"

Step 5 — Pray and Release (1 minute)

Ask permission to pray a short prayer. Thank God for what surfaced. Entrust the person to God's care.



Discussion Questions

- What went well and what was challenging about this listening exercise?
- How did it feel to be listened to?
- What assumptions might you need to lay down in order to ask better questions? (Acts 8:30)
- How can you create space to listen with care this week? What will you need to do to make this happen?

This Week's Action Step

Over the next week be intentional about listening with care. When we gather next, come prepared to share stories and experiences of how you listened with care. Remember to continue to begin with prayer, as prayer is the foundation for effective evangelism. Prayer is also what empowers us to listen with care and to be able to discern and follow the Holy Spirit.

Close your time together with prayer.

ONE-ON-ONE TIME WITH GOD

Before Week Four, read and reflect on the following.

WHO DID PHILIP LISTEN TO?

Philip listened to the angel of the Lord. When God speaks, are we willing to act? The text does not say exactly how the angel of the Lord spoke to Philip. God speaks to Elijah in a still, small voice (1 Kings 19:11–13) and speaks to Saul with a blinding light and an audible voice (Acts 9:1–19). God is speaking to each of us. Regardless of how God speaks, the core question remains: how will we respond? Divine appointments begin with an obedient heart that is willing to act when God speaks.

Philip received two sets of instructions in this passage. Both times the instructions were vague, but instead of waiting for every detail to become crystal clear, he obediently moved in faith. First, the angel told him to go to a “desert road.” Then the Spirit told him to “Go to that chariot and stay near it.” Perhaps we miss out on opportunities to share the gospel because we are not willing to step outside of our comfort zone or move in faith because we do not have all the details. Often steps three and four of the journey do not come into focus until we take steps one and two in faith.

Personal Reflection Question

How might God be inviting you to take a step in faith by acting on something that feels vague or does not have every detail mapped out?

Philip listened to the Ethiopian eunuch. Effectively sharing the good news of Jesus requires us to learn to listen with care. When we listen with care, we listen to a person’s story, their questions, and their specific needs. We do not just assume we know what they need or simply share the gospel in a prepackaged way. We hear their unique questions, concerns, and wonderings. We listen to hear how the Spirit is inviting us into their processing.

Philip did not start with a sermon, the Romans Road,¹ or even a question. He started by listening with care. As he listened, he heard the Ethiopian reading Scripture. After listening, Philip allowed what he heard to shape how

¹ The Romans Road is a historic evangelism pathway that briefly walks people through the gospel as explained in the book of Romans, and what making a decision to follow Jesus entails. The “road” starts with Romans 3:10, goes to 3:23, 5:8, 6:23, 19:9, and concludes at 10:13.



he engaged. Philip first asks the man an open-ended question, which afforded him the opportunity to listen further. Philip did not begin by teaching, explaining, or assuming he knew what the Ethiopian official needed. Philip began by asking, “Do you understand what you are reading?” Philip’s curious question invited the Ethiopian to lead the conversation, building trust and giving the man the choice to invite Philip into his processing when he felt safe and comfortable enough to do so.

As Philip listened with care, he gained a deeper understanding of the Ethiopian’s need. The man was able to express his confusion, which created space for Philip to see how the Holy Spirit was inviting him to engage (vv. 31–34). Philip listened long enough to know exactly where the Ethiopian was struggling. By being a nonanxious presence as he listened with care, Philip demonstrated that he was a safe person for the Ethiopian to invite into his chariot. The chariot represents the Ethiopian’s worldview. Philip was invited into a place of intimacy, and this relational invitation paved the way for Philip to share the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

When talking with people you are praying for and hoping to bless, listen more than you speak. Ask open-ended questions that prompt deeper reflection and allow what you learn to shape how you engage. Offer fewer statements about what you think they need, and listen for their longings and spiritual thirsts. Listen to their questions, the things they are confused about, and what they are seeking further clarity on. Honor and validate their questions, affirm how they are wrestling and working through their doubts and confusions. Resist the temptation to fix or offer solutions. Learning to listen with care is a discipline that we cultivate. Our development of this discipline begins with honoring our neighbor’s journey.

Personal Reflection Question

- When I hope to share the gospel with others, am I listening with care long enough to be deemed a safe person?
- What does it look and feel like to truly hold space to listen with care to my neighbors, without rushing the conversation to get to the evangelistic outcome I envisioned?
- As I listen to my neighbor, how might I also listen and discern how and when the Holy Spirit is inviting me to speak?
- In what way(s) do I need God to help me grow my listening skills?

Philip listened to Scripture. Faithful evangelism begins with prayer and is always rooted in Scripture. As we share the gospel, we do not have to be experts, but we must be grounded in the word of God ourselves. This will allow us to faithfully accompany our neighbors who are searching and spiritually hungry. When we are humble, obedient, and rooted in God’s word, we are better able to discern what the Holy Spirit is saying to us and respond in faith.

Philip “began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus” (Acts 8:35). Philip had already spent time in the word of God and therefore knew the teachings of the prophet Isaiah. Reading Scripture and spending time with God were spiritual disciplines that Philip had already committed to. Those spiritual disciplines equipped him to effectively share the gospel and respond to the specific question the Ethiopian had. Philip’s readiness came from listening to the word of God with care long before this encounter.

Reading God’s word, meditating on it, and beginning with prayer prepares us to listen with care to our neighbors and to engage in effective evangelism. We cannot share what we do not know. We can equip ourselves to be an effective evangelist by committing to a regular rhythm of connecting with God through reading



and meditating on Scripture and prayer. God not only speaks in the Bible; God also speaks through it, and to us as we pray.

Personal Reflection Questions

- Can I recall a particularly impactful or meaningful time when God spoke to me through Scripture?
- What are my current rhythms of connecting with God through Scripture?
- How might God be inviting me to cultivate a deeper practice of reading and meditating on Scripture?

Philip listened to the Holy Spirit. If Philip did not have a conscious dependence upon the Holy Spirit, he would have missed out on the opportunity to accompany his neighbor in giving his life to Christ. In heeding the promptings of the Holy Spirit, Philip had to do some strange things that took him well outside of his comfort zone and likely didn't even make sense to him. Remember, he was told to run to a chariot to meet a stranger and instructed to travel to a town in a different direction than he intended to go.

We cannot do evangelism on our own terms, or in our own strength. In this passage, the Holy Spirit leads Philip to the person he is supposed to share the gospel with and provides Philip with an opening to share the gospel. The Holy Spirit also guides Philip as he responds to the Ethiopian's question and was with Philip as he baptized the Ethiopian into the family of God.

Personal Reflection Questions

- What helped Philip to respond in obedience when he was uncomfortable and not fully certain what he was being led to do?
- What are some ways I can increase my conscious dependence upon the Holy Spirit?
- How have I seen the Holy Spirit show up in my life? What stories have helped shape my trust and dependence upon the Holy Spirit's direction?



week four

EAT TOGETHER

Begin Your Time Together with Prayer.

How Goes Your Walk?

Last week, our action step was to listen with care and come prepared to share stories and experiences of how we listened with care over the last week.

- What came naturally and what was challenging about listening with care?
- How does beginning with prayer impact our ability and desire to listen with care?
- Did anything come up in your reflections since our last meeting that you would like to share?
- How did the one-on-one time with God portion of this study shape you this week?

Today we will focus on the third missional practice of BLESS—eat together. Eating together is one of the most powerful and practical ways to show hospitality, creating space for us to listen with care and build relational trust.

The Power of the Table and a Shared Meal

Communion is the primary place we are reminded that there is something sacred about a table. Tables are a place of revelation, connection, and transformation. Jesus understood this deeply. He often chose meals as the place where he shared the gospel, softened hearts, and transformed lives. Jesus chose the table as a place for missional encounters, choosing to eat with people whom other people shunned, disregarded, and

ignored. We see this through the people who were invited to the feast in the parable of the great banquet (Luke 14:12–24) and those he shared meals with—tax collectors, sinners, and social outcasts. When Jesus shared a table, he wasn't simply sharing a meal. He was sharing himself.

When we share a meal, our stories, and a common table, we find points of connection. We affirm our shared dignity as people equally made in the image of God. Sharing a meal with people with whom we hope to share the gospel reminds us that people are not projects. We do not just strike up conversations with people to “save their souls.” The gospel is not merely about spiritual transactions or conversions; rather, we are called to lovingly share our lives with others as we seek to make disciples. We make disciples by building authentic relationships, inviting others into our lives, and investing in the holistic flourishing of our neighbors. This is true for both the people we have committed to praying for throughout this study and the people whom God will place in our path. Remember, God placed the Ethiopian in Philip's path, and Hebrews 13:2 tells us to “not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.”

Whenever we welcome someone to join us in table fellowship, we are offering more than an invitation to share a meal. We are offering space for God to move both within us and in those we are breaking bread with.



The Theology of the Table in Luke–Acts

Across Luke–Acts, meals become sacred spaces of revelation and mission. Levi throws an inclusive banquet for the least of these, welcoming outcasts, feeding the forgotten, and bearing witness to the abundance available in God’s kingdom. We serve a God who created enough for everyone’s needs, but not enough for our greed. We serve a God of abundance, not scarcity. On the Emmaus Road, eyes were opened through the breaking of the bread, and at the table our risen Lord was revealed. The early church shared meals to build and deepen discipling relationships as the church was rapidly growing, with new people coming to faith daily. Luke–Acts shows us how what we may perceive as an ordinary meal may be the exact place where God is inviting us to participate in the inclusive, upside-down kingdom of God breaking into our community, on earth as it is in heaven.

Where Is It Written?

READ LUKE 5:27–32.

Reflection Questions

- What do you hear God saying to you through this passage?
- Where do you hear a missional invitation in this passage?
- Where do you hear the theme of eating together in this passage?

UNPACKING WHAT THIS MEANS FOR US

This passage picks up on the broader themes of the table as a place of inclusion for the sake of mission and gospel transformation throughout Luke–Acts. This story centers Jesus and Levi, a despised tax collector, and his tax collecting friends. Tax collectors were scorned in Israel because they were notorious for their unethical dealings, theft, and economic exploitation on behalf of the Roman

Empire. They were among the last people God-fearing Jews would want in their homes or at their tables, much less to see their promised messiah sharing a meal with.

Stories like this show us what we mean when we say the kingdom of God is upside-down. God’s kingdom reverses our world’s values, flipping its patterns upside-down. In God’s kingdom, the last are first and the greatest serve others. In the kingdom of God, we pray for and love our enemies. In God’s upside-down kingdom, social outcasts and people who are poor are honored as VIP guests at the great banquet. And, in God’s kingdom the people from whom others would never accept a banquet invitation are the people Jesus prioritizes dining with. These surprises are meant to catch our attention and to help us understand how and why God’s kingdom is distinguished from the kingdoms of this world.

But Jesus was not just being contrarian when he dined with people his peers scorned. He wanted to help them see that they were created with a missional purpose. Jesus dined with sinners to help them realize that no matter what sins they had committed, God still desired to be in a loving relationship with them and wanted to welcome them home. Jesus’s table fellowship with Levi was focused on freeing him from the weight of forever being defined by the worst things he had done, and he offered Levi new life in him. At the table, while eating together, Jesus created an opportunity for Levi to turn away from his sins and return home to his loving Father.

The surprising nature of this passage is intended to catch our attention. It was shocking, if not downright scandalous, for a good Jewish rabbi (teacher) like Jesus to share a meal with people who caused so much pain, trauma, and injustice like tax collectors. The other surprising thing revealed in this story is that the Jewish religious leaders, who



considered themselves experts in the faith, didn't understand what Jesus was all about. They missed the truth of God's kingdom and the missional purpose of their Messiah. For them, God's table had become about a list of dos and don'ts, not a place for all people, from everywhere, who realize the error of their ways and are willing to repent.

Discussion Questions

- What fears or assumptions keep you from practicing table fellowship with people outside of your comfort zone?
- Where might God already be creating natural opportunities for you to eat with others, especially those you are praying for?

- How does the idea of hospitality and eating together reshape the way you think about evangelism?

This Week's Action Step

While sharing meals with others, aim to be distraction-free by leaving your phone in another room, a pocket, or a bag. Whether you are at breakfast, lunch, dinner, or grabbing a coffee or dessert, your presence builds trust. By keeping your phone out of sight you are showing the people you are with that they matter more than your notifications, opening the door for deeper conversations now and in the future.

Close your time together with prayer.

ONE-ON-ONE TIME WITH GOD

Before meeting for week five, read and reflect on the following.

THE HEART OF HOSPITALITY AS EVANGELISM

Scripture consistently reveals that God is the host who prepares the table. The Bible also reveals that some of God's most transformative work is done while we eat together. As we think about building authentic relationships where we can share about the goodness of God, hospitality is a great way to create an atmosphere that is primed for evangelism. We are not striving to feed or welcome people for the sake of transactional conversations, but as we authentically do life together in ways that deepen our relationships, space for us to share our faith and invite others to give their life to Christ will emerge.

At Levi's table, Jesus models a divine order: welcome before correction, presence before proclamation, and belonging as a key to belief.

People's hearts become more open to truth after they have encountered love. Hearts are more readily open to the gospel when people first feel seen, known, welcomed, and loved. When we are hospitable, when we eat together, we have an opportunity to convey to others that they belong, they matter, and we are connected.

Shared meals also have the capacity to speak a language of abundance. When we share meals, we can communicate that there is enough. When we host our neighbors, we can declare, "You belong here." Our generosity can illustrate that God's love is generous and overflowing. When we eat together, we have the opportunity to create unhurried moments where God's presence can be tangibly felt in a world that can feel cold, lonely, and unwelcoming.



Practical Ways to Be Intentional about Eating Together

1. Begin with Prayer

- Ask God to create opportunities for you to share a meal with people you have been praying for. Ask God to help your busy schedules align.
- Ask God to reveal ways you can make your dining partner(s) feel seen, known, and loved. This is even more important if you are dining with someone who often feels unseen, isolated, or overlooked.
- Pray for the person or people you will be eating with to also be spiritually hungry.

2. Create a Welcoming Atmosphere

- Keep it simple. The goal is not perfection but loving presence and an atmosphere where you can listen with care.
- Schedule the meal when there is ample time for conversation and relationship-building.
- Do not over-script the conversation. Prepare some open-ended questions to guide and deepen the conversation in ways that can build trust and intimacy (remember the practice we did together when we focused on listening with care).

3. Be Open to Whatever Form Hospitality May Take

- Do not be so locked into one vision of how this should look that you miss opportunities to make the meal happen. The meal can be homemade, store-bought, or at a restaurant where a meaningful conversation can occur. God uses whatever we offer with sincerity.
- Small touches show care. Consider whether there is a small way you can express that you have been thinking off, praying for, and desiring to be intentional about deepening the relationship.

4. Engage in Meaningful Conversation

- Ask gentle, open questions.
- Avoid turning the table into a pulpit; let the Spirit lead.
- Focus on connection more than content.

If you decide to host and cook for someone you are hoping to bless, here's a recipe from leisha Hawley, the Covenant's director of evangelism, that we invite you to consider.

Soul-Filled Fellowship Lasagna Soup

A hearty, comforting dish to enjoy over slow conversation and deep connection.

INGREDIENTS

1 lb. ground turkey or beef
1 small onion, diced
3 cloves garlic, minced
1 tsp. dried basil
1 tsp. dried oregano
1 tsp. smoked paprika
1 jar (24 oz) marinara sauce
4 c. chicken or vegetable broth
8–10 lasagna noodles, broken into pieces
1 c. ricotta cheese
1 c. shredded mozzarella
½ c. grated Parmesan
Salt and pepper to taste
Fresh basil for garnish

INSTRUCTIONS

1. In a large pot, sauté the onions and garlic until fragrant.
 2. Add the ground meat and cook until browned; drain excess fat if needed.
 3. Stir in basil, oregano, paprika, salt, and pepper.
 4. Pour in marinara and broth; bring to a gentle boil.
 5. Add the broken lasagna noodles and cook until tender (10–12 minutes).
 6. In a separate bowl, mix ricotta, mozzarella, and Parmesan.
 7. Ladle the soup into bowls and place a generous spoonful of the cheese mixture on top.
 8. Garnish with fresh basil.
 9. Serve with warm bread and open hearts.
- This soup invites lingering, and lingering invites connection!*



Blessing Prayer Before Eating

God, thank you for this table and for every heart gathered around it. Bless this food, bless our fellowship, and bless the stories shared here. May this meal become a place of peace, laughter, healing, and holy conversation. Let your presence fill every moment and your love season every word. Make this table a small expression of your kingdom where all are welcomed, all are seen, and all are loved. In Jesus's name, amen.

Personal Reflection Questions

- Can I recall a shared meal that made me feel seen, known, welcomed, and loved? What did my dining partner do or not do to make me feel this way?
- What does it look like for me to create a space that puts welcome before correction, presence before proclamation, and values belonging?
- Where do I have opportunity to be intentional about sharing a meal and table fellowship? Who is the Holy Spirit prompting me to invite and share a meal with?



week five

SERVE WITH LOVE

Begin Your Time Together with Prayer.

How Goes Your Walk?

Last week our action step was to be distraction-free and put our phones away during a shared meal.

- Where were you able to be intentional about connecting distraction-free with someone?
- How did beginning with prayer and listening with care shape your time eating with others?
- Did anything come up in your reflections since our last meeting that you would like to share?
- How did the one-on-one time with God portion of this study shape you this week?

Simple and Tangible Acts of Care

Serving others with Christlike love does not require grand gestures or perfect plans. Often, the most meaningful expressions of care are simple, steady, and sincere. A small offering like a thoughtful message or an unhurried visit carries the warmth of God's nearness.

Jesus reminds us that small acts carry eternal weight. "Whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple will certainly not lose his reward" (Matthew 10:42). With Jesus, even the smallest act becomes sacred when we serve with love.

Serving with love shifts faith into action. Jesus did not just simply talk about the kingdom of God; he revealed it through serving with love. As we learn to sincerely serve others with love, we create an atmosphere to share the gospel message we long for others to know. Simple faithfulness practiced daily, becomes a quiet but powerful witness. Evangelism

often grows gently through these ordinary moments in which someone feels seen, valued, and cared for through our loving presence. Evangelism most often grows through everyday faithfulness, not grand gestures.

Service doesn't have to be complex. Often God moves through humble acts, such as when we provide a warm meal, a listening ear, a thoughtful text, or a helping hand.

Serving Without Expectation or Agenda

One of the tender challenges of Christlike service is learning to give without expecting anything in return. Biblical love does not keep tabs, nor is it offered to persuade or to produce an outcome—it is merely offered as a response to the love God first extended to us. When we love without qualification, or an expectation of a return on our investment, our love becomes Christlike.

Jesus modeled this so beautifully. He healed people, knowing some would never follow him. For example, he restored ten lepers knowing only one would return with gratitude. Yet he continued to give freely, without condition. Scripture captures Jesus's posture of serving with love when it says, "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve" (Mark 10:45).

Serving without an agenda builds trust. It creates a safe place for people to encounter God's love without pressure or expectations. When our motivation is simply to show and tell the word about God's great love, we help prepare our neighbors hearts to become fertile soil where the gospel will take root. When we



love like this, people sense our authenticity, and they often feel Jesus's presence long before any words are spoken. People encounter Jesus most authentically through us when our love comes with no strings attached.

Serving without hidden motives builds credibility, creates freedom, removes pressure, and reflects God's grace.

When Service Prepares the Way for Evangelism

When we genuinely serve with love, our neighbor's hearts often soften. Though our service should never just be a strategic ploy or a task we only do to create an evangelistic shortcut, serving with love does create a sacred space where people feel seen, valued, and safe. In this space, curiosity often arises organically. Our neighbors may wonder, "Why are you doing this? What motivates this kind of kindness? Why are they serving me with such selfless love?" In these tender moments, God is at work and providing a gentle invitation to share the hope that is found only in the gospel. When our neighbors ask questions like these, we are invited to share that we love in the selfless manner that we do because there is a Spirit at work within us who compels us to love others, as God first loved us. When people wonder why we love in the ways we do, we always begin by pointing them back to God, the author of love.

Service is not a strategy, but it often creates sacred moments. When people feel cared for, they ask questions. And 1 Peter 3:15 reminds us to "always be prepared to give an answer." When the heart is open, spiritual curiosity flows naturally. Serving with love is a way we bless our neighbors, preparing the way for the Holy Spirit to guide us in the moment when we share our faith.

Where Is It Written?

READ MATTHEW 25:31-46

Reflection Questions

- What do you hear God saying to you through this passage?
- Where do you hear a missional invitation in this passage?
- Where do you hear the theme of serving with love in this passage?

Jesus's parable about the sheep and goats is about more than just serving—which is why our fourth missional practice is "serve with love," and not simply "serve." The addition of "with love," however, is not just a charming way of saying we serve kindly, with smiles and warmth. Rather, it points to something beyond sentimentality that is tangible and measurable. Our service should produce kingdom fruit in our lives, relationships, and communities. In fact, if we really understand Jesus's parable, it will turn our whole world upside down and radically change how we see, treat, and respond to the needs of our neighbors, particularly our most vulnerable neighbors.

God's love is at the heart of evangelism. Our neighbors are most prone to being transformed by God's love when it is not just spoken of, but it is also felt, experienced, and offered sacrificially. Before many are ready to hear what we believe, they need to encounter the compassion, mercy, and justice that flows from God's love.

The biblical call to serve with love invites us to be as intentional in what we do as what we say. When we live and love like Jesus, our love for one another demonstrates that we are Jesus's disciples. This loving witness creates gentle opportunities for hearts to receive the hope of the gospel.



ONE-ON-ONE TIME WITH GOD

Before Week Six, read and reflect on the following.

THE POSTURE OF A SERVANT HEART

Serving with love shapes us as deeply as it blesses those around us. As we respond to our neighbor's needs with grace, humility, and gentleness, God forms our character. Service becomes less about accomplishing tasks and more about becoming people who reflect Jesus's compassion, mercy, and justice in our broken and hurting world.

Jesus modeled this beautifully when he knelt to wash the feet of his disciples, an act that turned the world's idea of greatness upside down. He showed that in the kingdom of God, true greatness is found not in status or position, but in choosing to serve with love. Scripture reminds us, "Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant" (Matthew 20:26).

A servant's heart becomes a living testimony. Long before words are spoken, our posture of humility will make the most important statement. Long before a message is orally shared, love is felt. In this way, our posture often reveals Christ more clearly than our most eloquent words ever could.

Serving with love cultivates Christlike humility, patience, and compassion within us.

Serve with Love Exercise: **Demonstrating the Gospel in Action**

1. Ask God to Reveal Who to Serve

Ask God to highlight:

- Someone overlooked
- Someone hurting
- Someone new on your path
- Someone in need of encouragement

Ask God to give you:

- Compassion that moves you to serve with love
- Eyes to see needs that are often overlooked
- Courage to step into uncharted territory
- A servant's heart modeled after Jesus

2. Meet One Real Need This Week

Some examples of opportunities to meet a need this week are:

- Offering a neighbor in need a meal, something to drink, or some clothing
- Delivering a meal to someone who is homebound
- Offering transportation
- Visiting someone lonely
- Helping with a task
- Providing encouragement for someone going through a tough time or season
- Visiting someone in prison
- Offering an act of loving-kindness to an immigrant or refugee

3. Be a Nonanxious Presence of Love

During your interaction: Listen with care.

- Ask thoughtful, open-ended questions.
- Affirm their dignity and inherent worth as you compassionately serve them with love.
- Allow the Spirit to guide you if you feel prompted to share your testimony of faith.

4. Reflect on the Experience

- Where did I notice a person in need?
- What did I notice about their need?
- What did this encounter reveal about Jesus's heart?
- What next step might the Spirit be inviting me to take in order to deepen this connection?

week six

SHARE THE STORY

Begin Your Time Together with Prayer.

How Goes Your Walk?

Last week, our action step was to serve with love by praying, discerning, and acting.

- How did prayer help you to reframe serving and to discern an opportunity to serve with love?
- What small thing did you do to serve someone with love? What barriers or challenges did you encounter?
- How did you notice and discern the need?
- Did anything come up in your reflections since the last meeting that you would like to share?
- How did the one-on-one time with God portion of this study shape you this week?

The final missional practice in BLESS is “share the story.” At the heart of evangelism is an authentic encounter with Jesus. When we share the story, we often begin by sharing our story, and how our lives have been transformed by God’s story, the gospel. To guide you in being prepared to offer the story of how God has transformed you, a 90-Second Testimony tool can be found after this session.

While the gospel is amazing, encouraging, and inspiring, it may also seem intimidating to share God’s story with someone else. If asked what the gospel is, what would you say? You do not need to share every detail of God’s story from Genesis to Revelation. Below is a basic gospel presentation in four parts and just eight sentences.

The Gospel in Four Parts

- 1. The Good (Creation):** God created a good, beautiful, diverse world of harmony, peace, order, and justice.
- 2. The Bad (The Curse):** Humanity sinned by disobeying God, and our sin created brokenness in God’s good world. Sin led humanity to become self-centered, unleashing evil, destruction, injustice, and death that extended over all creation.
- 3. The Ugly (The Cross):** As we were hopelessly captive to sin’s power, love led God to send his only son Jesus to earth as one of us to save us. Jesus sacrificially gave his life in love on the cross to pay the price that we should have paid for our sins.
- 4. The Beautiful (The Kingdom):** Three days later, Jesus rose from the grave, defeating sin, death, and its evil powers through his resurrection from the dead. The resurrection freed us from sin’s power over us, and made it possible to be reconnected to God, one another, and creation in love. Those who believe in Jesus and follow him are adopted into God’s family, filled with the Holy Spirit, and live in hope that Jesus will return to establish his perfect, eternal kingdom and make all things new.

Reflection Questions

- What stands out to you most about this gospel presentation?
- What part of this gospel presentation is most encouraging or comforting to you? Why?



Where Is It Written?

READ JOHN 4:1–26, 39–42

Reflection Questions

- What do you hear God saying to you through this passage?
- Where do you hear a missional invitation in this passage?
- Where do you hear the theme of sharing the story in this passage?

Unpacking What This Means for Us

This story about Jesus sharing the good news with a Samaritan woman, who most Jews and religious people would have avoided, is incredible! Jesus sees her, sees her spiritual thirst, and offers her new life in him. Jesus shares the gospel story, and it changes everything for the woman at the well, just as the gospel transforms our lives. And we now get to go out and bless our friends, family, loved ones, and neighbors by sharing the story of Jesus with them, knowing that Jesus also wants to transform their lives.

A Story That Changed a Village

The Samaritan woman Jesus shares the story with is shaped by relational pain and social isolation. Jesus breaks all sorts of cultural and social barriers when he publicly engages her at a well at noon. She is not only seen as an inferior person by Jewish standards; she's also a woman that many would have gossiped about. Jesus understands that none of this affects God's desire to be reconciled to her.

The Samaritan woman was not a spiritual leader, a credible witness, or even a respected voice, yet Scripture records her as being one of the most effective evangelists in the Bible. She simply went out and declared the goodness of God by telling the truth about her encounter with Jesus. She returned home after her life changing encounter with Jesus and told everyone who would listen, "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be

the Messiah?" (John 4:29). And as she shared her story about how Jesus transformed her life, many in her town believed in Jesus because of her testimony (John 4:39). Her sharing was simple, honest, and compelling and God used it in profound ways. When we share the story of Jesus's love, lives are forever changed.

- We don't need to be eloquent to share the story.
- We don't have to be perfect to tell the story.
- We don't have to be the most respected person in our community to share the story.
- We don't have to be socially significant to tell the story.
- We do have to be willing vessels to tell the story.
- We do have to be intentional to tell the story.
- We do have to believe the gospel is truly good news to tell the story.
- We do have to tell our own testimony to tell the story of the good news of the gospel.

Why Your Story Matters

Revelation 12:11 affirms the power of our testimonies about the gospel of Jesus. It explains that the Church overcomes "by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony." Your story is a bridge to Jesus, not a spotlight on you. Our words bear witness to the goodness of God, and invite our neighbors, family, friends, and loved ones to give their lives to Christ. Your story is an honest account of your life before Christ, how you encountered him, and how Jesus has transformed your life.

Now let's practice sharing our story in ways that prioritize telling the story.



The Three Move Model: Before • Encounter • Now

In pairs, take a few moments to read over the framework and consider each of the points. Then have one person share based on this model while the other listens. After a sharing, switch roles. Simplicity creates freedom. Use this rhythm to keep your story clear, concise, and real.

- 1. Before Jesus**—With honesty (but not glamorizing sin), name what life felt like before, and the spiritual void you felt: fear, emptiness, striving, confusion, etc.
- 2. Encounter with Jesus**—Describe how you encountered Jesus and what changed for you after you gave your life to Christ: a conversation, a crisis, Scripture, or a quiet moment of surrender. Did someone else share the gospel with you, pray for you, serve you with love, or listen with care? How did those things help you encounter Christ? What shifted upon encountering Christ, and deciding to follow Jesus?
- 3. Now in Christ**—Share concrete changes you're experiencing (peace in place of anxiety, hope after despair, renewed purpose). What are the fruits of your new life in Christ?

Share with Grace: Evangelism Is Relational

Our story will be most effective when we have created relational trust. As we continue to foster relational trust, remember to listen with care, and speak in ways that show that you have listened well. This will go a long way.

Remember, we are responsible for sharing, not convincing. The Holy Spirit is in charge of transformation, not us. The gospel takes root and blossoms on God's timetable, not our own.

The fear of rejection or saying the "wrong" thing is real. Courage grows with obedience, and the Lord is with you. We do not have to be afraid. Share the story and watch God go to work.

This Week's Action Step

Share the story of God's transforming work in your life or your 90-second testimony with one person God placed on your heart to pray for throughout this study, when the Holy Spirit leads.

Additionally, take time to complete the final reflections on the following pages. Your group may consider meeting one more time to connect, share these reflections, and encourage each other as you set out to BLESS others.

Close your time together with prayer.



ONE-ON-ONE TIME WITH GOD

After the final meeting, read and reflect on the following.

A 90-SECOND TESTIMONY (MODEL)

Use around 150–180 words to keep it natural and clear.

HOOK → BEFORE → ENCOUNTER
→ NOW → INVITATION.

EXAMPLE:

Hook: “A few years ago, I looked successful on the outside, but inside I was anxious and exhausted.”

Before: “I tried to outrun my worry by working harder, saying yes to everything, and pretending I was fine.”

Encounter: “During a tough season, a friend listened without judgment and invited me to read a short passage from John. I sensed Jesus wasn’t asking me to perform—He was inviting me to rest. I prayed a prayer of surrender.”

Now: “I still face pressure, but I’m learning to pause and pray. I experience a deeper peace and a clearer purpose in daily decisions.”

Invitation: “If you’re open, I’d love to grab coffee and share more—or pray for you.”

Share the Story: Guided Journaling Exercise

1. WarmUp: Noticing God’s Work (5 minutes)

Where did you sense God’s presence this week? Write 2–3 moments (big or small).

MOMENT 1: _____

MOMENT 2: _____

MOMENT 3: _____

2. Map Your Story in Three Moves (10 minutes)

Before Jesus — Five words that describe that season (e.g., hurried, anxious, isolated):

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Meeting Jesus — Where/how did Jesus meet you (conversation, crisis, Scripture, quiet surrender)?

PLACE/MOMENT: _____

PEOPLE: _____

Now in Christ — Where are you changing (peace replacing anxiety, hope after despair, renewed purpose)?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

3. Draft Your 90-Second Testimony

(10 minutes)

Use this template to stay clear and grace filled:

Hook → Before → Meeting → Now → Invitation
(aim for around 150–180 words).

Hook (1–2 sentences): _____



Before (2–3 sentences): _____

Meeting (3–4 sentences): _____

Now (3–4 sentences): _____

Invitation (1 sentence): _____

4. Audience and Next Steps (8 minutes)

Who might God be inviting you to share with?
List 2–3 names. Identify one gentle, timely
next step for each (text, go on a walk, grab a
coffee, serve together).

Name 1: _____

NEXT STEP: _____

Name 2: _____

NEXT STEP: _____

Name 3: _____

NEXT STEP: _____

5. Barriers and Prayer (6 minutes)

What hesitations show up (fear, lack of clarity,
timing)? Pray into it: confidence in God, clarity
that points to Jesus, open hearts, Spirit’s
leading, peace about outcomes. Use the
prompts below to pray for one another.

Prayer Prompts

- “Jesus, give me courage that is rooted in love, not pressure.”
- “Spirit, give me clarity so my story points to the power of God’s transforming love, not to me.”
- “God, open receptive hearts and lead me to share the gospel story to the right people, at the right time.”
- “Lord, give me peace to entrust you with the outcome.”

Personal Reflection Questions

- Where do you see Jesus’s grace in your story right now?
- What would it look like to tell one of the people you committed to praying for that you have been praying for them?
- How will you continue to BLESS the people God puts in your life?
- How can you, your small group, and church family create a culture of BLESS within your community?

BLESSING PRAYER

Jesus, thank you for transforming my life. Make me an effective evangelist who shares the story whenever I share my story. May I be your mouthpiece. Speak through me as I show my family, friends, loved ones, and neighbors how to find new life in you. Give me the courage to share, eyes to notice when hearts are opening, and a conscious dependence upon the Holy Spirit to know the words to say. I trust you and your timing, because apart from you I can do nothing. Amen.