



Everyday ways to love your neighbour & change the world.

We are excited to journey with you. This guide has been created to provide you with ways to reflect & go deeper each week. This guide consists of scripture to meditate on, questions to consider, and spaces for reflection. As well, we have included a journal page each week for you to write down sermon notes, what areas of your life you desire growth & guidance, what you are thankful for, as well as a space for prayer requests.

5 BLESS PRACTICES

These practices are everyday ways you can love your neighbour & change the world. These practices are grounded in the Old Testament & lived out by Jesus.

- B** Be in Prayer
- L** Listen with Compassion
- E** Eat Together
- S** Serve a Need
- S** Share Your Story

WHO IS YOUR NEIGHBOUR?

Your neighbour is the person who lives nearby. But Jesus also defines neighbour more broadly in the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). Identify 8 neighbours - people God has placed around you where you live, work & play.

B.L.E.S.S. PLEDGE

At the back of this study guide, you will find the BLESS Pledge. We wanted to give you a space to make an intentional commitment. You can make a promise to love your neighbours by using these practices. Write out your commitment, have 2 people sign it & invite them to hold you accountable for this commitment.

PREP

BIG IDEA: Sharing the good news can be as simple as being a good friend.

Statistically, people are more open to talk about faith than we might think... 1 in 4 non-Christians would say they are curious about Christianity & what it could mean for their lives. The number jumps to 1 in 3 for people in their 20's & thirties.

Barna Group reports, there are 3 identified important qualities in a person that are valued in a spiritual conversation:

1. Listening without judgment.
2. Allowing people to draw their own conclusions.
3. Confidence in sharing your own perspective.

Relational equity is key... Invest in relationships, listen & love others, earn the right to share your story. Testimony is our best evidence... be good news.

It is super simple but challenging; (i) be a friend, (ii) be a friend who lives the Good News, (iii) share Good News in the form of your story.

OPEN

How did you first learn about the love of Jesus and choose to follow Him?

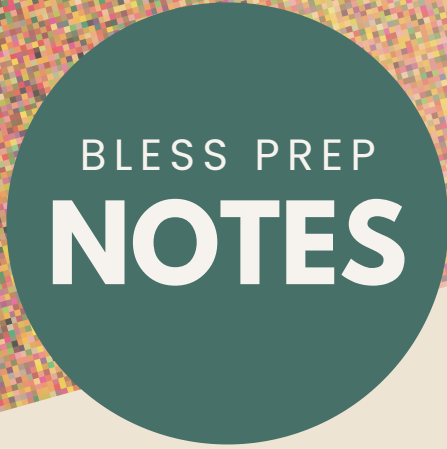
DEEPER

1. What is your greatest fear or frustration when it comes to loving people & sharing the good news of Jesus with those around you?
2. Read Matthew 28:19, Acts 1:8, & 1 Peter 3:15. What is your gut level, first reaction to these scriptures? In what ways are you motivated or demotivated by these scriptures?
3. Think about the 3 qualities people said they want in someone with whom they would discuss spiritual matters. How well do you exhibit these qualities to your friends & neighbours who don't know Jesus? What steps can you take to grow in these areas?
4. Jesus' nickname was "friend of sinners" (Matt 11:16-19). What changes might you need to make in order to be known as a friend of sinners?
5. What are you hoping to learn or gain from this series?

REFLECTION

- Who are some of the people around you that you would love to impact with the love of Jesus?
- Pray for the people you hope to B.L.E.S.S.





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INTRO

BIG IDEA: God's plan for loving your neighbour & changing the world is through blessing.

2 approaches: blessers vs converters. Converters go with the goal of covering people, save souls & evangelizing. Blessers go with the goal of blessing whoever God sends their way

What do we find in these approaches? One study saw blessers creating tremendous amounts of "social good" while the converters seemed to make no difference. Also, blessers saw 48 conversions & the converters saw only one. Bottom line? The best way to accomplish Jesus' mission of helping people love each other & come to know the love of God is to be a blesser!

There is no better model for what it looks like to go & bless than Jesus. The Gospels give us numerous examples of how His life was a blessing. From heaven, to earth & back again, there wasn't a moment of time in which He wasn't used by God to bless the people He encountered.

Jesus displayed consistent simple practices that He routinely employed. There are 5 everyday ways that Jesus loved His neighbours:

B: Be in Prayer

L: Listen with compassion

E: Eat together

S: Serve a need

S: Share your story

OPEN

What images or thoughts come to mind when you hear the words evangelize and covert?

DEEPER

1. Are you naturally a "blesser" or "converter" when it comes to reaching people far from God
2. Read Genesis 12:1-3, Luke 19:1-10, & Galatians 3:7-9. What do these passages tell you about God's plan for His people to be a blessing to those around us?
3. Based on the descriptions of the 5 BLESS practices, which do you think will come easiest for you? Which will require more effort for you to put into action?
4. How could simply being a BLESSing be a strategy for loving our neighbours & changing the world?

REFLECTION

- Who in your life has been the greatest BLESSing to you in your spiritual journey? How can you begin to emulate his or her approach as you seek to reach the people around you?



BE IN PRAYER

BIG IDEA: To BLESS your neighbourhood, Jesus invites you to BE IN PRAYER

In prayer, God begins to change your heart, and you begin to feel what God feels for other people. God uses prayer to change us and He uses prayer to change our world.

Prayer can often be one of those things that we know we should do but often don't do. There are lots of reasons we don't pray.

To help being in prayer for others, we need to be intentional, and we need to PLAN for it. We also need to PREPARE; asking God to prepare our hearts for the adventure. We need to be sensitive to our surroundings and asking God to guide us to PLACES where He wants us to be a blessing. We also envision the faces of the PEOPLE God wants us to bless. We can pray for their health, relationships, their emotional well being, their careers &/or their finances.

Following Jesus isn't meant to be comfortable, it's meant to be life changing! There is no telling where He might send us and what He might lead us to do!

OPEN

What are your earliest memories of praying? Did you recite a particular prayer? Did you pray in a specific place or with particular people?

DEEPER

1. Right after Jesus was baptized but before He began His ministry, He went in to the wilderness to fast and pray (Luke 4). In Luke 6:12-16, we find that He prayed before He selected His disciples. What do you notice from these examples about the emphasis Jesus placed on time alone with God in prayer?
2. What do you find most challenging about prayer?
3. When have you found prayer to be most helpful?
4. Prayer is a conversation in which we talk to God and He talks to us. Have you ever felt a prompting from God to reach out to someone? How did you respond? What was the result?

REFLECTION

- Who are the people you can begin to pray for, asking God to give you opportunities to BLESS them?
- Use the BLESS tool provided ("Who is my Neighbour?" Map) to write down the names of eight neighbours where you live, work or play. Then be in prayer!



BE IN PRAYER

BLESS tool: "Who is my Neighbour?" Map

This simple tool gets you started right now in praying for your neighbours. It's called the "Who is My Neighbour?" Map. It was given by Jay Pathak and Dave Runyon in their book *The Art of Neighbouring*.

Sketch out the "Who is my Neighbour?" graphic. The centre represents where you live. The eight surrounding houses represent your neighbours. Write each of your neighbour's names in the eight surrounding squares. Don't get hung up on being geographically accurate; just think about the eight people who live closest to you. This works wherever you live! An apartment or a townhouse, a suburban cul-de-sac or out in the country. Just ask "who is my neighbour?" and write in their names.

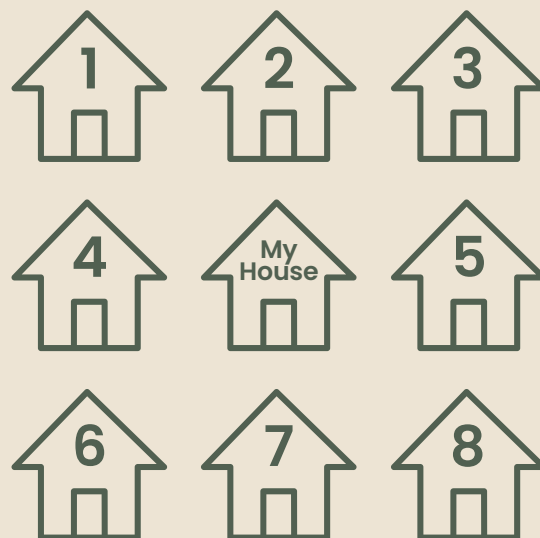
If you don't know the names of your eight closest neighbours, then find out. Google them. Ask them. Find out their names & write them in the boxes. Then use this tool to be in prayer for the eight people in geographical proximity to you.

This tool can also be used to identify your neighbours in other settings too. If you want to use it for work, just ask, "who are the eight people in closest physical or relational proximity to me at work?" You can do the same with where you play. For example, ask "who are the eight other people on my team?" or "who are the eight other people I regularly see at the gym?" Once you know their names, be in prayer.

The challenge? Set aside time every day to pray for each of these eight people by name. We don't have to pray all night like Jesus did, but we can all start somewhere.

In time you will find that you won't need the "Who is my Neighbour?" map because you have memorized the names of these eight people that God is asking you to love. This simple tool is a great way to get started in praying for the neighbours where you live, work or play.

"Who is My Neighbour?" Map



1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

4 _____

5 _____

6 _____

7 _____

8 _____



BE IN PRAYER

The First Step to Help Us BLESS Others: "BE IN PRAYER"

...That God draws/leads them to Jesus Christ

"No one can come unto Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him..." (John 6:44)

...That they seek to know God

But if from there you seek the Lord your God, you will find Him if you look for Him with all your heart and with all your soul. (Deuteronomy 4:29)

...That they will believe Jesus' words (the Scriptures)

Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the Word of Christ. (Romans 10:17)

...That Satan is bound from blinding them to the truth

The god of this age [Satan] has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. (II Corinthians 4:4)

...That the Holy Spirit is loosed to work within them

"When He [the Holy Spirit] comes, He will convict [convince] the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgement." (John 16:8)

...That God neutralize antagonists from dissuading them from trusting Jesus

But Elymas...opposed them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. (Acts 13:8)

...That God sends them someone who leads them to Christ

Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field." (Matthew 9:37,38)

...That they believe in Jesus Christ and Receive Him as their Saviour

Yet to all who receive Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God. (John 1:12)

For by grace you have been saved through faith. (Ephesians 2:8a)

...That they turn from sin

"Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord." (Acts 3:19)

...That they surrender to Jesus Christ and follow Him

And He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for them and was raised again. (II Corinthians 5:15)

...That they take root and grow

So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in Him, rooted and built up in Him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. (Colossians 2:6,7)

LISTEN WITH COMPASSION

BIG IDEA: God invites us to bless our neighbours by LISTENING WITH COMPASSION

When it comes to conversations with others, rather than listening to understand, we may find ourselves cuing up our next point or jumping into "fix-it" mode by giving out ideas or solutions. When we don't listen, people can begin to feel unknown, which ultimately leaves them feeling unloved. Listening to others with compassion comes with intentionality & a willingness to listen to understand.

Listening is a skill that we can develop and get better at over time. One of the ways we can practice listening with compassion is to use one or more of the 4 "H" listening questions in our conversations with others:

- (1) HISTORY: "Tell me your story." "Where did you grow up?"
- (2) HEART: "What's your favourite (team, restaurant, vacation destination)?"
- (3) HABITS: "What are you into?" "What do you like to do with your free time?"
- (4) HURTS: "How are you doing with (name the situation)?"

Living a life of blessing others like Jesus did isn't just in big moments, it's in the everyday moments too! Sometimes, the greatest opportunity to love & bless people is by simply reaching out & listening to what's going on in their hearts and minds. It's in these seemingly mundane moments of life that God wants to use you to bless others & change the world.

OPEN

What is your most memorable "Mondegreen Moment" when you misheard a word or phrase that made sense in your head but was entirely incorrect?

DEEPER

1. Why do we have such a difficult time truly listening to the people around us?
2. Have you ever felt unheard? What was that like for you?
3. Read Luke 18:35-42. What impresses you most about Jesus's interaction with the man who was blind? How would you have felt if you were in that man's place?
4. When was the last time you truly felt listened to, known, and loved? What was so special about that experience?

REFLECTION

- Review "Listening for the Four P's of Place: Pain, Pennies, Power, & Parties" on the following page & use one of the P's to describe a community around you.
- Choose one area - where you live, work, or play - and record your answers for two or three (or more) of the "Listening to Bless Others" Tool on the following page.



LISTEN WITH COMPASSION

Listening for the Four P's of Place

Blessing others & our world begins with being in prayer & listening with compassion. The Four P's of Place (pain, pennies, power, & parties) can help you discover how to best bless the communities & people around you.

Pain

- What are the challenges & difficulties that exist in your community?
- Is there loneliness? Anxiety? Addiction? Strained or broken relationships?

Pennies

- What kinds of jobs make up your community?
- Where is the opportunity for prosperity?
- How has the local economy affected the lives of people living there, for good or for bad?

Power

- Who holds the power? Who holds the influence?
- Is there a mayor's office? School council? Business owners?

Parties

- What are the values that the community cherishes?
- What do people honour or long for?
- What do people celebrate?

BLESS Tool: "Listening to Bless Others"

Use the following list of questions to begin to think & ask about the people where you live, work & play:

- Do you know your neighbours' or coworkers' names? If not, how can you introduce yourself?
- Who in your neighbourhood, work, or school just had a baby? Can you naturally offer something, take a meal, or a small gift & card?
- Who is elderly or has accessibility needs? What might they need help with?
- Who is around your age or in a similar life stage? Can you invite them out or into your space? Or your home?
- Are there single moms or dads around you? How might they need help from time to time?
- Do your neighbours, coworkers, or friends know each other? Can you do something to bring them all together?
- Are there other people who follow Jesus in your neighbourhood? If so, can you partner together to look for & meet needs?
- Do you know of birthdays, anniversaries, or other special events happening? How can you help someone celebrate?
- Who has moved in or began working at your place of work recently? How can you help welcome them to the neighbourhood or workplace?
- Is there anyone in your neighbourhood or workplace who doesn't fit the profile of the majority? How can you help them feel loved and valued?
- Is there someone who lives around you or works with you who has served or helped you? Is there a small gesture you can make to show your thanks?
- Has there been a death in anyone's family, or are they or someone in their family ill?
- How can you listen & express care for that person with whom you regularly interact with?

EAT TOGETHER

BIG IDEA: To BLESS your neighbours, Jesus invites you to EAT WITH THEM

We often fail to recognize the power of eating with someone – something special happens when we gather at the table.

Some of the strongest examples of the power of eating together come from Jesus. Throughout Scripture we see Him eat with people. But we probably don't think of it as one of the ways He blessed people around Him during His time on earth! It was a statement of friendship & affirmation of a person's value, dignity and worth.

NT Wright says, "When Jesus Himself wanted to explain to His disciples what His forthcoming death was all about, He didn't give them a theory; He gave them a meal."

When we start thinking & praying about blessing our neighbours through this practice of eating, it can be easy &/or tempting to come up with all sorts of excuses for why you can't do it. We think about things like: "I don't like to have people in my home", "I wouldn't know what to say", or "I just don't have time"

Wherever there is good food & people, there is an opportunity to deepen relationships & make friends.

OPEN

If you could eat anywhere for dinner, where would you go? or What is your most memorable meal ever?

DEEPER

1. Have you ever experienced sharing a meal with someone & suddenly that acquaintance became a friend? What is it about sharing a meal that seems to deepen a friendship so quickly?

2. Read Matthew 9:9–13. Why do you think Jesus chose to eat with Matthew? How do you think Matthew felt about sharing a meal with Jesus?

3. What point was Jesus making when He said that He "came eating & drinking..." (Luke 7:34)? What does this say about how He wanted to be known?

4. Why is eating with someone such an effective way to bless them?

5. Which of the excuses for not sharing a meal with someone do you relate to most?

REFLECTION

- Who will you share a meal, dessert or coffee with this week?



**EAT
TOGETHER**

BLESS Tool: "Meal Calendar"

Most of us eat three meals a day, seven days a week. At the beginning of each week, use this simple tool & any of the twenty-one opportunities to pick one meal, coffee, or dessert to bless a friend or neighbour with.

You don't have to do anything different - simply include someone in something you're already doing & use the "Meal Calendar" below to plan it out.

EAT	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
Breakfast							
Lunch							
Dinner							
Coffee / Dessert							





B.L.E.S.S. PLEDGE

I promise to love my neighbors using these practices!

Commitment:

Signature:

Date:

Witness:

Witness:
