

# *BLESS*



HELPING PEOPLE TO BE AND LOVE LIKE JESUS.



## **FROM THE VERY BEGINNING,**

God has demonstrated His profound love for us. This love was not just a feeling, but a promise; a promise to bless His people. Throughout history, God has blessed His people with His divine presence. And in the ultimate act of love, God chose to bless the world through the gift of Jesus. This gift invites us to share in His blessings by blessing others (Genesis 12:2). As God modeled for us, blessing people is the ultimate way to love like Jesus.

This booklet is a guide on how you could begin to bless others. BLESS focuses on five practices through which we can start to give away God's blessing joyfully.

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## **BE IN PRAYER**

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

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## **LISTEN WITH COMPASSION**

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

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## **EAT TOGETHER**

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

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## **SERVE IN LOVE**

Be attentive to the opportunities God provides you to care for people and pour out unprecedented amounts of mercy.

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## **SHARE A STORY**

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

# Be in Prayer

Jesus came to find people who are lost and to help those who are hurting. As we seek to be and love like Jesus through the BLESS practices, we begin with prayer recognizing we can only do this through God's power.

## TURN TO GOD

Begin by asking God, "Where are You already at work? Where do You want me to join in the work with my family, friends, neighbors, and others You are seeking? Are there other places You want me to go? How do You want me to grow and to use me to bless others?"

## HERE ARE SOME WAYS THAT YOU CAN PRAY FOR YOUR LIFE :

- Pray that you would trust in the Lord and not rely on your own strength. (*Proverbs 3:5*)
- Pray that God would open a door for the message to be heard. (*Colossians 2:3*)
- Pray that God would reveal opportunities to boldly go and share Him in word and deed. (*Acts 28:31*)

## CREATE A PRAYER LIST

1. Think about your friends, relatives, acquaintances, neighbors, and colleagues who do not yet know Jesus.
2. Reflect on these people, asking God to draw you to pray for 3 to 5 people daily. Write these names on the list provided.
3. Ask God how you can pray for each person.
4. Take at least one minute each day to pray for each person on this list.

## HERE ARE SOME WAYS THAT YOU CAN PRAY FOR THE LIVES OF OTHERS :

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

# BLESS Brainstorm

Jot down some places here, near, and far where God may be sending you to meet and BLESS others who may not yet know Jesus.

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“Every great movement of God can be traced to a kneeling figure.”

D.L. MOODY, *evangelist and author*

# Listen with Compassion

To BLESS others, begin with listening rather than talking. The gospels record Jesus asking 307 questions and only providing 8 answers to questions asked of Him. When people are heard and understood with compassion, they feel accepted and valued.

So, get curious and ask good questions. Ask questions that invite others to tell their stories, reveal their hearts and discover the truth. What's more, listen to the Spirit and for evidence of God's work in their lives so you can participate in the work He is doing. Listen well so you can learn how to BLESS others!

## SPIRITUAL CONVERSATION STARTERS

God is always seeking to reach and restore the world through blessing (Genesis 12:2). Listening is a practice that we can engage to help people connect with Jesus. Here are some questions to help you begin a spiritual conversation with people who do not yet know Him.

- What is a dream or hope you have for your life right now? What might keep you from reaching your dream? How does the spiritual side of your life affect whether or not you reach your dream?
- Do you have a religious background and does it mean anything to you?
- Tell me a little bit about your spiritual journey. How have your perspectives changed over time?
- Have you ever had what you would consider to be a spiritual experience? What happened?
- I often talk with people who are interested in spiritual things, but not interested in organized religion. Can you relate to that? In what way?
- Have you ever had good or bad experiences with Christians or with the church? What were they? (Sometimes we have to rebuild broken trust before a conversation can move forward.)
- Do you think that there is a God? If so, what do you think God is like? What questions would you like to ask God if you could?
- Do you wish God were real? Why or why not? What difference would it make?
- How do you feel about Jesus? What do you think God thinks about you?
- If you were to die tonight, what are your thoughts and why?
- Is there is a way that I can pray for or with you?

# BLESS Brainstorm

Jot down some ideas about how you might start a spiritual conversation with each of the 3-5 people you are praying for.

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“Just as our love for God begins with listening to God’s word, the beginning of love for other Christians is learning to listen to them.”

- DIETRICH BONHOEFFER, *theologian*

# Eat Together

To BLESS others, seek creative ways to share meals and life together. Through the simple act of eating together, we have the opportunity to move a relationship from an acquaintance to a friendship. Eating helps to develop relational bridges, discover people's stories, and discern next steps.

Jesus commonly ate and drank with those He sought to engage, such as Matthew, Zacchaeus, the Samaritan woman, and many others. We can richly BLESS others through the practice of hospitality.

## CREATIVE WAYS TO EAT TOGETHER

God is always seeking to reach and restore the world through blessing (Genesis 12:2). Eating is a practice that we can engage to help people connect with Jesus. Here are some ways to eat with people who do not yet know Him.

- Have dinner together at your home or a restaurant.
- Share a pizza.
- Enjoy a cup of coffee together.
- Ask a colleague out for lunch.
- Include others in your family celebrations.
- Organize a block party or neighborhood gathering.
- Invite others to a pancake feed or ice cream social.
- Host a theme party or game night.
- Create a group around a shared interest or hobby.
- Try new restaurants together.
- Share a holiday meal.
- Add one person to one meal each week.



# BLESS Brainstorm

Jot down some ideas about how you might schedule a meal or coffee with at least one of your 3-5 within the next few weeks.

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

**-BARRY D. JONES, author**

# Serve In Love

Perhaps one of the most powerful ways to BLESS others is by serving people in love. Jesus' ministry was characterized by service (*Matthew 20:28*). He showed the full extent of His love to his disciples by serving them (*John 13:1-17*).

We too can have a profound impact through service. As you listen compassionately and develop relationships with others, you will discover meaningful opportunities to serve them. As we freely and joyfully serve others, they will begin to experience the love of Jesus in tangible ways. God longs to love others through you.

## SERVING SAMPLES

God is always seeking to reach and restore the world through blessing (*Genesis 12:2*). Serving is a practice that we can engage to **help people connect with Jesus**. Here are some ideas for how you can begin to serve the people in your life who do not yet know Him, and for how others can reciprocate and, in turn, serve you.

- Find little ways to acknowledge important events (birthdays, anniversaries, etc.).
- Offer to take care of a tangible need, such as providing meals, raking leaves, shoveling snow, or babysitting.
- Do a service project with someone you are praying for (You may even have the opportunity to share why you serve others as you serve together.)
- Run an errand for someone.
- Keep someone company.
- Be a listening ear.
- Send a greeting card.
- Do not miss the big needs (births, deaths, trials, sicknesses and more).
- Give or lend something.
- Invite someone to meet you at a worship service or another church activity, and introduce them to others.
- Offer to pray.
- Share needs with your neighbors openly.
- Accept invitations (dinners, parties, etc.) and offers to help.
- Be generous with your gratitude

# BLESS Brainstorm

Jot down how God might be calling you to serve your 3-5 people in love over the next few weeks.

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“Do small things with great love”.

-MOTHER TERESA, *Roman Catholic nun*



# Share A Story

Once you start building relationships and earning trust, look for opportunities to BLESS others by sharing a story of how Jesus has changed or is changing your life and the world. You do not need a script or a dramatic story.

Simply stated, it is by grace you are saved through faith. It is God's gift, not based on what you do, but on what Jesus has done for you. He died on a cross for your sins and raised from the dead. What an extraordinary gift to receive Him as your Savior and King! And, as His handiwork, you are created in Him to do good works (*Ephesians 2:8-10; 1 Corinthians 15:1-9; John 1:12-13*).

So, when Jesus is at work in you, you become different. You experience grace. You know what it is like to be forgiven. You know what it means to have an even deeper meaning and purpose. You handle your relationships differently than you once did, whether with friends, relatives, acquaintances, neighbors or colleagues. You approach your career and home priorities differently than others. You make financial decisions differently than before. Your heart grows for God's mission to extend the gospel to the world. Jesus begins to change everything.

You don't just have one story, but many stories. And you can share them. You can tell stories about what the Lord has done for you and how much He has had mercy on you and others (Mark 5:19).

## SHARE A STORY

God is always seeking to reach and restore the world through blessing (Genesis 12:2). Sharing stories is a practice that we can engage to help people connect with Jesus. Here are some ways to share a story, starting with yours.

- **BEFORE:** My story before I received Jesus and committed my life to following him. Tell what was missing in your life.
- **DURING:** My story of how I received Jesus, and made a commitment to follow him. Tell how you came to this place, and what you did.
- **AFTER:** My story after I made a commitment to follow Jesus. Tell about the difference that receiving and following Jesus has made in your life.

Whether or not your story easily follows a before, during and after pattern, we do not just have one story, but many stories. Consider a time when God worked in your life and you were changed or a time when you had an encounter with God, maybe while reading the Bible, attending a worship service, meeting in a small group or other. Maybe think about how God worked in a situation where you experienced pain, hopelessness, or fear. What did your life look like before, during, and after these times? How did Jesus meet you in those situations?

The more recent your experience, the more natural it will probably be to share it. And sometimes a personal story of how God worked in your life is the best one to tell. Other times, someone else's story may be more fitting.

# **BLESS Brainstorm**

Jot down some ideas for stories that you can share with someone you are praying for.

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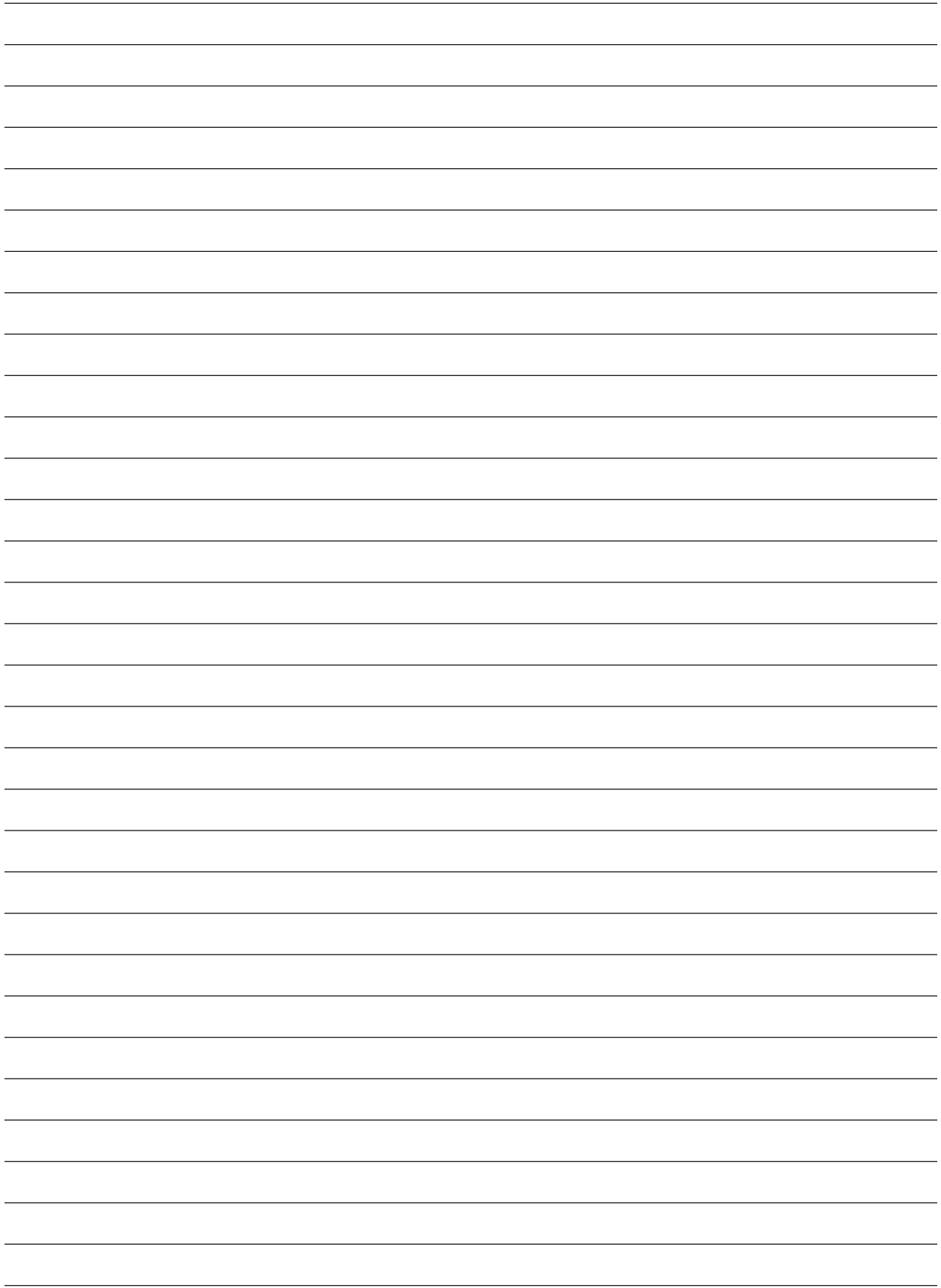
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“Because God gave you your makeup and superintended every moment of your past, including all the hardship, pain, and struggles, He wants to use your words in a unique manner. No one else can speak through your vocal cords, and, equally important, no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

**-CHUCK SWINDOLL, pastor and author**



“You are the light of the world - like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.”

**MATTHEW 5:14-16**

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