

B L E S S



LOVE GOD. LOVE PEOPLE. CHANGE YOUR WORLD.

"I will bless you; and you will be a blessing." **Genesis 12:2**

B

BEGIN WITH PRAYER

Our mission as a church, and as disciples, is that we are called to Love God and Love People. We see how Jesus came to find people who are lost and hurting and how He is calling us to do the same. As we look to BLESS those around us, we recognise that it is only God's power at work that can change lives. As disciples, we have the great opportunity to join Him as we BLESS others and this begins with prayer! Pray that we would have the same heart for people that Jesus had and then to pray specifically for these people.

Help! How do I Pray?

"Prayer is simply telling God what is on your mind and in your heart."

There are 3 simple R's to remember:

1. Reach.
2. Receive.
3. Rely.

- **Reach out to God.** Tell God what is on your heart and mind, for yourself and for others. We know that we may not be able to change a situation but we know that God is able to intervene in miraculous ways. (Luke 18:27)
Example: "Dear God, I don't know why I'm so anxious, please show me and show me ways to deal with it." "Dear God, show me who in my world I can pray for today!"
- **Receive from God.** Trust that God will answer your prayers as you pray for those in your world. Look for moments where you see how He is working and know that He is God and knows exactly what is best for us. (Romans 8:28) We hear God's voice as we read the Bible, as we sit in silence.
- **Rely on God.** You have told Him what you need or for whom you are praying, now receive His promise. Leave those things with God! So often we try and pick up what we handed over to God and take control again. Continue to rely on God in prayer as you commit to praying daily for those in your world. (Proverbs 19:21)

Create a Prayer List

Begin by asking God, “Where are you already at work? Where do you want me to join you in the work you are doing in my friends, family, neighbours and others you are seeking to draw toward yourself? Are there other places you want me to go? How do you want to grow and use me to bless the people in the places where you have sent me?”

1. Think about your family, friends, neighbours, work colleagues or those you interact with often who do not yet know Jesus.
2. Pray over the names, asking God to show you who you can BLESS. Write these names down on your BLESS card or below.
3. Ask God to show you how you can pray for these people.

7 Day Prayer Challenge

Commit to pray for the next 7 days – praying for the names on your **BLESS Card**.

Take 5 minutes every day over the next 7 days. Ask God to show you ways that He is wanting you to BLESS those in your world as you pray for them using the 3 R's - Reach, Receive, Rely!

Every
Day

Seven
Days

Five
Minutes
of prayer

I Am Praying For...

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



LISTEN

To BLESS others, begin with listening rather than talking. When people are heard and understood with compassion, they feel accepted and valued. We see this modeled in the life of Jesus – He was great at simply listening to those around Him.

“Christians have forgotten that the ministry of listening has been committed to them by Him who is Himself the great listener and whose work they should share. We should listen with the ears of God that we may speak the Word of God.” Dietrich Bonhoeffer

8 Easy Tips To Listen Well

- Make **eye contact**. Engage with the person you are listening to as they speak.
- **Don't interrupt**. Allow the person to speak with freedom.
- Practice **“active” listening**. Convey the sense that you are engaged and interested with what they are saying as well as asking questions to clarify what you may not understand.
- Show you **understand**. Body language and non-verbal cues help the person you are listening to know that you are understanding what they are saying.
- Listen **without thinking**. It is often easy for our minds to start forming a response before even hearing all the person has to say.
- Listen **without judgement**. As above, it is so important that people feel fully heard as they share with you in a safe space.
- Listen to **non-verbal** communication. Body language also tells us a story. Are they tense? Seem nervous? This all gives an indication to what may be happening in their lives as they share with you.
- Create a **suitable environment**. Remove all unnecessary distractions such as your phone, a noisy TV in the background etc. It is easier to be a great listener with an empathetic heart when the environment allows it.

A great way to be able to listen is to 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! 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.

Conversation Starters

Here are some questions to help you begin a conversation with people:

- Tell me a little bit about your life journey. How did you get to this point?
- What is a dream or hope you have for your life right now? What might keep you from reaching your dream?
- How can I pray for you or with you?

BLESS Brainstorm

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

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____



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 by simply sharing a meal together.

In the busy world we find ourselves in, finding time to share a meal with someone is really challenging. If we want to be a blessing, we need to commit to creating space to do so by considering the following:

- **Intentionality.** We need to be intentional with making (and confirming) plans with people. This requires us to really look at our calendars and prioritise making room to be able to spend time sharing a meal with someone.
- **Inclusivity.** Jesus spent time with all people, not only His disciples. How can we ensure that we are spending time with others, not just our group of friends?
- **Involvement.** Sharing a meal with someone, especially in our homes, really gives them an invitation to be fully involved in our lives. It builds another level of connection and relationship.

Creative Ways To Eat Together

- Invite someone to dinner at your home.
- Enjoy a cup of coffee with someone new.
- Ask a colleague to join you for lunch.
- Consider inviting someone outside of your family to a big family celebration.
- Host a games night or watch your favourite sports team in action together.
- Create a group around a shared interest or hobby.
- Try a new restaurant with someone new.



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*). And 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.

Challenge

“Take off your crown, and pick up a towel and a basin.”

How can we be practical about serving others this week?

- See as Jesus sees. Be aware of the people in your world.
- Become selfless and sacrificial. God calls us to live beyond ourselves for the sake of others.
- Serve with love and compassion like Jesus who modeled to us what it means to be a blessing.

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.

Ideas On How To Serve People

- Find ways to acknowledge important events (birthdays, anniversaries etc.)
- Offer to take care of a tangible need, such as providing meals, mowing the garden, babysitting for a single mom or offering to provide a lift etc.
- Run an errand (like grocery shopping) for someone.
- Send an encouraging WhatsApp message when thinking of someone.
- Invite someone to join you at church and introduce them to your Life Group/serving team etc.



SHARE YOUR STORY

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

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, neighbours 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 God has done for you and others (*Mark 5:19*). When we share our own story, we don't need to convince people of what's right or wrong or persuade them to believe what we believe. We are simply sharing how God has worked, and continues to work, in our own lives.

"Sometimes people are helped by your telling of your own lamentable past."
- St. Francis Xavier

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. Share what was missing in your life.

DURING: My story of how I received Jesus, and made a commitment to follow him. Share how you came to this place, and what you did. Did a friend or family member invite you to church? Were you invited by your children who attend Elevate or Edge Kids? Did a traumatic experience lead you to seeking out God and the church?

AFTER: My story after I made a commitment to follow Jesus. Share 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. 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? And sometimes a personal story of how God worked in your life is the best one to tell.

