

Won't you
LOVE
your neighbor?

B**L****E****S****S**

BEGIN WITH PRAYER LISTEN EAT SERVE STORY

Southeast
CHRISTIAN CHURCH



DEVOTIONAL & GUIDE

The Word became
flesh and blood,
and moved into the
neighborhood.

We saw the glory with
our own eyes,
the one-of-a-kind
glory,
like Father, like
Son,
Generous inside and
out,
true from start to
finish.

John 1:14, MSG

The BLESS acronym to
normalize mission was
created by Dave Ferguson.

You can watch him talk about
it here.

Ideas from Michael Frost,
gracechurchls.org and
covchurch.org are contained
in this devotional.

God's people are called to join him in his mission to bring restoration to the nations, our cities, our neighborhoods and our relationships. But how do we do that? Where do we start? How can we encourage one another to bless those around us in the rhythm of our every day lives?

BLESS is a simple framework to help us live out our faith in an authentic way and share the good news and God's dream for his world with others.

BLESS is how Jesus carried out his mission on earth - he prayed, he listened to his Father and others, he ate with people, served and shared his story.

These missional practices are not intended to be a burden or a list of 'to-do's' but rather a way of living. Our desire is for the people of Southeast to be known as people who love their neighbors both inside and outside of the church.

B E G I N W I T H P R A Y E R

WE PRAY FOR THE PEOPLE, OR
COMMUNITIES, TO WHICH WE ARE SENT.

L I S T E N

WE LISTEN TO THE PEOPLE, OR
COMMUNITIES, TO WHICH WE ARE SENT.

E A T

WE SHARE MEALS WITH THOSE TO
WHOM WE ARE SENT

S E R V E

WE RESPOND TO THE NEEDS WE DISCOVER
AMONG THOSE TO WHOM WE ARE SENT

S T O R Y

WE SHARE THE STORY OF JESUS, AND WHAT HE IS DOING
IN OUR LIVES, WITH THOSE TO WHOM WE ARE SENT.

To whom are you sent?

The people in your home, your church, your street -
to all the people you meet!

neighbor noun
neigh·bor | \ hā-bər \

Definition of neighbor

1: one living or located near another
had lunch with her next-door neighbor

2: FELLOW MAN

thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself
— Matthew 19:19 (King James Version)

The NAS New Testament Greek Lexicon
Strong's Number: 4139 Browse Lexicon

Original Word Word Origin

πλῆσιον neuter of a derivative of πηλας (near)

Transliterated Word TDNT Entry

πλῆσιον 6:311,872

Phonetic Spelling Parts of Speech

play-see'-on Adverb

Definition

a neighbour

a friend

any other person, and where two are concerned, the other (thy fellow man, thy neighbour), according to the Jews, any member of the Hebrew nation and commonwealth

according to Christ, any other man irrespective of nation or religion with whom we live or whom we chance to meet

"Jesus said that we are to love God and love our neighbours. We have the first half of Jesus's Great Commandment down to a 'T'. Literally. Theology, the study of God, has so captured our imaginations throughout history that it was called the Queen of the Sciences. Alongside philosophy, theology glistened in the imaginations of those who studied her mysterious depths and glorious heights. Theological disciples blossomed as people discovered there was more to be found. Poets and prophets, pastors and academics revealed what they found. The study of God is vast. Soon we found ways to study God with systematic theology, practical theology, moral theology, historical theology, aesthetical theology, biblical theology, natural theology, spiritual theology, philosophical theology, liberation theology, ecumenical theology, pastoral theology and so on. There has been no end to the books written celebrating the first half of Jesus' Great Commandment to love God.

But what of the second half. This invitation to love our neighbour?

The word Jesus uses in the Great Commandment to love neighbour is plesion (pronounced play-see'-on). Plesion is Greek and appears in all four Gospels. To the Jewish people plesion referred to a member of the Hebrew nation, but to Jesus it was extended to include people of other nations and religions. It comes from the word pelas, which means 'near.' Neighbour is a good English translation of plesion. 'Neighbour' comes from Old English root words neah "near" and gebur "dweller." Neighbour is the 'near-dweller,' and plesion refers to the person who is near to us. Jesus says that the Great Commandment is to love those near to us; our neighbors, plesion.

Plesionology, then, is the study of neighbours. It is the close examination of how we relate to our neighbors and how we love them in obedience to the Great Commandment. It is paying attention to, being curious about, standing in awe of something so profoundly vital to being a human made in God's image. Plesionology puts others, specifically those we can talk with and pass on the street everyday, and places them right in the centre of this human experience. It puts neighbours right in the midst of our faith in Jesus and says that we meet God when we love our neighbours."

Preston Pouteaux

Pastor at Lake Ridge Community Church, author,
beekeeper, and curator of neighbourhood conversations at
intotheneighbourhood.ca

Find Preston's entire article
written for Medium here.

Begin With Prayer

God's people are sent people, so we pray for people and communities to whom we are sent. We are sent where ever our feet are: our homes, churches, workplaces, neighborhoods - everywhere we go, to all the people we meet. Since we can't invest in an unlimited number of people, take some time to decide ask God, "Who is my neighbor?"

Read: Luke 6:12-16

Reflect: Jesus spent a night in prayer before choosing the men he would invest his life in. Who is God telling you to invest in?

Respond: Write a short list of people whom you long to see commit to faith in Christ. Place the list somewhere you'll see it everyday. Make a commitment to pray for them regularly. Add names as you are lead by the Holy Spirit.

Here are some ideas on what to pray:

Pray they will become thirsty for God - *Anyone who believes in me may come and drink! For the Scriptures declare, 'Rivers of living water will flow from his heart. John 7:38*

Pray God would draw them to Jesus - *For no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them to me, and at the last day I will raise them up. John 6:44*

Pray they would be receptive to God's grace - *For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins. Romans 3:23-24*

Listen

To bless people while we share in the Mission of Jesus, we need listen to other's needs and stories. Think about the barriers you might have in listening to people and ask God to help you have ears to hear. As you go about your normal rhythm of life, listen to what your friends, family, coworkers say and how God might want you to engage with them.

QUESTIONS TO HELP YOU LISTEN TO ANOTHER PERSON'S STORY

1. What made you choose to go into your present job (or your most recent one if you are looking for work now)? What is something you enjoy about that role?
2. What is a dream or hope you have for your life right now?
3. What might keep you from reaching your dream?
4. How does the spiritual side of your life affect whether or not you reach your dream?
5. If it seems appropriate to the conversation, ask your new friend if you can pray for them for the fulfillment of their dream.

As you practice listening, don't talk. Listen to your partner, their struggles, and their pains. When asking questions, try to listen to the Holy Spirit for guidance as well.

This READ strategy can help you hear others well:

Repeat what the person shared until they let you know they feel heard.

Experience—name the emotions the other person experienced in the story they shared.

Affirm every true thing you can about their position or experience.

Disclose—only now do you “disclose” your view or offer a challenge

EAT



"Missional eating is to live out the Jesus Mission by blessing the world, it's all about forming relationships with people where we live and work that go beyond small talk and occasional conversation. One of the most effective ways for that to happen is to simply eat with people."
Dave Ferguson

1. Ask God whom you should invite to the table this week.
2. Pencil in time on your calendar for a coffee, lunch, or dinner with someone in your life who is unchurched.
3. Discuss with your family, small group, or roommates how to coordinate and plan a meal this week to invite unchurched friends.
4. Extend the invitation to an unchurched friend through a personal invitation such as a call or text.
5. Think about some questions and topics of conversation to address while you are eating together.
6. Reflect on these skills of hospitality and how you may direct them toward someone on your prayer list over a meal:

- Identify common interests and celebrate them.
- Notice what people like and don't like and act on what you learn.
- Ask about and accept people's values to whatever degree you can authentically do so.
 - Identify something in the other person that you admire, remembering that they were made in God's image.
- Anticipate people's needs and try to meet them.
- Notice and receive the gifts people give you.

SERVE

Read: John 13:1-17, Joshua 24:14-15, 1 Peter 4:9-11, Ephesians 6:7-8

Reflect: How are serving God and others connected? What are the biggest barriers that keep you from serving? What does serving have to do with spiritual growth?

Respond: What is one way you can serve someone this week? **Pray and plan for acts of service toward two people in your life who are still finding their way to God.** Tell someone what you plan to do and ask them to hold you accountable by checking in with you next week.

A few simple Ideas:

1. Bake and take cookies to your neighbor.
2. Send a note of appreciation to someone special in your life.
3. Put a tip into the tip jar at the coffee shop along with a small card with an uplifting message.
4. If you know a family who is struggling with a health issue or has recently had a new baby, take them a dinner.
5. Shovel snow for your neighbors.
6. Babysit for free.
7. Return garbage cans from the street.
8. At the drive-thru, pay for the order of the people behind you.
9. After a heavy snow, clean off the windshields in your neighborhood, especially at apartment complexes where there are no garages.

In order to be a blessing I want to commit to....

Serve (name) _____

by (what) _____

by (date) _____

STORY

When did telling the good news about God, and about God at work in our lives, become something to be embarrassed about? Why is sharing faith sometimes cringe worthy, awkward, difficult, embarrassing? After all, this is Good News! Think about your BEST EXPERIENCE of someone sharing with you the Gospel, God's story, their story of God at work in their life. What resonated with you? What inspired or impacted you? Why? What effect did this have on your life?

Read John 4:5-42.

What aspects of BLESS do you see in this encounter? Both Jesus and the woman stepped beyond what was customary and "safe" in their culture. What is one thing from their encounter that encourages you in your faith sharing?

What difference has Jesus make in your life? What has God done for you? As you think about how God has helped you, think about a person with whom your story might connect.

What struggles, needs, longings, lostness, or woundedness might they have that you can identify with? How might you naturally bridge into a deeper conversation that leads to your story?

Focus on someone with whom you would like to share your story, and take time to pray for that person and for an opportunity to bless them by sharing your story.

BLESS is all about trying to build simple missional rhythms into our lives, so that mission is not something we have to think about doing, but rather something that naturally flows out of our relationship with Jesus.

Set aside time to consider how BLESS might become a more regular part of your life. What might God be inviting you to do?

What do you want to implement on a regular basis – daily, weekly or monthly?

Begin with prayer I will pray for:

Listen I will seek to listen to:

Eat I will eat :

Serve I will serve:

Story I would like God to help me share my story with: