

Sharing the Gospel: B.L.E.S.S.

The B.L.E.S.S. missional practice is a way to reimagine evangelism and go back to what Jesus did as he encountered others. It seeks to bless people holistically and finds its roots in God's words to Abraham in Genesis 12.

"I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all people on earth will be blessed through you." Genesis 12:2-3

Begin With Prayer

Don't miss the people in your spheres of influence. God has sovereignly placed you in your neighborhood, school, workplace, and recreational spaces for a reason. Start identifying friends, relatives, acquaintances, neighbors, and colleagues and commit to praying for them regularly. You'll start to see how praying begins to change how you interact with a person and creates a different kind of consciousness inside you. You'll suddenly find more opportunities than you thought you had. You'll begin to see what God is doing and how He desires to work through you.

Listen With Care

We begin with prayer, and then we listen to others. When we think of evangelism, we often think about talking a lot, but the first two steps of witnessing through **BLESS** are primarily oriented around listening—to God and then to others. So, how do we do that? Listening well starts with asking better and better questions – questions that help move a person from surface-level facts to common interests to pain points to core spiritual stories. Another framework for asking better questions is by considering the acronym **FOUR**.

Start by asking questions about their **F**amily, **O**ccupation, **U**pbringing, and **R**eligion. As you begin to learn more about a person, remember that this progression requires genuine listening at every stage. Genuine listening requires us to learn good conversation skills and to keep taking steps forward—not because we have a big agenda, but because we really care for and want to get to know people. Ultimately, we want them to respond to Jesus at the core of who they are. When people feel listened to, they feel cared about and loved.

Eat Together

As we pray for others and listen well to their stories, the next step is to eat with them. Why is eating so important? A few reasons:

1. When we eat together, we're on common ground. No one has the upper hand. Over food, we learn about each other, our cultural backgrounds, our likes and dislikes.
2. We all have to eat, regardless of our culture or spiritual background. As we eat with others, we begin to forge a connection that allows us to overcome perceptions and social stereotypes.

The BLESS practices are:

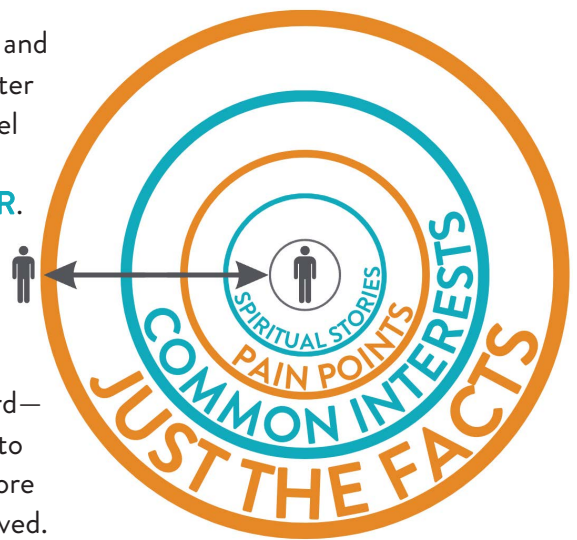
Begin with prayer.

Listen.

Eat.

Serve.

Story (Share your story and Jesus' story).



3. Eating together implies social equality. You see that in Jesus' interactions with others. He turned the societal order upside down by eating with sinners, tax collectors, and women of ill repute. By eating with these people, he publicly declared them social equals, giving them value and importance. The social elite of his day hated him for that.

4. Eating together always involves hospitality and practicing biblical hospitality is the simplest way to change the world. It's the secret sauce of our witness – welcoming people, creating space, having conversation as equals over food. Hospitality helps us get deeper in both conversation and relationship and ultimately close to the core of who people are.

The way for us to seek and save the lost today has a lot to do with letting people belong before they believe. One practical tip: Instead of focusing on incredible food, concentrate more on making people feel welcome, important, and valuable. Keep it simple, laid back, low-cost, and low-maintenance!

**Special Note* If hosting people inside your home is too big of a commitment right now, invite someone out for coffee and/or a meal at a restaurant.*

Serve In Love

Whether people vocalize it or not, everyone faces challenges and need to be served in ways—big and small. And they need to be served until they feel loved. Just like we do. We don't serve people to convert them. We serve because we care for them. And part of the way we care for them is in our longing to see them connect, or reconnect, with God and be with him forever.

Here are a few tips about serving others until they feel loved:

- Get practical. People often feel loved, not just by what we say, but by the practical things we do for them. Simple, practical acts of service speak volumes about the love and care of God for all people. Consider serving your neighbor by taking out/bringing in their garbage cans on trash day when they're out on vacation. Consider serving a neighbor by offering to pick-up their groceries or prescriptions while you're at the store. Get concrete, get practical!
- Look for the pain points. Seek out ways to serve someone after a painful breakup, divorce, health crisis, job loss, kids going away to college, etc. Pay attention to their struggles. Offering to provide meals for someone is one great way to serve someone during a difficult time.
- Let others serve you. Give help, ask for help. Serve, be served. That's how relationships develop.

Share Your Story & Share Jesus' Story

Your Story

Often, when we think about sharing our story or our testimony, we have a script: what we were like before Christ, how we met Christ, and what happened after we committed our lives to Christ. That's a good story to know, but we all have lots of other stories too. We need to learn to tell our God-sighting stories regularly, often as ways to start conversation and take relationships deeper. Answering the following five questions and putting them together into a personal story can help you connect deeply with others.

1. What was your point of pain?
2. What did that pain do to you?
3. How did God show up?
4. What difference did it make?
5. Invite a response using a question like: Can you relate?

****Helpful Tip*** Use simple language and be sure NOT to use “Christianese” or over-spiritualize things when you talk about demons or Satan. Just share your experience in everyday language.*

You can use this template to tell dozens of personal stories where God showed up. Reflect on the different stages of your life and the points-of-pain you went through. How did God redeem those circumstances and prove his love, goodness, and faithfulness to you in those moments? Share those stories with people whenever you can connect with a pain point in their life.

Jesus' Story

The way Jesus interacted with people, especially those like the “sinners” he ate with and served, are stories that people are drawn to. People who feel marginalized in society love the light of the gospel and Jesus’ healing message. Verbally communicating the good news about Jesus is vital to evangelism, but it rightly comes at the end of the BLESS paradigm, after you’ve prayed for, listened, eaten with, and served them. When we are ready to share Jesus’ story and invite a response, we can use the following template of sharing the gospel that helps us relate to others’ pain.

1. **Start with brokenness.** People are receptive to God at those points of pain and it is very natural to ask someone with whom we have shared honestly about our own struggles: “Would you like to hear what changed my life and how my getting closer to God made a real difference in my areas of pain and brokenness?”
2. **Share God’s design.** After sharing about your pain, say, “This isn’t what God designed or wants. His perfect design is for a world that’s unbroken – where we’re in loving relationships, where we become what we were meant to be, where people don’t get hurt. But we each went our own way, got a long way from God and did our own thing. That’s called sin, and sin has led to a broken people and a broken world. It’s not just our sin – everyone’s sin has contributed to the brokenness in our world.”
3. **Finish with God’s answer.** This is where we share about what God did to rescue and save us. Lovingly share: “But God didn’t leave us that way. God entered our world and showed us what it was like to live his perfect design. Then he went to the cross to die for our brokenness and sin, and he rose again to new life to give us a new start. But we have to respond to that. We have to turn away from doing our own thing and surrender our lives to Jesus. When we do that, he forgives us, and we start to grow and desire to go back into that broken world to bring life and hope.”

Using those simple words we can tell Jesus’ story and invite a response. If we do this, if we commit to each of these BLESS practices and start asking each other, “Who did you BLESS this week?,” we can create a culture of evangelism and live in obedience to Jesus’ commission in Matthew 28:18-20:

“Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”