

# B.L.E.S.S. Practices - Be Praying Study Guide

## Session 1: Three Reasons Evangelism Isn't a Lost Cause

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### SESSION GOALS

Every session has a point—what each participant should walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.

**Main Idea:** When we remember that Jesus commands us to share his good news with others, we can know that evangelism is not a lost cause but a mission that matters to God.

**Head Change:** To know that God's great passion is restoring our broken relationship with him.

**Heart Change:** To feel motivated to carry on the ministry of Jesus by sharing his good news with our neighbors.

**Life Change:** To commit to praying regularly for our neighbors.

### OPEN

What's the most recent good news you've heard? How did you react when you heard it?

Receiving good news is usually pretty exciting. And so is sharing good news. But sharing the gospel? That can be a surprisingly difficult and awkward task. Sometimes we try and the message falls flat. Other times nervousness gets the best of us, and we stumble over our words. And sometimes fear prevents us from even trying. If we're not

careful, all these scenarios (and more!) can lead us to believe that evangelism is a lost cause.

In *Lost Cause*, award-winning author and founding pastor of Chicago's Community Christian Church Dave Ferguson will teach us not only that evangelism isn't a lost cause, but it's also a challenge given to Christians to adopt God's great passion and Jesus's personal mission as our own. With Dave's help, learn how to revive your heart to share God's good news with others.

## VIEW

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Dave Ferguson's teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how he answers the following questions.

What three reasons did Dave give for why evangelism is not a lost cause?

What are the five B.L.E.S.S. practices that Dave shared?

*Watch Session 1: Three Reasons Evangelism Isn't a Lost Cause (14 minutes).*

## REVIEW

Dave recounted what he called his failed approaches to evangelism, from knocking on doors to street evangelism to asking scripted questions—and his failures led him to feel that evangelism was becoming a lost cause. What are some examples of your own failed approaches to evangelism? How might you do things differently if given another chance?

Once every strategy failed, Dave tried St. Francis of Assisi's method: "Preach the gospel at all times, and if necessary, use words." Have you ever tried this approach? In what ways is St. Francis's model an insufficient method of evangelism?

Today, confusion abounds as to whether evangelism is even okay anymore. What are some of the factors that lead to our confusion? In what ways do you struggle to believe evangelism is appropriate in our society?

Dave highlighted that many believers are either frustrated or anxious about how to share their faith. What frustrations do you feel when it comes to the task of evangelism? To what degree do you experience anxiety when you think about or engage in sharing Jesus's good news with others? What triggers your anxiety?

After re-reading the Gospels and examining the life of Jesus, Dave said he became convinced that evangelism is "the passion of God." Though we have rejected God, Dave continued, "it is [God's] passionate desire that all of us come to know him." How did God first make himself known to you? Who did he use to share his good news with you?

Furthermore, Dave rediscovered that evangelism was Jesus's stated mission—he "came to seek and save the lost" (Luke 19:10). For example, Jesus shared the message of the kingdom, he welcomed sinners and outsiders, and he healed people of their infirmities, bringing good news to each of them. How does the life and ministry of Jesus help shape your own approach to evangelism?

Evangelism is a task given to all who follow Jesus. But as Dave pointed out, the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18–20 is more than just a task—it's a "challenge to adopt Jesus's personal mission as our own." How have you "owned" the Great Commission? What one thing could you do today to help you "adopt Jesus's personal mission as your own?"

Toward the end of this session, Dave asked an important question: "How?" How do we share the good news of God's love without "treating people like a project" or "making neighbors feel like a group to be conquered"? Here, he introduced a tool called the B.L.E.S.S. practices (begin with prayer, listen, eat, serve, story). How do these practices differ from how you've historically done evangelism? What ideas do you have for implementing the B.L.E.S.S. practices into your evangelism?

*For more information on B.L.E.S.S. practices, check out the bonus session at the end of the series.*

To conclude the session, Dave encouraged us to implement the first B.L.E.S.S. practice by praying for eight of our closest neighbors, coworkers, or non-Christian friends by name. Do you know the names of your eight closest neighbors? Who are they? What moments during your day will you set aside to pray for them?

## BIBLE EXPLORATION

When it comes to the topic of evangelism, few Bible passages are referenced more frequently than the Great Commission, where Jesus gives some of his final instructions to the disciples. Read Matthew 28:18–20.

Before giving the disciples their marching orders, Jesus tells them that “all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to [him].” If Jesus has all authority in heaven and on earth, how should we respond to his commands?

Jesus’s command is for his followers to go and make disciples, or followers, of him, and to baptize and teach new followers to obey his commands—including this one. Who in your life teaches you what it looks like to obey Jesus’s commands? Who are you teaching?

Finally, Jesus promises to be with us as we share his good news and carry out the Great Commission. In what ways does it comfort you to know that Jesus is with you as you share the good news? How can you be mindful of Jesus’s presence as you begin praying for and interacting with your neighbors more?

In this session, Dave referenced the book of Genesis to make an important point about the purpose of evangelism—he linked it to what he called God’s “blessing strategy.” Read Genesis 12:1–3.

In Genesis 12:1–3, in God’s address to Abram, some form of the word “bless” shows up five times. And though much changes in the time between Abram (Abraham) and Jesus, Dave argued that God’s passion hasn’t changed. He aims to bless those who are lost, like we once were, by restoring our relationship with him. How does it change your attitude about evangelism to remember that it’s meant to be a blessing? What could change about your approach to evangelism if you see it as an opportunity to extend a blessing?

Both passages (Gen. 12:1–3; Matt. 28:18–20) share an operative word, a clear instruction from God to “go.” Whether it’s Abram being commanded to “go” from his country or the disciples being commanded to “go” and make disciples, we see that God’s call on their lives and ours is an active call. In your life, where has God called you to go and bear witness to his good news? In what ways can you be active in sharing the gospel this week?

## LAST WORD

Evangelism can be difficult. It's sometimes awkward, uncomfortable, and even scary. And when you jam all these things together, evangelism might seem like a lost cause, especially when people routinely reject the good news we try so hard to share. But, as Dave contended in this session, evangelism is not a lost cause; it's near to the heart of God and a mission Jesus passed on to his church.

Spend some time this week introducing yourself to your neighbors and coworkers if you haven't already. Learn their names. And as Dave challenged us to do, begin praying for them by name.

## DEEPER WALK

**Memorize:** Memorize 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, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'"

**Practice:** Prepare for the first B.L.E.S.S. practice by learning the names of your eight closest neighbors (at home, work, or elsewhere) if you don't already know them.

**Pray:** Set aside ten minutes each day this week to pray for each of your eight closest neighbors by name.

## BLESS- Be Praying Message Slides

Blessed to Bless

1. Momentum (Genesis 12:1)
2. Mission (Genesis 12:2)- WWJD
3. Motives- B.L.E.S.S.- Begin with Prayer

Big Idea: Prayer is Cultivated Communion with God.

I. Momentum (Genesis 12:1)

"Now the Lord said to Abram, 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you.'"

2 Corinthians 5:17

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come."

II. Mission (Genesis 12:2-3)

"And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

The Practices of Jesus

B- Begin with Prayer

L- Listen

E- Eat

S- Serve

S- Share the Story

Big Idea: Prayer is Cultivated Communion with God.

III. Motivation of B.L.E.S.S.- Begin with Prayer

John 17:9-26

"I am praying for them. ...keep them in your name, ... that they may be one, even as we are one. ...keep them from the evil one. ...Sanctify them in the truth ...that the love with which you have loved me may be in them..."

1. Prayer is Foremost Communion with God

Mark 1:35

“And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed.”

John 14:10 “With”

“Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works.”

John 5:19 “See”

“The Son can do nothing of His own accord, but only what He sees the Father doing.”

Dallas Willard

“There is a way of ordering our mental life on more than one level at once. On one level we may be thinking, discussing, seeing, calculating, meeting all the demands of external affairs. But deep within, behind the scenes, at a profounder level, we may also be in prayer and adoration, song and worship and a gentle receptiveness to divine breathings. ...It is at this deep level that the real business of life is determined.”

John 14:10 “With”

“Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works.”

Big Idea: Prayer is Cultivated Communion with God.

2. Prayer is Cultivated in Community (1 Timothy 2:1-4)

“I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people, ... This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.”