

B.L.E.S.S. Practices - Be Listening Study Guide

Session 2: The Values of Evangelism

SESSION GOALS

Click [here](#) to sign up for free and watch the video!

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

Main Idea: When we align our values with God's, we will view evangelism as an opportunity to bless our neighbors.

Head Change: To know that God values people's lives both now and in eternity.

Heart Change: To feel excited to bless others with material and spiritual care.

Life Change: To bless our neighbors, first, by asking questions and listening.

OPEN

What store do you shop at most (Target, Starbucks, etc.)? Do you know the company's stated values? What are they?

Many companies today think intentionally not only about the products and services they provide, but the things that they value as an organization. Their values help inform the company's internal and external operations. If a company doesn't have a set of clearly stated values, it can be aimless in its mission.

A similar thing could be said of evangelism. If Christians are unclear on the values of our faith and the God we worship, then the way we carry out the task of evangelism may be confused and ultimately ineffective. In this session, Dave will help us name and adopt the values that should drive our evangelism.

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.

How many times in the Bible did Dave say we are commanded to love our neighbor?

What three core values did Dave highlight in this session?

What's the difference between a "blesser" and a "converter"?

Watch Session 2: The Values of Evangelism (13 minutes).

REVIEW

Dave opened this session by highlighting the frequency with which God commands his followers to love our neighbors—at least eight times in the Bible. **In what specific ways do you seek to obey God's command to love your neighbors? Where do you see room to grow in your capacity to love others?**

Dave's teaching was anchored in the idea of values. He said that "our values form our identity and influence what [we] think about, talk about, and ultimately how [we] behave." **What are some of your values? In what ways do these values influence what you think about, talk about, and how you behave?**

One of the objectives of this series is to help revive Christian evangelism, both individually and collectively. A way to drive such a revival is by aligning our values with the things God values. Dave pointed out three such values: people matter, eternity matters, and life matters. **What does it look like to follow these values in your life? What do these values change about your interactions with neighbors?**

Read John 3:16. We know that people matter to God because he tells us plainly in this verse and all over Scripture. And even though it's clear that people should matter to us as well, it's not always easy. **What barriers sometimes prevent you from behaving like people matter to you? How can you overcome those barriers?**

In evangelism, one sticking point that we may experience is the topic of eternity, especially heaven and hell. **In what ways do you find it difficult to discuss eternity with your**

neighbors? What might help you grow more comfortable speaking with others about heaven and hell?

The third value that Dave highlighted is “life matters,” by which he meant life “in the here and now.” Because life matters now, not just in eternity, our evangelism involves sharing the good news—it’s never less than that—and should be paired with things like serving the poor, caring for orphans and widows, and seeking to end injustices of all kinds. **What are some of the real-life needs around you? How can adopting “life matters” as a value help inform the way you respond to and help meet these needs?**

Dave introduced a research study that was done on two groups of missionaries that were labeled either as “converters” or “blessers.” The groups had different approaches to evangelism and saw dramatically different results. **Which of these groups do you most identify with? What could it look like to adopt the “blessers” approach to evangelism?**

Near the end of this session, Dave returned to his B.L.E.S.S. practices, which he introduced in session one. This time, he focused on the second practice: L–listen. **Why is listening an important practice in evangelism? Who do you know that’s a good listener?**

How well do you listen to others? What practical steps can you take to grow as a listener?

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

Listening is an opportunity to slow down and give others our time and attention. **Which of your neighbors will you commit to sit with and listen to? What can you do to set aside time for them?**

BIBLE EXPLORATION

When we consider God’s command to love our neighbors, we may not always recognize why he gives us this directive. But one reason we’re commanded to love our neighbors is that God loves our neighbors. Read John 3:16–17.

John 3:16, as most of us may know, is a well-known and widely shared verse of the Bible. **As you read verse 16, what stands out most to you? Why do you think it’s such a popular verse? In what ways has John 3:16 been an encouragement to you?**

In verse 16, Jesus speaks explicitly about God's love for the world. And because he loves the world, God took the initiative to save the world by sending Jesus. **In what ways can you mimic God's initiative with your neighbors? What opportunities do you have to be more engaged with neighbors?**

Jesus's thought doesn't end with verse 16. He continues in verse 17 by saying he didn't come to "judge" the world but to "save" the world. Still, our attempts at evangelism can sometimes focus more on judgment than on bringing good news. **In what ways can getting Jesus's words backward undermine our evangelism efforts?**

As Dave pointed out in this session, Jesus modeled what it looks like to give time and attention to neighbors. Read Luke 18:35–43.

After stopping and commanding that the blind man be brought to him, Jesus proceeds to ask this man a question. Questions, as Jesus shows here and elsewhere in the Gospels, can be a disarming way to engage with others. **When you interact with your neighbors, what emphasis do you place on asking questions and listening? What fruit have you seen from asking good questions? How can you grow as a question-asker?**

The call on Christians is not only to imitate Jesus and his way of loving neighbors but also to be like the blind man in this story. We ought to be quick to cry out to Jesus for all manner of things, including evangelism opportunities and the courage to engage. **How can you follow the example of the blind man in this story by crying out to God for help? What do you want Jesus to do for you in your interactions with neighbors this week?**

LAST WORD

Our values form us and inform the way we go about our lives. When our values don't conform to God's values, our lives can stray in several directions, all of which take us off the path of life. But when our values are aligned with God's, we care about the things he cares about and the things he commands us to do.

Spend some time this week reflecting on God's values as Dave presented them: people matter, eternity matters, and life matters. Pray that God will align your values with his and use them to revive evangelism in your heart and life.

DEEPER WALK

Pray: Continue praying for your eight neighbors. Begin praying that God will align your values with is.

Ask: In your interactions with neighbors this week, make it a point to ask them good questions. You could ask them about their values, their upbringing, and their interests. And you can practice taking your conversations deeper by asking follow-up questions like, “Can you tell me more about that?” or simply asking “Why?” in a non-threatening way.

Listen: When you talk to your neighbor, put down your smartphone. Resist the temptation to speak. Give your neighbor your undivided attention and listen.

BLESS- Be Listening Message Slides

James 1:19- “Be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger.”
Ak-oo-o (Gr.) to attend to; understand; perceive.
“hear” vs. “listen”

Big Idea: To Listen is to Love

David Augsburger, *Caring Enough to Hear and be Heard*
“Being heard is as close to being loved that for the average person, they are almost indistinguishable.”

Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*:

“He who can no longer listen to his brother will soon be no longer listening to God either; he will be doing nothing but prattle in the presence of God too. This is the beginning of the death of the spiritual life. . . . Anyone who thinks that his time is too valuable to spend keeping quiet will eventually have no time for God and his brother, but only for himself and for his own follies.”

A. Jesus Listened to His Father First

1 John 5:14 – “And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask

anything according to his will he hears us.”

Psalm 46:10

“Be still and know that I am God!”

John 5:19

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

B. Jesus Listened to People...

1. ...without discriminating.

Zacchaeus- Traitor! (Luke 19)

Centurion- Oppressor! (Matthew 8)

Jairus- Pharisee! (Luke 8)

Leper- Social Outcast! (Mark 1)

2. ... with Grace.

Pharisees and the Adulterous Woman (John 8)

John 8:6a

“This they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him.”

John 8:10

“Woman where are they? Has no one condemned you?”

...“No one, Lord”

To Listen with Grace is to Heal

James 5:16 “Therefore confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed.”

3. ...with His heart.

Samaritan Woman (John 4)

9 The Samaritan woman said to him, “How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?” (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)

10 Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.”

Proverbs 20:5 – “The purpose in a man’s heart is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out.”

3. ...with His heart.

Bartimaeus -Blind beggar (Mark 10)

“Jesus, son of David have mercy on me.” Mark 10:47b

“What do you want me to do for you?” Mark 10:51a

3. ...with His heart.

Woman with internal bleeding (Luke 8)

"Who was it that touched me?" (Luke 8:45a)

"Master, the crowds surround you and are pressing in on you." (Luke 8:45b)

"While he was still speaking..."

Hauck, The Gift of Empathy

"I used to listen with my head, constantly thinking about what advice I could give or what I could say to make people feel better. Now I listen with my heart, seeking to feel the emotions they're having and letting them know I care. I like listening with my heart better, and I've found that the person I'm listening to appreciates it much more too."

Big Idea: To Listen is to Love