

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

Session 4: The Behaviors of Evangelism

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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 recognize that most of our neighbors are open to having spiritual conversations, we can engage with them more confidently.

Head Change: To know that spiritual conversations are often welcomed within the context of a friendship.

Heart Change: To feel friendly affection for our neighbors.

Life Change: To befriend our neighbors, serve their needs, and share the good news with confidence.

OPEN

Who was your best friend growing up? How did you become friends?

Friendship is one of the greatest gifts God has given us. With friends, all conversation topics are on the table, from the silly and light-hearted to the difficult and weighty, because friendships are built on trust. Friendships are also good soil for the gospel to take root.

Sharing the gospel with our neighbors isn't an easy task. It can be uncomfortable, awkward, and downright scary at times. But when we realize that our neighbors are eager for friendship, evangelism doesn't seem quite so intimidating. In this session, Dave will help us see that sharing the gospel with our neighbors can be as simple as building a friendship.

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 behaviors did Barna Research discover that unchurched people respond well to?

What single word did Dave use to summarize Barna's research findings?

Which B.L.E.S.S. practice did Dave highlight in this session?

Watch Session 4: The Behaviors of Evangelism (11 minutes).

REVIEW

To open this session, Dave shared a statistic that said, "seventy-nine percent of unchurched people don't mind talking to a friend about their faith if they really value it." **Do you find that statistic surprising? Why, or why not?**

"If we are going to revive evangelism," Dave said, "we must have the right practices, actions, and behaviors." **When you think about evangelism, what would you say are some of the wrong practices, actions, and behaviors? How do these wrong behaviors influence the way our evangelism is received?**

In the research Dave referenced, respondents gave three answers for behaviors they'd value in a person to whom they'd be willing to talk about spiritual matters. The first was "listen without judgment." **For what reasons is it important to listen to others without judgment? Do you find it difficult to listen and not judge? Why, or why not?**

Dave said that "listening is one of the purest acts of love." **How does listening show that we love and care about someone? Who among your neighbors can you listen to this week?**

The second behavior valued by the unchurched is that they want to be able to “draw their own conclusions” when responding to conversations about faith. In other words, they don’t want a conclusion forced on them. **For what reasons do we sometimes try and force non-Christians to come to the conclusions we desire for them? What could it look like to release control and allow them to draw their own conclusions?**

Finally, according to research, our unchurched neighbors want us to be confident in our perspectives—they want us to genuinely believe what we’re sharing. **Do you ever find it difficult to exhibit confidence when sharing the gospel? Why, or why not? How can we work to express confidence in our faith in the good news without seeming forceful or arrogant?**

After surveying the research, Dave’s conclusion was that our neighbors are simply looking for us to be a friend to them. **Are you friends with your neighbors? What could you do to cultivate friendships with those you’re not friends with yet?**

One way that we can begin building friendships with our neighbors is through Dave’s B.L.E.S.S. practices. In the previous sessions, we’ve been encouraged to pray for our neighbors by name, listen to them, and share a meal with them. In this session, Dave challenged us to find ways to serve them. **How can serving our neighbors endear us to them, and vice versa? In what ways have you been served by your neighbors? What could you do to begin serving your neighbors now?**

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

Dave identified three specific lessons we can learn from Jesus when it comes to serving others: serving should be done in close proximity, personally, and powerfully. In other words, we should serve those near us according to their unique needs through the power of God’s Spirit. **What can you do to grow in each of these three areas? What could change about your relationships, and even your neighborhood, if you applied these lessons to your life and evangelism?**

BIBLE EXPLORATION

Friendship is a concept Jesus was familiar with, even toward those who were considered “sinners.” Read Matthew 9:9–13.

In verse 9, Jesus calls Matthew, a tax collector, to come and follow him. Tax collectors in the first century were not people Jews made friends with—they were

seen as traitors and “sinners,” as the passage says. **Are there groups of people in your community that you're discouraged from making friends with, or even interacting with? What are some reasons we tend to judge people in these groups or have a bias against them?**

Jesus invited Matthew to follow him, and he also sat around a table to have a meal with him and “many tax collectors and sinners.” Some people criticized Jesus for eating with them. **Have you ever been criticized for associating with non-Christians? What was that like? How did you respond?**

Answering their question, Jesus said that he “didn't come to call the righteous, but sinners.” In other words, Jesus came to make friends with the likes of sinners and tax collectors because they needed the good news just like everyone else. **What could you do to put yourself in closer proximity to the “tax collectors and sinners”—or those who need the gospel—in your context?**

The service we render to neighbors and friends in our strength may do some good. But the service we render in the power of God's Spirit can leave an eternal imprint. Read Mark 7:31–37 and John 14:12.

As we read in the story Dave referenced from Mark, Jesus performed powerful acts of “service.” Here in Mark 7, he opened ears that were deaf. Elsewhere in the Gospels, he healed eyes that were blind and resurrected bodies that were dead. And the crowds who witnessed Jesus's “service” were astonished, as we see in verse 37. **When Dave said that we can access God's power—much like Jesus—when we serve, what thoughts crossed your mind? What do you think is required of us to gain access to God's power?**

In John 14:12, Jesus's words to his disciples are simple: “the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do. And he will do even greater works than these.” By our faith in Christ, we can serve others in the power of God, much like Jesus did during his ministry on Earth. **What are some of the differences between serving with own your power and serving with God's power? What could it look like for you to serve your neighbors and their specific needs with God's power?**

Dave challenged us to serve our neighbors by asking God to heal them when they're sick, to give them freedom if they're in the throes of addiction, and to reconcile broken relationships. **Are there needs like these among your neighbors that you're aware of? How can you step in and serve them this week?**

LAST WORD

In all our talk about evangelism, we may have overcomplicated our task. We often speak of tactics, strategies, models, and the like, all while tending to overlook the simple reality that our neighbors at home and at work are open to spiritual conversations with people they trust—with friends.

Take a moment today to think and pray about what you can do to move toward your neighbors with the goal of building friendships. And then commit yourself to the slow work of developing relationships by praying for neighbors, listening to their stories, spending time with them over meals, and serving them.

DEEPER WALK

Pray: Continue praying for your eight neighbors. Pray for opportunities to serve them.

Talk: Listen closely to your neighbors, ask them questions, and be on the lookout for opportunities to serve.

Serve: When needs or opportunities arise, be quick to serve your neighbors and coworkers in tangible ways. For example, you could offer help on a project at work, provide a meal when they're sick, or sit and listen when they need to process hurt feelings. There are a thousand ways we could serve—we just need to pay attention for opportunities.

BLESS Practices- Be Serving Message Slides

Mark 10:45 "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many."

1 Peter 4:1 "Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking..."

Big Idea: We get to serve in God's strength.

A. Peter was a Changed Man (1 Peter 4:7-11)

7 The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. 8 Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. 9 Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.

A. Peter was a Changed Man (1 Peter 4:7-11)

10 As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: 11 whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

B. Jesus Inspires Us (John 13:1)

1 Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

C. Judas Cautions Us (John 13:2)

2 During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him,...

Galatians 1:10

"For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ."

D. Jesus Cleanses Us (John 13:8-15)

8 Peter said to him, "You shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no share with me." 9 Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" 10 Jesus said to him, "The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean. And you are clean,..."

D. Jesus Cleanses Us (John 13:8-15)

12 When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, "Do you understand what I have done to you? 13 You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. 14 If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. 15 For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.

Big Idea: We get to serve in God's strength.