

SALT & LIGHT. As Christians we are living counter culture for the common good.

READ: Matthew 5:13-16

Discuss: What stirs you from this familiar passage?

BLESS - HOW GOD AND CHRISTIANS OPERATE.

“...I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.”
Genesis 12:2

In Genesis chapter 12, he says to Abraham, "I'm going to bless you. I'm going to make your name great. You are going to be a blessing and the people of the earth will be blessed through you."

So God blessed Abraham. And he blessed him, okay, not just to receive the blessing, but he blessed him to what?

To be a blessing.

And the same is true with all of us that followed after him. If that was God's strategy in the very beginning, does it hold true today? Could simply challenging people to be a blessing accomplish the mission of Jesus? Well someone did a fascinating study. It was actually called "Blessers versus Converters."

The study was based on two teams of missionaries that went to Thailand. Each team went to Thailand with two distinctly different missional strategies. The *converters* went with the sole intention of just converting people through evangelism. The *blessers* went with the intention of just blessing people. They said wherever God sends us, we are going to be a blessing to that place and that people.

After two years, here's what they discovered. First, they discovered that the *blessers'* presence in the community resulted in tremendous amount of social good. Not so with the *converters*.

Secondly, and this was surprising, the *blessers* actually had 50 times as many conversions as the *converters*. The *blessers* helped 50 times more people find their way back to God. The bottom line? To accomplish the mission to reach and restore our world, we need to be *blessers*.

How do we in a very practical way, that's theologically grounded, put language in place in order to explain to people how they could bless the people in places where they are incarnating?

The answer, in a word, or more accurately an acronym: B.L.E.S.S. And these are the missional practices we leave with you.

B. Begin with prayer.

We want you to ask, God, how do you want me, how do you want me to bless the people in places that you've sent me to? Where are you moving God?

L. Listen.

Incarnate again. Don't talk, but listen to people. Their struggles, their pains. The people in places that God sent you."

E stands for eat.

You can't just check this off. It's not quick. You have to have a meal with people or a cup of coffee. It builds relationships.

S stands for serve.

If you listen to people, and you eat with people, they will tell you how to love them and you'll know how to S, serve them.

The last S stands for story.

When the time is right, now we talk and we share the story of how Jesus changed our life.

Dave Ferguson did this with Community Christian Church and asked his congregation, "Here's what we want you to do. You do one of those missional practices every day. Just one of them. Every day. You can pick which one. And secondly, we want you to start every one of your missional groups weekly with the question of who did you bless this week? Just answer the question. Who did you bless this week?" A shift began in how the church began to move and function.

Discussion Questions:

If you had to pick one letter to do tomorrow, which one would you pick?

How might this practice produce the fruit of the spirit in a Believer's life?

What "letter" would you like to most improve on? Why?

Silent Prayer:

Take 5 minutes in prayer to think about people in your life that you would like to BLESS. Is there a place you see momentum or is there a place you see a stirring? It could be an individual or group. Identify context of relationship. Is there a particular issue or need present? Try and come up with 5 people and their context (work, neighbor, friend).

Name	Context

At the end of the time, take a minute to pray about who you would love to invite to the BBQ at Grace as way to BLESS them. (It could be another person not on your list).

Group Share:

Go around in a circle and take a minute to share one person's name on the list and why they are on your heart.

Get ready for next week, when we kick off with the question: Who did you bless this week?

GRACE BBQ CHALLENGE:

This week's challenge is to take an invite card (provided - or can be picked up at Grace) and invite someone from your prayer list. The BBQ is a great way to invite your friend into our community, demonstrating the love of God in a unique way.