

How to BLESS Your Neighbor: Begin with Prayer

Pastor Kevin Donoho

April 14, 2024

Opening Discussion

- What thoughts, feelings, or impressions do you have about the sermon this week?

B.L.E.S.S.

Begin with Prayer

Listen

Eat

Serve

Story

Scripture

Luke 4:14

“Then Jesus returned to Galilee, filled with the Holy Spirit’s power.”

Luke 6:12-13a

“One day soon afterward Jesus went up on a mountain to pray, and he prayed to God all night. At daybreak he called together all of his disciples and chose twelve of them to be apostles.”

Luke 6:17-19

“When they came down from the mountain, the disciples stood with Jesus on a large, level area, surrounded by many of his followers and by the crowds. There were people from all over Judea and from Jerusalem and from as far north as the seacoasts of Tyre and Sidon. They had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases; and those troubled by evil spirits were healed. Everyone tried to touch him, because healing power went out from him, and he healed everyone.”

John 1:43-49

“Philip went to look for Nathanael and told him, We have found the very person Moses and the prophets wrote about! His name is Jesus, the son of Joseph from Nazareth. “Nazareth!” exclaimed Nathanael. “Can any good thing come from Nazareth?” “Come and see for yourself,” Philip replied. As they approached, Jesus said, “Now here is a genuine son of Israel—a man of complete integrity.” “How do you know that about me?” Nathanael asked. Jesus replied, “I could see you under the fig tree before Philip found you.”

Thought #1: Starting the day with Jesus changes how we do the day!

How have you noticed that starting the day with prayer can impact your mindset and approach to daily tasks compared to starting without prayer? How do you maintain a consistent prayer routine amid busy schedules or unexpected events that might disrupt your morning routine?

Review Luke 4:14. This passage marks the beginning of Jesus’ ministry. Take a moment to review verses 1-13 before it. What example was Jesus setting in this moment for us? How does Jesus’ example of spending time with the Father before engaging in ministry shape your spiritual practices?

Pastor Kevin shared a story about caring for his car every week. Each week he spends time cleaning it inside and out, filling the tank. It’s like a reset button for him. Spiritually speaking, carving out time with Jesus first thing can have the same impact. How does starting the day with prayer help you to feel refreshed, prepared, and aligned? Share a specific story with the group if you can recall one.

Thought #2: Prayer is the foundation for all other activities!

When you think of it as the foundation for all other activities in the day, how does perspective change on the purpose and significance of prayer?

Pastor Kevin shared five specific ways to pray when it comes to pouring out blessings to those around you:

- God, help me to see people differently.
- God, help me to listen well.
- God, help me to listen and engage and truly care for the person that I sit across from.
- God help me to take the role of serving my neighbor...and would you work through that?
- God, help me share my story through my actions and words so that others see more of you and less of me.

Reflecting on the five prayers mentioned above, which one do you personally find most challenging or impactful in your own journey? How do you think consistent prayer helps us to see people differently and engage with genuine care and empathy?

Can you share an experience where prayer before an interaction with someone transformed or guided your approach in a meaningful way?

Thought #3: Prayer helps align our plans with His!

Read Luke 16:17-19 together. Reflecting on Jesus' decision to spend all night in prayer before choosing the twelve apostles, how does this emphasize the importance of aligning our plans with God's guidance through prayer?

In what ways, if any, do you struggle with the idea of representing Jesus and

participating in His work among people who have various needs and challenges? Jesus's training model of "Let's go...Follow me!" suggests a learn-as-you-go approach. How does this resonate with your journey of learning to engage with others as a representative of Jesus? How does it challenge you or what parts of this do you struggle with?

Finding yourself in front of someone in need can feel overwhelming. Knowing how to respond to that need can feel impossible. How does prayer help shape and guide these interactions? How does this statement "God's plan is to bless the world through those He calls blessed" sit with you? How does it encourage you? In what ways do you feel challenged by it?

Thought #4: Prayer is about stepping into places where God is already present!

How does the idea of stepping into places where God is already present and at work challenge your traditional view of evangelism and sharing the gospel with others? How does this idea reframe our role in being a blessing to others?

Read John 1:43-49 together. Reflecting on the story of Philip and Nathanael, how does it illustrate the importance of recognizing God's pursuit of people before we even engage with them? In what ways does this impact your interactions with others you encounter every day?

In your own experiences, can you share a moment where you felt God was already at work in a situation or relationship before you stepped into it?

How can we cultivate a mindset of attentiveness to where God is moving and working around us in our daily lives, especially when interacting with strangers?

