



INFLUENCE DAILY
Shane Philip
August 22, 2021

The Crossing Church
Las Vegas, Nevada

OPENING

This week we are continuing our series called Life on Mission where we are talking about the mission that God has given us, both individually and as a church. Our hope is that it will help us out of our faith funk and get us back on mission after a year and a half of lethargy and possibly apathy. This week we are looking at ways to Influence Daily as we open our eyes to see opportunities to bless people.

SCRIPTURE¹

Matthew 28:19-20a 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, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

Acts 17:16-23 While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols. So he reasoned in the synagogue with both Jews and God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there. A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to debate with him. Some of them asked, "What is this babbler trying to say?" Others remarked, "He seems to be advocating foreign gods." They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection. Then they took him and brought him to a meeting of the Areopagus, where they said to him, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears, and we would like to know what they mean." ²¹ (All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.) Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: "People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. ²³ For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship—and this is what I am going to proclaim to you.

Acts 17:32 When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, but others said, "We want to hear you again on this subject."

1 Peter 3:15 But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,

OBSERVATION

Five spiritual practices are found and lived out in the Book of Acts which is the story of the very first Christians and churches. What we will see is that they lived their lives on mission – the mission that Jesus gave to them. This is how the Book of Acts begins forty days after Jesus' resurrection. During that forty days between when Jesus rose from the dead and went up to heaven, He appeared to different people in different places, not only to convince them that He was alive, but to instruct them about what to do next. If there were ever people who lived their life *on mission* it was the early church. In Acts 17, Paul went to Athens, the great city of PLATO and

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all scripture referenced here is NIV

ARISTOTLE and SOCRATES. Even though it's been about 400 years since Athens' dominance it was still an intellectual hub in that part of the world. The plan was for Paul to meet Timothy and Silas there. They were going to share the gospel to this city, but because Paul was impatient, instead of waiting for the others to arrive he started without them. There was a speakers' platform and those in the city would gather around to listen. The Epicureans and Stoics were two of the dominant philosophical schools of the day. The **Epicureans** basically lived by "Eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow you will die." For them pleasure was the greatest good. **Stoics** on the other hand believed that happiness comes from detachment. If you love something and lose it you will be sad so the highest pleasure is to crave nothing. So, Paul engaged with the two groups talking about **religion** and **philosophy** and the **ideas** of the day. Athenians had many gods including one unknown god. They didn't want to take a chance on missing one. This created an open door for Paul – he had his eyes open to the people around him. He said, "I came to tell you about the unknown God. I've come to bless you"

QUESTION: In what ways did Jesus use "open doors" to reach people?

APPLICATION

Dave and Jon Ferguson wrote a book called BLESS which talks about everyday ways to love our neighbors and share our faith. They use this word "bless" as an acronym to **INFLUENCE DAILY: The "B" in B.L.E.S.S stands for Begin in Prayer.** If you want to have a daily influence for Christ in those around you it starts here with prayer. God has placed us in others' lives for a reason and beginning our witness with prayer brings the Holy Spirit into the conversation.

QUESTION: Who are you praying for in your life? Who is the person who is facing an eternity without Jesus?
The "L" stands for Listen. Let's be honest for a minute. We have lost the art of listening. We are so divided politically and racially that we don't know how to listen anymore. We are so busy thinking about how we are going to respond that we fail to be quiet and hear the other person, but if we are going to influence people we have to listen to people who don't experience the world like we do - listen to their story - listen to their experiences - listen to why they believe what they believe - listen to people who are different than we are.

QUESTION: How good are you at listening?

QUESTION: What could you do to become a better listener?

QUESTION: Who are the people who listen to you? Why?

QUESTION: When was the last time you listened to a member of your family, learned something, and made a change?

The "E" stands for Eat. Eating with someone creates a bond - it's a sign of friendship. To eat with someone means that we accept them. Part of the Christian life is having a community of believers around us as we connect deeply. But the problem is when someone becomes a Christian they spend all their time with Christians. All of their friends are Christians and they no longer have anyone in their life that doesn't know Jesus. This might feel uncomfortable, but if we're not close to people who are far from God, we're not as close to God as we think because God's heart is always with those who are far from Him. Sharing a meal creates an opportunity for fellowship to share Jesus.

QUESTION: When was the last time you had a meal with someone who wasn't a Christian?

The "S" stands for SERVE. When we use our gifts and passions to serve people, the Word of God spreads, people's lives are impacted and it breaks down walls. So, look for opportunities to serve others. It's amazing the doors that open when you SERVE people. **The last "S" stands for STORY.** We just share our faith story - how we came to Jesus and what God has done in our lives. Hearing a person's story is powerful - people can argue with the Bible but they can't argue with our stories.

QUESTION: What your life was like BEFORE Jesus?

QUESTION: How did you come to faith?

QUESTION: What led you to make that decision?

QUESTION: What Jesus has done in your life ?

That's it. The **BEFORE HOW and AFTER** . We don't have to be experts in the **Bible** or **Christianity** because we're experts in our stories. Let's open our eyes as Paul and Jesus did to those around us and see what doors are open to us.

QUESTION: In what ways did Jesus B.L.E.S.S. people?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, help us to overcome our hesitancy to share by allowing Your Holy Spirit to give us the words to say. We want to B.L.E.S.S them with our stories and Your Word as we share the truth of life everlasting. In Jesus' name, Amen.

QUESTIONS

QUESTION: In what ways did Jesus use "open doors" to reach people?

QUESTION: How good are you at listening?

QUESTION: What could you do to become a better listener?

QUESTION: Who are the people who listen to you? Why?

QUESTION: When was the last time you had a meal with someone who wasn't a Christian?

QUESTION: When was the last time you listened to a member of your family, learned something, and made a change?

QUESTION: What your life was like BEFORE Jesus?

QUESTION: How did you come to faith?

QUESTION: What led you to make that decision?

QUESTION: What Jesus has done in your life ?

QUESTION: In what ways did Jesus B.L.E.S.S. people?