



Begin With Prayer
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The Crossing Church
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OPENING

This week we are beginning our series called **B.L.E.S.S.** Many of us know that our Mission Statement here at The Crossing is “Helping People discover Jesus and the Journey,” but it isn’t just the mission of our church – it is given to every follower of Jesus. Over the next five weeks we are going to talk about His strategy to reach family, friends and other people around us to BLESS them.

SCRIPTURE¹

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

Genesis 12:2-3 “I will make you into a great nation, and I will *bless* you; I will make your name great, and you will be a *blessing*. I will *bless* those who *bless* you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be *blessed* through you.”

Luke 6:12-16 One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to *pray*, and *spent the night praying* to God. When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles: Simon (whom he named Peter), his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called the Zealot, Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

OBSERVATION

God’s plan from the very beginning was that He would bless us. He used the word **bless** five times in Genesis 12:2-3 when He told Abraham to “go and make disciples of all nations.” God’s purpose was and is, to bless those who love (obey)² His Word.

QUESTION: In what ways do you believe love and obedience are the same?

When we look at the life of Jesus we see that prayer was central to His ministry. He performed many miracles and always started with prayer – He baptized many people and began with prayer – when He, Himself was baptized, He prayed to His Father. Then He went into the desert and His prayers sustained Him. He began His days with prayer and would often withdraw from the

¹ The NIV translation unless otherwise noted.

² 1 John 5:3

crowds to go and pray. He did all of these incredible things, and was successful because He put prayer first.

QUESTION: In what ways do you prioritize prayer in your life?

There are two times the Bible records Jesus spending the night in prayer: One was the night before He was arrested then crucified and the other when He selected His twelve disciples in whom He invested all of His time. They were surely a bunch of misfits – just like us! Peter had an uncanny ability to say the wrong thing at the wrong time; John and his brother James were called the Sons of Thunder who would have called down fire from heaven to kill people in Samaria if He hadn't stopped them. Bartholomew, when speaking of Jesus asked, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Then came Matthew who worked as a tax collector for Rome and Simon who was a zealot and belonged to a group that secretly tried to overthrow the Roman government. Jesus could have chosen others who were better educated and had stronger religious skills, but instead He got the **right** people – those He could equip to share His good news.

QUESTION: If you died today, how do you know you will go to heaven?

QUESTION: Why do you think Jesus has chosen you to share His Gospel?

APPLICATION

For many of us, sharing the Gospel feels awkward or offensive so we decide to just be good examples of a believer and hope people will ask us about it. We think the right words won't come or we don't know the Bible well enough to answer their questions. Most of the time the prayers we do pray include food, a good day, traveling mercies, etc. This week we begin with prayer. "I don't know how to pray." This is our first reason for not praying regularly. Then we say "I'm too busy." It takes time, focus, energy. We have work, kids, stuff like a flat tire, shopping. "I'm not sure prayer works." We've tried it before and didn't get the answer we hoped for. So, let's spend the next few weeks together learning about Jesus' strategy to reach and, therefore **bless** people.

QUESTION: What barriers do you think are keeping you from sharing the Gospel with others?

Dave and John Ferguson (no relation) wrote a book about five practices Jesus used to bless people – five ways to love our neighbors. They are found in **B.L.E.S.S.** **1) Begin with prayer.** Pray for people in our lives who are far from God; **2) Listen.** Listen to their experiences – their stories; **3) Eat.** Eating with others creates relationships; **4) Serve.** Look for opportunities to serve them; **5) Share.** Share our stories. This surely sounds like the bases of friendship, doesn't it? And who doesn't want to share our faith with the people in our lives? Most of us intend to pray – we want to pray, but often it is just when we sit down for a meal or we're in trouble or we need something or we pray for a winning sports team. (LOL)

QUESTION: Who are the people in your family or neighborhood or community who need to hear your story?

What we may not realize is that God will bring people into our lives we may never otherwise have connected with. So, just begin with prayer and an opportunity to share with them. When we pray for those who come we start thinking of them in a whole new light. We suddenly get concerned about how they are really doing and our relationship with them goes to a whole new level. So, let's think about people around us who don't know Jesus and start praying. What are their needs, concerns, their interests? Then **make a plan** to pray regularly for them. Take notes to remind us of them and pray without lofty words. **Find a place** and time where we are going

to spend time with God. And, during this next week **follow us in this series** with three steps: **1) Action** apps provided by the church week, **2) Ways to engage with our Reach** partners, and a weekly **3) Podcasts**. Finally, on The Crossing APP we have three different prayer guides available: 1) Prayer for Las Vegas, 2) for our neighborhoods and 3) for our extended community (schools, police, fire stations).

QUESTION: What plans do you need to make for joining us in our churchwide endeavors to share Jesus?

"We never know how God will answer our prayers, but we can expect that he will get us involved in his plan for the answer." - Corrie ten Boom

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we often fail to share Your Gospel out of fear or awkwardness, but we want to mature in our walk with You. Help us to look beyond ourselves as we love our neighbors and engage in conversations about You and Your unending love for them. In Jesus' name. Amen

QUESTIONS

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QUESTION: In what ways do you prioritize prayer in your life?

QUESTION: If you died today, how do you know you will go to heaven?

QUESTION: Why do you think Jesus has chosen you to share His Gospel?

QUESTION: What barriers do you think are keeping you from sharing the Gospel with others?

QUESTION: Who are the people in your family or neighborhood or community who need to hear your story?

QUESTION: What plans do you need to make for joining us in our churchwide endeavors to share Jesus?