

# "RE -ENVISION" COMBINED VINE

8-29-2021

## BLESSED TO BE A BLESSING: GENESIS 12:1-3

- Biblical pictures of blessing others.
  - Elisha and Naaman: 2 Kings 5
  - Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz: Ruth 1ff.
  - Queen Esther saves the Jews: Esther 1ff.
  - Disciples lower the paralyzed man through the roof: Luke 5
  - The Good Samaritan: Luke 10
  - Lydia and the church in Philippi: Acts 16
  - David Blesses Mephibosheth: 2 Samuel 9:1-13
    - Blessing from the riches received.
    - *And David said to him, "Do not fear, for I will show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan, and I will restore to you all the land of Saul your father, and you shall eat at my table always."*(2 Samuel 9:7, ESV)
    - Blessing "for the sake of".
    - Jonathan loved David and blessed him.
      - From their friendship.
      - Because Jonathan helped David escape from Saul.
    - *And David said, "Is there still anyone left of the house of Saul, **that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?**"*(2 Samuel 9:1, ESV)
      - Kindness is from the Hebrew "Hesed", which is also translated steadfast love.
      - *The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, (Exodus 34:6, ESV)*

# BLESS

## **BEGIN WITH PRAYER:**

Jesus and others have blessed you through prayer. Bless others who don't know Jesus yet through prayer.

## **LISTEN:**

Listen with care. Jesus and others have listened to you and heard you. Bless others far from God by listening and hearing them.

## **EXPERIENCE:**

Eat or plan a shared experience together. Jesus and others have accepted you and "invited you to their table." Accept and invite others who don't know Jesus yet to your table (or to your local fast-food or favorite restaurant) or plan something fun to do together.

## **SERVE:**

Serve in love. Jesus and others have served you in ways that have changed you. Serve others far from God in ways that can change them. Receive their serving of you too! By receiving the help of others, we create openness to sharing, and give them dignity.

## **SHARE YOUR STORY:**

Share your story. Jesus and others have shared their story and God's story with you in a way that changed you. Share your story, memories you have of God's work in your life, and how your life has been changed by Jesus with others to offer them hope.

## **BE IN PRAYER:**

- Identifying who to pray for:
  - Grab a piece of paper and draw some circles on it that correspond with the different things you are involved with in the community (schools, sports, volunteer work, neighborhood, carpool, workplace). Write the names of the people you interact with most regularly in each of the circles. Begin to identify the “people of peace” among them and start to pray for each of them.
  - Learn the names of the neighbors in the eight houses that border your own, and begin praying for their families.
  - If you use social media, look at the people with whom you connect most regularly, and begin to prayerfully consider how you can reach out for deeper relationship with them.
  - Before you enter a meeting, gathering, store or restaurant, pray silently that God would open your eyes to opportunities to connect and pray for people you encounter. This can be as simple as praying as you walk from the car and into the building.
- Things to pray for:
  - Recognize before God that he is the one who will do the work in keeping our hearts open and soft towards those he wants to reach, and will do the work to prepare the soil of people’s hearts to receive any seeds we scatter in our interactions and friendships with others.
  - Commit your relationships to God and pray for trust in his Holy Spirit to be at work.
  - Pray for eyes to see those who are “people of peace” who are open to friendship.
  - Pray for humility coupled with confidence to persist in loving and sharing with those God puts in our lives.
  - As you pray for people, pray for them to be open to God’s work in their lives, for healing and hope for them.

## **LISTEN:**

- Listen to learn and not simply respond.
- Don't jump to immediately share your own experiences, but inwardly take note of common ground that you may see emerging.
- Ask good questions to learn more about their interests and how they spend their time (family, work life, challenges, good things that are happening).
- Pay attention when you are out and about to what people are saying and look for openings for conversation.
- When you encounter someone who is struggling, offer to pray for them right then or if they are uncomfortable with that, when you have parted.

## **EXPERIENCE:**

- Invite people to eat or share an experience with you.
- Invite people to your home for a meal or coffee.
  - o Doesn't need to be fancy. Set people at ease, and reduce your stress by keeping it casual.
- Meet people out for dinner
  - o this can reduce the awkwardness of a potentially "long night" when you aren't sure if you will have a ton to talk about.
- Bring a meal to someone who you know is struggling, and stay a couple minutes and offer to talk or pray.
- Invite someone out to experience something with you (cards, go for a walk, cornhole, soccer nights, book club)
- Invite someone to a Church event (meals, Kids FX nights, concerts, special speakers, etc.)

## **SERVE:**

- There are endless ways to serve others, and their personalities and needs will dictate this piece.
  
- Some ideas:
  - Send a handwritten note of encouragement.
  - Help with yardwork.
  - Join them in doing something you both enjoy that needs to get done.
  - DIY help
  - Share extra food when you bring home more than you need.
  - Give their kids a ride or help with childcare.
  - Take care of their pets when needed.
  - Invite them to serve alongside of you at a volunteer opportunity in the community.
  
- Always be open to receiving help and someone's service to you as well!

## **SHARE:**

- Take time to reflect on big faith questions that either you had when you were initially looking into the faith, or you have heard other people ask.
  - Take time to even jot down some thoughts on how you would respond if you were asked these questions. If you don't know, do some homework in scripture or with other resources or ask a Christian friend to help you think it through in conversation.
  - Remember that you don't have to have perfect answers to every question (God is the one who brings the change in people's hearts - it's not dependent on how good your responses are!)
  - Take the pressure off of yourself to know "it all" in order to share - no one does!
  
- Think through your own story of meeting God and coming to saving faith in Jesus. How would you share your personal story if given the opportunity?
  
- Every time you share, it does not need to be your full salvation story/testimony.
  - Share times when you have struggled and experienced God's faithfulness.
  - Share how God's goodness has been evident in your life in large and small ways.

- Once you have done a good amount of listening, and you have gotten to know someone well, consider how their lives and experiences connect with yours and your story of faith and how you might share with your common ground as a starting point.
- Take care to avoid overwhelming people with too much all at once. As you enter each conversation when you have a chance to share, also be prayerful in asking the Holy Spirit to give you a sense of when to pause or finish.
- Many people are looking for belonging. Be mindful of this when you share, and you can talk about the goodness of belonging that you have found in your Church family. Invite them to join you for Church to experience the community of faith and learn more.

**QUESTION FOR DISCUSSION:**

Which one of the five elements of BLESS is possible right now with someone in your life? Who comes to mind, and what plans might you make to pursue it? Share with your group.