

5

SIMPLE WAYS TO



BLESS

POCKET GUIDE

what if the
CHURCH?

GOD'S MISSION

He explained it to Abraham this way in Genesis 12, "I will bless you...and you will be a blessing...and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." God's strategy for reaching and restoring the world is simply this: to have His people bless the world.

We are blessed to be a blessing.

Are you asking, "Where does my life fit into the great and grand story of God's mission?" What would it look like if God's mission was the starting point of your life? It's a shift in perspective.

This pocket guide will outline a way to live this kind of life by equipping you with the five simple rhythms of BLESS.

OUR VISION

is to see the churches of Kansas City in all their diversity come together to make Jesus famous in our city. We believe these five rhythms will help us share Jesus with our family, friends, neighbors and coworkers in a way that is natural, relational and personal. By listening to God, the voices of the people He has placed in our lives, sharing meals together and serving, we will have the opportunity to share the good news in word and deed, where we live, work and play.

This guide is an adaptation of a guide developed by Beulah Alliance

YOU WERE MADE TO BLESS



Our mission to go and make disciples of all the nations (Matt 28:18-20) finds its roots in the original mission to go and be a blessing to others (Gen 12:1-3). This means that blessing others and seeing people come to know, love and serve Jesus are linked together!

If you practice one of these BLESS rhythms every day, you will not only look more like Jesus, but you will help others find Jesus too!

YOU WERE MADE TO BREATHE

In the beginning, God breathed into humanity's dust-formed body, giving us Life.



“God formed Man out of dirt from the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life. The Man came alive—a living soul!”
Genesis 2:7 (MSG)

Then after His Resurrection, recalling the creation, Jesus breathes New Life into His followers, creating a new humanity designed for a mission.



Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” And with that He breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”
John 20:21-22 (NIV)

The Biblical languages link Spirit and breath. Both the Hebrew word “ruah” and the Greek word “pneuma” are translated as either “breath” or “spirit” (God’s Spirit or our spirit). To breathe is to be alive! And the spirit is the will, the essence of life. The book of Psalms closes with these purpose-filled words “Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.”

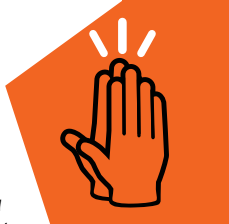


You were made to breathe in and breathe out.

Just as our physical bodies need oxygen continuously, so too our spiritual being is dependent upon God. Air must move two ways—in and out—for us to live. The question is: “Are we breathing in and breathing out?”

For each of these five BLESS practices, there is an in and out rhythm. As you intentionally breathe in and breathe out BLESS, it will become an almost unconscious rhythm, like breathing.

BEGIN WITH PRAYER



"God, may your kingdom come and will be done. Where are You already at work where I live, work, and play? How can I join You? How can I BLESS someone today?"

PRAYING FOR PEOPLE:



Who do you live, work, and play with? Among those people, who has not yet decided to follow Jesus?

Pray that God would create spiritual curiosity in them, and then spend time with them.

PRAYING FOR PLACES:



Where does pain exist here?
Pray for healing.



Who makes the decisions here?
Pray for integrity.



Who throws the parties here?
Pray for community.



Where are the pennies spent here?
Pray for provision.



Go to **pray4everyneighbor.com** and sign up to become a praying neighbor.

Breathe In Prayer: Practice His Presence



Prayer is a daily, ongoing, intimate conversation with our loving Father, who is present with us every minute of every day. Jesus said, "My Father and I are always at work." Begin by praying, "Father where are you already at work where I live, work, and play...and how can I join you?"

Breathe Out Prayer: Pray With and For Others



We also must learn to pray with and for others. Begin to pray for your neighbors by name. By breathing in and breathing out in prayer we will learn to "pray without ceasing."


...pray without ceasing.

1 Thessalonians 5:17 NASB


LISTEN

“God, how do you want me to bless the world today? Help me to listen to and discover the needs of others and where you’re at work.”



 **Before you can help others find Jesus, you need to listen to them first—their hopes, pains, challenges and dreams.**

In your interactions with others today, take the posture of a learner. Lay down your assumptions, and practice being present.

 Pay attention to the local news and ask God how you can meet those needs.

Breathe In Relationship:



Listen to God’s Word and Spirit, People and Places.

We patiently and actively listen first to God’s Word and God’s Spirit. Secondly, we actively seek out the stories of our neighbors (people) and our neighborhood (place).

Breathe Out Relationship:



Engage God’s Word & Spirit, People and Places

Out of a posture of listening, we move quickly toward responsive obedience to the Word and Spirit. Out of a posture of listening, we move actively toward relationships with our neighbors and neighborhood.

You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free... So I say, walk by the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. Galatians 5:13a, 16 NIV


EAT

Eating is one of the fastest ways to move a relationship from acquaintance to friendship.



 **Who can you eat with (or have a coffee with) that is far from God?** A co-worker over lunch?

A neighbor during the day? A friend or family member over the weekend?

 Is there a place that you regularly visit (coffee shop, gym, etc.)?
Ask God to grant you opportunities to eat with people.

Breathe In Meals:



Eat with your family.

Meals are a daily reminder of our common need for God and his provision. We regularly eat meals with other followers of Jesus for the express purpose of sharing not only food, but community and truth.

Breathe Out Meals:



Eat with your neighbor.

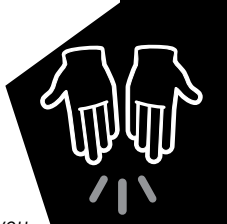
We regularly invite our neighbors, those whom God has placed us in proximity with in our neighborhood, workplace, and community—into community and the experience of grace.

They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Acts 2:42 NIV



SERVE

Before jumping into serving, have you taken the time to pray for, listen to and eat with these people? Doing these things first helps you discover the way that you really need to serve them.



Who can you serve this week?

Who do you know that has a practical need? Ask them how you can help them.

Breathe In Blessing:

Serve your family.



God's plan is to bless all nations—all peoples—through Jesus and his people. We intentionally seek out God's direction each week for a tangible way to bless someone in my church family.

Breathe Out Blessing:

Serve your neighbor.



We live out God's mission to bless the world by seeking out God's direction each week on a tangible way to bless someone who may not know how much they matter to God—in my neighborhood, workplace, community and world.

...I will bless you...and you will be a blessing... all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.

Genesis 12:2, 3 NIV

STORY

You can't spell BLESS without the second S. In other words, sharing the story of Jesus with others is necessary to participate in Jesus' mission (Matt 28:18-20).



Tips on how to share the story of Jesus with others:



Start by **sharing how Jesus has blessed you** and made a difference in your life.



Share your story in such a way that demonstrates that **Jesus is also at work in their life.**



Don't feel like you have to tell your life story at once. Think **"bite-size"** stories.

Breathe In Stories of Meaning:

Listen to the Story of Others.



We continue to patiently and actively listen to the stories of our neighbors with a focus on their search for meaning and help them find their way into Jesus' story.

Breathe Out Stories of Meaning:

Share God's Story and My Story.



We look for ways to meaningfully share Jesus' Story that we are learning through the Scriptures. In addition, we share our unique story of spiritual exploration and discovery in natural and conversational ways.

Jesus said, "... Tell them your story—what the Master did, how he had mercy on you." Mark 5:19 MSG

Sing your songs...to God, tell his stories to everyone you meet. Psalms 9:11 MSG

YOUR NEXT STEP



Daily:

Every day, intentionally look for ways to BLESS others.



Weekly:

With people you connect with on a regular basis, commit to asking one another this question, "Who did you BLESS this week?" Accountability will keep you from drifting away.



A BLESS Group is a 6-week small group that meets in your neighborhood. Invite other Praying Neighbors to form a BLESS Group with you. Use pray4everyhome.com to find Praying Neighbors near you.



A BLESS Learning Community is a group of leaders who are journeying together towards transformational change in their lives, neighborhoods and workplaces. It's a six-month journey of friendship, coaching and deeper learning around each of the BLESS rhythms. Register for the next BLESS Learning Community at: whatifthechurch.org/bleslc

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Use this discussion guide to introduce BLESS into your current small group or others you are connecting with.



Read pages 2-3, and discuss these questions:

Have you ever considered what would've happened if Abraham didn't respond to God's command to go and be a blessing to others? In the same way, what will happen if you and I don't respond to Jesus' command to go and make disciples?

Since God's commandment to Abraham is the foundation of Jesus' commandment to us, is it possible that blessing others is a critical part of making disciples?



Read "Begin with Prayer" on page 6, and discuss these questions:

Share how prayer has made a difference in your life.

Can you identify any barriers that may keep you from "beginning with prayer" on a daily basis?



Read "Listen" on page 8 and discuss these questions:

Have you ever assumed you knew what someone needed, only to find out later that you were wrong? Share your story.

What difference does it make to listen to other's needs before you begin serving?

What are some things that you could be listening for as you interact with people far from God?



Read "Eat" on page 9 and discuss these questions:

What difference does eating or having coffee with someone actually make? What are ways that you can incorporate this into your everyday life?

What if your small group had regular opportunities where instead of a study, you invited those who are far from God and ate together? Partied together? Imagine the love of God that they would feel and the conversations that would arise.

Plan an upcoming gathering to do just that.



Read "Serve" on page 10 and discuss these questions:

When's the last time that someone truly served you or you served someone else? How did that affect you? What did it do to your relationship?

What keeps you from serving people?

How do you think God may be calling you to serve someone? Is there something that you can help them with? Have you asked them? What is one step that you can take toward obeying God and serving that person?



Read "Story" on page 11 and discuss these questions:

What is the greatest barrier that prevents you from sharing your story of how you met God with others?

Who first shared the Gospel story with you? What stands out to you about that presentation?

How is God challenging you to share your story and the gospel story with others?



Decide how you will integrate this into your community as outlined on page 12.

BLESS



BEGIN WITH PRAYER

I will pray for the people in my life and the places that I'm in.



LISTEN

I will listen to and discover the needs of others and the places where God is at work.



EAT

I will share meals and spend time with people in my life.



SERVE

I will respond to the needs of others and help them in tangible and impacting ways.



STORY

I will share the story of Jesus and what He is doing in my life with others.

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whatifthechurch.org