



B L E S S

BLESS Guide for Small Groups and Discipleship Groups

OUR MISSION
EACH OF US, TOGETHER...
SATURATING GREATER AUSTIN WITH THE LOVE OF JESUS.



Notes:

The Significance of BLESS – Chuck’s Story

A few years ago, I started a discipleship group with three guys in my small group. My goal for the group was that they would become grounded and confident in the key life patterns and four identities of a Fully Formed Follower of Christ: Worshiper, Witness, Servant, and Disciple-maker. They were all committed to Christ and eager to grow as disciples.

My experience has showed me that witnessing is the most challenging aspect of discipleship, so we have to put an inordinate focus on personal evangelism over a long period of time in order to become consistent in the life patterns of a Witness as Jesus defines it. So, I decided to weave BLESS *throughout* our whole time together to better inspire and equip the guys in personal evangelism (rather than simply treat Witness as one module out of four). I was clear before we started that we would take a very practical approach to what it means to be a Witness. I also resolved to take some amount of time in *each* weekly meeting to talk about how we’re BLESSing others.

We started the group with a focus on daily Bible reading and on developing our prayer lives. I introduced “Begin with Prayer” and the “FRANC List” (Friends, Relatives, Acquaintances, or Coworkers who are far from God) within the first few weeks of meeting together and asked them to make this part of their daily prayer routines. Then, I gave them an opportunity each week to share how God was speaking to them through His Word *and* how they saw God working through their prayers for people on their FRANC Lists. Within a couple of months, the guys were sharing more about what God was doing through FRANC List prayer than anything else!

By the time we actually started working on the witness component of following Christ, the guys were already praying for and connecting with non-believing friends. This made equipping them on the mechanics of personal evangelism – conversational skills, testimonies, and Gospel sharing – much easier and more impactful. We honed communication skills like asking good questions and listening to the answers. We worked on articulating clearly how we came to faith in Jesus and we all memorized a clear, concise Gospel Illustration. We spent almost two years practicing BLESS together and holding each other accountable for sharing our faith with people on our FRANC Lists. We encouraged and supported each other in our spiritual growth process each week. By the time we finished the group all three guys were actually BLESSing people by being active witnesses where they live, work, and play. As a result of the group, each of us has personally led someone to faith in Christ and we all are actively discipling other men! If your disciples aren’t yet BLESSing others, you’re not done discipling them! –Chuck Barber

*“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will make you fishers of men.”
Matthew 4:19*

INTRODUCTION:

Our Mission

God put us where we are for a specific reason – to play a significant part in his plan to see all people enter into a living, eternal relationship with himself.

From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. (Acts 17:26-27)

Our mission is to saturate greater Austin with the love of Jesus. It will take each of us, working together, to give every man, woman, and child repeated opportunities to know, trust, and follow Jesus Christ.

We will make significant progress in God's mission if each of us embraces a personal and intentional strategy for witnessing based on the life and example of Jesus Christ. What Jesus did, and equipped his disciples to do, can be summarized by the acronym **BLESS**. This personal witnessing strategy is important for two reasons. First, it communicates what God has intended for man from the beginning. He blesses us so that we can **BLESS** others. God is missions-minded and doesn't want us to keep to ourselves what He has blessed us with. He wants us to pass His blessings on to others. Second, **BLESS** stands for five life patterns that we see active throughout Jesus' life and ministry. Jesus and his early disciples constantly modelled **BLESS** in spreading the Gospel and ministering to people.

BLESS describes every disciple's normal gospel influence activities:

- B**egin with Prayer
- L**isten with Care
- E**at Together
- S**erve with Love
- S**hare Your Story and God's Story

BLESS Should Permeate Group Life

Praying for, connecting with, and sharing the Good News of Jesus with people far from God should be normal life for followers of Jesus. We desire to see each small group and discipleship group member embrace BLESS as their personal evangelism strategy. This starts with our disciple makers and small group leaders setting the example themselves and then envisioning and equipping others in the practices of Jesus.

This BLESS Guide is not just another curriculum that you take your group through. We want to go beyond knowing more about evangelism to practicing it as a lifestyle. If we are to become a community that looks like Jesus, we must do what Jesus did. So, we must solidify evangelistic life patterns in our lives over an extended period of time. The BLESS Guide provides simple approaches to this end.

Momentum is better built through more frequent, intentional focus than through short-term intensive training. Therefore, we are asking Small Group Leaders and Disciple Makers to commit to focus on BLESS envisioning, equipping, and accountability at least once per month in your small group or discipleship group for as long as your group is together! Many groups weave some aspect of BLESS into each meeting. This could be as simple as giving people *short* opportunities during each meeting to share how God has worked through their prayers for people on their FRANC Lists. You could also pose the question, “How did you BLESS someone this past week?” How could God use us and our groups if we had this kind of focus?

BLESS Guide Desired Outcomes

First and foremost, leaders must lead by example. When you, as the leader, embrace the direction of the BLESS Guide and practice the five life patterns yourself, you will be able to effectively equip others as BLESSers. You and those you lead will:

- Pray regularly for people far from God (FRANC List).
- Learn and practice new approaches of getting in and staying in spiritual conversations.
- Learn to share short examples/stories of how God is impacting your life and causing you to grow spiritually.
- Learn to share your salvation story effectively by using the Three-Word Testimony Worksheet. Share your story with someone on your FRANC List.
- Memorize, practice and learn to share the Three Circles Gospel Illustration clearly. Share it with someone on your FRANC List.
- See people come to faith in Christ and disciple *them* to witness to and disciple others.

Using the BLESS Guide in Groups

This BLESS Guide can be used in any group setting, whether it be a small group, discipleship group, or a men’s or women’s group. The month-by-month breakdown might vary, but the tools will still apply.

In a small group, working through the BLESS Guide might stretch over a year or more. You should lead your group into BLESS envisioning and equipping at least monthly and continue the focus over a long period of time. Start with “Begin with Prayer” and the FRANC List and continue this focus over the life of the group. Add envisioning and equipping for the other elements of BLESS and continue to reinforce them continually in your group.

In a discipleship group, introduce the BLESS Plan, “Begin with Prayer” and the FRANC list within the first few weeks of meeting together. Prayer for people far from God is a life pattern of a Worshiper. When you are ready to focus on the second FFF Identity, Witness, you will unpack the rest of the BLESS strategy tools. Praying for people on our FRANC Lists “gets us in the game with God” and prepares us to BLESS others in the fullest sense. We see our need for equipping when we pray and join God in His work! We need to put a continual focus on personal witnessing, making it integral to everything we do.

Overview: Equipping Your Small Group in the BLESS Practices

Month 1:

- Introduce our vision for a Culture of “BLESSing” people in the name of Jesus.
- Week One: Read and discuss “BLESSers vs. Converters” from the introduction.
- Week Two: Cover “Begin with Prayer” with your group. Have everyone write out a FRANc List (page 11) and begin praying regularly for people far from God.

Month 2:

- Continue praying regularly for people far from God on your FRANc lists.
- Have everyone share how they see God working through their prayers.
- Explain the Outreach Temperature Scale and its value for gauging progress and the BLESS Plan (page 11) – integrating prayer with intentional action items.

Month 3:

- Continue praying regularly for people far from God on your FRANc lists and sharing what God does.
- Introduce the importance of being able to share our own faith story effectively.
- Cover the instructions for filling out the Three Word Testimony Worksheet.
- Assignment: Complete the worksheet at home and share it with a spouse, family member, roommate, or friend.

Month 4:

- Continue praying regularly for people far from God on your FRANc lists and sharing what God does.
- Have everyone share exactly what they wrote on their Three Word worksheets. (If someone is uncomfortable with sharing their story in the larger group, don't force them to do it. Meet with them individually and have them share it.)
- Assignment: Share your testimony with someone on your FRANc List.

Month 5:

- Continue praying regularly for people far from God on your FRANc lists and sharing what God does.
- Introduce the “Three Circles Gospel Illustration” and play the video for the group.
- Have people pair up and share it with each other as best they can.
- Assignment: Watch the video at home several times and memorize it and practice by sharing it with a spouse, family member, roommate, or friend.

Month 6:

- Continue praying regularly for people far from God on their FRANc lists and sharing what God does.
- Ask people to share the Three Circles with the whole group if they are comfortable. (This should be mandatory in a discipleship group.)
- Assignment:
 - Share the Three Circles with someone on your FRANc List.
 - Read Chapter 1 of GOD|SPACE. Do the personal assessment on page 22.

Month 7:

- Continue praying for people on your FRANCS lists and share what God does.
- Discuss Chapter 1 of GOD|SPACE:
- Assignment: Read Chapter 2 of GOD|SPACE.

Month 8:

- Continue praying for people on your FRANCS lists and share what God does.
- Discuss Chapter 2 of GOD|SPACE:
- Assignment:
 - Try the Faith Experiment from Chapter 2.
 - Read Chapter 3 of GOD|SPACE.

Month 9:

- Continue praying for people on your FRANCS lists and share what God does.
- Talk about your Faith Experiment from Chapter 2.
- Discuss Chapter 3 of GOD|SPACE:
- Assignment:
 - Try a Faith Experiment from Chapter 3.
 - Read Chapter 4 of GOD|SPACE.

Month 10:

- Continue praying for people on your FRANCS lists and share what God does.
- Talk about your Faith Experiment from Chapter 3.
- Discuss Chapter 4 of GOD|SPACE:
- Assignment:
 - Try a Faith Experiment from Chapter 4
 - Read Chapter 5 of GOD|SPACE. Take the assessment on page 57.

Month 11:

- Continue praying for people on your FRANCS lists and share what God does.
- Talk about your Faith Experiment from Chapter 4.
- Discuss Chapter 5 of GOD|SPACE:
- Assignment:
 - Try the Faith Experiment from Chapter 5.
 - Read Chapter 6 of GOD|SPACE.

Month 12:

- Continue praying for people on your FRANCS lists and share what God does.
- Talk about your Faith Experiment from Chapter 5.
- Discuss Chapter 6 of GOD|SPACE:
- Assignment: Try the Faith Experiment from Chapter 6.

BLESSers vs. Converters

As an introduction to BLESS, read and discuss this important story!

A compelling contemporary case study of the BLESS approach is the study of 12 “business as mission” groups in Thailand conducted by Mark Russell found in his book¹. Six of the companies Russell researched over time were primarily focused on developing businesses that succeeded, hired local people, and enhanced the Thai economy. Influencing Thai people toward faith in Christ was seen as a by-product of these businesses. Although welcome, conversion was not the main focus. Russell called these businesses the “BLESSers.” The second set of six businesses had conversion as their top priority. Developing a successful business was considered a by-product, or secondary goal. In a real sense, they used business as a means to get into the country and as a way to build an initial presence and trust with Thais. These latter businesses were much more concerned for the “spiritual destiny” of the Thai people than for their economic improvement. Russell called these six businesses the “converters.” Not surprisingly, the “BLESSers,” the first six businesses, did much more social good, employed more Thai people, and generated more income. That was their goal, and they met it. Perhaps much more surprisingly, the “BLESSers” also converted more people. And here is what is most surprising; the “BLESSers” experienced many more people converting to Christ, *by a ratio of 48 to 1!* A whopping 96 people gave their lives to Christ through the “BLESSers” over a several years period. “Converters” saw only two people make new faith commitments to Jesus Christ over that same period.

Why was there such disparity between the two? Here are some factors: The “BLESSers” blessed so many more people, built more deeply genuine relationships, hired people for longer term, created greater income and capital in the economy, and built deeper trust. Thai people listened when the founders and leaders of “BLESSer” companies at the right time did talk about their faith in Jesus! The Thais were genuinely interested and influenced profoundly by the “BLESSers” natural laid-back manner of sharing their faith.

On the other hand, the “converters” never really became a part of the Thai community, partly because their agenda overshadowed their relationships. That is often how the process of spiritually influencing others works, not just in Thai culture, but in American culture too. People do not care for our agendas unless they know we “get them” and that we care and are committed to their well-being. People want to know we are for real. They want authentic relationships. So, the “BLESS” approach works. But not only does it work. It is also rooted in Scripture, starting with Abraham, whose story is found very early in the first book of the Bible.

Discussion

- What challenged you in this story?
- What needs to shift in your perspective and activities to better BLESS people?

¹ Russell, Mark. *The Missional Entrepreneur: Principles and Practices for Business as Mission* (New Hope Publishers, Birmingham, AL), 2010.

Equipping Details for: Begin with Prayer

The Primacy of Prayer – The Story of Missionary James Fraser

(Read this story to the group prior to giving the assignments.)

During the winter in China, missionary James Fraser was effectively unable to travel and minister to people who lived up in the mountains due to the snow. He worked out that it would take him three to five days to conduct church services in the highland villages of Lisuland – one or two days of travel up into the mountains, a day of gathering together, and then one or two days of travel back down again. He therefore decided to find out: *What would happen if I decided to spend the time that I would have spent gathering with these Lisu people praying for them instead?*

For James Fraser, this was more than just a throwaway tweet on social media. It wasn't an oh-so-radical piece of church-leader virtue-signaling. Nobody knew, or much even cared, how a missionary chose to spend his time in the foothills of the Himalayas. It was between James Fraser and God alone, but he gave himself to his experiment completely. He prayed for three to five days for each of the highland villages instead of visiting them. Then, once the spring sun had melted the snow, he climbed the mountains to discover what had happened. No scientist can ever have been so eager to examine the petri dishes in his laboratory.

James Fraser discovered that his converts in the highland villages had prospered during the winter months in which he had found himself unable to gather them together. In fact, as he met with them to hear about their winter Bible reading and their isolated prayer times, he came to the remarkable conclusion that his converts in the highlands of Lisuland had grown *far more* during the winter than his converts in the lowlands – the converts that he had been busy visiting and gathering all winter long. He recorded his conclusion: *“If two things stand out clearly in my mind, they are firstly how ‘foolish’ and ‘weak’ our new converts are, and secondly that God has really chosen them.”* Thereafter, he was determined never to fret when he could not gather people, but always to seize it as a God-given invitation to pray for people instead. *“If I were to think after the manner of men, I should be anxious about my Lisu converts – afraid for their falling back into demon worship. But God is enabling me to cast all my care upon Him. I am not anxious, not nervous. If I hugged my care to myself instead of casting it upon Him, I should never have persevered in the work so long – perhaps never even have started it. But if it has been begun in Him, it must be continued in Him.”*

James Fraser never knew the full results of his prayer experiment. Many missiologists trace back the enormous revival that has swept through China in the past fifty years to the revival that began amongst the highlanders of Lisuland during the winters when he stayed at home and prayed.

Prayer is key to every aspect of evangelism. *(Read verses together)*

- Matthew 9:37-10:5 – Pray we will see the harvest and go into the harvest.
- Romans 10:1 – Pray for those far from God.
- Colossians 4:2-6 – Pray for each other’s relationships with people far from God and for the clarity of our message to them.

Discussion Question:

What stands out to you most about prayer in these verses?

Introduce The BLESS Plan *(next page)*

1. Discuss the Outreach Temperature Scale. *This is not a “pass/fail” measurement! It’s designed to show us where we can improve in our Passion, Practice and Influence in BLESSing people over time!*
2. What is your current Outreach Temperature?

Reflect on the following questions to help develop your FRANC List:

Ask God:

1. Where are you already at work?
2. Where do you want me to join you in the work you are doing in my family, friends, and others you are seeking to draw toward yourself?
3. How do you want me to BLESS the people in the places you have sent me?

FRANC Prayer List:

Pray for and BLESS people – where you live, work, and play.

1. **F**riends
2. **R**elatives (family members can often be the hardest)
3. **A**cquaintances
4. **N**eighbors (geography and interests)
5. **C**o-workers (or community contacts, people at church who are far from God)

FRANC List Tip

Experience shows us if we have a FRANC List and pray regularly, God will do some fantastic things as a result. When we give time during our groups for people to share what they see God doing, it tends to begin to dominate the discussion. People are always excited to see God work in personal witnessing and this builds momentum.

Assignments for the First Two Months:

1. Finish your initial FRANC List. Begin praying regularly for people on your list.
2. Decide: What does “regular” mean for you? When and how often will you pray for the people on your FRANC List? Is this in your calendar?
3. Come to group ready to share how God is working *as a result of you praying* for people on your FRANC Lists. We want this to become part of the culture of our group.

EACH OF US, TOGETHER... SATURATING GREATER AUSTIN WITH THE LOVE OF JESUS.



What is BLESS? **BLESS** is an acronym for five life patterns that Jesus and his early disciples constantly modelled. **BLESS** defines a good neighbor and friend. We see **BLESS** as every disciple's approach to influencing people far from God with the love of Jesus Christ.

Every Disciple's Normal On-Going Gospel Influence Activities

Begin with Prayer

- Praying regularly for the same heart and love for people that Jesus has.
- Praying regularly for people far from God in your spheres of influence (FRANC). (Matthew 9:36-38; Acts 26:29; Romans 10:1; Colossians 4:2-4)

Listen with Care

- Entering spiritual conversations by asking questions, listening and formulating Jesus honoring responses. (John 4:10-26; Acts 8:26-40; Colossians 4:5-6)

Eat Together

- Sharing meals with people who don't yet know Christ personally (Matthew 9:9-13; Luke 11:37; Luke 19:1-10)

Serve with Love

- Serving people and inviting them to help you in different ways. (Mark 10:45; John 4:7; Romans 15:1-3)

Share Your Story and God's Story

- Sharing your salvation story in relevant ways. Speaking openly about your relationship with Christ and sharing how He is influencing your life. (Mark 5:19-20; John 4:28, 39-41; John 9:25; Acts 26:1-23)
- Sharing a simple Gospel illustration clearly and inviting people to trust and follow Jesus Christ. (Acts 2:36-41; Romans 10:8-11; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11)

BLESS Plan

Rate My Outreach Temperature (1-10): _____



1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Apathy

- *Unaware*
- *Disobedient*
- *Hostility*

Growing Passion

- *Love for God & People*
- *Desire & Prayer*
- *Building Relationships*

Growing Practice

- *Learning Methods*
- *Trying & Improving*
- *Spiritual Dialog*

Growing Influence

- *God Uses Me*
- *People Believe in Christ*
- *High Influence*

FRANC - People far from God in my spheres of influence I pray for regularly:

Friends _____

Relatives _____

Acquaintances _____

Neighbors _____

Co-workers _____

BLESS	How I plan to BLESS others and raise my outreach temperature	Deadline
<p>Begin to Pray</p> <p>Listen</p> <p>Eat</p> <p>Serve</p> <p>Share</p>		

Equipping Details for: Share Your Story

Joy in BLESSing Others

Every time we've heard believers share stories of talking with people far from God about Jesus Christ, they were very excited about the experience! Why is that? Because God is the source of real joy. A joyful response follows when we're right in the middle of His mission with Him! Acts 1:8 clarifies that living out our identity as a witness is sure evidence of God's Spirit working in us in power. "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses..." What is a witness? Someone who tells what they have experienced—sharing their story.

Learning to Share Your Story – The Three-Word Testimony

The Three-Word Testimony format is based on Paul's testimony before King Agrippa in Acts 26:1-23. Paul spoke for 3-4 minutes and he described his life before trusting Christ, how he came to faith in Christ, and how his life changed after submitting to Christ. We can effectively mimic this approach by completing the Three-Word Testimony worksheet and practicing telling our stories with each other.

Why do we do this simple exercise?

- Identifying three words helps the mind to focus. Searching for one word can be a "hook" to what's most important deep inside of us.
- Coming up with two to three sentences per word helps us boil down the most significant points that support each of the three words.
- Writing down results helps to filter and clarify further the most important points of our stories.
- Reading it out loud gives us accountability to complete the assignment and reveals if our stories are clear or not. This gives us needed feedback for refining our stories.

Three-Word Testimony Worksheet

- Read through pages one and two together. Make sure the instructions are clear.
- Take several minutes on your own to identify your three words and write them in the boxes provided on the worksheet.
- Now go back and take several minutes on your own to draft a few sentences that describe each word. This is now a draft of your own story!

Assignments for the Next Two Months

1. Spend some time refining your Three-Word Testimony on your own.
2. Practice your testimony with your spouse, accountability partner, and a friend. Get feedback and refine your testimony again.
3. Share your testimony with someone on your FRANC List.
4. Share what you see God do at the next group meeting.

Your Three-Word Testimony

What's the value of a personal testimony?

- It's YOUR story of how God worked in YOUR life.
- Your story may be delivered in many venues.
- Your story tells how YOU came to faith in Christ and gives a concrete example of how God can work in THEIR lives, too.

What makes a testimony effective?

- Your testimony is the story about how you came to know Jesus Christ personally and received His salvation by faith.
- It describes what your life was like before you came to faith in Christ.
- It explains how you initially trusted Christ.
- It tells of the difference Jesus has made since you've trusted Him.

Building a Three-Word Testimony

This exercise helps you distill your testimony first into **three words**, then into **two to four simple sentences** per word. Use the attached worksheet to create your three-word testimony. Your testimony should last no more than 3-4 minutes.

The Process

- Use the word bank in each section to help you think of the one word that most accurately describes your condition at each of the described stages in your life. You aren't limited to this list.
- Put those words in the small blue boxes on the worksheet.
- Create two to four simple explanatory sentences relating to each word. Write your sentences in the same box as each word.
- Share your testimony in no more than 3-4 minutes using these sentences. Keep your sentences short and concise. Alter them to your audience as needed.
- Weave the Gospel into your testimony. The Gospel is simply the Good News that Jesus Christ suffered and died for our sins, rose from the dead so that we could have life with God, and eternal life is given as a free gift to those who put their faith in Jesus Christ.

Your Three Words

First Word – What were you like before you placed your faith in Christ? Focus on your spiritual or personal condition, not your behavior. Your testimony is not a list of bad vs. good behaviors. If you grew up in a Christian home and trusted Christ as a young person, say so. Then describe areas in which you needed to grow as a Christian.

Examples of words people have used:

Angry	Independent	Manipulative	Miserable
Hopeless	Empty	Addicted	Aimless
Restless	Immature	Insecure	Scared

Second Word – How did you come to place your faith in Christ? If you grew up in a Christian home and trusted Christ as a young person, use this word to lead into a time when you matured and were able to realize the full impact of the decision you made when you were young. It's also important to include a very short and clear statement of the Gospel.

Examples of words people have used:

Creation	Studied	Concert	Church
Bible	Friend	Trouble	Observation
Evangelist	Spouse	Loved	Media/Movie

Third Word – What has trusting Christ helped you become or overcome? Describe your life, feelings, situation, or thoughts now that you have placed your faith in Christ.

Examples of words people have used:

Approachable	Peaceful	Generous	Loving
Confident	Caring	Leader	Purpose
Brave	Servant	Mentor	Certain

(An example testimony is provided, at the end of the worksheet.)

Three-Word Testimony Worksheet

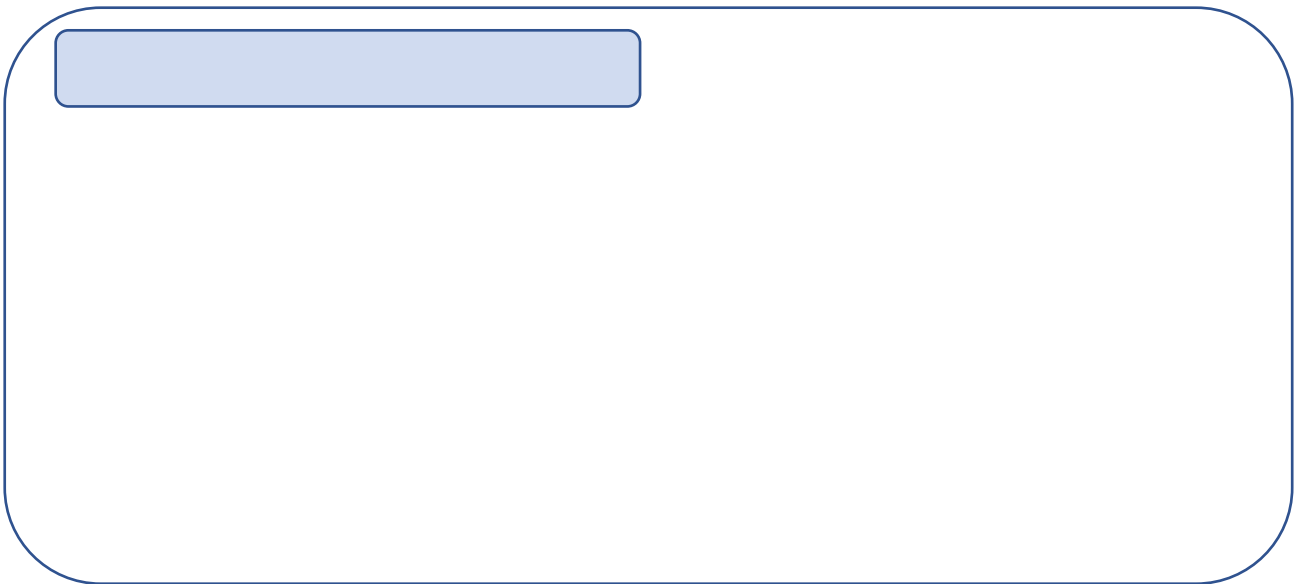
What were you like before You Placed Your Faith in Christ?

Insert your first word in the blue box, then add the first two to four sentences of your testimony.

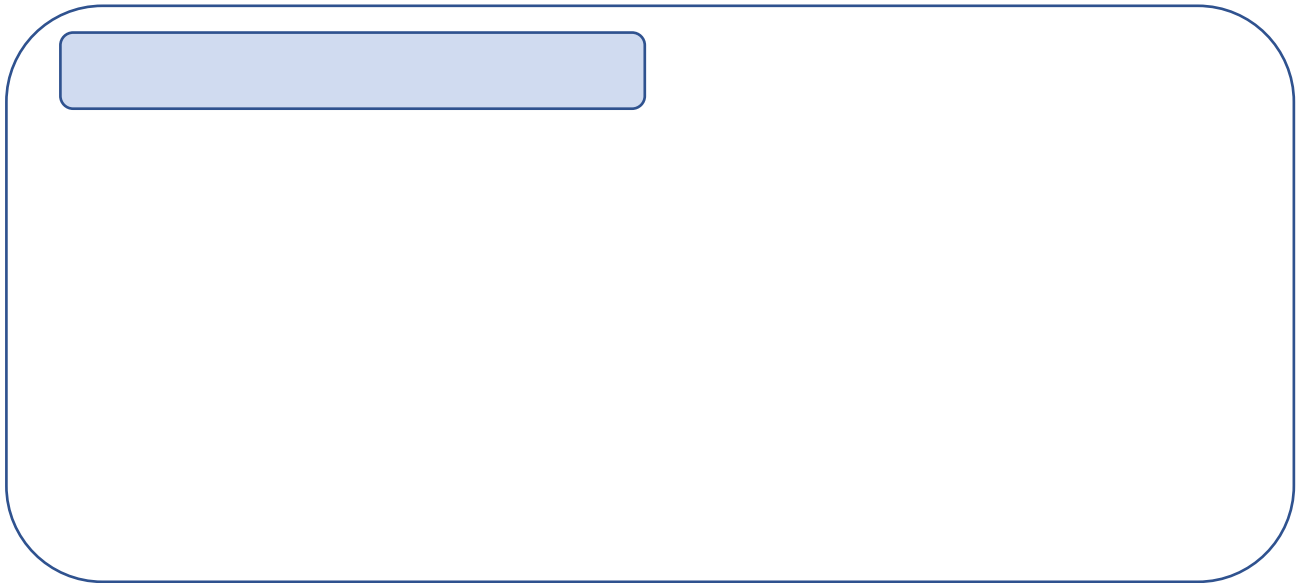


How Did You Come to Place Your Faith in Christ?

Insert your next word and sentences.



What Has Trusting Christ Helped You Become or Overcome?
Insert your last word and sentences.



Example Three-Word Testimony

First Word – Ambiguous

Although I believed in the existence of a God and even knew the story of Jesus, I didn't fully understand how it all fit together. I was *ambiguous* about the nature and character of Jesus as God and how He had provided a way for me to be reconciled to the very Creator of the universe!

Second Word – Awakened

Through a series of conversations with new Christian friends in college, as well as exposure to some Christian music with meaningful lyrics, I came to understand Jesus as savior. I was *awakened* to the reality that Christ died for my sins and rose from the dead.

Third Word – Assured

Now I am *assured* that through my trusting in Jesus Christ for salvation, I have an unbroken relationship with the very God who created the universe and everything in it. This relationship is for eternity, and my life with Him will not end when my time on earth does.

Equipping Details for: Share God's Story

What is BLESS? – *(Review)*

BLESS is an acronym for five missional practices that Jesus and his early disciples constantly modelled. BLESS defines a good neighbor and friend and is every disciple's approach to impacting people far from God with the love of Jesus Christ.

Sharing God's Story – the Good News of Jesus Christ

Why memorize a Gospel presentation and practice it?

- Emphasizes and summarizes the most important points of the Good News of Jesus Christ.
- We'll always be ready. Increases confidence. Gives us freedom in sharing.
- When we are more comfortable, that comfort will project to others. Practice, practice, practice.
- Gives us a way to ask for a decision.

Three Circles Gospel – Great Example

Watch the video together: <https://vimeo.com/326917759/0ed136a05d>

Three Circles Gospel Presentation – Practice, Practice, Practice!

Pair up and practice sharing the Three Circles Gospel using the space below.

Assignments for the Next Two Months

1. Continue practicing the Three Circles gospel presentation until it's memorized.
2. Practice by sharing it with your spouse, a family member, or a friend.
3. Share it with your small group
4. Share it with someone on your FRANC List.

Equipping for Listening with Care Using GOD|SPACE

GOD|SPACE, by Doug Pollock is particularly relevant to the practice of Listening with Care. Below is a plan for the first six chapters, which are the most crucial. If your group covers one chapter a month, this will occupy the second half of the year

Before Your First Discussion:

- Assignment:
 - Read Chapter 1 of GOD|SPACE.
 - Make note of anything you found particularly insightful or challenging.
 - Do the personal assessment on page 22.

First Meeting:

- Discuss Chapter 1 of GOD|SPACE:
 - As you read the story on pages 10-11, did you identify more with Paul and Lisa, or Karen and the rest of the family? Have you ever had an experience that made you decide it would be better to stay away from spiritual conversations?
 - Doug Pollock asserts that people far from God need a safe place to ask their questions, share their doubts, voice their concerns, and even vent their anger toward God and the church; but the church is NOT that place. What do you think?
 - How did you grade yourself on the assessment on page 22?
- Assignment:
 - Read Chapter 2 of GOD|SPACE.
 - Make note of anything you found particularly insightful or challenging.

Second Meeting:

- Discuss Chapter 2 of GOD|SPACE:
 - Which of the 10 Spiritual Conversation-killers have you experienced?
 - How does the example of military de-escalation by Lieutenant Colonel Hughes (take a knee, point your weapon at the ground, look up and smile) help as you move into spiritual conversations?
- Assignment:
 - Try the Faith Experiment on page 33. “Ask not-yet-Christians in your life what they experience when conversations turn to spiritual matters.”
 - Read Chapter 3 of GOD|SPACE.
 - Make note of anything you found particularly insightful or challenging.

Third Meeting:

- Talk about your Faith Experiment: what do not-yet-Christians in your life experience when conversations turn to spiritual matters?
- Discuss Chapter 3 of GOD|SPACE:
 - Discuss the connection between seeing, noticing, and caring.
 - Why does the author say, “Stop praying and start noticing”? Is anything wrong with praying?
 - Page 42 suggests three Faith Experiments. Which one will you try?
- Assignment:
 - Make notes about your Faith Experiment so you will be ready to share with the group next time.
 - Read Chapter 4 of GOD|SPACE.
 - Make note of anything you found particularly insightful or challenging.

Forth Meeting:

- Talk about your Faith Experiment. What did you do, and what happened?
- Discuss Chapter 4 of GOD|SPACE:
 - What is the trouble with this attitude: “Preach the gospel at all times; when necessary use words”?
 - Does serving people necessarily lead to spiritual conversations? Should it? Discuss the connection.
 - Brainstorm ideas for “servant evangelism” you might try this month. Leader, HCBC’s Community Impact Ministry has opportunities to get involved in serving our community and creating God|Space for spiritual conversations.
- Assignment:
 - Check out the websites on page 52, or the Community Impact opportunities presented by your leader. Choose one way to serve people and create God|Space for spiritual conversations.
 - Read Chapter 5 of GOD|SPACE. Make note of anything you found particularly insightful or challenging.
 - Take the assessment on page 57. (Consider asking someone who knows you well for their perspective on this.)

Fifth Meeting:

- Talk about your Faith Experiment. What did you do to serve someone for Jesus? Did it lead to and spiritual conversations?
- Discuss Chapter 5 of GOD|SPACE:
 - Which the obstacles to Listening with Care are you subject to?
 - What did you discover about yourself from the assessment on page 57?
 - Of the nine principles of listening, what did you find helpful?
 - Review the list of suggested questions on page 63. Which would you like to ask someone? Who will you ask?
- Assignment:
 - Try the Faith Experiment at the top of page 63.
 - Read Chapter 6 of GOD|SPACE.
 - Make note of anything you found particularly insightful or challenging.

Sixth Meeting:

- Talk about your Faith Experiment. Who did you listen to? What questions did you ask? What did you learn?
- Discuss Chapter 6 of GOD|SPACE:
 - What is more attractive in conversation: someone who asks a lot of questions, or someone who has lots of answers? Why?
 - Doug Pollock says, “[When we wonder] we regularly experience emotions like awe, admiration, fascination, surprise, astonishment, amazement, and curiosity...[But] It’s easy to end up “wonderless” in a world that seems to prefer answers over questions and certainty over mystery.” Discuss the role of wonder, mystery, imagination, and curiosity in spiritual conversations.
 - What are the hazards of asking wondering questions as an evangelistic gimmick? (see page 73—Wondering Is NOT)
 - Review the Faith Experiments described on page 74. Which will you try?
- Assignment:
 - Try the Faith Experiment you chose. Share your experience with the group next month.

BLESS Equipping Resources

Begin with Prayer

- BLESS Plan with FRANC List and BLESS Actions (BLESS Guide page 11)
- B.L.E.S.S. by Dave and Jon Ferguson (Chapter 3)
- BlessEveryHome – Online neighborhood prayer and BLESS strategy. Sign up with HCBC’s unique URL: <https://blesseveryhome.com/light/?cust=8218>
- Daily Devotional – 7 Minutes with God: https://www.usna.edu/Navigators/_files/documents/7minwithgod.pdf
- Tyranny of the Urgent Pamphlet: http://crossbridgediscipleshipschool.weebly.com/uploads/7/8/2/3/78234118/tyranny_of_the_urgent.pdf
- The Art of Neighboring by Pathak and Runyon

Listen with Care

- God Space, by Doug Pollock
- You Found Me, by Rick Richardson
- B.L.E.S.S., by Dave and Jon Ferguson (Chapter 4)

Eat Together

- Get together for coffee or a meal.
- Go out together or invite people into your home.
- B.L.E.S.S., by Dave and Jon Ferguson (Chapter 5)

Serve with Love

- The Art of Neighboring, by Pathak and Runyon
- The “One-Anothers” in Scripture: http://storage.cloversites.com/wakarusamissionarychurch/documents/59one_another_scriptures.pdf
- B.L.E.S.S., by Dave and Jon Ferguson (Chapter 6)

Share Your Story and God’s Story

- Tim Hawks on Gospel Saturation: <https://vimeo.com/215734662/b4fe959399>
- Three Word Testimony
- Three Circles Gospel Illustration Training Video: <https://vimeo.com/326917759/0ed136a05d>
- Bridge Illustration Training Video: <https://vimeo.com/120370274>
- B.L.E.S.S., by Dave and Jon Ferguson (Chapter 7)