

BLESSES



BEGIN WITH PRAYER • LISTEN • EAT TOGETHER • SERVE • SHARE STORIES

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Introduction

At Rush Creek, we take Jesus' command to go and make disciples seriously. As Forerunners of the faith, we are committed to helping people find and follow Jesus. However, we also know that sharing your faith can be difficult and intimidating. That is why we are excited about our new BLESS strategy. Our prayer is that this 5-week reading plan will ignite your heart and give you practical steps for pursuing the people in your life who don't know Jesus. Forerunners BLESS to help people find and follow Jesus!



WEEK

1

Begin With Prayer

Day 1: Let God Talk

Read

1 Samuel 3:1-21

Reflect

God wants to communicate with us, but sometimes we do too much talking and not enough listening. Other times we fail to recognize the promptings of God. Listening for God's direction in our lives and following His will allows us to bear fruit for Him. God blesses us through our obedient listening so that we can be a blessing to others.

Reveal

What typically distracts you most from being silent before the Lord? What changes can you make to protect a few minutes of silence daily with the Lord?

Respond

This week, challenge yourself to begin your daily prayer time in silence, specifically asking God to reveal people in your life you can BLESS. Write those names in a journal, on your bathroom mirror, or on a sticky note attached to your computer monitor, and begin praying for them.

Family or Group Activity

Identify one person who your family or group can BLESS through prayer. Create prayer cards to remind you to pray for this person. Let this person know that you are praying for them by delivering thoughtful emails or timely texts. Be creative and BLESS them with prayer!

Day 2: Love Begins with Prayer

Read

Matthew 11:28-30

Reflect

Rest from our worldly and eternal burdens only comes from finding and following Jesus. As believers, we are commanded to show love to others by sharing this truth. We must live our lives curious about the stories of people around us. We must also give our prayerful attention to their burdens in order to gain a love for helping them find and follow Jesus.

Reveal

Who in your life has been the greatest blessing in your spiritual journey? How can you emulate their approach to reach people around you?

Respond

Pray today for specific burdens you may be aware of for the people on your BLESS list. If you are unaware of the burdens, ask God to reveal them to you so that you can BLESS them.

Family or Group Activity

Identify one person who your family or group can BLESS through prayer. Create prayer cards to remind you to pray for this person. Let this person know that you are praying for them by delivering thoughtful emails or timely texts. Be creative and BLESS them with prayer!

Day 3: Crazy Things Begin with Prayer

Read

Genesis 12:1-9

Reflect

Sometimes God calls us to do things we do not understand. He does not always provide all the details or allow us to see the result in advance. This allows us to take a step of faith in prayerful obedience to Him. From this prayerful step of faith, He blesses us so that we can bless others.

Reveal

Have you ever felt a prompting from God to take a specific step of faith? How did you respond?

Respond

Look at your list of people you would like to BLESS. Ask God to reveal a bold step of faith you can take to be a BLESSing to one of them.

Family or Group Activity

Identify one person who your family or group can BLESS through prayer. Create prayer cards to remind you to pray for this person. Let this person know that you are praying for them by delivering thoughtful emails or timely texts. Be creative and BLESS them with prayer!

Day 4: Jesus Begins with Prayer

Read

Mark 1:35-38, Luke 5:15-16 and Luke 6:12-16

Reflect

Jesus used prayer to reconnect himself to the Father in preparation for ministry to others. For God to use us to impact the lives of others, we must also connect to this same source of strength through prayer. Beginning with prayer allows God to change our hearts, to feel what He feels for others, and to embolden us towards action in blessing others.

Reveal

What do you notice most about the emphasis Jesus placed on time alone with God in prayer? How can you replicate this in your own prayer life?

Respond

Look at your BLESS list again. What person do you have the least knowledge of or burden for reaching? Pray that God softens your heart towards this individual so that you can be a BLESSing to them.

Family or Group Activity

Identify one person who your family or group can BLESS through prayer. Create prayer cards to remind you to pray for this person. Let this person know that you are praying for them by delivering thoughtful emails or timely texts. Be creative and BLESS them with prayer!

Day 5: Reasons We Don't Pray

Read

John 16:16-24

Reflect

Jesus' death on the cross opened the path for a new way to connect with God in prayer: to pray in Jesus' name. Any reasons we hide behind for not praying, like "I don't know how," "I'm too busy," or "I doubt it works," are eliminated. Christ-followers have a direct line to God through the Holy Spirit in Jesus' name. Pray boldly and unceasingly. God hears your prayers and will answer them according to His purposes.

Reveal

What is your go-to excuse for not praying? What steps can you take to eliminate this excuse?

Respond

Praying for people on your BLESS list by name is already BLESSing them. However, some have never had anyone openly pray for them. Ask God to provide an opportunity for you to pray in person with one of the people on your BLESS list.

Family or Group Activity

Identify one person who your family or group can BLESS through prayer. Create prayer cards to remind you to pray for this person. Let this person know that you are praying for them by delivering thoughtful emails or timely texts. Be creative and BLESS them with prayer!

WEEK

2

Listen

Day 1: Not Really Listening

Read

John 3:1-13

Reflect

Nicodemus wasn't really listening to Jesus. He was asking questions from his point of view. He wasn't trying to understand Jesus' perspective and wasn't really listening to the words Jesus was saying. We are often guilty of not listening to Jesus but framing Jesus' commands through our perspective and ideals.

Reveal

In what ways are you not listening to Jesus? What is holding you back from truly listening to Him?

Respond

Take 20 seconds and really listen. Write down all the noises and sounds that you hear. Think about all the noises that always exist around you but that you don't typically hear.

Family or Group Activity

Think of one person that each person in your family can listen to this week. Maybe it's a family you know, a neighbor, or a friend. Pray that God would give you the opportunity to truly listen to them.

Day 2: Jesus as a Listener

Read

Luke 18:35-42.

Reflect

In all the commotion of the day, Jesus heard the man's voice. He not only heard his voice, but He listened to what he was saying. He asked the man a question and then listened for his answer. Jesus sets an example for us to ask questions and merely listen to what others have to say.

Reveal

Who in your life do you need to listen to today?

Respond

Take a few minutes and think through your day. Think about all the people you will interact with. Write down a couple of names of people you can intentionally listen to today.

Family or Group Activity

Think of one person that each person in your family can listen to this week. Maybe it's a family you know, a neighbor, or a friend. Pray that God would give you the opportunity to truly listen to them.

Day 3: Listening Across Cultures

Read

John 4:4-10

Reflect

Jews and Samaritans did not mix culturally in Jesus' time. Jews were not supposed to touch anything a Samaritan felt, for it could be unclean. However, Jesus fought the social norm by asking the Samaritan woman for a drink of water. He did not allow culture to decide who He should or should not talk to. Our neighbors come from varying backgrounds and cultures, and part of listening to those around us is trying to understand their perspectives and desires.

Reveal

Who in your life comes from a different background than you? If you cannot think of someone from another background, make a point to find someone in your life who differs culturally from you.

Respond

Pray for your friends from different cultures. Ask God to help you see things from their point of view.

Family or Group Activity

Think of one person that each person in your family can listen to this week. Maybe it's a family you know, a neighbor, or a friend. Pray that God would give you the opportunity to truly listen to them.

Day 4: Listening to the Heart

Read

Proverbs 18:13

Reflect

Listening not only requires hearing words, but understanding the meaning behind the words. When listening to those around us, we should strive to not only understand their words, but to learn more about their hearts. Hearing what happens in people's hearts matters even more than listening to their words.

Reveal

How often do you answer before you actually listen? What can you do today to remind yourself to stop and listen before answering?

Respond

Write down one way you have listened to someone this week. Pray for that person by name.

Family or Group Activity

Think of one person that each person in your family can listen to this week. Maybe it's a family you know, a neighbor, or a friend. Pray that God would give you the opportunity to truly listen to them.

Day 5: Listening to Where They Are

Read

1 Corinthians 9:22

Reflect

In this passage, Paul explains the importance of meeting people where they are to be able to reach them for the Gospel. Being a follower of Jesus requires us to listen to those around us, work to meet their needs, and tell them about Jesus. Dallas Willard says, “The first act of love is always the giving of attention.” Giving people attention, genuinely listening, and meeting them where they are helps people feel heard and accepted.

Reveal

What person is God calling you to give extra attention to this week? How can you change your perspective to meet people where they are and give them attention?

Respond

Think about all the people God called you to listen to this week. Rate yourself on a scale of 1 to 5 about how well you listened to them this week. Write down one clear way you can improve your listening skills next week.

Family or Group Activity

Think of one person that each person in your family can listen to this week. Maybe it’s a family you know, a neighbor, or a friend. Pray that God would give you the opportunity to truly listen to them.

WEEK

3

Eat Together

Day 1: The Joy of Sharing a Meal

Read

John 15:1-5

Reflect

One of the greatest joys as a Christian comes when we engage in the work of God. Often times we miss out on that joy because we are not abiding in Christ. It is important to acknowledge that apart from Christ, we can do nothing. Our one job as Christ-followers is to abide in Him, like a branch on a tree. The roots give the nourishment that flows through the trunk and into the branch which bears the fruit. The branch cannot say, "Look what I have done!" It did not do anything but rest in the trunk. May our work be empowered by the Spirit and not our flesh. May we give Him alone the credit and take none for ourselves. May the satisfaction of serving God as we share a meal be an abundance of joy in your life!

Reveal

What is the best way to practice daily abiding so that we can ensure any "work" we do is not of us, but of Him?

Respond

Ask the Lord for a desire to live your life fully surrendered to God's will. With this comes a genuine love for the people around you. Ask the Lord which neighbor He would like you to invite over for a meal.

Family or Group Activity

Select one meal each day to intentionally pray over the neighbor you intend to BLESS.

Day 2: Excuses, Excuses

Read

Luke 14:16-24

Reflect

Christ invites us to have intimate fellowship with Him. We are invited to His banquet table. The Christ follower who has accepted that invitation and tasted the sweetness of supping with the Master cannot help but pass on the Good News of the Gospel. Earning the privilege of being heard by a neighbor, friend, or family member often takes intentionality. Sharing a meal with them is a good step in breaking down barriers. Overcoming any fear or self-centeredness that hinders us from pursuing such relationships is a work of the Holy Spirit. Are you willing to lay before the Lord any excuses you might give for not following Him in this?

Reveal

Make a list of excuses people give for not inviting their neighbor to have a meal. What is your excuse?

Respond

After determining the neighbor you will invite to a meal, take them a hospitality gift such as baked goods, a snack pack, etc.

Family or Group Activity

Select one meal each day to intentionally pray over the neighbor you intend to BLESS.

Day 3: The Power of Sharing a Meal

Read

Luke 7:34

Reflect

Christ was often misunderstood while He walked this earth, but His goal was not to please people. His goal was to please God the Father. Even Jesus' own disciples did not understand or agree with the way He conducted His ministry. Jesus spent a great deal of time in solitary prayer to ensure He was aligning His life with the Father's will. As Christ-followers, our goal is the same as our Savior's; to align our life with the Father's will no matter what.

Reveal

Do the things I fill my day with align with my desire to please God, or is it more about pleasing others and myself? Do I trust Him enough to obey when God calls me to do something uncomfortable?

Respond

Ask God to help you overcome your excuses for sharing a meal with your neighbors. Make a seven-day meal/coffee calendar. List breakfast, lunch, dinner, and coffee for each day. Pick just one meal or coffee each week to BLESS someone.

Family or Group Activity

Select one meal each day to intentionally pray over the neighbor you intend to BLESS.

Day 4: Eating with Jesus

Read

John 13:2-8

Reflect

John 13:3 is vital for understanding the humility of Jesus. Jesus' identity was bound up in His relationship with God the Father. He had nothing to prove, no career ladder to climb, no one to impress. His oneness in the Triune Godhead satisfied all His personal needs. Out of that came the overflow of foot washing. May all Christ-followers follow Jesus' example, grounding themselves in Christ, abiding in Him, and allowing the Holy Spirit to lead us to places we would otherwise never go.

Reveal

How can sharing a meal help you know how you can pray for and serve your neighbors?

Respond

Take the next step and invite your neighbor to share a meal with you.

Family or Group Activity

Select one meal each day to intentionally pray over the neighbor you intend to BLESS.

Day 5: Eating with “Sinners”

Read

Matthew 9:9-13

Reflect

A Christ follower is called to follow Christ, to do what He did, to love as He loves. Jesus came to redeem all mankind—the CEO of a successful business, the stay-at-home mom, the homeless drunkard in the gutter—all people in all walks of life. In God’s eyes, all have sinned and fallen short of His glory. All need saving. May we have His love and compassion for the lost. Jesus has called us to a ministry of reconciliation—to be reconciled to God and one another.

Reveal

Why do you think Jesus chose to eat with Matthew? How do you think Matthew felt about sharing a meal with Jesus?

Respond

Have a meal with your neighbor.

Family or Group Activity

Select one meal each day to intentionally pray over the neighbor you intend to BLESS.

WEEK 4

Serve

Day 1: A Crown for an Apron

Read

John 13:8

Reflect

Jesus' message is simple: it's our turn to serve the way Jesus served. Washing someone's feet isn't the standard for impacting someone's life, yet the relevance and importance of this act by Jesus was pivotal for the disciples. You have the opportunity, like Christ, to set aside your crown for an apron. When we think about serving others, we all hope to have an impact. We may not be able to wash everyone's feet, but we can still impact their lives.

Reveal

Do you realize the impact you can have when you decide to serve others?

Respond

Pray: "Lord, please soften my heart to share words and actions that point people to Jesus."

Family or Group Activity

To promote the spirit of serving, find one local service opportunity to participate in as a family or group. As you are serving, be looking for opportunities to BLESS people by your actions and words.

Day 2: Serving People Close in Proximity

Read

Galatians 6:2

Reflect

We tend to think that service starts with going out and doing things for other people-and it often does. But sometimes, as with Jesus' disciples, it starts with letting them serve you. Bearing another person's burdens is a great way to care. As followers of Christ, we ought to make practice of bearing the burdens of others, and allowing others to bear our burdens as well.

Reveal

What is one burden you are carrying that you can share with someone?

Respond

Start by asking God to help you share your burdens and invite others into your life.

Family or Group Activity

To promote the spirit of serving, find one local service opportunity to participate in as a family or group. As you are serving, be looking for opportunities to BLESS people by your actions and words.

Day 3: Serving People Personally

Read

1 Peter 4:10

Reflect

We all have things we want to avoid. Or maybe we think someone else is better suited for the task. However, in these moments, consider the gift you have in Christ Jesus. God has specifically gifted you in ways that not everyone is gifted. He has uniquely positioned you to meet the needs of those around you.

Reveal

What service opportunities are you avoiding that you can lean into to BLESS others?

Respond

Go to our Rush Creek website and take the spiritual gifts test by clicking [here](#).

Family or Group Activity

To promote the spirit of serving, find one local service opportunity to participate in as a family or group. As you are serving, be looking for opportunities to BLESS people by your actions and words.

Day 4: Serving People Powerfully

Read

Proverbs 19:17

Reflect

Sometimes serving is doing something as simple as clipping someone's toenails. Let me explain, or rather, introduce you to my Grandma Nellie (a.k.a. "GiGi" to her grandkids). GiGi was a proud woman. She lived through the Great Depression and World War II. GiGi saw that her neighbor's health was in serious decline and after prayer and listening, she volunteered to help her neighbor clip her toenails. An 85 year old woman laid down her pride weekly to put someone else's needs first. A lot is communicated when we are generous with our time, talents, and resources.

Reveal

Are you willing to change your posture to be generous and serve those in need?

Respond

Who is a neighbor that you can humbly serve in a generous way?

Family or Group Activity

To promote the spirit of serving, find one local service opportunity to participate in as a family or group. As you are serving, be looking for opportunities to BLESS people by your actions and words.

Day 5: Serving As You Go

Read

Proverbs 3:27

Reflect

Jesus knew His position and power. He knew that God had put all things under His authority. And yet what did He do? He chose not to withhold good from the people in his life. He modeled for us that once you begin with prayer, listen, and eat with someone, there is a good chance you'll have discovered how to serve them as well.

Reveal

Who has expressed a need you can participate in to bring them good?

Respond

Look for an opportunity to meet a need that has been expressed.

Family or Group Activity

To promote the spirit of serving, find one local service opportunity to participate in as a family or group. As you are serving, be looking for opportunities to BLESS people by your actions and words.

WEEK

5

Share Stories

Day 1: Jesus Shares His Story

Read

John 3:13-17

Reflect

This passage shows us an instance in which Jesus does not hesitate to share His story with those around Him. He tells of where He is from and his plans for salvation for His people. Jesus does this graciously and beautifully, showing us what it is like to do exactly what He calls us to do. It should comfort us that Jesus does not ask us to do anything He did not do Himself.

Reveal

Do you know the truth of God's redemption story for you personally?

Respond

Rest for a moment in the beauty of Jesus' story and the joy of salvation in Him. Pray, thanking Him for modeling and sharing His story with others.

Family or Group Activity

Find one person you can BLESS by sharing your story with them. Begin by asking questions about their story and listening well, and then look for an opportunity to share what Christ has brought you from and into. As a family or group, take time to share with each other how that conversation went, setbacks and successes!

Day 2: Why Are We Reluctant to Share Our Story?

Read

Matthew 10:19-20; 22

Reflect

As believers, we often have many excuses for not sharing our story of what God has done in our lives. Sometimes it is not having the right words, fear of rejection, or even discomfort. While counting the cost of following Jesus is important, our discomfort is worth someone else's eternity. The Spirit lives within us and gives us the power to share exactly what is needed; we just must be obedient to share.

Reveal

What is holding you back from sharing what God has done in your life with others?

Respond

Think and pray about what is holding you back and begin to give those fears over to God.

Family or Group Activity

Find one person you can BLESS by sharing your story with them. Begin by asking questions about their story and listening well, and then look for an opportunity to share what Christ has brought you from and into. As a family or group, take time to share with each other how that conversation went, setbacks and successes!

Day 3: Sharing Your Story: Life Before Jesus

Read

Ephesians 2:1-3

Reflect

The reality is that our lives were full of death before an encounter with Christ. Apart from Him, we can do nothing. It is critical that when sharing our stories, we remember what Christ saved us from. Because of the work of Jesus, we do not have to be ashamed of our past. Sharing these struggles allows us to connect with others. He uses the broken parts of our story to bring Him glory!

Reveal

What was your life like before you came to know Jesus?

Respond

Take out a piece of paper and begin writing down your story. Start with what your life was like before Christ.

Family or Group Activity

Find one person you can BLESS by sharing your story with them. Begin by asking questions about their story and listening well, and then look for an opportunity to share what Christ has brought you from and into. As a family or group, take time to share with each other how that conversation went, setbacks and successes!

Day 4: Sharing Your Story: How I Met Jesus

Read

Ephesians 2:4-6

Reflect

Jesus stepped in and saved our lives from destruction through His gracious and merciful death on the cross. He reveals Himself to us at different moments and places in our lives, making each of our stories unique. But the overarching story always points to the one true King. Sharing how we came to receive this gift of salvation is so powerful because no one can argue with your experience.

Reveal

What was the moment you came to have faith in Jesus? What was this moment like?

Respond

Continue writing down your story you started yesterday. Add on your first encounter with Jesus and what that moment was like.

Family or Group Activity

Find one person you can BLESS by sharing your story with them. Begin by asking questions about their story and listening well, and then look for an opportunity to share what Christ has brought you from and into. As a family or group, take time to share with each other how that conversation went, setbacks and successes!

Day 5: Sharing Your Story: My Life Since I Met Jesus

Read

Ephesians 2:8-10

Reflect

We are made new when we come to know Jesus! By His power alone, we are saved, and then we receive a new identity. Jesus calls us His workmanship, a masterpiece! Our mess is now a masterpiece – a work of art with new life and new purpose as we are called to good works for the Kingdom. Our challenge is to live in this new identity daily!

Reveal

How has your life changed since you met Jesus?

Respond

Finish writing down your story, complete with how knowing Jesus personally has changed your life. Now, pick one person to share your story with today!

And if you feel inclined, visit RushCreek.org and let us help you share your story with others.

Family or Group Activity

Find one person you can BLESS by sharing your story with them. Begin by asking questions about their story and listening well, and then look for an opportunity to share what Christ has brought you from and into. As a family or group, take time to share with each other how that conversation went, setbacks and successes!



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