

Session #6 – Influencing Others to Christ – Going Deeper

Premise

God blesses us in order that we will be a blessing to others.

Key Scripture Passage

Genesis 12:2 (NIV) And I will make of you [Abraham] a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.

The Journey of Transformation – Target Outcomes

As I follow Jesus on the journey of transformation, I experience the joy of abiding with him ... *I am pursuing a deeper relationship with God.*

As I become confident in my identity, I find an inner strength and learn to live out of the overflow of a healthy soul ... *I am centering my identity in Christ.*

As my behavior is shaped by and modeled after Jesus, and I consistently find ways to give him glory through my life ... *I am modeling my character after Christ.*

As I discover the power of doing life together, I am encouraged and sharpened by others ... *I am growing in authentic community.*

As we learn and grow in these areas, we will find that the natural result is to become passionate about the things Jesus was passionate about. And He is passionate about His mission, which he declared in Luke 19:10: “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.” To truly be his disciple means we look to also make disciples, as summarized in our fifth and final target outcome: *I am influencing others to Christ.*

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Our mission at Ridgepoint Church is to *help more people find and follow Jesus*. We want to be zealously pursuing Christ and actively making an impact for Him in the world – locally and globally. But for many of us, the idea of actually sharing our faith with others can feel like a daunting task.

The Disconnect

Recent studies from Barna research have shown that more than nine out of ten practicing Christians agree that part of their faith means being a witness for Jesus (96%), and eight out of ten strongly agree that “the best thing that could ever happen to someone is for them to come to know Jesus” (79%). We believe it is good news! However, one-quarter of those polled also believe it is “wrong to share one’s personal beliefs with someone of a different faith in hopes that they will one day share the same faith” (27%). Among Millennials and Gen Z, the percentage who believe it is wrong to actually share our faith shoots up to nearly half (47%).

Do you see the disconnect here? On the one hand, we know we are called to be a witness for him. The Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20 is clear, as is the call to be His witnesses in all the world in Acts 1:8. However, looking to actively see someone turn away from what they believe is frowned upon. “Evangelism” has become a tainted word, especially as it relates to what some would call a broader cultural term of “evangelicalism.” Meanwhile, the amount of people who identify as Christians in the USA is in steady decline, as those who identify as “nones,” or having no religion, now make up about a third of our population.

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So in summary, Christians believe the gospel is good news, but are less likely to share it than ever before. Adding to the challenge is the fact that the number of people in our cities and in our world is steadily growing.

What are we to do?

Boots on the Ground

Scripture is clear that we are called to share the good news. As it says in Romans 10:13-15,17:

¹³ for, “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

¹⁴ How, then, can they call on him they have not believed in?

And how can they believe without hearing about him?

And how can they hear without a preacher?

¹⁵ And how can they preach unless they are sent?

As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news.”

¹⁷ Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message,
and the message is heard through the word about Christ.

This is a clear gospel presentation. Those who are saved believe in their hearts and confess Jesus with their mouths. This is the only way for people to be saved. Verse 17 says faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. There is no other way to be saved except through Christ, which is why helping people find and follow Jesus isn’t just trying to help people have a better life. We are trying to rescue people from sin and eternal punishment in hell.

Paul then uses this reverse engineering principle with rhetorical questions to say that in order for people to call on God, they have to believe, and to believe, they must hear, and to hear, someone must preach, and to preach someone must be sent. For a person to be saved, someone must be sent to share the good news. Here he is referencing Isaiah 52:7, which reads, “How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news.”

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So, according to this Scripture, we need to pay special attention to our feet in order to “climb the mountain” and proclaim the good news. You can’t climb a mountain without good boots, and we won’t be able to reach our vision without the proper footwear. What does that look like? Ephesians 6:15 says that part of our “armor” as a Christian, is to have “feet fitted with the readiness of the gospel of peace.” Our boots are the gospel – the good news of Jesus that we celebrate. We are called to take this good news wherever our feet take us. We are called to be on a mission with him. We are all called to be “boots on the ground.”

The million dollar question, of course, is ... how?

Blessed to B.L.E.S.S.

In Genesis 12:2, God makes an audacious promise to Abraham: “And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.” We, as the descendants of Abraham, are also descendants of the promise. He blesses us in order that we will be a blessing to others. In their book *B.L.E.S.S.*, Jon and Dave Ferguson use that theme and turn the letters into an acronym with a helpful and memorable way to share our faith with those around us.

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The BLESS method is a missional practice – a way to reimagine evangelism by going back to the way Jesus loved people. Here is how the method works:

B - Begin with Prayer

L - Listen with Care

E - Eat Together

S - Serve in Love

S - Share your Story, and Jesus' Story

B - Begin with Prayer

Jesus models prayer throughout the gospels. Prayer is how we discern the heart of God regarding our mission, our calling, and how he wants to move in and through us in the lives of others. If we aren't sure where to begin when it comes to evangelism, the place to start (and continue) is prayer.

L - Listen with Care

After listening to God through prayer, he sends us out to go and listen to others. This is a critical step to honor people by discovering their stories through empathetic listening and conversation. Becky Pippert, author of *Out of the Saltshaker and Into the World* says: "Often, we don't have issues with competency in sharing; it's competency in listening and conversation that we lack." Jesus modeled this with the Samaritan woman in John 4. By asking good questions and truly listening, we can begin to see God move in their hearts.

E - Eat Together

When we invite someone to share a meal or meet up at a coffee shop, we can find common ground and begin to forge a mutual connection. We often find Jesus sharing a meal with people in the gospels, so much that he became known as a "friend of sinners" (Luke 7:34). Meeting up at the table is one of the best ways we can move from acquaintances to friends and build the kind of trust needed to provide open doors for grace and truth to be communicated.

S - Serve in Love

Jesus came not to be served, but to serve (Mt 20:28). He taught His disciples how to lead by picking up the towel and washing their feet. Therefore, in following the way of Jesus, we look for ways to serve others. We ask Him to show us practical ways to serve people relationally, physically, mentally, or spiritually. We look for open doors and commit the time it takes to serve people, trusting the Spirit will reveal the heart of Christ to them through meaningful acts of service.

S - Share Your Story

As we listen and get to know someone's pain points, we can share relevant stories of our own lives, and the ways we have seen God minister to us in our own brokenness. Jesus modeled this with Nicodemus in John 3, and by sharing more of his own story he found a way to impact this spiritual seeker.

Except for beginning with prayer, these steps aren't always linear. The Spirit may lead us to share a meal or serve someone before we hear their story. Sometimes we may sense an urgency to share the story of Jesus before any of these steps are taken. It's also likely that we won't be the only one involved in the process of influencing someone to Christ and that we may not necessarily be involved in every step. The point is not to follow the method legalistically, but to use it as a way to build genuine friendships with people which can lead to spiritual

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conversations and ultimately transformed lives. As we build these natural bridges in friendship and conversation, the path to share the gospel story and the truth of Jesus becomes clear.

In her book, *Walking on Water: Reflections on Faith and Art*, Madeleine L'Engle explained how beautiful this process can look when our desire is to bless people: "We draw people to Christ not by loudly discrediting what they believe, by telling them how wrong they are and how right we are, but by showing them a light that is so lovely that they want with all their hearts to know the source of it."

We draw people to Christ not by loudly discrediting what they believe ...

May we influence others to Christ by looking to BLESS those around us. As we do that, we show God's love to our neighbors and ultimately God can use us to change the world!

Who are you becoming?

Going Deeper Reflections

See below for some thoughts on how to go deeper.

1. Review the "B.L.E.S.S." method above and prayerfully consider how you might take the next step in blessing others.
2. Listen to Andy Owens' sermon *Boots on the Ground* at: whoamibecoming.org > Session 6 > Boots. As you listen, take notes and prayerfully consider how you might up your game regarding "influencing others to Christ."
3. Read and study John 4:1-42. Make note of Jesus' ministry style as he relates to the Samaritan woman. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you ways you can learn from His example.