

Adventures in Neighboring **EAT and SERVE – Luke 10**

-These last few weeks we've been talking about blessing our neighbors. In fact we're using the BLESS strategy.

Begin with prayer. Listen. Eat. Serve. Share.

-**Week 1** we challenged you to get out of the house and go pray for your neighbors.

-Walk through your neighborhood and spend a few moments praying for the people you know & the ones you don't.

-How many of you have been praying for your neighbors?

-If you have taken the challenge to be praying for your neighbors that puts you in great company with a guy I know named...Jesus!

-Jesus traveled through villages (neighborhood sized little towns) and prayed for God to raise up workers, who would help lead those people to salvation.

-**Week 2** (last week) we challenged you to take that a step further and talk to your neighbors.

-To watch for opportunities to have a conversation with someone at the mail box, or while you're working on the yard.

-To cross that street to chat for a few moments and to try and really listen to what people are saying.

-If you've missed either of these first two weeks get online and listen so you can catch up. And when you visit our website, you'll see that it's gone through a bit of a makeover.

-Pray. Listen. Today we're going to take this one step further.

-Most of us know the term Good Samaritan and if you've been in church any amount of time you probably know the story.

-Jesus was talking to a religious expert in Luke 10.

-They were talking about the two greatest commandments.

-Let's read these together out loud. Ready?

[Luke 10:27 "...You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind.' And, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"](#)

-That's what we've been talking about these past few weeks.

-God loves our neighbors, he wants us to love our neighbors, and his plan for saving our neighbors involves us.

-As Jesus is talking to this religious leader it seems that he knew the right answers.

-He knew what God expected of him: to love God and love his neighbors.

-But isn't it funny; when are told to do something, our natural human tendency is to ask "how much?" To quantify everything.

-If you tell your kids to clean their room, there is the question of **how clean** does it need to be?

-Tell a student to write a paper; how many pages?

-If you give an employee a job to do, they ask **when** does it need to be completed by?

-So when it comes to these teachings about neighbors we naturally want to ask:

- How **MUCH** do I have to get involved?
- How **MANY** neighbors do I have to care about?
- What do I **HAVE TO DO** for my neighbors?
- What is this whole neighboring thing going **to cost me**?

-At the core of these questions is really, What's the least I can do?

-And that's what the religious leader ended up asking.

Luke 10:29 "The man wanted to justify his actions, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

-If I'm supposed to love my neighbor, who all is included?

-And that's when Jesus told **The Good Samaritan Story**

-There are four primary characters in the story.

The man in need.

-There was a Jewish man traveling on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho. A highway that was notorious for robbers and bandits.

-The man was ambushed, robbed, beaten up, and left for dead.

-As he lies there on the road...

A priest comes by and sees the man lying there, crosses the street. Keeps on walking.

-Then another fellow Jew comes upon him, this time...

a temple assistant, and he stops to take a look, but does nothing.

-Then a despised...

Samaritan comes by, a mortal enemy of the Jews, and he is the one who stops to help.

-He doctors up the wounds, puts him up at Motel 6 and pays all his expenses.

-And when Jesus got done telling that story, he asked the religious expert, "who was the neighbor to the man in need?"

-And of course the answer, that the self-righteous man had to admit, was this: "the one who showed him mercy."

-Jesus said, "Yes, now go and do the same."

-Now what if we modernized the story about neighbors a little?

-What if there was neighbor or neighboring family that really needed some help? It could be any kind of help.

-Help with money. Help with property or home maintenance.

-Help with kids. Help with food. Help with a health concern.

-So there is a family in need; maybe even in your neighborhood.

-And day after day one of their neighbors drove by their house and just kept their eyes facing forward.

-If we don't see anything we don't have to get involved.

-The garage door goes up, the car pulls in, and the garage door goes down. **Loving their neighbor successfully avoided!**

-Another neighbor saw this family and knew they were struggling and thought about helping, really gave it some thought.

-But they were just too busy to really stop and help, so they just gave a wave as they got their mail, and then went back inside.

-Meanwhile the neighboring family continued to struggle.

-That doesn't sound too improbable does it?

-Sounds kind of lifelike. But humor me just a little more.

-What if we changed that story to make the family's need a little different? What if the help the neighbor needed was spiritual help?

-What if they didn't know Jesus? Didn't have hope of life death?

-What if they did not know about forgiveness of sin?

-And day after day, week after week, Christian neighbors drove on by, thought about helping, but just gave a smile and a wave, to people who were headed to hell?

-That's not a very good story. It's a sad story, a tragic story.

-In the old days, before electricity was easily available there were night jobs for people around bridges and railroad tracks.

-These people would light lanterns, sometimes with panes of colored glass, and they would swing them back and forth to warn oncoming trains or cars.

-A story is told about a man who was sleeping on duty while watching a bridge that happened to be raised.

-He woke up to see an oncoming car, and frantically swung the lantern, but it was too late and the car crashed and the passengers died.

-When put on trial for failing to do his duty the judge asked him if he swung the lantern warning the oncoming car of its imminent danger. The man replied "yes" which was true.

-But he later confessed to a friend that though he'd swung the lantern, he had failed to light it and the people in the car sped on to their death without being warned.

-A lamp that isn't lit, isn't very effective. Do you know who said that? In Matthew 5 Jesus said,

"Matthew 5:14 "You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden.15 No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. 16 In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father."

-You are light to a dark world. To people who are rushing toward destruction, you are the warning light that might just save them!

-The religious leader who was talking to Jesus knew what was right, but he didn't want to do it. That's just like the story:

-The Priest in the story knew what was right but he didn't want to do it...so he crossed the street.

-The temple assistant, knew what was right, but he didn't want to do it. So he thought about doing something & then walked away

-And there are many Christians, who also know what is right, but don't want to reach out to their neighbors.

-Many of our neighbors are facing an eternity separated from God, and we know how to fix that.

-Many of them are heading for a fatal crash and we have the light.

-Many of them are beaten down spiritually, and need someone to stop and help them back on their feet.

-And the people with the message, the people with the light, the people with the ability to help, often times do nothing.

-Some of you might be feeling guilty about that; please don't.

-When Christians aren't engaging their lost neighbors, I don't think it's from a complete lack of concern.

-More often than not, I think it's because they don't know how.

-And that's what I love about this BLESS strategy.

-It's simple. Pray. Listen. And in the remainder of our time this morning I want to talk about two things we can do!

-And they are simple things: eating and serving.

-Please tune into this because these are practical ways for us to engage with our neighbors. Anyone can do this. You can do this!

-The first is to Eat With Your Neighbors— Mark 2:15

-You may not realize that eating a meal together is a powerful way to connect people.

- And we see this all throughout the Bible.
- In the OT way of thinking a meal was a symbol of friendship.
- If you shared a meal with someone they were a friend.
- If you would not share a meal with someone they were an enemy
- Some of you saw the movie Lone Survivor which is the true story of Navy Seal Marcus Luttrell. In the movie Luttrell is injured and crawls his way off of a mountain where he meets some local Afghans.
- When the Taliban come to take him from the village he's in, the local people rise up to defend this American soldier. Here's why:
 - He was a guest in their home. He ate meals with them.
 - Their hospitality culture meant that this man was under their protection. And so they fought to defend him.
 - We might think, "well we did eat together, but it was just spaghetti, you can have him!"***
- But eating a meal together is a powerful statement of friendship in many places around the world, and in the Bible.
- Do you know that in the OT some of the sacrifices people made, were actually a meal? When people brought a Peace Offering to the temple they would burn a portion of the meat or bread on the altar, but a portion was for them to eat right there at the temple.
- It was a symbolic way of eating a meal with God, showing that they were at peace with him.
- When Jesus ate meals with tax collectors the religious people were outraged! Because a meal is a statement of friendship!
- When he went to the home of notorious sinners, the religious people flipped out! Rabbi Jesus was befriending sinners!
- [Mark 2:15](#) "Levi invited Jesus and his disciples to his home as dinner guests, along with many tax collectors and other disreputable sinners. *(There were many people of this kind among Jesus' followers.)"*
- Jesus not only ate with "disreputable sinners" they were followers
- Do you think Jesus would share a meal with that rough looking family from across the street? Yes.
- When Jesus left he gave his followers a ceremony to celebrate together, it is the breaking of bread and the drinking of wine to remember his sacrifice.
- And what is Communion? A meal where the family of God, comes together to show our love for God and each other.
- And when we reach our home in heaven, what awaits us there?

- Among other things, the great banquet table of God where will feast with the likes of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob & Jesus. (Mt 8)
- And there is something about sharing a meal with people.
- A dinner table is a place where friendships are formed.
- Think about all the Jesus stories that center around a meal.
- Jesus shared a meal with Zacchaeus, Matthew the Tax Collector!
- His first miracle was at a wedding feast in Cana and his last meeting with his disciples before his death was a meal.
- What did he do when he rose from the grave?
- Cooked breakfast for the disciples at the lakeside campfire.
- A great way to make neighbors into friends is sharing a meal!
- Now some of you hear about meals and think “no problem” because you have the gift of hospitality or cooking.
- Others of you struggle with this it scares you a bit.
- Maybe you’re not a good cook...so buy a pizza.
- Maybe you’re not a good conversationalist...invite another couple over who are more chatty.
- Maybe your house is too small or too cluttered...go out to dinner.
- Maybe you’re broke...**get them to invite you over!**
- If you’re watching a sporting event...so easy. Dinner and a game.
- Having a BBQ, hamburgers and hotdogs come on over.
- If you’re canning something, baking something, preserving something...take them over some. That’s almost eating together!
- I met some neighbors recently that like the same football team as I do and we invited them over yesterday.
- And in spite of **the loss**, we had a great time.
- Laura and I have made it our goal to have people from our neighborhood over to the house once a month.
- That may not sound like a big deal to some of you, but it feels like a big deal to me!
- But if we’re going to be serious about reaching our neighbors for Jesus, we can’t just invite them to our home church.
- We have to see our homes as little churches, little church outposts in our community.
- We see our home as a bridge to the church. And even if our neighbors never come to our church or want to hear about Jesus...we’ll at least have shown them the light of Christ.
- Now, what if everyone in our church made that commitment?
- What if the 300 plus people at Adventure we’re inviting 300 plus people into their homes each month to be neighborly?

-That would be almost 4000 people in the homes of ACC families in a year's time.

-What if the thousands of Christians in our town were doing that?

-I suspect there would be thousands more Christians in our town.

-The meal thing scares some people. Serve Your Neighbors

-Serving people is another great approach to helping your neighbor. **You're cleaning the gutters, offer to clean theirs.**

-You're mowing your yard, mow theirs.

-They are raking their leaves up, grab a rake and go help.

-They're picking up something heavy, jump right in.

-If they are going out of town, offer to water their flowers or feed their cat.

-If they are hanging up Christmas lights, ask if they need a hand.

-Take their trash to the curb for them, or put the it back once the garbage truck has come.

-If you're taking your kids to school, offer to take theirs.

-Serving your neighbor is easier than you might think.

Mark 10:45 "For *even* the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many."

-Think about the Good Samaritan story.

- **The traveler was the person in need. Some of you have been the person in need before.**
- **Someone cared enough to show you the way to Jesus.**
- **A priest wouldn't help. Stayed on the other side of the street. We've all been that kind of person before.**
- **A temple assistant: Thought about helping. We've all been this kind of person before too!**
 - Saw a situation. Thought about helping. But didn't do it.**
- **A Good Samaritan stopped to help. That's who God wants us to be.**

-See once upon all of us found ourselves in great need.

-We'd chosen a road that left us beaten down spiritually.

-And without some Good Samaritan's help, without someone stopping and stooping down and helping us...we wouldn't have made it.

-The Bible tells us that the our Heavenly Father saw our spiritual condition, saw the wounds we'd inflicted on ourselves.

-And he sent his Son Jesus from heaven down to earth, and like the Samaritan man Jesus picked us up off the dirt.

-He soothed our wounds, and paid the price for our restoration.

-He paved the way for us to be right with God; to live with God for all of eternity.

-Someone shared that Good News with us. Someone was a light for us. And now God wants us to return to the favor. He wants us to love our neighbors like we love ourselves.

The B.L.E.S.S. strategy is not an agenda or program; it's a lifestyle.