

BLESS FOR YOUTH: LEADER'S GUIDE



covchurch.org/BLESS/Youth



LEADER'S GUIDE INTRODUCTION

The content of this guide is an adaptation of BLESS materials for the Covenant Church. This content is written by ECC Youth Ministry Conference Coaches. Original materials are available at covchurch.org/bless.



STUDENT JOURNAL

- We recommend you print a journal handout for each student.
- Just as some students engage best in discussion, others will engage best in personal reflection.
- It may be best to collect the journals at the end of each session instead of sending them home. Your call!

BLESS is a new way of thinking about evangelism. It is founded on the idea that since the beginning of our story with God, God has demonstrated his deep love for us through his blessing. In turn we become a blessing to others (GENESIS 12:2).

Five Missional Practices

BLESS develops five missional practices that focus on blessing our unchurched family and friends.

Begin with Prayer

Pray for people in your life who are far from God. Ask God, "How do you want to use me to bless the people in my life?"

Listen with Care

Pay attention to people's dreams and pain. Listen for evidence of God's work in their lives.

Eat Together

Share meals and life with people in your life who do not know God. Listen for evidence of God's work in their lives.

Serve with Love

Be attentive to opportunities God provides you to care for people and attend to their needs.

Share Your Story

Once you build relationship and earn trust, look for ways you can share the story of how Jesus is transforming your life and the world.

How to use this guide

This leader's guide and accompanying Student Journal offer practical application, rooted in Scripture, to help us focus on the unchurched people in our lives who are far from God. It is for every student from every walk of life, background, and spiritual maturity to help them live their faith effectively among neighbors and friends.

LEADER'S GUIDE

- Feel free to adapt this for your context: add, subtract, and substitute content according to your small group time frame, age, the spiritual maturity of your students, your facilities, etc.
- Fill in your own stories: Share your own experiences both good and bad. This will prompt students to be willing to share.
- Ask open questions. Add your own questions that start with "How do you feel...?" or "What do you think about...?"

LEADER'S GUIDE FOR BEGIN WITH PRAYER ROMANS 8:34-35 | LUKE 11:5-13

Introduction (5 MINUTES)

Since the beginning of our story with God, God has demonstrated his deep love for us through his blessing. In turn we become a blessing to others (GENESIS 12:2). God is calling us to live in such a way that we bless those around us, especially those who don't know him. BLESS is a framework for understanding the missional practices that lead us toward blessing our friends and family who are far from God.

As with all things, we always begin with prayer. Today we will be talking about the power of praying for our unchurched friends who don't know God.

DISCUSSION: An old proverb says, "You catch more flies with honey than with vinegar." How do you think attempting to bless our friends is better than attempting to convert them?

Digging Deeper (10 MINUTES)

DISCUSSION: Have you ever experienced God answering your prayer? How did that affect you?

Prayer is a key part of missional living, yet we don't always understand it, and too often we fail to pray altogether. Why do we pray, especially for others?

C.S. Lewis is the author of The Chronicles of Narnia and many other significant Christian books. The movie Shadowlands tells the story of his life with his wife, Joy Gresham. Before they were married, Joy was diagnosed with cancer. The movie depicts their joys, pains, grief, and even their struggles with faith leading up to Joy's eventual death. At one point a friend says to Lewis, "I know how hard you have been praying; and now God is answering your prayers." Lewis replies, "That's not why I pray. I pray because I can't help myself. I pray because I'm helpless. I pray because the need flows out of me all the time, waking and sleeping. It doesn't change God, it changes me."

Prayer comforts us. It gives us strength, guides and directs us. One of the most important purposes of prayer is that it draws us closer to God. When we pray, we are changed to become more like Jesus. It also draws us closer to the people we pray for. We understand them better and feel God's love for them.

DISCUSSION: Sometimes we are quick to pray that God will heal a friend from an injury or sickness. Why do you think we are not as quick to pray for a friend to have faith in Jesus?

Choose volunteers to read Digging Deeper and scripture passages aloud.

В

Jesus Prays for Us (20 MINUTES)

Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? (ROMANS 8:34-35, NIV)

If you Google the word "intercede" you will find this definition: "intervene on behalf of another." Christians often use this word when referring to praying for another person. When we pray for our unchurched friends we intervene on their behalf. We go before God for their benefit. We do this not because God condemns them but because God loves them.

One of the things Jesus does for us is go before God on our behalf. Jesus is praying for you right now. He knows your needs more than anyone. He knows God's love for you better than anyone. He is bringing you before the Father because he loves us.

Jesus is also praying right now for your friends who are far from God. He loves them, just as he loves you. He wants everyone to know God's love.

DISCUSSION

- 1. Do you believe Jesus is praying for you right now? Why or why not?
- 2. What do you think Jesus might be praying for you at this stage of your life?
- 3. What might Jesus be praying for the unchurched people in your life whom he loves and wants to reach?
- 4. How do you think prayer changes us?

Persistent Prayer (10 MINUTES)

Then Jesus said to them, "Suppose you have a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have no food to offer him.' And suppose the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children and I are in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.' I tell you, even though he will not get up and give you the bread because of friendship, yet because of your shameless audacity he will surely get up and give you as much as you need.

"So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

"Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" (LUKE 11:5-13, NIV)

In this passage Jesus teaches us to be persistent when we pray that our friends will come to know God. We ask because prayer makes a difference. We continue to ask because our friends are worth it. We know that God is listening because we know that he wants to give the Holy Spirit.

DISCUSSION

- What do you think is the point of the story about the neighbor who needs bread late at night? What do you think is the point of the illustration about eggs and fishes?
- 2 Why do you think we need to keep on asking, seeking, and knocking when it comes to prayer in general and specifically prayer for our unchurched family and friends? Why do you think those prayers are not always answered quickly?
- 3. Why do you think we don't get everything we ask for when we pray?

FRANC MODEL (10 MINUTES)

The FRANC model is a tool to help you pray for and bless people in your spheres of influence where you live, study, and play.

- 1. Friends
- 2. Relatives
- 3. Acquaintances
- 4. Neighbors
- 5. Classmates

Use the space provided in your Student Journal to write down the FRANCs in your life. First, write down the names of as many friends as you can think of. Second, take a moment to pray on your own and then circle the names you feel God wants you to focus on praying for.

Action Plan (10 MINUTES)

An important part of this study each week will be making plans to put these ideas into practice in our day-to-day life. Zig Ziglar, a popular speaker and author, once said, "If you aim at nothing, you will hit it every time." He went on to emphasize the importance of putting goals in writing.

Use the space in your Student Journal to write down your action plan for praying for your FRANC list.

- If your list isn't finished, when will you finish it?
- Where will you keep this list? (Put it somewhere you will see it often.)
- When will you pray over this list? Each morning/night? On Taco Tuesdays and Throwback Thursdays?
- How will you pray for this list?

DISCUSSION

- 1. How could you let your friends know you are praying for them?
- 2. Under what circumstances might it be appropriate for you to ask them to pray for you?

Closing Prayer

(5 minutes) Pray in pairs or as a group for someone or several people on your BLESS list.

CLOSE BY PRAYING THIS PRAYER ALOUD AS A GROUP:

Lord, help us to ask and keep on asking when it comes to praying for our unchurched family and friends. You promise that if we are persistent, you will answer. You promise that if we cry out to you, you are good and will respond. You promise to give the Holy Spirit to those who ask. Amen.

LEADER'S GUIDE FOR LISTEN WITH CARE ACTS 8:26-40 | LUKE 18:35-43

Introduction (10 MINUTES)

Pair up and spend a few moments sharing with each other about your weekend.

DISCUSSION

- 1. How many of you can repeat what your partner just told you?
- 2. How many of you were able to share about your weekend without interruption?
- 3. After this exercise, how would you rate your listening skills?

Listening to others is a way that we can bless one another. Listening means paying attention to people's dreams and pain and listening for evidence of God's work in their lives.

DISCUSSION

- 1. What would you say are skills for being a good listener?
- 2. If you have time, check out what these kids have to say about being a good listener. Visit covchurch.org/how-to-listen to watch "How to Be a Good Listener" on YouTube.

(Ideas from the video: make eye contact, be patient, do not interrupt, ask questions, relate to the topic, use positive body language, do not be distracted, be open-minded, be empathetic, remember what people say)

Choose volunteers to read scripture passages aloud.

Digging Deeper (10 MINUTES)

DISCUSSION

- 1. Who in your life has truly listened to you?
- 2. How did you know that they truly listened to you?

"When people talk, listen completely. Most people never listen." – ERNEST HEMINGWAY

"There is a kind of listening with half an ear that presumes already to know what the other person has to say. It is an impatient, inattentive listening, that despises the brother [or sister] and is only waiting for a chance to speak and thus get rid of the other person." – DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

"To answer before listening—that is folly and shame." — PROVERBS 18:13

DISCUSSION: What do these quotes teach us about listening?

We all want to be heard. We tweet, we blog, we post on Instagram and Snapchat, and we tell jokes to get others to listen to us. Listening with care is a skill that takes practice. A person feels valued and cared for when they are listened to. Jesus listens to us and values us. We can bless and value others who may not know God by attentively listening to their stories. We can listen for evidence of where God is working. God has uniquely placed us and given us passions, interests, and experiences that help us to relate to others. He puts



people in our lives so we can build relationships with them. By listening with care, we can point them to Jesus. We let them know we value them and pray that they may come to understand that God values them too.

Philip and the Ethiopian

(20 MINUTES)

Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of the Kandake (which means "queen of the Ethiopians"). This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the Book of Isaiah the prophet. The Spirit told Philip, "Go to that chariot and stay near it."

Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. "Do you understand what you are reading?" Philip asked.

"How can I," he said, "unless someone explains it to me?" So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. This is the passage of Scripture the eunuch was reading:

> "He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before its shearer is silent,

so he did not open his mouth.

In his humiliation he was deprived of justice.

Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth."

The eunuch asked Philip, "Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?" Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.

As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?" And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing. Philip, however, appeared at Azotus and traveled about, preaching the gospel in all the towns until he reached Caesarea. (ACTS 8:26-40, NIV)

Philip listened to the Spirit and went near the chariot of the Ethiopian man. As a result, he was able to meet with the man who didn't know Jesus. God used Philip's unique gifts and placed him where God was already working. As Philip listened with care, he was able to ask good questions. These questions and answers gave Philip the opportunity to share the good news of Jesus with the man. The Ethiopian believed and was baptized. God was already working, and Philip was able to join in his work. Similarly, we have the opportunity to join God in his work through BLESS.

DISCUSSION

- 1. How was God already at work in this story?
- 2. What shared experiences do you have with people who are far from God?
- 3. How can you use times together to have meaningful conversations?
- 4. What are some good questions you can ask to build relationships that show you value the other person?



Jesus and the Blind Beggar

(10 MINUTES)

As Jesus approached Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. When he heard the crowd going by, he asked what was happening. They told him, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by."

He called out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Those who led the way rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Jesus stopped and ordered the man to be brought to him. When he came near, Jesus asked him, "What do you want me to do for you?"

"Lord, I want to see," he replied. Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has healed you." Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus, praising God. When all the people saw it, they also praised God. (LUKE 18:35-43, NIV)

Jesus took the time to interrupt his journey to spend time listening to and healing a blind man. When others wanted to shut the blind man up, Jesus listened, asked questions, and showed that he cared. The result was physical and spiritual healing.

DISCUSSION

- 1. What were some of the distractions the man faced while trying to be heard?
- What distractions do you face in listening and being listened to?
 Phones? People? Busyness? School?
- 3. How does Jesus show that he valued this man?
- 4. How do shared experiences, joyful or painful, help us to have meaningful conversations?

Action Plan (10 MINUTES)

It's time to take what we have talked about and put it into practice.

DISCUSSION

- 1. Where do you see God already at work in your family, friends, and others?
- 2. Where do you think God wants you to join in the work he is doing?

FRANC MODEL

Use the space provided in your Student Journal to reflect on these prompts:

- Did you pray for your FRANC list this week? When will you pray this week?
- Ask God to show you others who share experiences, passions, and interests who need Jesus and someone to listen. Write their names down.
- Pray for an opportunity this week to have a significant conversation with someone on your BLESS list.

Closing Prayer

(5 minutes) Pray in pairs or as a group for someone or several people on your BLESS list.

CLOSE BY SAYING THIS PRAYER TOGETHER AS A GROUP:

Lord, help us to listen to others and to you. We want to bless others by listening, responding, and valuing them. We want to hear about the experiences in their lives, and we want to hear and see what you are doing in their lives. Lord, thank you that you have listened to us and loved and valued us. We want to bless others. LEADER'S GUIDE FOR

EAT TOGETHER LUKE 19:1-10

Introduction (5 MINUTES)

DISCUSSION: What is your favorite food to share with others?

Digging Deeper (10 MINUTES)

Youth pastor Tim Ramgren shares this story about eating together:

In the summer of 2017, my whole family went to Guatemala on a mission trip with our church. Half the group were high schoolers and the rest were from all ages and walks of life. We were split into various teams to paint, clean, build a desk, etc. Besides worship in the evening, mealtimes were the only time the whole group was together. These became special times to swap stories from our work sites and connect with each other. The need to eat brought us all together and created a more enriching experience for us all.

Our meals also gave us a connection to the local people that I don't think could have happened any other way. We were served by local people giving of their time and resources to bless us with their own dishes. We thanked them often.

On the final day, the whole group celebrated our accomplishments with a trip to a beautiful city in the valley of several volcanoes. Lunch was at a gorgeous hotel overlooking a beautiful lake. The delicious food and pristine setting opened

Choose volunteers to read scripture passages aloud.

the door to great conversations as we reflected together on our week together. It was the perfect way to end the trip.

In reflecting on that experience, I see how vital those mealtimes were. I can't think of a better way to get to know people and their culture than eating with them. There is truly something special about eating together. It unites us in a unique and special way.

DISCUSSION

- 1. Why do you think sharing a meal together is so gratifying?
- 2. What are your family's favorite dishes that you love to share with others?

Eating with Jesus (10 MINUTES)

Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.

When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.

All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner."

But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor,



and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount."

Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. 10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." (Luke 19:1-10, NIV)

Assign each member of your group a different character from this passage. Ask one person to be Jesus, one to be Zacchaeus, the third to be a person in the crowd, etc. Instruct them to close their eyes as they listen and to fully immerse themselves in their character. Concentrate and imagine yourself as that character and pay attention to their thoughts, emotions, and all five senses. What do you see, hear, feel, taste, and smell? Re-read the Scripture slowly or play the passage from your favorite audio Bible.

- Reflect and write about this experience in your Student Journal.
- Take turns sharing thoughts and feelings and insights with whole group.

DISCUSSION

- 1. Why do you think Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus so desperately?
- 2. Why do you think Jesus singled out Zacchaeus?
- 3. Why were the people in the crowd offended by this?

Tax Collector (10 MINUTES)

The title "tax collector" itself is a derogatory term in the Gospels (Matthew 5:46; 18:17). Luke 7:29 highlights the surprise people felt at the idea of good coming from a person such as Zacchaeus: "All the people, even the tax collectors, when they heard Jesus' words, acknowledged that God's way was right." This term is often joined with other obvious sinners like "prostitutes" (Matthew 21:31-32) or simply with "sinners" (e.g., Mark 2:15; Luke 15:1). This outlook was widespread as rabbis linked tax collectors with "robbers" and Roman writers linked them with brothel-keepers.

The reason for such scorn was twofold. First, a tax collector would pay the tax in advance to the Romans and then collect the taxes from the people. There was no regulation as to how much they took, which of course opened the door to much inflated taxes, which made the collectors rich. Second, tax collectors were Jewish people extorting their fellow Jews to help the much-hated occupying Romans. Tax collectors were thought to be so vile that rabbis considered any house unclean that a tax collector entered! (Commentary about tax collectors taken from Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels, pp. 805-806.)



DISCUSSION

- How do you think Zacchaeus felt when Jesus told him he was coming to his house for a meal? Do you think it was rude of Jesus to invite himself over?
- 2. Would the fact that Jesus stopped to address him personally have left Zacchaeus elated—or feeling something else? Why does Jesus go to his house for a meal?
- 3. How do you think the conversation between Jesus and Zacchaeus went? What do you think they talked about? Who talked more?
- 4. What role do you think Jesus and Zacchaeus eating together has in the overall story and outcome?
- 5. All Jews are descendants of Abraham, so why does Jesus say of Zacchaeus "this man too is a son of Abraham"?

Read the Scripture passage out loud again. With the information they learned during discussion, students may have a deeper experience. Give them time to briefly discuss any additional thoughts.

Action Plan (15 MINUTES)

In pairs, brainstorm ways you could have meaningful meals with people in each sphere of influence in your FRANC model. (Note: this is not just eating with people. You are eating with them for a purpose.)

FRANC MODEL

As a large group, come up with at least five leading questions you could use to get communication going (i.e., ask about their life, ask about church and why they go or don't, etc. Don't try to convert someone over one meal, just really get to know them.)

Use your Student Journal to write down and commit to setting up a meal from at least two FRANC spheres over the next month. This could be as simple as taking a friend to lunch or helping your parents throw a block party.

Closing Prayer

(5 minutes) Pray in pairs for courage to make these invitations and that the recipients will respond positively.

CLOSE BY SAYING THIS PRAYER TOGETHER AS A GROUP:

Lord, where have you sent me, and whom do you want me to bless this week? Open my eyes to see who you want me to be hospitable toward and to include in a meal this week. Show me who to invite for dinner, lunch, or coffee. Help me to include those who are often excluded from our community. Give me the time, courage, and compassion to reach out and invite those who have been left out. Help me become more like you, Lord Jesus.

LEADER'S GUIDE FOR SERVE WITH LOVE

MATTHEW 23:11 | MARK 10:45 1 CORINTHIANS 13:13 | 1 PETER 4:10 | 1 JOHN 4:20

Introduction (10 MINUTES)

No matter how young or old we are, serving others is something God calls us to do. In heaven, our sole purpose will be to serve the Almighty One, and here on earth serving is a part of our walk with God. God has called us to serve those around us.

Digging Deeper (15 MINUTES)

Use your Student Journals to answer these questions:

- When I serve others, what is my motivation?
- How might I become aware of needs in my community that God has equipped me to help fulfill?
- Do I complain in my heart or to those closest to me after I have served others?
- How do I seek out ways in which I can serve others joyfully?

DISCUSSION

- 1. What surprised you about your answers?
- 2. Share whichever answers you are willing to share.

Serving in the Bible (20 MINUTES)

Use the discussion questions provided to talk about the passages below.

DISCUSSION

- 1. What message was Jesus communicating?
- 2. How do we see evangelism in these Scriptures?
- 3. Where does Jesus exemplify love in service?
- 4. How can we apply these Scriptures toward our own lives?

"The greatest among you will be your servant" (MATTHEW 23:11).

"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (MARK 10:45).

"Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms" (1 PETER 4:10).

"Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen" (1 JOHN 4:20).

"And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love" (1 CORINTHIANS 13:13).

The very last lesson Jesus taught his

Choose volunteers to read scripture passages aloud.



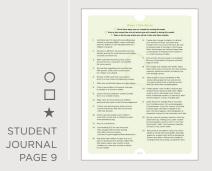
disciples before going to the cross was to wash each other's feet. Jesus said, "And since I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other's feet." Jesus is teaching his disciples, saying, Since I have done so much for you, because of me you are saved. Now go and serve others.

Jesus wants us to focus on doing for others without expectation. The Scripture we just read demonstrates three powerful ideas that service to others provides for both the giver and the recipient: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of the three is love. Serving with love allows others to experience who God really is—love!

Serving with Love (10 MINUTES)

As a group, create a scenario where someone has the opportunity to serve. Decide if the characters are serving with love or not. Guide students through finding ways they can serve with love in each scenario.

Watch this two-minute video on YouTube: "Why I Serve" covchurch.org/why-I-serve



Action Plan (10 MINUTES)

Look at the list of ways you can serve on page 9 of your Student Journal.

- Circle three ways you can commit to serving this week.
- Place a box around two acts of service you will commit to doing this month.
- Place a star by one action you will do in the next three months.
- Be sure to share your praise reports each week.

DISCUSSION

- What opportunity to serve are you excited about?
- What opportunity to serve are you anxious about?

Closing Prayer

(5 minutes) Pray in pairs for God to show you whom you could serve in love this week.

CLOSE BY SAYING THIS PRAYER TOGETHER AS A GROUP:

Lord, you have loved and served me both in small ways and with the gift of your life. Whom do you want me to bless this week? Open my eyes to see who you want me to serve in practical ways, and from whom I might also ask for help. Show me who I can serve in love. Help me include those who are often excluded from our community. Give me the time, the courage, and the compassion to serve those who have been left out. Help me become more like you, Lord Jesus!

Ways Students Can Serve

Circle three ways you can commit to serving this week.
Place a box around two acts of service you will commit to doing this month.
Place a star by one action you will do in the next three months.

- Use fabric paint to decorate new pillowcases. Include encouraging Bible verses and bright pictures. Deliver or mail the pillowcases to a children's hospital.
- 2. Purchase a gift from CovenantCares to help families around the world become self-reliant. covcares.covchurch.org
- Plant individual flowering plants in pots. Deliver them to a long-term care facility for senior adults.
- 5. Provide free babysitting for local families. Plan games, crafts, and a special snack for children who attend.
- 6. Prepare muffins and fruit cups. Deliver them to a local school for teachers to enjoy.
- 7 Offer free windshield washes at a gas station.
- 8. Collect new bottles of shampoo and soap to donate to a women's shelter.
- 9. Collect and sort children's clothes. Donate them to a children's home.
- 10. Make cards to send overseas to military personnel who need a word of encouragement.
- Collect new board games and puzzles to send to missionary kids who are serving with their parents.
- 12. Collect new and gently used children's shoes that can be sent to children in need. www.soles4souls.org
- 13. Pray for missionaries.
- Download BLESS for Kids resources. Help younger kids practice sharing their faith with one another. covchurch.org/evangelism/bless/#resources
- 15. Distribute free bottles of water at a local park or sporting event. Design a label with information about your church and an invitation to come and worship to attach to each bottle.

- 16. Create door-hanger invitations to attend your worship services. Use foam door hangers from your local craft store. Be sure to include times of worship on the hanger. When the hangers are finished, hang them on doorknobs of neighborhood houses or in a multi-housing complex.
- 17. Pick up trash at a local park or schoolyard. Be sure to have plenty of gloves and trash bags on hand!
- 18 Fill a cooler with canned soft drinks. Hand them out to men and women who are working outdoors. Invite the workers to attend your next worship service.
- Take donuts to your local police or fire station. Encourage the men and women who are working there to attend worship services when their schedule allows.
- 20. Collect gently used children's picture and chapter books. Design a label with a Bible verse to put on the inside cover of each book. Donate the books to a preschool, after-school program, or boys and girls club.
- 21. Order the Serve Globally Prayer Calendar from CovBooks.com. Cut out photographs of missionaries. Cover the cutouts with clear contact paper, and add a magnet to the back. Put the magnet on the refrigerator to remember to pray for the missionary each day.
- 22. During a church business meeting, while the adults are busy making plans, bake cookies for area business owners. Call it "Love Your Community" night. Your business meetings will have a very sweet smell!
- 23. Bring a bit of springtime indoors for senior adults in a long-term care facility. Decorate grapevine wreaths with artificial springtime flowers and ribbon. Deliver the wreaths to nursing homes to be hung on patients' door.



Introduction (5 MINUTES)

Play "Questions Only," a fast-moving game designed to get everyone talking. It's a way to get students in the mode of asking questions, rather than doing all the talking when they interact with others. The object is to be the last one standing by carrying on a fast conversation by only asking questions.

RULES: You can only respond to the other person with a question. You must respond immediately. Any longer than a second and you're out. If you respond with a statement (i.e., you answer the question), you're out.

OPTION 1: Get in pairs. As soon as one person is out, the winner finds a new person who's still in the game and immediately starts the second round. This continues until there's one student left standing.

OPTION 2: Form a circle and have the leader ask the person on their left and they ask the person on their left, etc. Or you can randomly ask people in the circle by name. As soon as a person is out, they move out of the circle and play continues until there's one student left.

We've been working our way through BLESS. Today we're talking about the final letter, "S" which stands for "Share Your Story." The Questions Only game we just played is a great way to introduce another question: how do you respond when someone asks you, "So, what's your story?"

Everybody has a story. The key thing about your story is that it's *your* story. People may argue about the existence of God or whether the Bible is true, but it is difficult to argue with someone about what God has done in their life. Your story may be full of fireworks and massive life changes, or it may be a quiet one where God has steadily been at work since you were a little kid. The important thing about telling your story is that it be real and honest.

Digging Deeper (10 MINUTES)

Look at the Share Your Story situations on page 11 of your Student Journal. Choose one of these stories and think about how you would respond if you were actually in that situation. Share your response with your group.

Choose volunteers to read scripture passages aloud.



Share Your Story Situations

- Anthony was in the church nursery six days after he was born. Until recently, he couldn't remember a day in his twelve years of life when he didn't know that he is loved by God and wanted to follow him. But lately, he's beginning to question if what he's always believed is really true. He asks you, "How do you know God loves you?"
- 2. Alyssa's parents used to drop her off at church and then go out for pancakes on Sunday mornings. When she started sixth grade, Alyssa finally quit going to church. Now she's exploring other religions of the world to see which one might fit her. Right now, she says she is spiritual but not religious. She asks you why you go to church.
- 3. Lucas was active in his church's youth group through ninth grade. Then he started taking pain pills that he got from a couple of friends. He became addicted and ended up in a rehab facility. Now as he tries coming back to youth group, he is wondering whether Jesus really does forgive him for his decisions. He asks you if you have made mistakes, and how you know God loves you.
- 4. The group you sit with at lunch is becoming pretty good friends, and they are starting to have some very real and honest conversations. One day a couple of them disclose that they are often overwhelmed with anxiety about how they're going to pay for college, family pressure, and more. They say they feel a sense of hopelessness, and one of them looks at you and remarks that you seem different, like you're peaceful. "What's your story?" they ask.

Jesus and the Woman from Samaria (20 MINUTES)

So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon.

When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)

Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

"Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?"

Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water."

He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back."

"I have no husband," she replied. Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband.

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What you have just said is quite true."

"Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem."

"Woman," Jesus replied, "believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth."

The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us."

Then Jesus declared, "I, the one speaking to you—I am he."

Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked, "What do you want?" or "Why are you talking with her?"

Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?" They came out of the town and made their way toward him.

The story continues a few verses later.

Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did." So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. And because of his words many more became believers.

They said to the woman, "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world." (JOHN 4:5-30, 39-42, NIV)

Many Samaritans from that city believed in Jesus because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I have ever done." This woman in this story is sometimes seen as having a pretty rough life since she has had five husbands besides the man she's living with now. But we don't know her real story: perhaps her husbands died in battle or because of illness. When we hear someone else's story, we have to be careful not to judge, but instead, like Jesus, we enter into conversation with them. It's when people encounter Jesus that their lives begin to change.

DISCUSSION

- Who are the key characters in this story? What do we know about them? Is there one person or group you connect with in the story? Why?
- 2. Why is it a big deal that Jesus went to Samaria and that he was talking to a woman? (See Lesson 2 in the pre-CHIC curriculum for possible answers.) chicconference.org/pre-curriculum
 - 3. When Jesus asks the woman for a drink, it starts a conversation. What are some questions you can use to start a spiritual conversation?
 - 4. What is the "aha" moment for the woman when she's talking to Jesus? How do you think her life changed because of it?



- The woman's story caught the attention of the people in her village, and they became curious about Jesus.
 What is it about your story that might make someone interested in learning more about Jesus?
- 6. In the end, the woman's story pointed people to Jesus—and their lives changed. How does your story point to Jesus?

What's Your Story? (15 MINUTES)

There's no such thing as a perfect story. Your story is important because it's yours. When you are honest, your friends can connect to it. Use the questions in your Student Journal to form an outline to help you write out your story.

After five minutes of writing, ask students to share their stories. Set a timer for three minutes per person, and make sure everyone has a chance to share.

- What were you like before you met Jesus? If you don't remember a time that you didn't know him, move on to the next question.
- 2. What made you decide to follow Christ? Or, why do you keep following Jesus?
- 3. How is your life different because you're a Christian?

- 4. Think of a story-ending question. The Samaritan woman told her story to her community and ended with the question, "He cannot be the Messiah, can he?" What's a good question you can end your story with that turns it back to the listener?
- OPTIONAL: Check out James Choung's "The Big Story" for how to understand the gospel and how to share Jesus's story of how he is changing the world. covchurch.org/the-big-story

ACTION PLAN (5 MINUTES)

Use the space provided in your Student Journal to make a list of two to five friends with whom you want to share your story in the next month. Use the FRANC list you made earlier for inspiration. As you're brushing your teeth in the morning, use that as a cue to remember to pray for an opportunity to share your story with one of those friends.

Closing Praver

(5 minutes) Pray in pairs for one person on the list you just made.

CLOSE BY SAYING THIS PRAYER TOGETHER AS A GROUP:

Lord, you are changing our lives through your deep love for us and by your Spirit who indwells all who love and follow you. Whom do you want us to bless this week? Open our eyes to see who you want us to share our story of how you are working in our lives and in the world. Deepen our relationships with those who do not know you, that we might have the privilege of blessing them and, in time, introducing them to Jesus.

B S E w NEXT STEPS

