
Surprise the World: Leader Discussion Guide

The Five Habits of Highly Missional People



Introduction

Read this to the Group:

Picture this. You are in a service where a church has brought in a special evangelist to teach the audience how to reach out and win people to Jesus. After an extremely charismatic message and some rousing testimonies of some crazy God-moments, you think to yourself, “Wow! That story was amazing! I can’t believe that God actually did that in their life! I wish that I could do that!”. But as you leave, you quickly realize that you can’t reproduce anything that the speaker just mentioned. Or maybe you have tried, but feel like it didn’t have the same effect that the speaker had.

Well don’t feel too down. Of course the evangelist makes it sound easy and his stories are really great, because his gifting is in evangelism. For many of us, that is our idea of what evangelism looks like. However, if we let that paint the picture of what its like to reach people of Jesus, one of a two things will happen. One, we will try to do the *exact* same thing that speaker spoke about, but lack the same results. Or two, we will feel so overwhelmed with the idea of repeating the things that were just spoken that we freeze in fear and do nothing at all. In both instances, we feel like we have somehow failed or don’t know how to reach people with our faith.

The fact is that we all recognize the need to live generous, hospitable, Spirit-led, Christlike lives as witnesses of Jesus to our campus or neighbors. We want to live our faith out in the open for all to see. But how do we do that? How do we live a life that is uncompromising of the Gospel, yet relatable enough to reach even the person who seems the farthest removed from God? Hopefully, this discussion guide can help us figure that out as we look at what Scripture has to say about living our faith out in this world, discuss these implications out as a group, and then actually carry them out together.

Week 1: Living Surprising Lives

Opening Discussion/Questions: Can you think of a time in your life that seeing someone live out their faith in an everyday way that has impacted you?

Read *Titus 2:1-10*.

Read this to the group:

Notice how Paul concludes the list that he is writing to a young pastor named Titus. “So that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive” (v. 10). This attractiveness isn’t a watering down or changing the Gospel so more people will come to faith. The attractiveness comes by seeing lives that have purpose and are fulfilling, yet go way beyond ourselves.

Nothing would be more surprising in the first century than a slave who loved his master, or a self-controlled young man, or an old woman who didn’t engage in slander. In other words, this was Paul’s recipe for a surprising life in his time. Our challenge is to find what similarly surprising lives look like in the twenty first century.

With all the best intentions in the world, some people will tell you that every Christian is an evangelist and bears the responsibility to share Christ with others. Most every Christian would agree that the latter part of that statement (that we bear responsibility to share our love for Jesus with others). But the first part of the statement is unhelpful, and quite frankly, not true.

Discussion Questions:

1. Read *Ephesians 4:10-16*. Why do you think some are evangelists and others are not? Have you ever felt guilty for not being “evangelistic”?
2. Do you know anyone who is gifted in that manner?

Read this to the Group:

While evangelism is an essential gifting for all churches, it isn’t a gifting to every believer. However, believers were to conduct themselves in such a way and devote themselves to prayer so that the lives that they lived would provoke unbelievers to question their beliefs and enter into dialogue about faith. In other words, Scripture seems to point to us all living life *evangelistically*.

Read these Scriptures:

“Live wisely among those who are not believers, and make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be gracious and attractive so that you will have the right response for everyone.”

- Colossians 4:5-6

“Instead, you must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if someone asks about your hope as a believer, always be ready to explain it. But do this in a gentle and respectful way. Keep your conscience clear. Then if people speak against you, they will be ashamed when they see what a good life you live because you belong to Christ.”

- 1 Peter 3:15-16

Discussion Questions:

1. What do these passages instruct believers to do?
2. How do you see these passages shaping the way believers should live out their faith?
3. What would your relationships with the people around you change if you modeled your life after these passages?

Read this to the Group:

Scripture seems to be asking us to live lives that are surprising. Not surprising in the sense of compromising morality or flirting with the edge of sinful activity. On the contrary, Scripture instructs us to live lives that are so different from the people around us, that it causes unbelievers to question the way we live. Why do we do things so differently from them? **The Bible indicates that we live this way for the gospel to be attractive to those who do not believe the gospel.**

The fact is, gifted evangelists telling us we should act like gifted evangelists has a debilitating effect. We look at confident, articulate, theologically trained evangelists preaching in churches, and we hear their stories of sharing the gospel, then we hear them tell us we, too, can (and indeed, should) do what they do — and we freeze! We know we can't do what they do.

But the notice Paul doesn't tell the recipients of his letters to preach like he did. He doesn't berate them for not creating opportunities for bold, clear proclamation. However, he does want them to talk about Jesus, but as we've seen, he assumes it should be in the context of wise socializing, prompted by the questions of others.

Discussion Questions:

1. How could we live surprising lives to the world around us?
2. How do you think living this way would affect the people around you?

Ending the Discussion:

Finish by praying together. Ask God to show you ways that you could live surprising lives together so that you can make the Gospel attractive to people how do not believe yet. Encourage your group to write down and share any ideas that may come to them in the next week.

Week 2: Developing Missional Habits

Opening Discussion/Questions:

We have all probably been part of a short-term or one time initiatives to better ourselves or to improve the world. Maybe that was a mission trip, or outreach, or a New Year's resolution. Why do these things tend to never catch traction and stick around as regular practice? **Because they are not habits that we have cultivated in life.** Whether you realize it or not, we all have habits that we have developed in our life (whether they be good or bad) and we live out of those habits.

1. What "short-term or one- time initiative have you been part of? (Outreach, service project)?
2. What long-term changes did those projects or initiatives have?

Have somebody from the group read this:

For most people, these events may have a tremendous long term effect, but that doesn't negate their importance or effort. But what we are addressing here is something different: **the challenge of finding regular rhythms or habits that transform our everyday lifestyles.**

That is why it is essential to develop habits in our lives that are going to help foster activity and mindsets that are missional. By missional, we simply mean that all we do and say alerts others about Jesus and the lives that we live. A good example is the discipline of having a "quiet time" or "devotional life" with God. Certainly most any Christian would agree that having a set time where we are focusing on God, His word, and prayer is important, but where does the Bible talk about a mandated quiet time that has to be spent on a daily basis with God? Well, there isn't a place in Scripture that gives us that specific command. However, there are Scriptures that point towards using our time to devote ourselves to God's word and thinking on the things of God.

So we develop the *habit* spending time in the Bible and prayer to have a devotional life. The same is true of our faith and mission. We must develop habits in our life that are going to place us in a position to live our faith in a way that shares Jesus with others around us.

Discussion Questions:

- 1. What are some habits in your life that you have developed?**
- 2. Do these habits help or hinder living on mission with Jesus?**
- 3. Read 1 Peter 3:15-16 and Colossians 4:5-6 again. What kind of habits can you see that need to be developed if we live out these passages?**

Read this to the Group:

Last week we talked about living lives that are surprising to the people around us. If doing one thing for someone would surprise them, what would it be like if we did that kind of thing all the time? Of course, this is not a “fix it all” solution. We are not dependent on a system or an idea, we are dependent on Jesus. **But if we want to live for Jesus in a way that reaches those around us, we have to not just learn the principles that Scripture lays out, we need to foster them and implement them into our lives.**

Have somebody from the group read this:

“Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” - Galatians 6:2

**“And do not forget to do good and share with others,
for with such sacrifices God is pleased” -Hebrews 13:6**

**“Kind word are like honey sweet to the soul and healthy for the body”
- Proverbs 16:24**

**“Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality”
-Romans 12:13**

Discussion Questions:

- 1. In your own words, what are these verses telling us we should do? What are some practical examples of how you can fulfill these verses?**
- 2. As you read these verses, what stories or examples of someone that has done these things for you come to mind? What impact did that make on you?**

Ending the Discussion:

Take a few minutes to reflect and list some ways that you could develop some missional habits. Once you have made your lists, take some time to pray for God to help you implement some of the ideas that your group has come up with. Challenge each member to think of the regular habits they have made in their life and how they could use those habits to reach others.

As we move forward with these discussion, we will be looking at 5 specific habits **(B.E.L.L.S. : Bless, Eat, Listen, Learn, Sent)** that will help foster missional activity in our lives to reach people with the Gospel in our everyday lives.

Week 3: Bless - The First Habit

Read this to the Group:

The first habit we want to consider embracing is the that of blessing others. Have you ever heard the expression of something giving you “a shot in the arm”? Something that gives you “a shot in the arm” is something that helps you, encourages you, or motivates you towards a given goal. Think of blessing others as giving them a “shot in the arm”. Anything that helps relieve a burden, anything that helps lift up someone’s spirit or alleviates distress is what it means to bless someone. It can be big or small, it’s the thought and care that means more than the actual blessing itself.

Discussion Questions:

1. **When is a time that someone blessed you and it gave you a shot in the arm (encouraged you and lifted your spirits)?**
2. **Read Philippians 2:4. What are some ways that we can “look to the needs of others”?**
3. **Read Proverbs 3:27. What are ways that we withhold good from someone?**

Have somebody from the group read this:

There are numerous ways that you can bless somebody, but we are going to look at three specific kind of ways: **Words of Affirmation, Acts of Kindness, and Gifts.**

Words of Affirmation is probably one of the easiest ways to bless people. This may look like sending them a note, writing them an email, sending a text message, or verbally affirming them. Let them know that you noticed something worthwhile and good that they did. It is so encouraging to be told you are doing something well!

Acts of Kindness are another powerful blessing to others. This could be helping a friend move, making a meal for someone, helping pay for an expense, offering to pray for them for a current situation. Who doesn’t feel blessed when someone does a favor or provides some kind of practical support?

Gifts can be incredibly meaningful to the recipient. The recipient of a gift thrives on the love, thoughtfulness, and effort behind a gift. Gifts show people that you know them, you value them, and you care for them. Gifts come in all shapes and sizes. Some are free, some cost something, but either way they are worth the investment.

Discussion Questions:

- 1. Read Proverbs 16:24 and Proverbs 18:21. When was a time that somebody's words of affirmation or encouragement were like "honey to your soul"? Why do you think our words are so important to others?**
- 2. Read Proverbs 3:3 and Ephesians 4:32. What examples do you have of someone doing an Act of Kindness for you?**
- 3. What was the best gift you ever received from someone? How did it make you feel when you received that gift?**

Read this to the Group:

A few words of caution when blessing people. **We are not blessing people as a means to an end. We aren't simply blessing people just so that we can get on their good side and maybe convince them that Jesus is pretty cool.** That's manipulation. We bless others because God has blessed us, no strings attached. It's the kindness of God that brings people to the kingdom, not our gifts. Remember *Philippians 2:3-4: "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not look to your own interests but each of you to the interest of the others"*. Something that Chi Alpha says often is this: **"Love sees a need and meets it"**.

Even if no one asks us about our motivations, we resolve to live out a habitual rhythm of gift giving, time spending, and affirmation sharing. We will be humble, gentle, loving, and consistent. Bear in mind the proverb, **"If anyone loudly blesses their neighbor early in the morning, it will be taken as a curse"**. No, this proverb isn't saying don't ever bless someone until after 12pm. It is simply saying that the act of blessing must be considerate to achieve its purpose.

Ending the Discussion:

Take some time to pray together and ask God how your group can bless people this week. Maybe even make a list of ways that you can record to help you think through ways to bless people throughout the week.

Challenge This Week:

Challenge each member to bless two people this week, one Christian and someone who is not yet a Christian. Remember, blessing someone doesn't take a full wallet, it just takes a full heart. Have your group find a partner or two and work together to bless someone this week!

Week 4: Eat - The Second Habit

Opening Question:

1. What is a time that someone has shown you incredible hospitality?
2. Did that hospitality involve food?

Have somebody from the group read this:

One of the earliest practices of the early church was something called Love Feasts. Today we know this as Communion. But unlike most of our experience with Communion, the Love Feasts were quite different. Love Feasts would be full meals that Christians would come together and eat in celebratory remembrance of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the book of Acts, it talks about how God's people came around the table regularly to eat together and fellowship.

The point is that eating has been a central Christian practice since the beginning of the Church. But not only eating in a sacramental way like Communion, but also in a missional way to express love for all.

Discussion Questions:

1. Read Acts 2:46-47. Why do you think eating is such a big deal in the Bible?
2. What is a time that you felt close with someone while sharing a meal with them?

Read this to the Group:

The invitation to share a table is a profoundly meaningful one in every culture. The table is the great equalizer in relationships. When we eat together we discover the humanity of everyone, we share stories, we share hopes, we share fears. Sharing a meal shows that you are interested in that person and you accept them. That's why the Pharisees got so mad at Jesus for eating with drunkards, prostitutes, and tax collectors. **In their eyes, Jesus was accepting their life of sin. In Jesus' eyes, He was letting them witness the Kingdom that would deliver them from their sin.**

Discussion Questions:

- 1. Read Matthew 9:9-13. What was Jesus doing in this particular Scripture?**
- 2. How did Jesus respond to the criticism of the Pharisees?**
- 3. Read Matthew 11:19 & Luke 7:34. Jesus is called a “Friend of Sinners”, “drunkard”, and “glutton”. What do those names imply about how Jesus spent His time?**

Have somebody from the group read this:

Obviously, Jesus wasn't a drunkard or glutton. But He was a friend to the people who were not yet followers of Him. Jesus saw that there was nothing inherently evil in eating with someone who isn't a Christian, or that by eating with them you would somehow be affected by their sin. Jesus saw this as an opportunity to share life, offer help, and build a relationship. Fostering this kind of habit of eating with people can have similar results. The idea isn't to preach at them during dinner, or to be anxious the whole time worrying about whether or not they get saved that night. You are simply just sharing a meal to get to know that person, share life, and look for ways to share hope with them as your conversations go on.

Discussion Questions:

- 1. Who do you normally eat with? How could you change up when, where, or how you eat so that you could eat with others?**
- 2. Do you think your friends (especially those who don't follow Jesus) would be open to having a meal with you?**

Ending the discussion:

End the discussion by asking everyone to write down their lunch/dinner schedule and see if there is a time that you all could eat together as a family. (You may have to try to have two different groups meet throughout the week if you have a larger group).

Challenge This Week:

- **Eat with 2 people this week**, one being a Christian and one being someone who does not yet follow Jesus. Remember, you don't have to try and pull off a huge party.

Everyone eats throughout the week, you are just trying to invite people into your life to eat with you. **Get with a partner or two and eat with people this week!**

Extra Challenge (continue the other challenges):

- **Bless 2 people this week** (one who is a Christian, and one who is not yet a Christian).

You can do this together again with a partner or two.

Week 5: Listen - The Third Habit

Opening Questions/Discussion:

1. Have a few people share about a time that they really needed to hear something that was being said, but noise prevented them from hearing.

Read this to the Group:

Have you ever listened to a radio or television for something important, but due to the noise around, you weren't able to truly hear what was being said? Whether it was a bad connection, music in the house, or people yelling around you, there was just too much interference for you to focus on what was being said.

For many people, listening to the Holy Spirit is like trying to hear a radio in a busy coffee shop. You can make out a faint noise, but there is no clarity to what is being heard. This is the same situation that exists when you try to listen to the Holy Spirit with too many people or things offering interference. We need a time and place to unplug, and turn off the distractions. This is vitally important as followers of Jesus because we don't want to be guided by any other voice or leading other than God. The Holy Spirit is an indispensable source of wisdom and strength to us as Christians. **How are we to know how to navigate our way through the world, eating with and blessing unbelievers, without the Spirit's voice to guide us away from falling into sin?**

Have someone turn to Mark 1:35-39 and read that passage. Then consider this passage below:

In one of the villages, Jesus met a man with an advanced case of leprosy. When the man saw Jesus, he bowed with his face to the ground, begging to be healed. "Lord," he said, "if you are willing, you can heal me and make me clean." Jesus reached out and touched him. "I am willing," he said. "Be healed!" And instantly the leprosy disappeared. Then Jesus instructed him not to tell anyone what had happened. He said, "Go to the priest and let him examine you. Take along the offering required in the law of Moses for those who have been healed of leprosy. This will be a public testimony that you have been cleansed." But despite Jesus' instructions, the report of his power spread even faster, and vast crowds came to hear him preach and to be healed of their diseases.

-Luke 5:12-15

Have somebody from the group read this:

What's really interesting is the response of Jesus to the high demand of ministry that was coming His way. In this passage, Jesus started in a quiet place alone with God (*Mark 1:35*). He then went to many different towns to preach the Kingdom of God to the people, cast out demons, and heal the sick among them. (*Mark 1:35-40*). He soon created so much buzz that he couldn't even walk into a town without being bombarded by people. His response was not to find more time to do ministry, He responded by finding more time to pray. "*But Jesus often withdrew to the wilderness for prayer*" (*Luke 5:16*). Jesus found it completely necessary to get alone or get alone with His disciples and pray. If we are to be the most effective to our campus and world around us, we must be people who do the same.

Discussion Questions:

1. **Do you find it hard to hear the the voice of the Holy Spirit?**
2. **What challenges do you face in setting aside time to listen for the Spirit's voice? What would help protect this habit?**
3. **Do you find solitude, silence, and prayer to be enriching or intimidating? Both? Neither? What about this habits appeals to you?**

Read this to the Group:

As we foster our habits of generosity and hospitality, we must be intentionally nurturing and sustained by the disciplines of solitude, silence, and prayer. While listening to the Spirit's voice, try to turn off all distractions and unnecessary noises. Worship music and friends can help, but often times they can hinder us from really hearing from God. Why not try to truly get alone and just listen? Jesus even tells us to "*go in your room, close the door and pray...in secret*" (*Matthew 6:6*). I'm not talking about half a day of silence or anything. Try to pick one day where you set aside 15-30 minutes where you just listen for God (let's not kind ourselves, well all at least 15 minutes in the day). Try to come and spend a good chunk of that time just in silence listening for God to speak to you. Often times, you'll find during your listening God will often give you people to bless and to eat with for that week. Listening to the Holy Spirit can become a source of comfort, peace, answers, and direction for you daily life.

Discussion Questions:

1. **Why do you think Jesus found it important to be alone with God?**
2. **When do you think the best time for you would be to set aside to listen to the Spirit?**
3. **Does anyone have a story of a time that setting a time to listen to God has really helped you?**

Ending the discussion:

Take 5 minutes and practice listening for the Holy Spirit. After about 5 minutes, ask if anyone has anything they feel that God was sharing with them. (This will feel really awkward because we aren't used to silence, but push through). Finish by praying for help cultivating a time each week where you all can listen to the Holy Spirit.

Challenge for the week:

- **Listen to the Holy Spirit** at least one period of time this week. Having a pen and paper to write down anything God may share with you is a good idea. (Avoid a phone or laptop to write down things to help avoid distractions). **Spend time listening to the Spirit!**

Previous Week's Challenges:

- **Bless 2 people this week** (one who is a Christian, and one who is not yet a Christian).

You can do this together again with a partner or two.

- **Eat with 2 people this week**, one being a Christian and one being someone who does not yet follow Jesus.

Week 6: Learn Christ - The Fourth Habit

Opening Discussion/Questions:

1. What is one of your favorite stories about Jesus from the Bible?
2. What would you like to know better about Jesus and His life?

Read this to the Group:

The expression “to learn Christ” was a common one among the earliest Christians, but its not a phrase we use much these days. In the early centuries of the Christian movement, conversion involved denying the pagan gods and entering a period of catechism, committing oneself to an intensive study of the person and work of Jesus. Although the entire act of catechism may not be necessary for us, it would do us well to institute a habit of studying the Gospels and becoming very familiar with the person of Jesus. Our whole way of life and everything we believe is revolves around Jesus!

If we are being sent into the world to live intriguing and surprising lives, arouse curiosity, and answer people’s inquires about the hope that we have within, we need more than ever to know what Jesus would do or say in any circumstance.

This fourth habit that is being recommended is to “Learn Christ”. “Learning Christ” is not just another way of telling us to simply read our Bible and have a quiet time. Those are good habits (and needed habits) to have, but in order to “learn Christ” we need to commit ourselves to actually studying Jesus. We don’t just read the Gospels to check a box, we read about Jesus to see how He lives, how He reacts, how He teaches.

Consider the passage below:

"I am the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn't produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more. You have already been pruned and purified by the message I have given you. Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me. "Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing. Anyone who does not remain in me is thrown away like a useless branch and withers. Such branches are gathered into a pile to be burned. But if you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted! When you produce much fruit, you are my true disciples. This brings great glory to my Father. "I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love. When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father's commandments and remain in his love." -John 15:1-10

Discussion Questions:

1. What do you see as the difference between reading (or studying) the Bible and "learning Christ"?
2. What do you find intriguing about Jesus based on what you already have read and know about Him?
3. How do you think we "remain in His love"? Compare John 15:9-10 with John 14:15. What does Jesus say we will do if we love Him?

Have somebody from the group read this:

For anyone who has spent any time in a church, I'm sure you've heard a dozen messages or more about Jesus being the "Vine". As familiar as that may sound, it is so incredibly important for us to grasp on to. If a branch is severed from the vine, then the branch will get no nutrients, or life. The same is true of our relationship with Jesus. Jesus commands us keep His commandments and teachings. Even the Great Commission says *"Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you"* (Matthew 28:19-20a). But if we are to keep Jesus' commands and teach others, we ourselves first have to learn about Jesus. We need to be people that know the gospels like the back of our hands!

Here are some practical ways to be able to “learn Jesus” that are simple, yet very effective:

1. **Study the gospels.** Read, reread, and reread the four gospels in the Bible. You may have done that before, but try to get in the habit of constantly revisiting the Gospels and letting your thoughts marinate on the teachings of Jesus.
2. **Read about Jesus.** There are SO MANY good books that have been written that focus on Jesus! Why not try to pick up a book that teaches about the person, life, and teachings of Jesus?
3. **Other methods.** Other methods of learning about Jesus is looking for movies or short videos that talk about Jesus.

You’ll find that when you intentionally set out to “learn Christ” and let your life and thoughts marinate on Jesus, your life begins to revolve and shape itself around Jesus. You’ll become deeply familiar with his story so that you can share it whenever anyone asks you for the reason for the hope that you have (*1 Peter 3:15*).

Discussion Questions:

1. **What are some ways you have found helpful to “remain in the Vine”?**
2. **Are there any ways that you haven’t tried, but sound interesting to try?**
3. **How could you better “learn Christ” this week?**

Ending the Discussion:

Bring the discussion to a close by praying for each other and asking Jesus to help you better know Him. Ask Jesus to teach you more about Him so that you can be more like Him in every circumstance in life.

Challenge for the week:

- **Learn about Jesus** at least once this week. Read from the Gospels, start reading a book about Jesus, or watch a video/film about Jesus.

Challenges from previous weeks:

- **Bless 2 people this week** (one who is a Christian, and one who is not yet a Christian). You can do this again with a partner or two.
- **Eat with 2 people this week**, one being a Christian and one being someone who does not yet follow Jesus. You can do this again with a partner or two.
- **Listen to the Holy Spirit** at least one period of time this week.

Week 7: Sent - The Fifth Habit

Opening Discussion/Questions:

1. Have a few people from the group share about their experiences of trying the other four habits that we have talked about during the last few weeks (Bless, Eat, Listen, Learn).
2. Have you been able to have conversations with someone or surprise someone with the things you've done?

Have somebody read Proverbs 27:19 and Psalm 90:12:

"As water reflects the face, so one's life reflects the heart" -Proverbs 27:19

"Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom" - Psalm 90:12

These verses are particularly relevant when it comes to this last habit we are trying to cultivate. As *Proverbs 27:19* states, what is truly in the center of our heart will be evident by what our life looks like. If we wonder what we value and hold dear, we need not look farther than how we are using our time. The Psalmist in *Psalm 90:12* tells us that we need to *"number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom"*. We need a method that we can *"number our days"* or make the most of our time so that we can learn from our victories, failures, hard times, and everything in-between. That is why for this final habit, we want to foster the habit of being **sent**. We want to cultivate a habit that helps us think through and see how God has been working in us and through us. This isn't about puffing up our ego or bragging on ourselves, we do this so that we can see how God is using us throughout our daily lives! There are several ways you can reflect (verbally process with a friend, journal, go to a quiet place and think, etc), but whatever way you choose do something natural to you and sustainable.

Discussion Questions:

1. How has God sent you this week? What has He done in you or through you?
2. How do you think that reflecting on being sent can help us *"number our days?"* What are some ways that you can reflect on being sent by God?

Why Do We Need This?

Why do you need to reflect on your experience? Reflecting is more than just a way of thinking through things: **it will help you recognize God at work in your world and help you remember ways that you were able to show people what God is like.**

1. Reflecting will help you process thought the events of the week to help you put meaning to the actions you showed
2. It will help you make sense of God's work. Sometimes with life moving so fast, you can see how God is working. But when you take time to reflect, it slows things down for you to connect dots.
3. Reflecting helps you gain insights. Journaling may be a helpful way of reflecting because we are all better students when we're taking notes. Writing things down helps us remember the things God has done and gives us a better understanding of how He is working.
4. Reflecting leads us to ask important questions. Why did God work this way and not another? How did my actions affect the people around me? What other ways could I show Christ in this situation?

Read this to the group:

Why do we have tests? At some point in our learning, we need something that shows us if we are truly getting the material that is being taught. Reflecting is a test for our lives to see if our lives are lining up with that which Jesus is asking of us. Remember *Proverbs 27:19*, "*As water reflects the face, so one's life reflects the heart*". Reflecting on being sent is the water that is reflecting our face. It helps us see what works and what doesn't work. Reflecting helps us keep accountable and constantly testing our lives against Scripture to see if our lives are truly reflecting Christ.

The point of this fifth habit is not give us a fifth thing to do or to end the acronym B.E.L.L.S. with it's "S". The point is to help us reshape the way we identify ourselves around the calling of Jesus' disciples and being sent by God. By fostering the habit of briefly journaling the various ways (large and small) in which you alerted others to God's reign of reconciliation, justice, beauty, and wholeness, you will find yourself increasingly identifying yourself as a sent one. And remember that you can alert others to these things both by talking about them (witness) and by demonstrating them (action).

Ending the discussion:

Take some time to pray for each other. Ask God to help each member to see themselves as people who are sent by God and have the mission of showing the Kingdom of God in their everyday life.

Challenge this week:

- **Sent.** Try to set aside a time you can reflect and record the ways you are showing Christ to those around you. This may work best at the beginning of the week to reflect on the previous 7 days.

Challenges from previous weeks:

- **Bless 2 people this week** (one who is a Christian, and one who is not yet a Christian). You can do this again with a partner or two.
- **Eat with 2 people this week**, one being a Christian and one being someone who does not yet follow Jesus. You can do this again with a partner or two.
- **Listen to the Holy Spirit** at least one period of time this week.
- **Learn about Jesus** at least once this week.

Conclusion:

Read this to the Group:

As you may have noticed, to make these five commitments (blessing, eating, listening, learning, sent) a set of habits, we need to stick with them for an extended period of time. But remember, these things you are trying to foster are not just busy work, nor are they distasteful or unpleasant. *Blessing* people is personally *satisfying*. *Eating* with others is *fun*. *Listening* to the Spirit and *learning* about Jesus is *spiritually enriching*. And *reflecting on being sent* and the various ways you alert others to God is *encouraging*.

You'll find as you commit to blessing people, you will become a very generous person. As you eat with people and open your home to people, you will become a very hospitable person. As you listen to the Spirit and learn about Jesus, you'll find that you are increasingly becoming a person who depends on Jesus, and as you reflect on being sent you will see more clearly the way God is using you and impacting those around you.

This is not a flawless system, nor is this a "five step program" that will guarantee your "fifty new disciples in 7 weeks or your money back." These are simply habits that help open doors for us to be able to express the love of God to the world around us, and adhere more closely to the teachings of Jesus. After all, its Jesus we depend on, not B.E.L.L.S. or any other kind of system. Why not give these habits a shot, and see what God does in you. *After that, understand that what God does in you, He then wants to do through you.*

Ideas for Blessing Others:

- Have your group offer to do yard work for someone that you know
- Write some encouraging notes to someone that is going through a hard time, focusing on affirming the good qualities you see in that person
- Take up a donation for someone who doesn't know Jesus who has a need that they need help paying.
- Offer to babysit a family's children so that parents can have a nice night together

Ideas for Eating with Others:

- Host a dinner at your house, dorm, or apartment
- Organize a day of the week to get lunch with people on campus
- Try a new restaurant around town with some friends, both Christians and non-believers)
- Have a bonfire where everyone brings snacks and food to share

Ideas to Help You Listen:

- Find a park you can go sit that has minimal distractions and is quiet
- Take a trip to the reservoir and find a place to sit along the water to listen to God.
- Get up earlier than your roommates and spend that time that is quiet to listen to God.
- Or wait until your roommates go to bed and take advantage of the quiet house to listen to God.
- Get a room in the library reserved so you could have some interrupted time listening to God

Resources to Learn:

Books about Jesus:

The Case for the Real Jesus by Lee Strobel

The Case for Christ by Lee Strobel

Encounters with Jesus by Tim Keller

The Imitation of Christ by Thomas a Kempis (available online pdf for free)

Simply Jesus by N.T. Wright

Videos/Films about Jesus:

The Bible Project (has videos speaking specifically on the Gospels)

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLH0Szn1yYNecanpQqdixWAm3zHdhY2kPR>

The Gospel of John

<https://youtu.be/47OkuvT5JFo>

The Life of Jesus Christ

<https://youtu.be/gvUcf5c1RUw>

Jesus

<https://youtu.be/W9UcImEiF9o>

Son of God (available to rent or buy).

Passion of the Christ (available to rent or buy)

Bible Studies about Jesus:

The Gospel of John

<http://ballstatechialpha.com/client/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/John-9-weeks.pdf>

The Gospel of Luke

<http://ballstatechialpha.com/client/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Luke-10-weeks.pdf>

Ideas for Reflecting being Sent:

Verbally Processing: Find a friend or people in your core group to talk about how God has used you and how He has worked in you during the week

Processing: Get alone and think through how God has used you this week, and ways He has been speaking to you (write them down if it will help you remember)

Journal:

Sample Journal Entry (for reflecting):

Monday: Today I was able to encourage a friend of mine who recently lost their grandparent. I did this by sharing how God can help bring comfort to them even in this time of grieving. My friend was very appreciative and I was able to pray with them.

Tuesday: I was able to host three of my friends from China who don't know Jesus yet. They brought some traditional Chinese food and I attempted to make a dish from China as well. My food wasn't great, but they really enjoyed and liked that I tried to be hospitable to them by trying to make food for them!

Wednesday: I didn't have a chance to share my faith with anyone today, but I did watch a video about the life of Jesus. The video revealed some things about Jesus' life that I had no idea about before! I think it could be good to share these things that I learned from the Jesus' video with my friends.

Thursday: Today I tried to bless my Christian friend, Scott, with some peanut M&M's. Unfortunately, he was allergic to peanuts, so he wasn't able to eat them. He was grateful I had thought of him in that way though! I will have to remember that next time, and I will get him regular M&M's.

Friday: I took some time today to listen to the Spirit by going to a nearby park and sitting on a bench on my own. It was really cool because I felt like I connected with God in a way that I wouldn't have if I wouldn't have went to be by myself away from my distractions.