

NOTES FOR SMALL GROUP LEADERS | W/C 15 OCTOBER BLESS #2 | Begin With Prayer

Planning your evening

This is the first evening that includes the '*Who have you BLESSED this week?*' question at the start of the evening. The accountability this provides is crucial to pursuing the BLESS practices together, so please do make sure you lead with this question and encourage people to share, even if it doesn't feel very significant to them. It would be best if you, as the leader, have something to share here.

These notes have been written before the Sunday talk to which they relate (from 14 October) so there may be things that you have noted from the Sunday talk that you would like to discuss with your group – that is, of course, fine! Everything in these notes is a suggestion – so feel free to run your session in the way you think will work best for your group.

On this particular evening, it would be good to spend longer than usual on the 'Prayer' section – suggestions in the notes.

Sharing stories

People's stories are powerful (and a key part of BLESS) so please do keep having the story slot where one or two in the group have the opportunity to share their story that they have prepared using the guidelines emailed previously.

We would also really appreciate hearing any stories that emerge from your group, as well as feedback on the materials we're providing throughout the series. Please share stories and feedback with us, either through your Cluster Leader or by emailing sgc@kchw.co.uk

Through the 'King's News' section at the end, we will aim to keep you informed of things that are coming up so you can remind your people about them.

We're continuing to pray for you and trust you will have a good and fruitful time together!

Starting Out

OPENING QUESTION

Who have you BLESSED this week?

WORSHIP SUGGESTION

Read Psalm 100 and encourage people to bring words and shouts of praise and thanksgiving.

PERSONAL STORIES

Someone in the group (asked in advance) shares their 3-minute story. Following this, ask for a volunteer(s) for next week.

Video Content

Richard's story and group discussion between John Harbour, Neil Bartlett and Ruth Wainman that will focus on some of the areas for discussion below.

Discussion & Reflection

OPENING QUESTIONS

1. When have you been blessed by others praying for you? What difference do you think it made?
2. When have you seen God answer prayer?

IN THE BIBLE

1. Read Luke 6:12-16. Use your imaginations – what do you think a night of prayer looked like for Jesus? Quiet or noisy? Joyful or serious? Would He have fallen asleep?

Leaders' notes: It might be helpful here to think of the Trinity – Father, Son & Holy Spirit – three Persons, one God – eternally loving and delighting in one another. Although it's a difficult doctrine to get our heads round, it is at the centre of who God is – He was loving before there was a you or a world to love. Creation is an overflow of His love, joy and delight. We get a glimpse of this at Jesus' baptism (see Matt 3:16-17) – a Father proclaiming His utter love for His Son in the overwhelming joy of the Holy Spirit! If you put the Holy Spirit in the picture when imagining Jesus spending a night in prayer, does it change the scene in your mind?

2. How do the responses to the question above compare with your prayer life? What would happen if you spent a night in prayer?!
3. Why is prayer sometimes so difficult? What are the barriers to prayer in our lives?
4. It seems that the choice of the 12 disciples was a direct result of that night of prayer. When have you faced an important decision and spent time in prayer seeking God's guidance? What happened?

Leaders' notes: Probably worth bringing a bit of balance here – sometimes people can become paralysed by seeking God's explicit guidance in every area of life when He may just be saying, "It's your choice!" Without wanting to downplay the importance of seeking and hearing God's voice, here's an extract from Tim Keller's book 'Way of Wisdom' that brings some balance:

*"If you survey Proverbs for methods of discerning God's will, you will conclude that the book does not talk about **how** God guides as much as **whom** God*

guides. What modern people want is almost a form of magic. They want little signs and feelings in order to determine from God the right decision to make. But that is the way you may guide an infant, who cannot understand you and must be carried or led. The way you would guide a youth or adult is to speak to them so they understand and can make decisions without being led by the hand in every instance. Through a long path and a lot of work (Proverbs 1-4), we develop integrity and righteousness and it is through these character traits that God guides us. The more we know God, ourselves, the human heart, the order of creation, the times and seasons, the more we will have the wisdom to make good decisions. Modern people want a technique for guidance, "five steps to good decisions." God offers wise character, hard won over a lifetime."

5. In the context of BLESS, why do you think it's important to 'Begin with Prayer'?
6. Have you ever had a 'divine appointment' - an unexpected encounter/connection with someone that you sense in the moment has been arranged by God? Or where you have responded to a 'nudge of the Holy Spirit' to go and talk to someone? What happened?

Leaders' notes: The reason for asking about 'divine appointments' is that the 'Begin with Prayer' part of BLESS is not only about praying for those on your list - it is also about asking God each morning: "Who can I bless today? Who are you going to put across my path today? Help me to hear your voice and give me the courage to be obedient to your prompting..."

Prayer

- In 2s or 3s, spend some time going through the people on your BLESS list. Where do you see God already at work in their lives (this helps shape your prayers). Then pray for those people.
- Pray for opportunities to listen, eat together, serve and share your story with those on your list.
- Pray for divine appointments - "Help me to hear your voice and give me the courage to be obedient to your prompting..."

King's News

- If you have anyone in your group who is not a church member, we have an Exploring Church Membership morning coming up on Sunday 28 October from 9.30am - 1pm (*please note - this has changed from the original date of 21 October as laid out in 'Life at King's'*). Encourage them to attend and to email office@kchw.co.uk to let us know. (There will also be an ECM morning at Hazlemere on Sunday 2 December)
- We are running a marriage weekend away from 9-11 November - contact the church office to find out details and if there are still places available.