September 4/5, 2021

Coming Together to Help Others Do the Same

Faithfully Forward Series

Psalm 67:1-7

Pastor Josh Luse

We are so excited about some of the things coming up this fall as a church. This week will be the last week in our Faithfully Forward Series. If you've missed that, I encourage you to go back and catch up on the last four weeks. We're casting a vision for the future, moving forward as a church together.

Next week, we're really excited to jump back into our study of Acts. Bryan will be preaching, and we start into Paul's missionary journeys. It's going to be an amazing ride as we take this adventure together. We also have some great fall classes that are starting up. You can find more about those by looking at the fall session on the website. And our Life Group Session is about to start next week as well, as we study through Acts. So, we just are excited about what God is doing.

This morning, as we finish up our *Faithfully Forward Series*, we're going to be in the book of Psalms, Chapter 67. So, if you want to grab your Bible, you can turn to Psalm 67, and I'll share a little story as you do that.

I don't know if it's the same now, but back in the day, 20 years ago, when you were engaged to be married, there was one little part of a ritual that you got to join into. That was the wedding registry. I don't know how this works now—because this is 20 years ago for me—but now you probably do it all online. But back then, you would go to the store that you wanted to register for, and they would give you this little scanner, this little gun. And as they're explaining this to me, I'm thinking, "This is awesome; I'll take that thing." And so we get the scanner and they say, "Just go around and scan the stuff that you'd like to add to your list." And I'm like, "Is this Christmas?" So we started in, and I'm like, "Nerf Gun. Yeah. Pack of gum. Sure. I don't know what that is, but okay." My wife was like, "Okay, slow down…slow down." So we start going around, and she's getting, you know, blankets and dishes, and I'm like, power tools or video games or a video game console. And everything was going pretty good…until we got to B76. And we're going down the aisle at B76, and we stop in front of a hard-boiled egg slicer. And it starts to hit me. Everything I scan adds to a bigger list, so there's less chance that I'm going to get what I want—and I do not want a hard-boiled egg slicer. I'm doing fine with Ramen Noodles and canned goods right now. Why do we need an egg slicer in our marriage? Plus, I would much rather have a video game than an egg slicer. I can slice eggs myself. Well, my wife and I enter into this friendly discussion in B76 about why we need a hard-boiled egg slicer.

Well, long story short, we get to the wedding; we start opening up gifts. There is no video game console that comes through the wedding gifts. But there is another thing—a hard-boiled egg slicer! But there's one other thing that shows up in our wedding gifts that was not registered for. It's actually this pitcher vase. I didn't know it at that time, but this will become pretty significant in our marriage, in the way of life that we led—and I want to talk more about that later. So, remember that and maybe remind me at the end.

But before we go there, I want to turn to Psalm 67. Now there are a couple things that are helpful to know as we work through the psalm. The psalm has a pattern. It's a prayer or a song to be sung to the nation of Israel. But you see, it's a benediction. It's a prayer from their heart. And it's a poetic psalm, so it follows a certain classic structure which comes from the Greek word Chi and is made up of two lines crossing each other as in the shape of an X, and you'll notice as we go through this chapter, it has that same pattern. So, verses 1 and 2 are parallel to verses 6 and 7. And then verses 3 and 5 are not only parallel, but they're also identical. And then it's hinged in the middle at verse 4. And so I'm going to use that pattern as we go through this, this morning. Psalm 67, verse 1:

> **May God be gracious to us and bless us**
> **and make his face to shine upon us, *Selah***
> (*ESV, Psalm 67: 1)

Now ***Selah*** is there to allow us to pause and reflect. And I'm really glad that it is there at this point, because I can very quickly move past the words that we've just stated, but they are so important. **May God be gracious to us.** Always a starting point: God's grace, His mercy, His extensive graciousness in our lives. It was Charles Spurgeon who said it best in his *Treasury of David*:

> *Saints and the worst sinners unite on this petition. May I never forget my need for God's grace. I don't deserve it. I didn't do anything to earn it. I certainly can't do my life without it. And yet, God lavishly pours out His grace in my life. He pours it out just as deeply and freely today and tomorrow as he did on the first day that I chose to follow Jesus as my Savior.*

Not only that, he goes on to say, **May God be gracious to us, and bless us**. Boy, we get a lot of mileage out of the word **bless** these days, don't we? We see *#Bless* thrown up, which just basically, in essence, is somebody saying, "rich and fame," right? "Absorbing the spotlight."

When I was young, one of my friend's moms would always say, "Bless your heart." We knew it was just code for, "You idiot," because it would come right after we would say something stupid we had done. "Oh, bless your heart," right?

In Christian circles, we see people posting "*blessing*" and I think they actually mean bragging, but they say "*blessing,*" right? They're posting the latest trip or the latest upgrade that they've had or the new thing that they've got. I feel like that's the appropriate time to say the line from *The Princess Bride*, "You keep using that word, but I do not think it means what do you think it means."

So, what does "blessing" mean in this chapter? In the Old Testament, as we look at "blessing", we see it show up in a couple of different ways. One way, it would be through covenants or through agreements that nations or parties would have with one another. And they would talk about blessings and curses. The blessings would be the benefits of that agreement; the curses would be the consequences if you didn't abide or follow that agreement. So, as a nation made an agreement with another nation or another party, they would have some blessings. Maybe it would be in a military form from the other nation that would protect them. Maybe it would show up in economic ways where they could live in that land, and they could produce crops from that area. And if they chose to break that covenant, that military would turn on them; they'd be cursed in that way, or they would get kicked out of that land, or they would get destroyed or annihilated.

In this sense, as the psalmist says, speaking of blessing, he's not speaking merely of just feelings. "I want to feel blessed," or a prayer of feelings. It's a very visible, tangible favor. It's things; it's external; it's material in form. And we get a glimpse of that because of the parallel verse that's shown up here in verse 6:

> **The earth has yielded its increase; (**Or maybe your translation says its *produce*.)
> **God, our God will bless us.**

This is a prophetic statement of God's blessing, as a psalmist looks at the way that God has blessed them and will continue to bless them in tangible ways. **The earth has yielded its produce**…**its increase.** What does that mean? It means, "Look at what God has given us." It's been a testimony to God's goodness, as the crops continue to flourish, as their livestock was healthy, as their families would grow. It would be even in the physical protection that God would provide from the enemies that surrounded them, that were watching them, seeing their lives, observing what was happening in the midst of them, because these people had learned that they could do nothing without God.

A lot of that learning came through their journey through the desert, as they came out of Egypt, and on their way to this Promised Land. You remember that journey. Exodus chapter 16 talks about this journey and, as they're going through it, every day they are daily depending on God for everything—for direction, for food, for water. And God, in His presence, would show up like a pillar of fire and a cloud to lead them and guide them, and he would dwell in their midst, in the midst of this journey. They're hungry and they start asking for food. So what does God do? He gives them manna. Have you ever thought about this, that God could have given them anything? He could have given him some kind of beef jerky that tasted like leather. But he didn't. He gave them manna. You know what Exodus chapter 16, verse 31 says? It says: *The manna tasted like wafers made with honey.*

Remember the spies that continue on this journey, and they go to the promised land, and they look at it, and they come back and they report and they say, "This land is amazing. It's filled with milk and honey," a sign of God's abundance, His goodness, a flavorful treat. In the midst of this desert journey, God blesses them with something sweet, because that is the kind of God that He is. "*Every good and perfect gift is from above*." Our God is a good God that loves to give His children good gifts, blessings. But blessings are not meant to be enjoyed alone. Blessings are meant to be enjoyed with God. Did you get that? Blessings are not meant to be enjoyed alone; blessings are meant to be enjoyed with God. Now he says, "**May God be gracious to us and bless us and make His face shine upon us."** The literal pronoun that's used here for **upon** is actually "*with*" or "*among*". **May God make its face shine among us.**

That may start to trigger a memory for you. I feel like I've heard that before, right? So let's unpack what this means to enjoy God's blessing with God. If you want to turn in your Bibles, you can go to Numbers, chapter 6. Now on this journey, as Israel was going through the desert, God gave them certain laws that He had commanded them to follow, certain holiness aspects within their life, to show the holiness that He was and is, and as a nation, how they should stand out and be different. But tucked in the middle of this book of Numbers, is a little prayer that God gives Aaron to the priests, to pray over the nation of Israel. And it's a prayer, purely just about gracious blessing. Numbers, chapter 6, verses 22 through 26, says this:

The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, Thus you shall bless the people of Israel: you shall say to them,
The LORD bless you and keep you;
The LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you;
The LORD lift up his countenance (just means taking notice or granting favor) **upon you and give you peace.**

Not just a lack of war, but a total well-being, a flourishing. This is a prayer that God has given to the priests to pray individually for the whole nation of Israel now. What a good God! What does it mean for His face to shine upon us? It's not tough for us to understand this concept. Oftentimes, as we look through situations, we talk about people whose face was beaming. It was lit up with the light, right? Maybe they just got some great news. Would you say their face was shining? They were so excited! Maybe they got a promotion, or maybe something just happened, and their countenance reflected that.

As we go through the Old Testament, we can see different terms for God's presence, His omnipresence, that He's present everywhere. But this is not a term used for that. This is a term that gives us a picture of a presence of God, in a face-to-face interaction. "Make God's face shine upon us."

It reminds me of my daughter. When she was young, she would climb into our bed in the middle of the night. She would just want to be with us, by us. I remember feeling her little hands would reach out and touch my face because she wanted to make sure my face was facing her face. Pitch black, you couldn't see a thing. But that was something that meant a lot to her—for my face, to be facing her face. And this God has His face shine upon these people!

Now that's a problem, because God is holy, and this is a sinful people. God's countenance cannot rest on a sinful people. His holiness would incinerate them and the sin, in the way that a paper would incinerate instantly on the surface of the sun. The two cannot coexist. So how does this work? A little context that helps us is because the phrase is talking about a personal, relational presence of God. In this chapter, what's happening is, this is a tabernacle service. The priests are leading the nation in a service to God. And part of this service was taking an animal and sacrificing it as an atonement, as a substitute penalty for their sin, as a covering for their sin. So this has taken place in the service, and the last thing that they would do in the service would be to have the priest recite this prayer, because God delights in his people. In fact, in Psalm 147:11, it says, **The Lord delights in those who fear Him.** But something had to happen.

Remember Moses, when he's talking to God on the top of the mountain, in Exodus, chapter 33, verse 20: **Then God told him, you cannot see My face, for Man shall not see Me and live.**

And yet a substitute atonement had just taken place. An animal was killed, sacrificed on their behalf, so they could have God's presence dwell among them. Now, God still lived in the Holy of Holies, but one day He would send His Son who would be that ultimate sacrifice, so that He could not just rest and live in the Holy of Holies, but His very presence could dwell in you…and in me. This is the kind of blessing and delight that our God gives. His blessing is not meant to be enjoyed alone; it's meant to be experienced with Him.

It kind of reminds me of a friend of mine, a master chef. I taste his food, and I'm like that "*What About Bob"* movie scene every time like, "This is so good," around the dinner table. It's like my taste buds just start to have a party in my mouth every time one of those flavors hits. It's incredible! He's an amazing chef, and he would call me and say, "Hey, Josh, I want you to come, and I'm going to make a meal for you and your family you can come pick up. So, I would go to his backyard, and you can see the wood fire stone oven, going with some bread in it, and his garden that's been cared for beautifully. And in all those things, he had a meal prepared for me in a bag, and he would give it to me at the gate and I could go, or he could invite me in the backyard. And I'm smelling the flavors; I'm seeing them in action. And as he cooks, he tells stories, and you see him start to transform these foods in a way that I never could do. (That's why I always stuck to Ramen Noodles.) But he transforms these foods into incredible…incredible dishes. And as he's talking about even one time, he's talking about the bread and the recipe that he'd gotten from an elementary teacher when he was in elementary school, because of all the ways that bread flavor would just hit his mouth in an incredible explosion of delight! And he would share about the story of this. And as he's cooking, memories would unfold from his childhood at the smell of his food. And if he invites us into his backyard, he sets a table around there and we sit down and we eat. And as we eat, we look and we see him smiling, because the thing he enjoys to do is being enjoyed by us. This is what enjoyment looks like.

So, I want to ask you, "Are you enjoying God? Do you enjoy God?" Not, "Do you enjoy the thought of God, but do you enjoy the very presence of God in your life?" The Westminster Catechism says that the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever. Later, an author came and said, "I think we need to change '*and'* to '*by'*. "*The chief end of man is to glorify God by enjoying him forever."* God is to be delighted in. He gives us blessings, to join with us and watch and share in our delight.

You know, one of the things, if you find yourself just complaining, missing out, feeling like the circumstances are not the way that you want them to be, not enjoying God, maybe one of the things you need to do—put into practice—is something I've been practicing the last couple of weeks, and that is just being grateful for God's graciousness. Every time one little blessing comes your way, being grateful, and just saying, "Thank You, Jesus." This morning, after I took a shower, I said, "God, thank You for hot water." My wife went out to grab some groceries early this morning. She texted me a picture of the sunrise, so beautiful. I just said, "Thank you, God." As we sat down last night around some incredible barbecued ribs, I looked at this plate and I just said, "Thank You, Jesus," not just as a pattern of prayer, but as a pure delight in God's goodness. What if, throughout your day and throughout your week, you could start to recognize God's graciousness, and just be grateful and give him gratitude…because God's blessings are meant to be shared. But they're meant to be shared for a purpose. Verse 7 in Psalm 67 says this:

God shall bless us, let all the ends of the earth fear him.
(The New American Standard says it this way):
God blesses us, so that all the ends of the earth may fear him.

There's a purpose in God's blessing. You can't invite others into something you're not experiencing yourself. So, he continues to tell us that the connection of God's enjoyment and His blessing is

connected to God's mission in the world. Why is God gracious and blesses us and make his face to shine upon us? Go back to verse 2:

> **…that your way may be known on earth,**
> **Your saving power among all nations.**

That or maybe your translation says, **so that your way may be known on the earth, your saving power among all nations.** Why?

So that He may be known in His saving power, which stretches around the globe. As a church, we continue to say that we come together to know Jesus, to delight in Him, to know Him, to become more like Him, to follow Him. But it doesn't stop there. Why? *And to help others do the same*. Our blessing does not stop in our lives. It's meant to be shared and expanded outward. In fact, as we look through this chapter, except for verses 1 and 6, every verse says, **All people,** or **All nations**. God's plan is to continue to unfold this to the rest of the world. That's been His plan from the very beginning. In Genesis chapter 12, when He met with Abraham, He said, *"I will bless you, and I will bless you so that you will be a blessing."* Because God's glory and His praise will be stretched around to the entire world. In fact, verse 3 goes on to say:

> **Let the peoples praise you, O God;**
> **let all the peoples praise you!**

In case you didn't get that. Let me read you verse 5:

> **Let the peoples praise you, O God;**
> **let all the peoples praise you!**

In John Piper's book, *Let the Nations be Glad*, I think he beautifully describes what God is doing in this passage.

> *Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn't. Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man. The goal of missions is the gladness of the peoples in the greatness of God. And that, "All of history is moving toward one great goal, the white-hot worship of God and his Son among all the peoples of the earth.*
> *____[1]Let the Nations be Glad, Baker Academic, second edition, p.17)*

If you're turning the corner from God's blessing and graciousness into your life, and you're seeing that His goal, from that blessing is that you will enjoy it, and that you would share it and you're starting to think, "Oh, man, I've got to tell somebody about Jesus," and you're starting to feel the weight of that, you're missing it. First, go in joy, and go back to what it means to delight in God, because we are people that are hardwired to share about that which we love most. And if you're having trouble telling people about Jesus, check your delight in your relationship with God. C. S. Lewis was studying this passage, and as he was reading it, he was having difficulty with this obligation to go and share the gospel, until he realized we are creatures that are wired to talk about the things we love. He actually described it this way:

"Just as men spontaneously praise whatever they value, so they spontaneously urge us to join them in praising it: "Isn't she lovely? Wasn't it glorious? Don't you think that magnificent?" He goes onto say… "I think we delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses but completes the enjoyment."
___[2] Lewis, C. S. Reflections on the Psalms (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World,1958), pp. 93-97)

Did you get that? I think we delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses but completes the enjoyment. Our ability to tell others about God completes the enjoyment to tell others about God's goodness in our life. It goes on in verse 4:

Let the nations be glad and sing for joy,
for you judge the people with equity,
and guide the nations upon the earth.

I think, in the context of this, you've got the Israelites sitting there in the valley and all the other nations encamped around them. Why would they sing for joy? They're worshipping other gods. They're hoping that these gods will show up to give them goodness; they're always living in fear. Israel has the one true God. It's saying in this verse that God will rule the whole world justly. He will set things as they are meant to be. He will shepherd those who fear Him and who follow Him. He is the King.

And this will continue to unfold as we look back into Jesus coming to earth as King and get this, Church. Jesus will return as King, and every knee will bow before Him. And we will realize, because of God's graciousness, and favor of His Son's sacrifice in offering to us a free gift, we can be glad and sing for joy! His message of hope has been extended to the whole world. We are blessed in order that we would be a blessing.

So how do we do that? How do we cultivate that individually? How do we cultivate that collectively as a church? I think it starts with prayer. This always starts with prayer, because it's not our plans; it's God's plans, seeking out what God would have us to do. And I think one of the things we can do is just take a look at the blessings God has given us and say, "God, how do You want us to use this to continue to bring You praise, and expand Your name around the city and around the world?"

I'm really grateful this morning to have a guy named Jacob Erb with us. He's been on staff for a couple of years, and he's part of our Local Outreach. He's going to just share a little bit of some of the things we're praying about and dreaming about as a church in the area of local outreach.

(Jacob Erb): Thanks, Josh. Cool! So, like Josh said, I've been a part of the outreach team for a couple years now. And it's been so cool to see how God has been moving in our city through Lincoln Berean Church. And since we've talked a lot about our vision statement over the last couple of weeks, it's probably starting to become ingrained in your mind. And that is a good thing, because we are a church that comes together to know Jesus, and help others do the same.

So, as an outreach team, we think a lot about this last part. How do we help others do the same? And it is our desire to see our city transformed into a place of flourishing. Now, Bryan has talked a lot about this idea of *shalom* over the last few years. And if one thing should be certain by now,

it is that this sort of mutual flourishing is only possible if we, a spirit filled people, are intentionally pursuing Jesus, and growing in the love of the Father. It's only out of a deep love of God, that we are able to share in such a self-giving way. So, as an outreach team, we are trying to prepare all of you to live missionally in whatever context that you find yourself. Whether you're at work, or your school, or the neighborhoods where you live, you are intentionally seeking to share the love of Christ with those around you. You see, that's the goal. We want to make Jesus known in every little corner of our city. We should do this by not only serving and doing good, but by boldly telling of the greatest good that we know, right? That's the gospel. It's you and it's me going out and sharing the gospel with those around us that will transform our city.

And so one of the cool things about our church is that we have a rich history of doing just that, sharing the good news of Jesus and being engaged in our community. So many of you here today have been a part of that history. You've served in our schools, in our prisons. You've helped to resettle refugees; you've worked with at risk youth and teens. Just yesterday morning, a group gathered at our Car Care Ministry, where they were able to help people in our city that had real felt needs. So, the impact of these outreach efforts in our city are evident. But we are not content as a church to rest upon our laurels. See, God is continually calling us to reach out and not only pursue Him, but pursue others. So we all know the greatest commandment: **Love the Lord your God with all of your heart, with all of your soul, with all of your strength and your mind, and then to love your neighbor as yourself.**

So, this is how we will be a blessing to those around us. And this is how we will see flourishing come to our city. And this is how we will move safely forward as a church by going and living out and sharing the gospel with those around us. God has blessed our church continually, and we trust that He is going to continue to bless us as we move forward in faith.

Many of you are familiar with our Car Care Ministry, that has been faithfully serving those in our community since 2008. In what started in basically a two-car garage, has grown and expanded as God has blessed the faithful efforts of those serving there. So, in 2016, the Car Care Ministry actually moved from the little two-car garage down to the middle of town, just down the street from City Impact, where we were able to rent a much larger space that helped us serve the city better. And perhaps the most exciting news is, in just the last year, we as a church, were able to purchase the entire building that Car Care was operating out of. So you're going see it here in the video, and what you're looking at is 11,000 square feet of opportunity, as we want to see God's name known in every corner of our city. We're excited to see how this building will help us do that. Now to be sure, we're going to continue to grow our Car Care Ministry.

But we're starting to ask the question, “How else might God use this opportunity to bring blessing to our city? How might we be able to use this opportunity to produce and create flourishing in our city?” Now we know that a building, on its own, is not going to create flourishing, right? That takes people; that's the church; that's the body; that's you! So, as we come together to know Jesus, to become more like Him, how can we use the opportunities that we've been given to help others do the same? I'm so excited to see how God will continue to bless us, so that we can be a blessing to all of those around us.

(Josh Luse): Thank you, Jacob. That just gives me so much excitement, because that's just one area where we're asking, "God, how do You want to use us and use this blessing, this resource that You have given us?" This is so incredible, by the way, that as a church, we were able to have this blessing in the midst of this past year! But there are so many other things that we're starting to look at and say, "God, how do You want to use us? How do You want to work through us as a church?"

One of the other areas that we're praying about, and we're excited to see what God has in store is: we would love, with all the resources and people and things that God has blessed us with, to continue to multiply churches, to plant more churches, and to help other churches that are being planted, become rooted. That's been a part of our church history. I don't know if you remember the first week in the *State of the Church*, one of the descriptions in the pamphlet that you were given, was from our founding pastor, Curt Lehman—and Curt was a church planter at heart. One of the things that we saw in the early years, and showed up in the 25-year anniversary of our church, Curt said this, "One of the most rewarding parts of the 25 years of ministry is that dozens of our own young people are now on the missions' fields, or a pastor, or in some other phase of Christian ministry. Eight other churches have been started during that time, and others are soon to come."

Church planting has been a part of this church's history. We saw it from there. Other churches to be planted in Poland, in India, even right here in Lincoln, like North Pointe. And we continue to ask God, "What other ways do you want us to multiply out as a church?" Maybe some in this room will be sent out as missionaries. Maybe some in this room will join in a church plant that will expand out. We can't wait to see what God has in store. And so we are praying with open hands saying, "God, lead us and guide us. In what You call us to, we will go." I think maybe sometimes we might need to just rethink our thoughts around evangelism. Rather than thinking of it as evangelism, think of it as sharing about that which you love most, that which you delight in. Then it doesn't become a burden. It's not heavy. It becomes a joy!

It's like Heidi's story that was shared four weeks ago. You remember Heidi, as she was sharing her story. She's growing up, and she receives, at a point in her life, the gospel, and it becomes real to her. Jesus becomes real and He starts to transform and change her life. And Heidi uses things she delights in and she enjoys. She uses things, even horses, and the company around it, to be able to be an opportunity to share the hope of the gospel, to invite friends to know who Jesus is. And as this happens, she herself comes to know Jesus, becomes more like Him, and helps others do the same. This is the cycle that we are called to over and over and over again. And it comes through our delight in knowing Jesus, and an opportunity to share more about Him.

Others of you may remember back at the debt free celebration, about five years ago, as we walked all over throughout this building, just saying, "God, thank You for the resource that we've been given." One of the spots was up in the balcony, still unfinished, where there are about 1000 more seats we could put up there. In the balcony was a rope and an opportunity with a bunch of ribbons. It was to remind us that we're not here for just us. We gather for the world that needs Jesus. It was a reminder that the empty seats that we see around the auditorium today are not for space, or for comfort. They're actually for more people to come to know Jesus, to become like Him and go out and share this magnificent news. So, we want to give you the opportunity. Many of you have joined us since that time, or maybe you've forgotten what names you put up there. Maybe that name has come to join you in this auditorium and come to worship Jesus, from that time. But as you leave

today, in the hallways are some opportunities for you to go and write the name of somebody that you are praying for, that you would long and love to see that person come to know Jesus. Or for someone that God knows could use your blessings, to be something that would bring about a blessing in someone else's life as they choose to follow Jesus and praise Him. Hoarding blessings for yourself is a sad, sad way to live.

Like Jesus started to show me that, as I was just thinking about all the things that I could get, and I could enjoy, He started transforming my heart to realize that as He gives me things, He gives me them to enjoy, but also to spread the news about Him. Remember, when my wife and I were figuring out what it meant to be married, we'd opened all our gifts, and we had this pitcher I showed you earlier. Well, God started to show us that our marriage was an opportunity, a blessing to be used for His glory. We started to have people over at our home. I remember the first time that we're having people in our home, and we thought, "What do we do? We have this cramped little, tiny space; we've got this little table. Oh, we've got the dishes that we could use, and then we have this pitcher." And it had a lot of significance in a lot of ways, not only as we looked at it from our marriage, but it became an opportunity for hospitality in our home. We were proud of our pitcher as we would pull it out. It gave us the opportunity to serve others, care for others, love others, and bless others. And maybe for you, if you're thinking about how to bless others, maybe this acronym—BLESS—would help you as a place to start.

B - Begin with prayer. Just ask God how you could join with Him, in what ways He wants your life to be a blessing?
L will be to Listen. Start to listen to the people around you. Because if you listen to them, and you ask questions, and you genuinely care to know their story, you'll start to find ways that you can serve them. One of the easy ways to listen is to
E - Eat with them. Just have a meal. Join with them for a meal and get to know their story. Then the two S's at the end would be:
S - Serve them. You've listened to them so you know how you can serve them. And at some point God might open the door for you to
S - Share with them about this Jesus you are delighting in the way your blessing can bless the world.

> *Jesus, we pray that our lives would be a blessing. God, we pray that we would find our ultimate delight and joy in You and You alone. God, we pray that as we walk through this week, we realize that You are with us, that Your presence is among us, and that You are a gracious God. Father, help us to enjoy and delight in You. Cause that to spill and overflow in our lives in a way that we just long to share that enjoyment and delight with others. Thank You for the hope that You've provided. God, thank You for Your graciousness. You are such a good God. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®),
Copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.
Used by permission. All rights reserved.
Lincoln Berean Church, 6400 S. 70th, Lincoln, NE 68516 (402) 483-6512
Copyright 2021 – Josh Luse. All rights reserved.