

*Please check the last page for the latest church announcements*

Dear Faith Family,

Last week I began talking about the BLESS Method. As a reminder, this method was developed by the Humanitarian Disaster Institute (HDI), passed on to us by our partners at Food for the Hungry. Through years of research and study, they developed this process to train lay people in providing care for individuals facing crisis situations and have adapted it to fit our current coronavirus realities. Please see the full training manual at [www.spiritualfirstaidhub.com](http://www.spiritualfirstaidhub.com)

Today I would like to take us through the first step of BLESS. To begin, HDI acknowledges that every human being has at least five core areas of need: the need to **Belong**, the need for a sustainable **Livelihood**, **Emotional** needs, **Security** needs, and **Spiritual** needs (B.L.E.S.S.). All of these are interconnected, and there is significant overlap between them. In times of crisis, however, these needs manifest themselves more acutely, and if they are left unmet (whether actual or perceived), can result in serious damage to a person's wellbeing. Attending to these needs is how we can best care for and bless individuals struggling with this crisis.

In doing so, HDI suggests we adopt a simple four step approach to evaluate and respond to each area of need. These four steps are: Attend&Observe, Ask, Act, Repeat.

1. **Attend&Observe:** When faced with a person in crisis, we start by observing and looking for clues as to whether that person is showing signs of distress in any of the areas of need.
2. **Ask:** We then ask follow-up questions to see if our suspicions are confirmed.
3. **Act:** Next, we provide a practical response to the area of need we feel is expressing itself most acutely.
4. **Repeat:** And finally, we repeat the process until the unmet needs are fully addressed.

Keep in mind this does not mean you will always be (nor should you be) the person to completely fulfill all of the person's needs. But as caring Christians we can stand with someone and point them in the right direction to help them find solutions to their needs.

Let us now see how to apply this process when it comes to meeting a person's **Belonging** needs. All persons have a need to be loved and to feel like they belong, to be part of a community, a place and a people where they are accepted and valued. In times of crisis, people are often forcibly removed from their tribe, their place of belonging, and may feel this need more intensely. Our COVID-19 quarantine/lockdown is a particularly strong example of this. For people who don't have a close network of support,

who live alone, or who feel alone even in their own family, this need may manifest itself in strong ways and can lead to feelings of loneliness, isolation, anxiety, depression, etc. When caring for someone who may be feeling this need, here is what you can do:

1. Attend and Observe. Start by looking for possible red flag warnings:

\_You know this person lives alone and has limited outside connections.

\_They talk a lot about being left alone, unattended by family members, etc.

\_They regularly complain about a lack of practical help from their community, regardless of services they are actually receiving.

\_They frequently reach out in unconventional ways: frequently sending nonsensical messages via social media, lashing out at others in anger and frustration, calling or texting at odd times demanding immediate attention for non-emergency reasons.

\_Or they completely isolate themselves and haven't reached out to anyone in a long time.

*Note: A key part of attending is just being present with someone, listening to them and being there for them. This is an important step, especially in meeting people's belonging needs.*

2. Ask. Follow this up by asking key questions to assess if this is indeed an unmet need:

\_How are you feeling lately? How are you really doing?

\_When was the last time you talked to a family member? Someone from church? Etc.?

\_How has the virus/quarantine affected your relationships with others? Have you noticed a difference?

\_Do you feel like you're receiving enough support from members of church? Your family? Etc.?

\_What could they be doing to better support you?

\_Do you have someone you talk to on a regular basis? Someone you can share your joys and frustrations with?

\_Whom has God used in your life to bless you lately?

\_Is there someone you think God is calling you to be a blessing to?

3. Act. If the answers to these questions confirm that belonging is indeed an area of unmet need, provide some practical help for this person. Some suggestions are:

\_Acknowledge this pandemic is difficult for a lot of people and has created a sense of loss for them. Tell them you're sorry and stand with them in their pain.

\_Ask if there's something you can do to help them. What is it they need most from you?

*Note: It's important to treat each person as an expert on their own needs. We cannot presume to know what will make a person feel better. Asking how you can help is often better than telling others what to do.*

\_Brainstorm what other people in the community they can turn to and hang out with.

\_Encourage them to express their true feelings to individuals within their network of support (family members, pastors, etc.).

\_Offer to pray for them, seeking God's help and strength to get through this. If they are willing, pray for them right then.

\_Share with others (while maintaining personal information confidential) that this person is feeling lonely and could use a friendly phone call.

4. Repeat. Schedule a time to regularly check-in with this person via phone call, email, text, and/or virtual hang outs. Ideas for how to do this while social distancing can include: zoom/face-time meetings, going for walks together in an open place (6 feet apart), playing games (trivia games, crossword puzzles, etc.) or watching a television program together over the phone...

More than anything remind this person that you love them, God loves them, and we will get through this together.

Next week we'll look at addressing the second area of need, livelihood. For now I encourage you to think of one or two people within your sphere of influence who may be feeling acute belonging needs. Reach out to them and see what you can do to be a blessing in their lives. And if you are feeling an acute need for contact and friendship, please let us know. It is normal to be feeling this way, but we can't always know who needs help unless they tell us.

Thank you for hanging in there with us. I look forward to seeing you again soon!

--Pastor Andrew

## **Announcements**

- All-church fellowship hour: Tonight (Wednesday, May 20) from 7 to 8 p.m. Follow the link:  
REMOVED for WEB VERSION
- Teen Bible study: Every Sunday from 11 a.m. to 12 p.m. Talk to pastor Andrew for the zoom link.
- Church Re-opening:

At this time we are planning on reopening the church as soon as our county reaches Governor Inslee's Phase 4 of the re-opening process. This is when groups of 50 or more are allowed to convene together.

As of today, the earliest we anticipate this happening is sometime around mid-July, though this could change depending on the trajectories our state and counties take. Yet while we eagerly look forward to being together again, we also recognize we will need to do so with an abundance of caution, establishing a "new normal" that includes: wearing face masks, keeping our distance, minimal contact everything (greetings, offering, communion, etc.), no food or fellowship for some time, no kids' programs for some time, etc. Please stay tuned for more specifics, and, as usual, if you have any questions, please don't hesitate to ask.