

A LIFE OF
Blessing

DIOCESE OF BUNBURY

2024-2025



ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF BUNBURY

A Life Of Blessing

Introduction by Rev Jamie and Verity Murray

The word 'bless' and variations of it (e.g., blessing, blessed) are used over 500 times in the Bible¹. God delights to bless, and blessing is a major theme throughout the scriptures, from Genesis chapter 1 through to the Book of Revelation. Being blessed and blessing others is a significant part of our lives as Christians. What a joy!

At St Nics we use a framework called 'The 5Bs' to illustrate and guide our life together (see diagram opposite). Bless is the first B. Its where our life in Christ begins – by being Blessed in our relationship with Him and our Belonging to his family. As we become more like Jesus we grow in love and desire to Bless others and so the cycle of blessing continues.

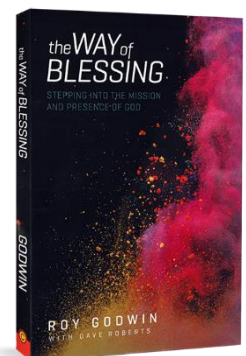
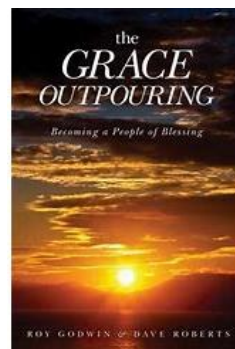


Each year since 2022 we have welcomed Cate Lewis from Local Houses of Prayer Australia who has taught us the guiding principles of the global movement called 'Local Houses of Prayer'. 'Local Houses of Prayer' has grown out of a ministry of blessing which began at a retreat centre in Wales called Ffald-y-Brenin.² The principles of blessing which have been learned there offer a way to align ourselves for greater impact in our world for Jesus Christ right where we are. This is the heart of being salt and light: to bless and be a blessing in our families, communities and region in co-operation with the Holy Spirit. We believe that the principles of 'Local Houses of Prayer' are an answer to our prayer to be more effective in our witness and to see more of God's kingdom come and will be done amongst us.

These notes help us to learn and apply these principles. Please join us and be part of the learning experience! Share your encouragements and questions with us and each other as we go along.

We also encourage you to attend LHOP training events advertised on the LHOP Australia website. You can find out more about Ffald-y-Brenin and Local Houses of Prayer from these websites and publications:

- <https://lhopaustralia.org.au/>
- ffald-y-brenin.org
- "Grace Outpouring" book by Roy Godwin
- "The Way of Blessing" book by Roy Godwin



¹ qa.answers.com

² Ffald-y-Brenin means 'Sheepfold of the King' in English

Week 1 – The Gospel of the Kingdom

The word 'Gospel' means "Good News". It derives from a Greek word 'euangelion' which was used to announce that a new king had been born or a new rule had commenced.

Jesus spoke often about the kingdom of God . Gradually it became clear it was His kingdom and there was a 'now' dimension and a 'yet to happen' dimension. e.g.

- "Jesus travelled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. (Luke 8 v1)
 - "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God . . . for I was sent for this purpose". (Luke 4 v 43)
 - Once, on being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, "The coming of the kingdom of God is not something that can be observed, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is in your midst." (Luke 17:20-21)
 - Parable of the nobleman Luke 19:11-27 He will return, and judgment will come.
1. What is the Kingdom of Jesus like? Why is it good news for everyone? How would you explain it in your own words and/or relate it to your own experience?

Read Matthew 10 v 1-13

2. What did the disciples say as they travelled about? There are two answers (v 7 and v12- 13)³
3. How did the disciples demonstrate the kingdom through their actions?
4. What would it look like if the kingdom broke into your street or community?
5. What difference would it make?
6. How can we imitate the disciples in what we do and say to proclaim the Kingdom of God?

³ The traditional Jewish greeting of the day was "Shalom" which means peace, wholeness, completeness, soundness, health, safety and prosperity, carrying with it the implication of permanence.

Week 2 – A Royal Priesthood of Believers

1. What does the word ‘priest’ mean to you? What images does it bring to mind? What do you understand to be the purpose of a priest?

Read 1 Peter 2 v 5 and v 9-10 and 1 Peter 4 v 10-11

2. What do you learn from these verses about the ‘priesthood of all believers?’
3. Do you consider yourself to be part of this royal priesthood? If so, how does that make you feel? What difference does it make to the way you live?

Local Houses of Prayer summarise the role of priests like this:

- To STAND and minister to the Lord (Deuteronomy 10 v 8)
 - To CARRY His presence (Numbers 6 v 22-26,27)
 - To BLESS in His name (Leviticus 9 v 22-23)
4. Does this resonate with you? If so, how can we do these three things regularly in our lives?
Note we speak blessings in the authority given to us in Christ, so we bless in Jesus’ name.

In Pairs

5. Practice speaking blessings over one another in Jesus’ name. You might like to use one of the blessings from the Psalms below or use your own words. Afterwards, discuss how it feels to bless someone in this way, with the authority you have been given by your Heavenly Father.

Begin your blessing like this: “I bless you _____ (name of person) in the name of Jesus that you may/He may

Psalm 121 v 7-8

“I bless you _____ that the Lord may keep you from all harm; that he will watch over your life and that he will watch over your coming and going both now and for evermore.”

Psalm 20 v 1-5 (paraphrased)

“I bless you _____ that the Lord will protect you and answer you when you are in distress. May he help you and support you. May the Lord give you the desire of your heart and make all your plans succeed so that we will rejoice with you in your victory and give praise to God.”

Psalm 67

“I bless you _____ that the Lord will be gracious to you and bless you and make his face shine on you. May his salvation be made known through you”.

Week 3 – Blessing an Individual

God delights to bless and teaches us to do the same. The Bible verses on the next page show us that God blessed his creation (Genesis 1 v 28). He blessed Abraham and promised to make him a blessing (Genesis 12 v 2-3). From the earliest times, fathers blessed their children (e.g. Genesis 48 v 15-16) and God commanded his priests to bless the people (Numbers 6 v 22-27). Jesus told his disciples to bless people with the 'shalom' greeting as they travelled about (Matthew 10 v 12) and to bless their enemies (Luke 6 v 28). The apostle Peter said this too (1 Peter 3 v9)⁴.

1. How has the Lord blessed you? Share your stories. You may like to do this in pairs.
2. Why do you think it's important to receive a blessing before you bless others?
3. Who can *you* bless? At this point, think in general terms e.g. your family . . .
4. What about the difficult people in your life? How can you bless them and show mercy?

Pray for Five!

5. Write down the names of five people whom you can bless regularly – even perhaps daily.⁵ You might want to include one or two of the difficult people in your life!
6. In pairs or threes, speak out blessings over your 'five'. You can speak one blessing prayer over all the people you have named, rather than having to bless each one individually. You might like to use the 'Bless' acronym below to give you some ideas how to bless or use the blessings from the Psalms used last week.

Homework: Continue blessing your five this week. Ask the Lord to show you any practical ways you can bless each person, as well as in prayer. Notice if you see any 'green shoots' of answered prayer.

The 'Bless' Acrostic from LHOP can be a useful summary of what we want to bless:

Body – health, protection, strength; God wants to renew our health.

Labour – work, reward, security, because God cares for the whole person

Emotional – joy, peace, hope; health here means health in the rest of your life.

Social – love, marriage, family, friends; we were created for community.

Spiritual – salvation, faith, grace; God desires to renew us in the patterns of our thinking about Him, our purpose in the earth and our future hope. Whoever we are, believer or not-yet believer, He wants us to discover the mind of Christ.

⁴ All these scripture verses can be found on the next page.

⁵ The number 5 is a suggestion – you can have fewer or more than 5 and you can change the list as you go along. 5 works for weekdays and then have a break over the weekend!

Genesis 1 v 27- 28

So God created mankind in his own image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

²⁸ God blessed them and said to them,

“Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

Genesis 12 v 1-3

The Lord said to Abram . . .

“I will make you into a great nation,
and I will bless you;

I will make your name great,
and you will be a blessing.^[a]

³ I will bless those who bless you,
and whoever curses you I will curse;
and all peoples on earth
will be blessed through you.

Numbers 6 v 22-27

²² The LORD said to Moses, ²³ “Tell Aaron and his sons,

‘This is how you are to bless the Israelites. Say to them:

²⁴ “The LORD bless you
and keep you;

²⁵ the LORD make his face shine on you
and be gracious to you;

²⁶ the LORD turn his face toward you
and give you peace.”

²⁷ “So they will put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them.”

Genesis 48 v 15-16

Then Jacob blessed Joseph and said:

“May the God before whom my fathers
Abraham and Isaac walked faithfully,
the God who has been my shepherd
all my life to this day,

¹⁶ the Angel who has delivered me from
all harm

—may he bless these boys.

May they be called by my name
and the names of my fathers Abraham
and Isaac,
and may they increase greatly
on the earth.”

Matthew 10 v 12 – “As you enter the home, give it your greeting/blessing [Shalom]”

Luke 6 v 28 - “Bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.”

1 Peter 3 v 9 – “Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.”

Week 4 – Blessing Areas

We all belong to a family, a neighbourhood, a community, church family, and perhaps a workplace or school, or social group. The Lord loves and is reaching out to people in these groups and places and chooses to work through us to bring his blessing. We can learn to speak blessings over these areas.

Read Jeremiah 29 v 1-14

The letter referenced in this passage was written to Jewish people who were living in exile in Babylon. The letter contains instructions for how the people were to live there. It also contains a promise that the Lord would one day bring them back to their own country. There are parallels for us in that we too, have not yet reached our heavenly home, and are waiting for all the promises of God's kingdom to be fulfilled when Jesus returns. In the meantime, how should we live?

1. What evidence is there of God's desire to bless the people of Israel in this passage?
2. In what ways were they told to bless the people in Babylon?
3. In what ways can we apply these instructions and promises to our own lives?

Jesus brought the blessing of the Kingdom of God wherever he went. Consider these few examples:

- At a wedding in Cana (John 2 v 1-11)
- With the fishermen at their work (Luke 5 v 1-11)
- In a tax collector's house (Matthew 9 v 10)
- In the synagogues (Luke 13 v 10-17)
- In 'enemy' country (Samaria) (John 4)

We too are called to bring peace and blessing wherever we go.

4. Which places, groups or communities are you part of on a regular basis? Write some of them down here.
5. How can you bless the people in these places, groups or communities in practical ways?
6. In pairs or small groups, speak out blessings on some of these areas. Use the BLESS acrostic summary on p5 to prompt you. Begin . . . "In Jesus name I bless _____ that He may/they may . . .

Homework: Every day this week pray and then speak a blessing on one of the areas you have listed above. Try to make a habit of blessing your workplace, gym etc whenever you go there.

Week 5 - Blessing the Land

When God created the earth he repeatedly said, "It is good". God blessed his creation and entrusted it to the care of human beings. Human sin has sadly polluted and spoiled the land. As Isaiah said,

"The earth is defiled by its people;
they have disobeyed the laws,
violated the statutes
and broken the everlasting covenant (Isaiah 24 v 5)

And yet God still desires to bless, heal and restore his world – through us!

Read Romans 8 v 18-25

1. What strikes you from these verses?
2. Why is creation waiting in 'eager expectation' for the children of God to be revealed and when should we expect this to happen? (v19)

Read Deuteronomy 28 v 1-6

3. What inspiration can we take from these verses for how we can bless the land where we live?
4. How can we pray for and bring restoration and healing to land that has been polluted and spoiled?
5. Take time to bless the land where you live. If necessary, ask forgiveness for damage that has been done to the land and ask the Holy Spirit to show you how to pray for healing and restoration. You might like to end your prayer time by reading Psalm 104 aloud.

Homework: Try to make a habit this week of blessing the land where you live, walk, or pass through. Bless the plants, animals, birds, water creatures etc. Ask the Lord to show you how he wants to use you in practical ways to bring healing and restoration to your environment.

Week 6 – Putting it all Together – Local Houses of Prayer (LHOPs)

1. Whether you are doing these studies in a small group or alone, try to follow the steps shown below on the **Local Houses of Prayer Simple Meeting Plan**. The references to 'the 5s' means the five people (or more or fewer) that you have been blessing since Week 3. It is not necessary to name each individual out loud or to pray for each one individually but bring them together before the Lord as a group. Try to prayerfully answer the 'Caleb Questions'.
2. What you have learned from this 6 week series on 'A Life of Blessing'?
3. In what ways can you/we continue to practice 'A Life of Blessing', as an individual, small group, or church and possibly as part of an LHOP. (An LHOP is a small group of about 2-5 people who meet regularly to bless their 5s and an agreed locality, neighbourhood, school, etc using the simple meeting plan format outlined below.)
4. Bless one another to close.



SIMPLE MEETING PLAN

(IDEALLY EVERY WEEK)

Our Purpose - To see the Kingdom of God come in power, in our local area, community or workplace

Worship - Songs / poems / psalms etc

Invite His presence

Encouragement - Share what God is doing in your area and with the 5's

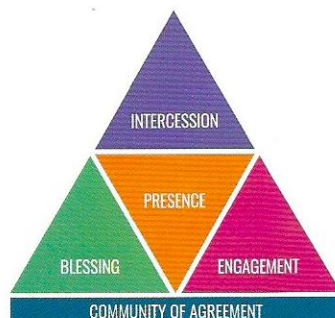
Intercession:

- Identify with and intercede for your wider area
- Use the Lord's Prayer as a basis for your prayer
- Pray together for the 5's in the power of agreement

Speak Blessings:

- Over your area
- Over your 5's

Ask the Caleb Questions in your group together



CALEB QUESTIONS

WHO IS GOD PUTTING IN FRONT OF YOU...

- 1 Who you can affirm and bless?
- 2 To whom you can show mercy?
- 3 With whom you can share the gospel?
- 4 What opportunity is God opening up for you to declare the good news of the Kingdom in your area?
- 5 Who could you encourage to join with you?



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