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* Blessings will vary. Side effects may occur.



BLESSED—1

Blessed With A Need

KEY POINTS:

You need family:

- 1) With refrigerator rights
- 2) Who are barefoot buddies

God has blessed you
with a need:
you need each other.

LAUNCHING:

- Share one thing you would have liked to change about your family growing up?
- What are some indications that our culture has become self-centered and self-sufficient?

CONNECTING:

1. How would you describe your life-style: others-centered, family centered, or self-centered? When you have a physical or financial need, to whom are you more likely to turn, besides God? Why do you think God designed us so that we would need each other? Name something God has blessed you with that you enjoy sharing with others.
2. Describe what you think Craig means by “barefoot buddies” and “refrigerator rights”? Why is acceptance something we all need? What other attributes do we need to have for our LifeGroup to be a safe place? **All of us face insecurities. Share one of your biggest insecurities. (Maybe you have a hard time trusting or being vulnerable. Face your fears and open up.)**
3. In what ways do you enjoy spending time with other believers? Describe the kind of home atmosphere that makes you feel the most comfortable? Share an example of how you have been blessed by your spiritual family or LifeGroup. **What will you do to cultivate a growing spiritual family?**
4. Read Acts 2:42-47. In the early church, to what were believers devoted? What life-style did they adopt? Why do you think they shared everything in common? How should the church today be more like the early church? What would it look like for our LifeGroup to share everything and do life together? What does our LifeGroup need to do differently to become more like a family?

TAKE IT HOME:

- What will you do this week to be more dependent on your spiritual family? In what areas do you need to become more open and transparent with you Life-Group? Take the risk and open up!
- Who do you need to accept within your spiritual family or LifeGroup? How can you reach out to this person and cultivate a deeper spiritual friendship? (Example: Get together for coffee and hear more of their story)
- As a LifeGroup, make plans to reach out and invite others to join your spiritual family. What attitudes do you need to bring to your LifeGroup or what actions do you need to take, to make it feel more inviting and accepting? Ask the Lord to show you any needs within your spiritual family that He wants you to meet.

DISCOVERY QUESTIONS:

Read about the first LifeGroups in Acts 2:42-47 and 4:32-35.

- What were the activities of the early church? (2:42) What life-style did the early believers adopt? (2:44-45; 4:32) Where did believers meet? How often? Why do you think they shared everything in common? In what ways do you think today's church should be the same as or different than the early church?
- The early church was joyful, victorious and full of praise. How would you describe the church today? Your LifeGroup? Would you describe your LifeGroup as self-centered, others-centered or Christ-centered? How can you make your spiritual family a greater priority? What will you sacrifice for the common good? (i.e. time, possessions, money, personal preferences, etc.)

Read about our need for each other in 1 Corinthians 12:12-27.

- In what way are believers like members of the human body? (12:12-13) Why shouldn't outward appearances or abilities matter to us? (12:13) What makes believers dependent on one another? (12:13) Why should we *not* say, “I don't need you”? (12:21-22)
- How well do you interact with other members of your spiritual family? How can you treat the weaker members as indispensable? What do you think are *your* personal responsibilities to your spiritual family? (12:25-26) How can you show more love and concern for others in your LifeGroup?

KEY VERSES:

Rom 15:1-7; Eph 1:3, 2:19-21, 4:16-17, 5:19-21; Heb 3:13, 10:24-25; 1 Pet 2:9

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BLESSED—2

Blessed With a Burden

KEY POINTS:

- 1) Identify your divine burden:
 - What breaks your heart?
 - What makes you angry?
 - What do you care about that others don't?
- 2) The Right Ways to Embrace Your Burden:
 - Let your burden **ruin** you
 - Let your burden move you to **action**

Popeye Moment:
"I've had all I can stanz and I can't stanz no more!"

LAUNCHING:

- Share an unmet need you see in our community or within the church that concerns you deeply.
- Name some modern day examples of people who felt a burden, took action and made (or are making) a difference.

CONNECTING:

1. **Describe a time when you had a "Popeye moment" when something bothered you so deeply that you had to act.** Was your response a right or wrong one? What was the result? When burdened by something, what approach to do most often take: complain about it, ignore it, appease it, embrace it, or something else? How can we discern whether the burden we *feel* is from the Lord?
2. **Finish the sentence: My divine burden is _____.** How can you expose yourself more to your burden? As God increases your burden, what are you going to do about it? What does God want to do through you?
3. **How is God using your burden to ruin you?** What does it mean to be *ruined*? Why is this a good thing? Name some examples of individuals in the Bible who were given a divine burden. In what way were they ruined by it and how did God use them to make a difference?
4. **Discuss what your LifeGroup can do together to make a difference in your community.** Prayerfully decide on a ministry project your group can do to help people in need.

TAKE IT HOME:

- Identify your *divine* burden. What makes your heart ache? What are you most passionate about concerning God's will and kingdom? Is your burden regarding self, others or God's glory? Consider how God would be most glorified and pray for His will to be done on earth as it is in heaven.
- Embrace your burden. Feel what God feels and allow it to *ruin* you. Cast your burden on the Lord; then, be still and listen. Write down any thoughts that come to mind. Make your burden a part of your daily conversation with God. Ask Him questions and seek direction about what actions He wants you to take.
- If you are having trouble identifying a burden, ask the Lord to show you what He loves and what makes Him angry. As you make delighting in the Lord your focus, He will give you His desires (Psalm 37:5). Ask God to burden you something which is important to Him.

DISCOVERY QUESTIONS:

As you read the passages below, identify each person's specific burden. Observe how they responded to it and what actions they took. Also, note how they were *ruined* by it (broken and dependent on God). Seek to understand what is truly important to God.

- Moses (Ex 2:11-12, 3:1-12; Heb 11:24-30)— What motivated Moses to kill the Egyptian? In what way was Moses ruined by his taking matters into his own hands? How did this shape Moses into a man God could use?
- Nehemiah (Neh 1-2, 4, 6:15)— How did Nehemiah's burden for Jerusalem affect him? (1:4) After he fasted and prayed, what did he do? (2:1-9) Why was it so important to Nehemiah to rebuild the walls around Jerusalem? (2:17, 6:15)
- Esther (Esther 4:1-17)— What did Esther do about her burden? What is the purpose of fasting? When have you been so burdened that you fasted to draw close to God and seek His will? What risk did she take to act on her divine burden?
- Habakkuk (Hab 1:1-4, 12-13; 2:1-3, 3:1, 16-19)— What broke Habakkuk's heart? (1:1-4) What was his complaint? (1:13) What did God ask him to do? (2:1-3) What was his response? (3:16-19) How did Habakkuk glorify God?
- Paul (Rom 9:1-5, 10:1; 2 Cor 1:8-10; Gal 4:19; Phil 1:12-14, 21-25, 2:17)— How great was Paul's burden for his lost kinsmen? What burden did he have for new believers? For what person, group or race has God given you a burden?
- Epaphras (Col 1:6-8, 4:12-13)— For whom was Epaphras burdened? What actions did he take? How were the Colossian believers blessed?

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BLESSED—3

Blessed To Be A Blessing

KEY POINTS:

- You are blessed to be a blessing
 - 1) We are blessed to give joyfully
 - 2) We are blessed to give extravagantly
 - 3) We are blessed to give sacrificially
- Give in the way that is hardest for you to give

Blessing Mistakes:

- Ignore God's Blessings
- Apologize for God's Blessings
- Hoard God's blessings

LAUNCHING:

- Who is the most generous person you know? Why do you think so?
- In our affluent culture, what are some blessings that we tend to take for granted or ignore?

CONNECTING:

1. **Of the three mistakes people make regarding God's blessings, share with which one you struggle the most and why.** What are some of God's blessings that *you* tend to ignore? Which ones do you apologize for? What blessings are you hoarding? How can we allow God to change us in these areas?
2. Besides giving financially, name some other tangible ways we can bless others (think outside the box). Which do you find more difficult to give: your time, money, possessions, abilities or prayer? **Discuss what it means to give sacrificially.** When have you been on the receiving end of someone's generosity? How did this bless you?
3. **Talk about how you love to give (this includes your time, talents, or finances).** What is your primary love language; giving of time, gifts, words of affirmation, service or physical affection? How is our giving an indication of our love? **How can you learn to give in a way that stretches you?**
4. **Discuss, as a LifeGroup, how you can learn to give extravagantly together.** Take into account how God has blessed each person and the impact you could have through your combined efforts and resources. (Be careful to not pressure anyone to participate.) Identify a need (large or small) within your LifeGroup or community and plan how, as a LifeGroup, you can meet that need.

TAKE IT HOME:

- Honestly answer the following questions: When God blesses me with more, am I more likely to raise my standard of living or increase my level of giving? What earthly things can I sacrifice in order to give more extravagantly to God's kingdom? How does my giving reflect (or not) my conviction that God is the owner of all that I have and my sole provider? Is my giving in proportion to the blessings I have received?
- If you are a reluctant giver, what can you do to become a joyful giver? What beliefs and attitudes do you need to change so you'll be free to bless others? Surrender to God all that you have (time, possessions, money, abilities). Adopt the mindset that God is the owner and you are the manager. Start by giving the tithe and determine what you *need* for *yourself* (to live on). Then, as God blesses you with more than you need, ask Him where He wants you to give the rest.

DISCOVERY QUESTIONS:

- **Read 1 Timothy 6:6-10,17-19.** With what should we be content? (8) Why is it so difficult to be content? (9-10) Do you consider yourself rich? Are you blessed with more than food and covering? What does God command the rich to do with their wealth? (18) What actions can you take to store up treasure in heaven? (18-19) What will you do to guard against putting your hope in the things of this world?
- **Read 2 Cor 9:6-12.** What farming illustration does Paul use to teach about giving? What happens when we sow (give) bountifully? (6) What defines a cheerful giver? (7) What do you need to remember when you are tempted to give grudgingly? (8, 10,11) What does the seed represent? (10) What results from believers giving joyfully and extravagantly? (12)
- **Read Mark 12:41-44.** How did Jesus compare the giving of the rich people with the giving of the poor widow? (43-44) Why was Jesus not impressed with the large amounts of money given by the rich people? (44) What was the central principle Jesus was teaching? What steps will you take this week to give sacrificially of your resources, abilities or time?

VERSES FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Prov 3:9-10; Eccl 5:10-15; Mark 12:43-44, 14:3-5; Luke 6:38, 16:13; Acts 20:35; 2 Cor 8:1-3, 7-9, 14-15, 9:6-7; Phil 4:11-19

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BLESSED—4

Blessed To Share His Story

KEY POINTS:

You are blessed to share Christ

- Samaritan woman: invite someone to come and see
- Blind Guy: Share Your story
- Dorcas: Give your life away
- Peter: Get in someone's face

LAUNCHING:

- Who has been an unlikely evangelist in your life?
- Besides Christ, what is one thing you passionately share with others?

CONNECTING:

1. **Read Ephesians 2:1-9.** According to these verses, what key points do we need to keep in mind when sharing His story? **If you are a follower of Christ, tell your salvation story.** (Include, in your story, what you were like before Christ came into your life, how you came to receive the free gift of new life and the difference Christ is making in you, now.)
2. **We learned about four unlikely evangelists. Who do you relate with the most and why?** Which means of sharing Christ are you most uncomfortable with: inviting, telling, serving or confronting? Which one are you the most passionate about? How can we discern the best approach for each opportunity? How do *you* discern when God is prompting you to share His story with a particular person? Share a personal story of God using you to lead someone to Christ.
3. What is the most significant difference Christ has made in your life? Fill in the blanks: Before Jesus came into my life I was _____ but now, because of God's grace I am _____. Remember, the internal attitude changes are just as important and life changing as the outward behavioral ones.
4. **If you died today, who would you regret not having shared Christ with? What are you going to do about it?** What keeps you from sharing Christ? Is it feelings of inadequacy, believing your story is not dramatic enough, fear of others' opinion of you, not knowing what to say or is it something else? How can we overcome these hindrances? What are some *not* so good ways of sharing Christ with others? How are we blessed by sharing Christ with others?

TAKE IT HOME:

1. Who is God calling you to invite to church or your LifeGroup? With whom is He calling you to share your story; to confront or to serve? Make a list of your non-Christian friends and acquaintances. Begin praying for those on your list and ask God to show you the best approach to use with each person.
2. Write out your story, the long version first. Then shorten it to something you can share in a few sentences. Try to make your story intriguing so they will ask you questions. Include the important facts of the gospel (who Jesus Christ is, what He did to reconcile you to God, and how you received Him). Also, keep your story current by sharing how Christ is making a difference in you today. Ask God to make you aware of those around you who don't know Christ and be sensitive to His leading.
3. Identify and address, with God, the things that hinder you from sharing your faith. Ask Him to bless you with a burden for the lost people around you. Be prepared. (2 Timothy 4:2) Study God's word to learn more about all that Christ promises those who trust in Him. You may want to memorize some key verses that explain why Christ came and how to receive Him.

DISCOVERY QUESTIONS:

- **Read 1 Corinthians 9:16-23.** What do you think motivated Paul to share the gospel? Why did Paul make himself a slave to everyone? To what extent was Paul willing to go to share Christ? Why is it helpful to adjust our actions for the people around us? How can we share Christ with unbelievers without compromising our values or yielding to sin? What do you think Paul meant when he said, "to the weak I become weak"? How many non-Christian friends do you have? How will you share Christ with them?
- **Read Matthew 5:13-16.** What did Jesus mean when He called his followers salt? What effect does salt have on food? How do salty things affect us? How does a believer lose his or her saltiness? In what ways are we the light of the world? What affect does light have on darkness? What happens when we let our light shine? What should our good works accomplish? How does being salt and light relate to being blessed to share Christ? How can you be salt and light to the people God has placed in your life?

VERSES FOR FURTHER STUDY:

John 3:14-17; 4:7-32, 9:1-41; Acts 2:22-41; 9:36-42; Rom 10:1,13-15; 1Pet 3:14-16