

WHAT IF?

As recently as 1999, 70 percent of Americans were members of a local church, synagogue or mosque. In 2021, a Gallup poll indicated that only 47 percent of Americans are members of a local church, synagogue, or mosque. This is the lowest percentage in the past eight decades.

Our nation is certainly not trending in a good spiritual direction.

We know that many Christian leaders are wondering how this trend can be changed for the better.





In addition to the decline in church membership, various surveys indicate somewhere between five percent and 20 percent of Christians ever share their faith with anyone. Let's look at this through a football lens. Imagine the ridiculous scenario of Tom Brady being the only Tampa Bay Buccaneer offensive player to take the field when they had the ball. It would be disastrous.

One offensive player, no matter how great he is, does not stand a chance against eleven defensive players. One out of eleven men playing in a football game is about the same percentage of believers who ever share their faith. This low percentage of players wouldn't work in football and it doesn't work in evangelism. It is no wonder why the influence of the gospel is lessening, rather than growing.

So what can we do about this? Let's consider the two words on the front of this brochure... WHAT IF? ... Just two little words that invite us to envision a totally different outcome.

1. What If all Churches and all Believers Partnered for Regional Evangelism?

What If, instead of churches working independently of one another, all of the churches agreed to work together to embrace all or some of a simple, yet compelling strategy for training and mobilizing all believers to often show and share Jesus with others?

The Apostle Paul wrote the following words: "Apart from such external things there is the daily pressure on me of concern for ALL the churches" (2 Corinthians 11:28). The apostle had concern for ALL the churches and so should we. When ALL the churches, and not just some of the churches, are reaching and discipling many with the gospel message, then, and only then, can the community as a whole be transformed.

2. What If all Churches and all Believers Practiced Relational Evangelism?

What If all churches encouraged their members to build relationships with those around them, people who do not follow Christ? What If they encouraged them to genuinely love and spend time with lost people and then look for opportunities to influence their friends, neighbors, co-workers, and others to trust in Jesus?

The Apostle Paul strove to please all people, both lost people and believers, in order that they might be saved or strengthened in their faith. In I Corinthians 10:32-33, Paul wrote these words, "Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God, 33 just as I try to PLEASE everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they might be saved."

What if all churches simply used the acronym P.L.E.A.S.E. to communicate a few significant and habitual actions that all believers can take to show and share Jesus with others?



What if all of us were to P.L.E.A.S.E. others by ...

- P** **Praying for others** — We should consistently pray for family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers who do not have a personal relationship with Jesus.
- L** **Loving Others** — We should follow the command and example of Jesus to love everyone the way He loves them.
- E** **Enjoying Others** — We should enjoy spending time with the lost people we love through hospitality, hobbies, entertainment, and activities.
- A** **Assisting Others** — We should follow Jesus' example to look for opportunities to serve lost people that we know.
- S** **Sharing with Others** — We should prayerfully and intentionally share the story of our salvation and the story of the Gospel with others.
- E** **Engaging with Many** — We should plant many Gospel seeds by asking thought-provoking, spiritual questions in our everyday interactions.



WHAT IF?

Praying for others — We should consistently pray for family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers who do not have a personal relationship with Jesus.

Prayer is the most important discipline we can have for lost people. It is where we begin and sustain an effective ministry with those who need Christ. But, for many of us, we just do not know where to start.

That is why we recommend Bless Every Home.

Bless Every Home

The advertisement features a cityscape background with a warm, golden light. At the top right is the Tampa Bay Baptist Association logo. In the center, the BLESS logo is displayed above the text "1515649 prayers". Below this, the text "Bless every home!" is written in a bold, white font, followed by an orange "SIGN UP NOW" button. At the bottom, a yellow banner contains the quote: "For the Lord has commanded us, 'I have placed you as a Light for the gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.'" with the reference "Acts 13:47" below it.

blesseveryhome.com

Bless Every Home is the best pathway to start and sustain a movement of *praying for*, *caring about*, and *sharing* the gospel with those around us.

The vision is for every home in our county to be repeatedly prayed for by name by a Christ follower.

This prayer ministry is free for individuals (Lights) and \$15 per month for churches.

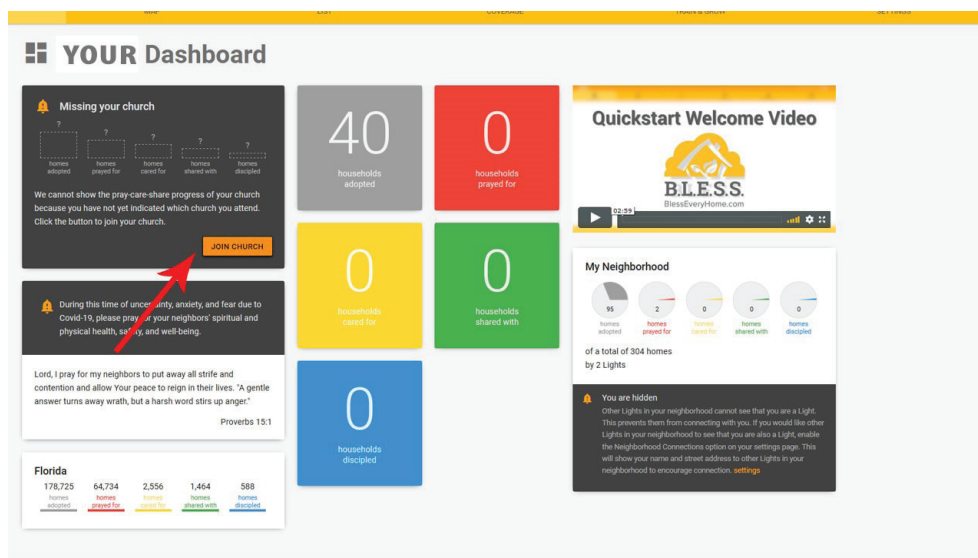
Lights receive a daily email with the names of five (or more) neighbors or co-workers that the Light can pray for that day.



When believers sign up to participate in Bless Every Home, they are immediately assigned 40 to 50 of their closest neighbors. They receive daily emails with the first and last names, and the addresses of neighbors to pray for. The believers also have a way to make confidential notes every time they pray, care, and share with their neighbors.

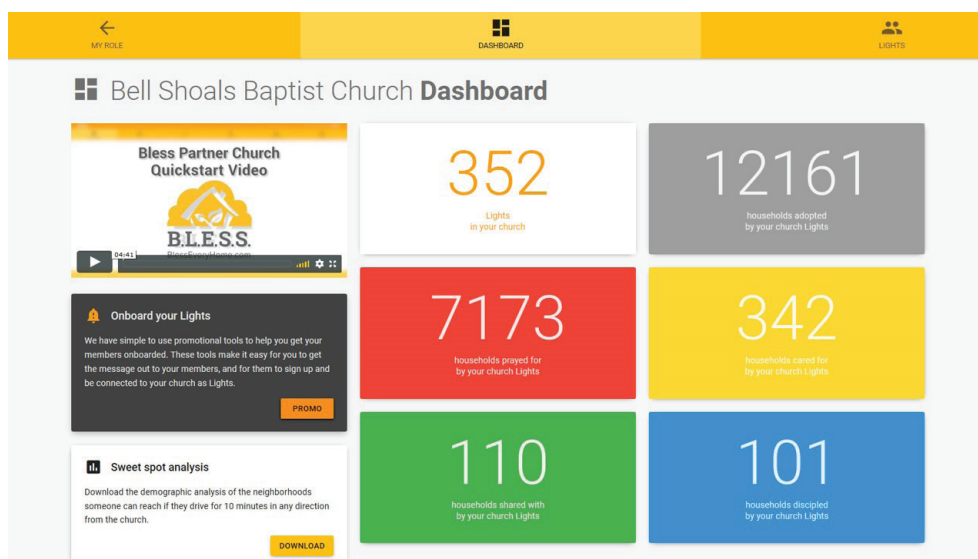
See the dashboard screenshots below:

Blesseveryhome.com — individual dashboard



In addition, churches that participate in Bless Every Home can monitor how their members (Lights) are doing in their Pray, Care, Share ministry to their neighbors and co-workers. Churches can train a few leaders to encourage their Lights to excel in their ministry.

Blesseveryhome.com — church dashboard





If you are not very Internet-savvy, we have tools to help you pray for your neighbors and co-workers. Go to TBBA.org/evangelism to download the cards, print them out, and put them in your Bible!

Prayer Cards



*Your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Matthew 6:10*

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____
- 6 _____
- 7 _____
- 8 _____
- 9 _____
- 10 _____



*Your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Matthew 6:10*

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____





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Loving Others — We should follow the command and example of Jesus to love everyone the way He loves them.

When we pray for others who need Jesus, the Lord changes our attitudes toward them and fills us with His compassion for them. Deeply loving others begins with and is sustained through earnest, daily prayer.

John 3:16 — For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

Matthew 9:36 — When He (Jesus) saw the crowds, He had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

Since God “so loves” everyone in the world and Jesus had compassion for the crowds, then it makes sense that His children should also deeply love everyone they know and meet.

2 Corinthians 5:14, 18-19 — For the love of Christ compels us ... and He gave us the ministry of reconciliation, and has committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

We will be motivated to be involved in God’s work of reconciling people to God when we are moved by His love for us and filled with His love for others.

Genesis 1:27 — So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

Everyone is God’s special creation and has great value to Him because they are His image bearers. They share with God moral, relational, and spiritual qualities and they have the potential to enjoy an intimate relationship with Him and others. Therefore, we should value and love all people that He has created.

Luke 6:27-28 — “But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.”

We must deeply love everyone, even those who hate or mistreat us.

In Luke 19:1-7, Jesus traveled through Jericho and reached out to a hated tax collector named, Zacchaeus. The people of Jericho despised Zacchaeus but Jesus went to his home and led him to become one of His followers and Zacchaeus’ life was changed.

We must not overlook anyone, especially the outcasts whom the community disregards.



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Enjoying Others — We should enjoy spending time with the lost people we love through hospitality, hobbies, entertainment, and activities.

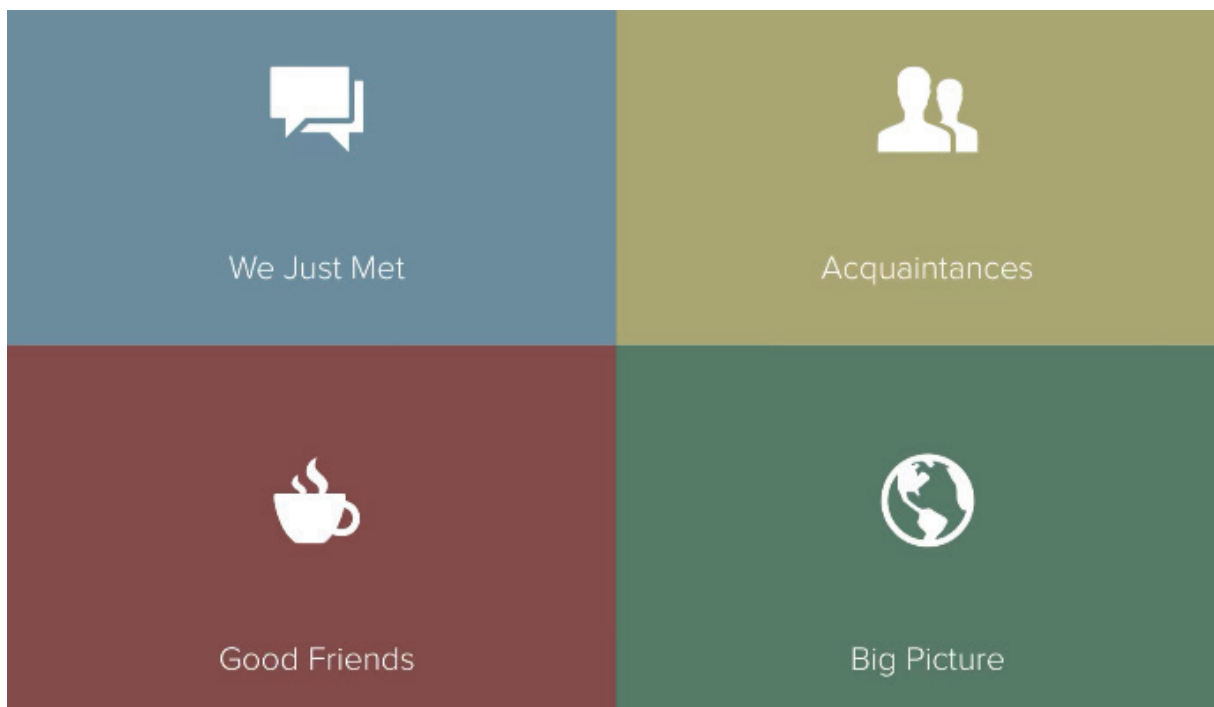
Jesus attended weddings, went into homes, interacted with strangers, and much more, just to be around all sorts of people. He was often accused of being a friend of sinners. We should follow His example and spend much time enjoying lost people we know.

One of the best ways to enjoy others is through hospitality. Everyone must eat to live, but some people live to eat. Many people enjoy eating together and there is something special about eating a delicious home-cooked meal in someone's home. What If all of us were to consistently invite neighbors, co-workers, and others over to our homes to enjoy meals. What If we were to get coffee or eat lunch with a co-worker?

There are many other wholesome ways to enjoy spending time with those who don't follow Christ. We just need to be creative. What if all of us were to spend time with others around common interests such as kids, sports, hobbies, exercise, entertainment, and more?

In addition to spending time with others, it is important that we learn to effectively converse with others. Since most people enjoy talking about themselves it is beneficial to ask good open-ended questions of others when we are with them. We should make sure that we listen carefully to their answers to our occasional questions. People love to share their stories of where they grew up, how they met their spouse and fell in love, and more. What If all of us used good questions to develop genuine friendships and to naturally steer conversations to spiritual topics?

Use the free, Questions in a Box app (below) to discover great questions geared to help you enjoy building friendships with others without Christ.





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Assisting Others — We should follow Jesus' example to look for opportunities to serve lost people that we know.

We need to take the time to serve others whenever possible. More often than we think, God places opportunities in front of us to serve and help people we know. Serving is certainly the way of evangelism. It is the way that Jesus modeled and emphasized.

Luke 10:29-37 — Jesus told a story to an expert in the law, about a man who was robbed and left half dead. Religious people did not take the time to help the man, but a despised Samaritan stopped to save his life. Jesus told the expert, "Go and do likewise."

We must be sensitive to those who are hurting all around us and take the time and make sacrifices to love and care for them in their time of need.

John 13 — Prior to Jesus eating his final dinner with His disciples before going to the cross, He humbled Himself and washed their feet. It appears that He even washed the feet of Judas who He knew would soon betray Him. After washing their feet, Jesus told His disciples, 14 "Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. 15 I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. 17 **Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.**"

Mark 10:43-45 — Jesus said... "whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, 44 and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. 45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

The world says that leading has everything to do with power and position, but according to Jesus, we lead by humbling ourselves and lovingly serving others.

Matthew 25:35-36 — For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in. 36 I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.

We should always help others, because Jesus said what we do unto others, we do also unto Him.

Philippians 2:7-8 — But made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross!

Even though Jesus is God, He humbled Himself to such an extent that He not only came to Earth, He came to serve others, and to die on a cross in our place. Therefore, we should follow His example.

Titus 3:14 — Our people must also learn to engage in good deeds to meet pressing needs, so that they will not be unfruitful.

As the Lord leads us to meet people's physical, emotional and relational needs, He will also use us to help them be transformed through the power and the message of the Gospel.



WHAT IF?

Sharing with Others — We should prayerfully and intentionally share the story of our salvation and the story of the Gospel with others.

Sharing your salvation story with others

Sharing involves talking with people about Jesus...

A believer's salvation testimony is the most effective way of transitioning conversations, with those they know, to the gospel. There are three parts to a personal testimony.

Use one of the two following salvation testimony examples to write out your testimony, memorize it and then, prayerfully, use it to steer conversations toward spiritual things.

Once you have memorized your testimony then you can use the following statement and question as a transition to your personal testimony. "I believe you know that I go to church and that I have a strong faith in God. But I want you to know that I haven't always believed in Him like I do now. As your friend, may I briefly share with you how I came to personally trust in Him?" If they give permission then share your testimony.

Salvation Testimony

There are three basic parts:

1. *My life before Christ* » Share your primary issue if you had one (fear, emptiness, insecurity, etc.). If you were saved as a young child (<10 years of age) then the primary issue may not apply to you.
2. *How I came to trust Christ as Lord and Savior*
3. *My life after Christ* » Share how He dealt with your primary issue and what other benefits you have experienced because of your conversion.

My life before Christ » Briefly describe yourself and your life prior to knowing Christ. Mention the primary issue that bothered you during this time. Many people can relate to feelings or experiences of loneliness, emptiness, fear, guilt, lack of purpose in life, etc. Be as specific as possible so that the person you are talking to can relate to you.

Conversion experience » Tell the story of how you came to trust Christ as your Lord and Savior. Do not use "churchy" words but do briefly insert the gospel message into this part.

Recent benefits of conversion » Share some statements about God's goodness to you (peace of mind, joy, purpose, whatever was lacking in your life in your pre-conversion experience). Include the assurance transition, "And now I know for certain that I am going to Heaven when I die."



Sample Testimonies

Saved as a Teenager or Adult

I grew up as an average young person who had a tremendous love for athletics, especially basketball. I played on teams every chance I could get. I was a good student and had lots of friends and yet something was missing in my life. I felt empty. All during my adolescent years I went to church because I was made to go. Yet church made no difference in my life, I didn't even like it. One summer a group of people from our church went on a retreat to North Carolina.

I did not want to go but they talked me into it. While I was at the retreat, someone spoke from the Bible and it really made sense to me. They stressed that God loved me and desired to have a personal relationship with me, but because of my sins I was separated from God and His love. That is why Jesus came to earth to die on the cross, to take away my sin. I asked God to forgive my sin that day and my life has never been the same.

Now, many years later, my life is no longer empty but it is filled with God's favor and peace. I greatly enjoy God's blessings and want others to know how much He loves them. I truly am excited about what life has to offer through God and the best thing is that I know beyond a shadow of doubt that I will go to Heaven when I die. Has anything like this ever happened to you?

Saved as a Young Child under Ten Years of Age

I grew up as an average kid in a home in central Florida. I enjoyed life, school, and my friends and everything was going along pretty well. My parents were good parents who loved my younger siblings and me very much. My mom was a church-goer, so my siblings and I attended church with her. My dad wanted us to have a good education, so my parents sacrificed to send us to private school. It was in a weekly chapel service that I heard about God's love for me and His plan for my life. I understood that Jesus died on the cross to forgive my sins and bring me into a relationship with God. I asked God to forgive my sin that day and come into my life.

After that decision I faithfully attended church, but unfortunately, I failed to fully understand the significance of what God had done in my life. Instead, I focused on meeting the perceived expectations of others. It wasn't until years later when my husband and I moved away from the familiarity and security of my hometown that I realized that God doesn't want me to obey religious rules, but that He wants me to experience the daily joy of a personal relationship with Him. Now, my life is filled with God's favor and peace. I greatly enjoy God's blessings and want others to know how much He loves them. I truly am excited about what life has to offer through God and the best thing is that I know beyond a shadow of doubt that I will go to Heaven when I die. Has anything like this ever happened to you?

Stress that every attendee should write out their salvation testimony and learn to share it in two-three minutes. Using the examples above, take some time to write the three basic parts of your salvation testimony.



Sharing HIS Story — The Gospel

Sharing our salvation testimony about how Christ is real in our lives and the most important person or thing in our lives can lead to further gospel conversations. It is not enough to share our story about Christ but we need to learn to share HIS gospel story about His death and resurrection.

There are many good gospel presentations that one can share. Some may want to share the gospel by using a well-designed gospel tract such as:

- *Steps to Peace with God* (Billy Graham)
- *3 Circles* (North American Mission Board)

Many may want to learn a simple, easy to remember gospel presentation so that they can share it with others in a comfortable manner.

Sharing HIS Story — The L.O.R.D. Presentation

- L** **L is for Love** — John 3:16a: For God so loved the world...
God loves everyone and wants a relationship with them.
- O** **O is for Offenses** (sin) — Romans 3:23: For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Romans 6:23a: For the wages (earnings) of sin is death (separation).
We are all sinful and therefore separated from a holy God.
- R** **R is for Remedy** — Romans 5:8: God showed his love to us, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
We cannot work our way to God but God has done the work for us. He sent His Son Jesus to die on the cross in our place and to be raised from the dead.
- D** **D is for Decision** — Acts 20:21: I have declared to both Jews and Greeks, that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.
We must repent and trust in Jesus in order to be made right with God.

Go to all41life.org/videos/ to view the basic and the extended version of the L.O.R.D. presentation.



Sharing HIS Story — 3 Circles

Another great gospel presentation that we recommend is the *3 Circles*. It is designed to be drawn on a napkin or sheet of paper as a guide for helping you share the gospel.

3 CIRCLES: LIFE CONVERSATION GUIDE A simple way to share the gospel



Go to namb.net/evangelism/3circles/ to download resources and link to the free app (iOS).



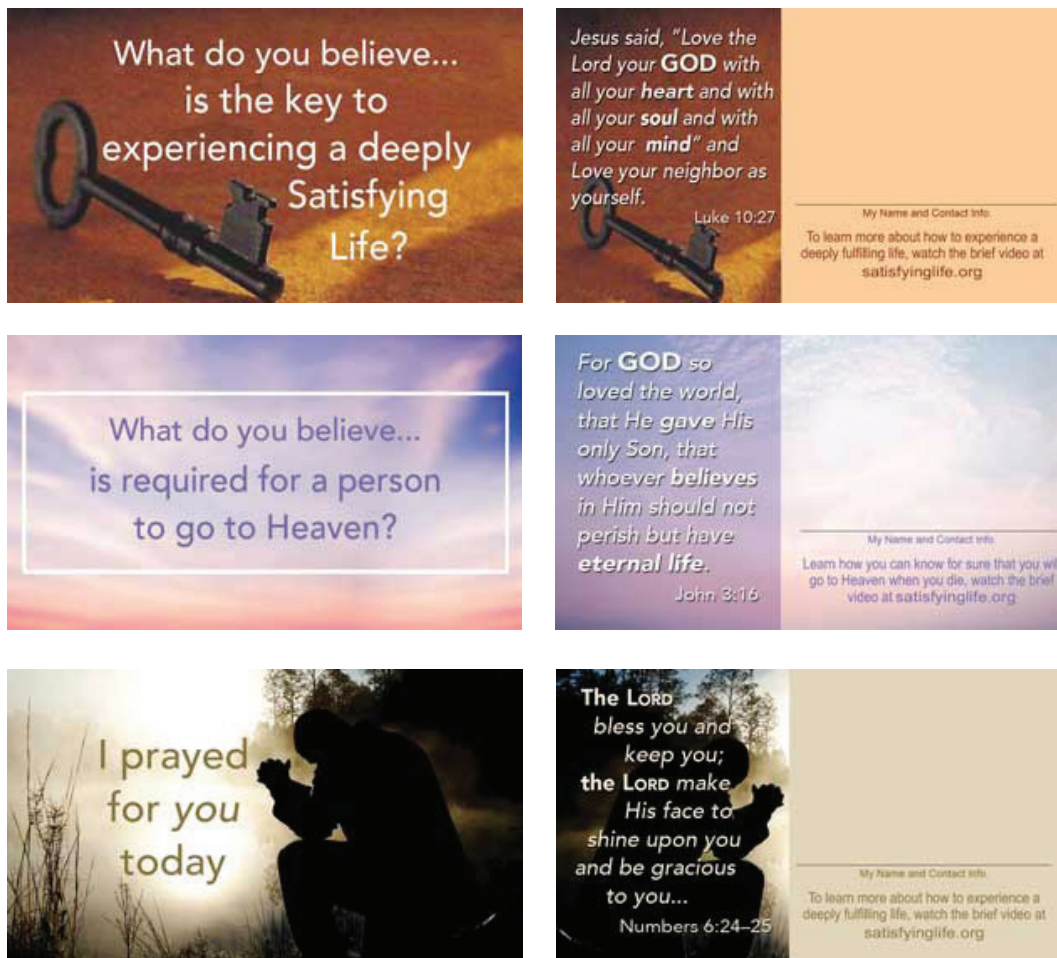
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Engaging with Many — We should plant many Gospel seeds by asking thought-provoking, spiritual questions in our everyday interactions.

Spiritual Conversation Cards

Christ-followers should graciously ask spiritual questions of strangers they briefly interact with on any given day. The Holy Spirit can cause the seeds of these questions to grow so that unbelievers may become open to gospel conversations later on with other godly witnesses. Most believers interact with at least a few strangers each day. If you sense that the Lord wants you to ask someone a spiritual question, then you can use one of the Spiritual Conversation Cards (below) to do that.

Use these cards at gas stations, with servers at restaurants, at the check-out line in grocery stores, and more. You can introduce most of the cards by saying something like, “I like to ask _____ employees a very important question and it is this ... (read the question and give them the card). It is a good question and I hope you might take the time to think about how to answer it. Have a nice day.”



To see all eight of our conversation cards (and download them), go to all41life.org/conversing/.



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Mobilizing Your People Today!

What can you and your church do together with other churches to show and share Jesus with everyone in our county?

You can use some common P.L.E.A.S.E. language and P.L.E.A.S.E. strategies on Sunday mornings or other times throughout the year.

1. Preach on P.L.E.A.S.E. / relational evangelism on the two Sundays after Mother's Day, or any other two consecutive Sundays.
2. Preach on prayer and launch Bless Every Home or a church-wide Prayer Card ministry.
3. Preach on loving and enjoying others and launch a "Love Your Neighbors" hospitality campaign.
4. Teach on "Developing and Sharing a Personal Testimony."
5. Teach on Sharing the Gospel (3 Circles/L.O.R.D. Presentation).
6. Teach on planting many gospel seeds by using Spiritual Conversation Cards or Gospel tracts.
7. Develop and use a new church email address so that church members can report efforts to P.L.E.A.S.E. others (i.e., please@fbc.org). Then, occasionally share a few of these reports during a Sunday morning worship service.

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Coming Alongside



TAMPA BAY BAPTIST
ASSOCIATION

tbaa.org