

FIELD GUIDE

Bless the City



CHRIST COVENANT

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Bless the City

INTRODUCTION

All Christians should regularly reflect on the Great Commission and the Great Commandment of Jesus. They are both called “great” with good reason. In the Great Commission, Jesus gives Christians the command to make disciples of every nation, and this should be central to our lives as believers (Matt. 28:19–20). In the Great Commandment, Jesus reiterates the commands of God from long ago that Christians should love God with all their heart and soul and mind and that Christians should love their neighbors as they love themselves (Matt. 22:37–40; see Deut. 6:5 and Lev. 19:18).

This means that the Christian life should be largely marked by outward-facing relationships and love. As Christians, we are called to love one another (John 13:34). As the Great Commandment makes clear, we are also called to love our neighbors. The Greek word that Jesus uses in His command that we love our neighbors is the same word that the lawyer uses when he asks Jesus, “Who is my neighbor?” (Luke 10:29), which leads into the parable of the Good Samaritan. In this parable, the Samaritan didn’t know the man who was beaten and stripped on the road. Not only that, the

man on the road was actually the Samaritan's political and racial enemy. Even still, the Samaritan showed lavish mercy to the vulnerable man. The Samaritan was full of love toward a stranger and enemy, and this is exactly what Jesus has called us to through the gospel.

At Christ Covenant, we regularly talk about being a church that gathers and scatters well. When we gather, we seek to worship God faithfully, encourage one another, and love one another deeply. When we scatter, we want to be a people who represent Christ authentically and share our faith as faithful kingdom ambassadors. We want to make disciples and plant churches in Atlanta and beyond in our efforts to reach the world. We also want to be a people who do good works, pursue justice, and love the people of our community as we seek to bless the city in which we live. While we want our efforts to bless the city to ultimately lead to disciple-making opportunities, we also recognize that these opportunities don't necessarily begin there. We want to be a church that gives of ourselves to do good for others in the name of Christ, even when we aren't verbally communicating His gospel. God instructed His people to bless the city even when they were in exile in Babylon, urging them to "seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare" (Jer. 29:7).

We are trusting the Lord to help us discern how to steward our resources, partner effectively, and mobilize our members to bless the city faithfully. We are seeing Him grant us opportunities to engage our city in four focus areas.

FOUR BLESS THE CITY FOCUS AREAS

1. Community Flourishing

Atlanta is a city of both great wealth and immense poverty. According to recent census data, Atlanta has the largest gap between the poor and wealthy among United States cities with more than 100,000 residents. Certain communities near Christ Covenant face the ongoing challenges of homelessness,

low employment rates, and subpar education performance. We believe that God has placed Christ Covenant in the city of Atlanta to display His mercy and justice to the vulnerable all around us. We aim to encourage this work primarily through local strategic partnerships.

- Strategic Partnerships: Atlanta Mission, Grove Park Community Church, Read Together ATL, Thrive Academy

2. Family Restoration

As we consider how to advocate for the vulnerable, we desire to give particular care to pregnant mothers and vulnerable children in dire need. By partnering with FaithBridge, our church equips its members to engage in foster care and adoption. We also partner with A Beacon of Hope, a local women’s clinic that aids women both physically and spiritually during the entire process of an unplanned pregnancy.

- Strategic Partnerships: FaithBridge, A Beacon of Hope

3. Refugee Care

Clarkston is a city less than 15 miles from the heart of Atlanta. It’s one of the largest refugee resettlement sites in the United States. Over 45% of Clarkston’s residents are internationally born, and over half live below the poverty line. They face many challenges in a new host culture as they adjust to a new language, culture, and lifestyle. We believe that God has strategically placed Christ Covenant near this community to engage our refugee neighbors with the love of Christ. The Lord has given us a unique opportunity to engage the nations with the gospel in Atlanta!

- Strategic Partnerships: Send Relief – Atlanta Ministry Center, Brannon Hill Community, Clarkston International Bible Church, Individual Refugee Families

4. Fighting Trafficking

Atlanta is among the top five cities in the United States for human trafficking. We believe that God has providentially placed Christ Covenant in this city to minister in this dark space. Through our efforts, we hope to educate our members on the complex realities of human trafficking and work with partner experts in the field to bring holistic gospel healing to victims. Our aim is to press into these difficult spaces alongside our partners in order to see people rescued from the slavery of human trafficking.

- Strategic Partnerships: Frontline Response, BeLoved Atlanta

CONCLUSION

Every year at Christ Covenant, we take a month to highlight practical ways that you can do good works, pursue justice, and love your neighbor. We call this emphasis Bless the City, and it's the perfect time to engage with different ministries and organizations that Christ Covenant seeks to bless strategically. Our ultimate hope is that you would regularly engage in serving with at least one of these organizations and that you would consistently seek ways to be a blessing throughout the year. To this end, we plan a range of opportunities for you to contribute to. Visit christcovenant.com/bless-the-city-initiative to determine which opportunity you would like to engage with.

Jesus has called us to love our neighbors as we love ourselves. As we seek to obey Him and to be like Him, let us pursue outward-facing relationships in love, and by doing so, let us bless the city together.





