

B.E.L.L.S. habit #3: *Learning Jesus*

Mark 2:13-17; Col 4:2-6

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[BELLS testimonies- Blessing or Eating with others]
[Mine- Eating (Tapuika hui/Mitre 10/Anthony Wihapi)]

I was going to ask *Paul Hunt* (Principal of Fairhaven school) if I could borrow their *school bell* so I could *surprise you all* this morning by ringing it before I started preaching! But then I remembered there'd probably be some sleeping babies in church this morning (*including Theo*) and so I decided that *might not* be such a good idea!

So just *imagine I'm ringing a bell* this morning. Not a little one that you shake, but a *big church bell* like they *used to ring* in times gone by, to signal to the community that *church was about to start*.

Ding Ding; Ding Ding; Ding

Whether it's a *church bell*, a *school bell*, a *fire alarm bell*, a *bicycle bell*, or an *alarm clock bell*, bells are rung to *catch people's attention* by *startling us* out of whatever we're doing, and signaling that it's time to start doing something different.

Like when the *fire alarm bell* went last Sunday during our closing song, it signaled that it was time for us to leave the building for a fire drill.

BELLS is also the *metaphor* and the *acronym* presented by *Michael Frost* in his excellent little book: *Surprise the World: The Five habits of highly missional people*.

BELLS is a *metaphor* of how Christians are supposed to be *surprising the world* with our *different way of living* because of the *hope we have in Jesus Christ*.

BELLS is also an *acronym*:

- B is for: *Blessing* people both inside and outside the church
- E is for: *Eating* together with believers and nonbelievers alike.
- L is for: *Listening* to the guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit
- L is also: *Learning* Jesus as our leader and model for making disciples
- And S is for being *Sent* by God to everywhere life takes us to *Share the good news*.

Gary Scoggins (our Evangelism Purpose Leader) did an *excellent job* of introducing the *five habits of BELLS* to us a couple of weeks ago.

He explained the *first habit* of highly missional people, which is: *blessing three people, at least one of whom is outside of the church*

We heard a couple of good testimonies about that *last Sunday*.

Sjaan Rounds (our Fellowship Purpose Leader) did a *superb job* of introducing us to the *second habit* which was: *eating with three people at least one of whom is not a believer*.

We heard a couple of good testimonies about that *this morning*.

Today I'm going to be presenting *the third habit* of highly missional people which is: *Learning Jesus*. (actually the 4th but swapping these around).
1a

I suspect the *extroverts* will have enjoyed the *first two habits* of *blessing and eating* because they're *highly relational habits*. While the *introverts* (like me) will have found them quite a challenge.

But my *hunch* is that for the *next two habits* of *Learning Jesus and Listening to the Holy Spirit* it may be the other way round, the *introverts* will *enjoy them* while the *extroverts* will find them a bit more of a *challenge!*

But before I introduce you to the *habit of Learning Jesus*, I want to explain a bit more about *how* this initiative called *BELLS* is a *surprisingly easy way of doing evangelism*.

A surprisingly easy way of doing evangelism!

2



With all the best intentions in the world, some people will tell you that *every Christian is an evangelist*.

But are we *really all evangelists?*

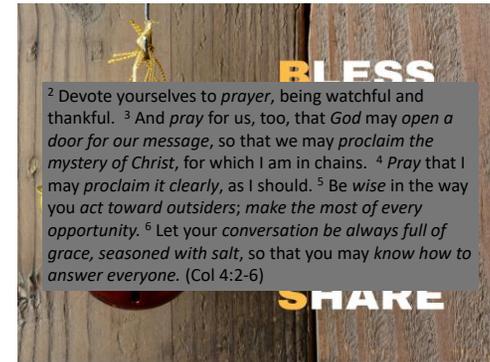
Contrary to the *myth* that *every believer* is an *evangelist*, *Michael Frost* argues that the *apostle Paul* presents a *twofold approach* to the ministry of evangelism.

First he affirms the *evangelist* as a gift to the church in *Ephesians 4:11*.

Second he describes *all believers* as being *evangelistic in their orientation to the people we interact with*, but in a way that's *distinctively different* to a *gifted evangelist*.

This *twofold approach* is especially evident in *Colossians 4:2-6*. Paul writes:

3



- ² Devote yourselves to *prayer*, being watchful and thankful. ³ And *pray* for us, too, that *God* may open a door for our message, so that we may *proclaim the mystery of Christ*, for which I am in chains. ⁴ *Pray* that I may *proclaim it clearly*, as I should. ⁵ Be wise in the way you *act toward outsiders*; make the most of every opportunity. ⁶ Let your *conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt*, so that you may know how to answer everyone. (Col 4:2-6)

So according to Paul, *evangelists proclaim* while the rest of us *pray for them* and are *ready to answer any questions* raised during the

course of our *wise, gracious, flavorsome interactions with nonbelievers.*

Michael Frost calls *this living a questionable life, a life that's so surprisingly different to the rest of the world it prompts unbelievers to ask questions.*

This *twofold approach* to evangelism explains the *great success* the early Christians had in *transforming the Roman empire* with the *good news of Jesus Christ*, because they literally surprised the empire with how they lived!

While *great evangelists* like *Peter and Paul*, and *Barnabas and Timothy* proclaimed the gospel around the empire, *ordinary believers* (like you and me) *devoted themselves* to sacrificial acts of *kindness*, to *loving* their enemies and *forgiving* their persecutors. To *caring for the poor* and the *sick*, and *feeding the hungry*. In the *brutality* of life under *Roman rule*, *Christians* were the *most stunningly different people anyone had ever seen!*

And *hundreds of thousands* turned from *paganism to Christianity* because of the *surprising way the early Christians lived.*

So the *good news* for those of us here who *don't feel like we are gifted evangelists* is that this *twofold method* of evangelism is *surprisingly easy to do!*

3



Here's an *example from my own experience.*

Three or four years ago, *Gary Scoggins* who is without a doubt a *gifted evangelist*, invited me to go with him doing *door to door evangelism* to all the houses in *George Street*. I was *quite nervous* about how it would go, but I *needn't have been*, because *Gary* made it seem so *easy* with his *relaxed way of interacting with people* and *asking them questions* about what they believed in.

A few months later our church took part in the *Hope Project* which delivered the *Hope booklet* to *every household in Te Puke*, so *Raewyn and I* signed up for doing *door to door evangelism* of a *couple of streets in Te Puke*.

Encouraged by the *easiness* of how it had been *with Gary*, I *boldly knocked on the first door*.

"Hi we're representing the combined churches of Te Puke and we're delivering the Hope booklet to every household." I said to the person who opened the door.

"Sorry not interested!" was his reply from the first house. *Same with the second, and the third!*

Thankfully the fourth house greeted us warmly, (or we might have stopped right then and there!) but that was because they were *Christians who go to the Orchard church!*

By the time we'd finished our allocated area, *only about four or five people* at the houses we knocked on, had shown *any sign of interest in the gospel booklets* we were delivering. *Raewyn and I* felt like we were *absolutely useless door to door evangelists*, and *Raewyn* told me afterwards *she was never going to do that again!*

Last year *Gary* lined me up for *yet another household evangelism visit* with a young man and a couple of his friends *Gary* had met in *Maketu*.

But when I *knocked on his door*, he *wasn't there*.

"Phew" I thought, I was *off the hook!*
But on my way home I stopped for *petrol at the BP* and was greeted by an *old Massey University classmate of mine*, who recognised me from almost 30 years ago!

We decided to *catch up over a coffee* a few days later. He was *surprised to hear that I'd left the Dairy Industry and was now a pastor*. He asked me *lots of questions* about that.

We had several more coffees together over the following weeks and had interesting conversations about where we were each at with our lives.

Then I invited him to *Long Story Short* and he came and loved it!
Then I invited him to the *Reading the Bible Faithfully* course and he *loved that too!*
Both the content of the course and the people he met and interacted with, *including Gary*.
My friend still hasn't been to *Sunday church*, and I'm not sure he *ever will*,
but last Thursday he came along to our *first T20 men's prayer breakfast* and he *enjoyed that too!*

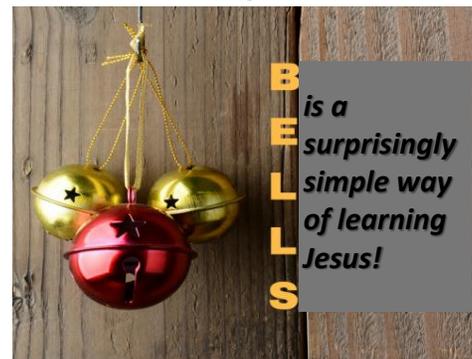
When I tagged along with *Gary* (our resident evangelist), the work of evangelism seemed *surprisingly easy*.
When I tried doing it by *myself* (with Raewyn) it seemed *incredibly hard!*
When I had *coffees and conversations* with my old class-mate, it was *surprisingly easy!*

I think that's an example of how surprisingly easy this twofold method of evangelism is that's described in Colossians 4:2-6. The *five habits of BELLS* are designed to help those of us who *aren't* gifted evangelists (like Gary), to practice living *questionable lives* that will *surprise the world!*

So far we've been introduced to the first two habits of BELLS: blessing others, and eating with others. Now it's time to introduce you to the *third habit* of highly missional people. *Learning Jesus*.

A surprisingly simple way of learning Jesus!

5



The third habit of BELLS is: *I will spend at least one period of the week learning Jesus*.

There are *two very good reasons* why we should be *learning Jesus*.

One reason is the *devotional value of growing closer to Jesus* by hearing the *promptings of the Holy Spirit* through reading the *gospels* (Matthew, Mark, Luke & John).

The other reason is just as important as the first, if we're going to *share Jesus as the reason for the hope we have* then we need to *know Jesus* and to *know Jesus* we've got to *learn Jesus!*

In his book *Surprise the World*, *Michael Frost* says that he's concerned that *many Christians only seem to have a Jesus' greatest hits awareness of the Gospels*- they know about his *birth, his death, his resurrection, a few miracles, and a couple of parables*- but *that's about it!*

Yet if we're to figure out what Jesus wants us to *think, be, and do here and now*, in the situations we encounter every day, we must *get to know Jesus by regularly reading* what *Matthew, Mark, Luke & John* wrote about him in the gospels.

Then we can pattern our life on the life of Jesus!

Many of you, I expect, will have some kind of *devotional Bible reading habit* going for you, when you *spend some time reading scripture and prayer*.

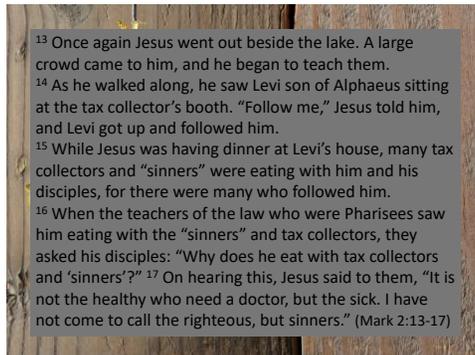
I use *The Word for Today* as my daily devotional.

This *third habit of spending a chunk of time at least once a week reading and reflecting on a section of the gospels*, isn't meant to *replace that*, but *builds on it*.

Let's *have a go* at doing that right now.

Here's a passage of *Mark's gospel* that I'll read to you, then let's see what we can *learn about Jesus from it*.

6



¹³ Once again Jesus went out beside the lake. A large crowd came to him, and he began to teach them.

¹⁴ As he walked along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax collector's booth. "**Follow me,**" Jesus told him, and Levi got up and followed him.

¹⁵ While Jesus was having dinner at Levi's house, many tax collectors and "sinners" were eating with him and his disciples, for there were many who followed him.

¹⁶ When the teachers of the law who were Pharisees saw him eating with the "sinners" and tax collectors, they asked his disciples: "Why does he eat with tax collectors and 'sinners'?"

¹⁷ On hearing this, Jesus said to them, "**It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.**"

Turn to your neighbour and share with them the different things you can *learn about Jesus* from this passage.

1. Jesus *taught people* (about the kingdom of God) (v13)
2. Jesus was *alert for opportunities* to interact with interested people (v14)
3. Jesus *included unpopular people* into his team of disciples (v14)
4. Jesus *ate with unpopular and sinful people* (v15)
5. Jesus *took his disciples with him* so they could learn by seeing and hearing and and doing (v15)
6. Jesus was *unphased by the critical questions* people asked about the company he kept (v16,17)
7. Jesus was *aware of his mission*- which was to invite sinners into God's kingdom (v17)

So there in just *four verses* are at least *seven things* we've *learnt about Jesus* that then helps us *be like Jesus* with the people and situations we encounter as we go about our daily lives.

Learning Jesus like this should then cause me to ponder:

- *How can I teach people about the kingdom of God today?* (like Jesus did)

And prompt me to:

- *be alert for the opportunities to interact with interested people I meet today.*

- And to be *ready to include unpopular people among the people I mix and mingle with today.*

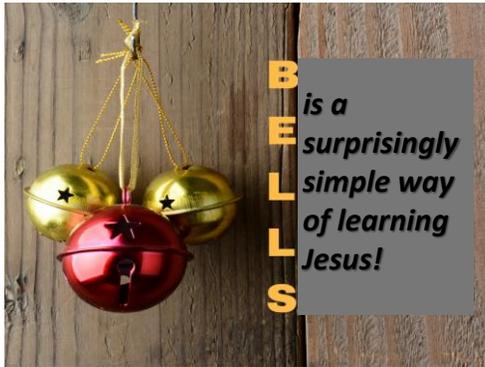
Learning Jesus like this should provoke me to:

- *bring someone with me who'd benefit from learning by doing things together like Jesus did.*
- And will help me be *unphased by critical questions people might ask about my different lifestyle to theirs.*

And learning Jesus like this:

- *reminds me that my mission is the same as Jesus' mission of inviting people into God's kingdom as I go about my daily life.*

7



But wait there's more!

While reading the gospels is *the primary way of learning Jesus*, we can add to that reading well researched books about Jesus like: *The Jesus I never knew* by Philip Yancey.

And we can add to that *watching well presented movies* about Jesus- like *Son of God* (which I think is one of the best depictions of Jesus made so far).

By *regularly reading the gospels, reading books about Jesus*, and by *watching movies about him*, the Holy Spirit helps *pattern our lives on the way Jesus lived*, as we become so *familiar with his story*, that we can *share it with whomever asks us for the reason for the hope we have in him!*

In his book *Surprise the World*, Michael Frost tells a story about a *Christian Surfers conference* he spoke at. In one of the sessions he asked them to *name their favourite surfer of all time.*

The roomful of *avid surfers* erupted with *excited chatter* about who their *favorite surfer* was. Lots of *different names* were called out but the name that was *called out the most* was *eleven time world surfing champion and legend Kelly Slater.*

So he selected *Kelly Slater* as their *all time favourite surfer*. Then he asked them, "*So what do you all know about Kelly Slater?*"

This time the room *went nuts* as they *yelled out facts* about *Kelly Slater's life*. *Where he grew up, what boards he used, what movies and TV shows he'd been in, which super models and movie stars he'd dated.* It took quite a while for the room to finally settle down.

Later on in the conference, when he was talking to them about the *habit of learning Jesus* so we can *share him as the reason for the hope we have*, he asked them, "*Tell me, what do you all know about Jesus?*"

This time the response was much more *muted*. Slowly, quietly, people offered things they knew about Jesus. "*He's the Son of God*", "*He died for our sins*", "*He rose from the dead.*" "*He's coming back again.*" They seriously listed off several important *doctrinal statements* like that.

Then Michael Frost asked them, "*How come you didn't speak about Jesus in the same way you've just been talking about Kelly Slater!*"

Silence!

When we live *surprising lives*, people should see our *strange behaviour and ask us why?*
And when we *answer why*, we should be able to *speak about Jesus the way surfers speak about Kelly Slater*,
with *energy and enthusiasm*, with *reverence and awe*,
with *delight and wonder!*
That's why we practice the *third habit of highly missional people!*
This week on top of *blessing three people* (at least one of whom isn't a Christian);
and *eating with three people*, (at least one of whom isn't a believer),
Your mission (should you choose to accept it) and mine is to *spend at least one period of time learning Jesus by reading from the gospels!*