

The 'knack' of being beacons of hope

Philippians 2:12-18

By pastor Ken Keyte

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Philippians 2:12-18

¹² Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³ for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.

¹⁴ Do everything without grumbling or arguing, ¹⁵ so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.

Phil 2:12 Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³ for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose. ¹⁴ Do everything without grumbling or arguing, ¹⁵ so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.

2

Philippians 2:12-18

Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky ¹⁶ as you hold firmly to the word of life. And then I will be able to boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor in vain. ¹⁷ But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. ¹⁸ So you too should be glad and rejoice with me.

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3



"A 'knack' is knowing how to do something without even havin ta think about it"- Hec

Last Sunday night, (while most of you were watching the Holy Ghost movie at Revive!), Raewyn and I went to see *Hunt for the Wilderpeople* at the Capitol theatre!

We'd heard lots of good things about the movie which is based on one of *Barry Crump's* novels about a foster child named *Ricky Martin* who goes bush with his dog *Tupac* and his uncle *Hec*, ending up on the run from *Ricky's* social worker and the police.

It's a very funny movie, that also provides some serious insight into what it's like being a foster child.

One of the scenes that particularly caught my attention was when *Uncle Hec* finds *Ricky* hopelessly lost in the bush, after he'd run away from his social worker so he wouldn't end up in juvenile prison.

Upon finding him, *Hec* says to *Ricky*:

"You wouldn't last in the bush, you don't have the 'knack' of survival!"

"What's a knack?" asks *Ricky*.

"It's known how to do something without having to think about it," answers Hec. **3a**

"And if you *don't* have the *knack* of survival in the bush, then if you get lost you'll end up *going crazy* and your *mind'll* start playing tricks on ya, thinking ya *hot*, when ya *cold*, so you start *taken off ya clothes* and then ya *end up dead!*"

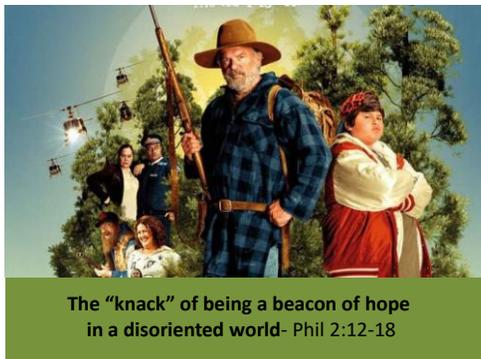
According to Hec, the "*knack*" of survival in the bush, involved knowing that *if you get lost*, you should:

*"head down hill till ya find a river,
then ya walk down it till ya come across a way up to a high point so ya can find ya way out."*

Whether it's the "*knack*" of survival in the bush, or the "*knack*" of survival in a *disoriented world*, a "*knack*" is another name for a "*practice*" and a "*practice*" (or a "*knack*"), consists of: knowing *what* and *what not* to do, *how to do it*, and *why you do it*- and knowing it *so well*, that *'ya know what to do without have'n ta think about it!*"

It's a different kind of "*knack*" or "*practice*" that the *Apostle Paul* is talking about in the passage I just read: The "*knack*" of being a *beacon of hope* in a *disoriented world*.

4



You see, *Paul knew* that the *Philippian church* whom he *loved and cared about* very much, were in *grave danger* of *getting lost* in their disoriented world.

But *not only* did he want to prevent them from *getting lost*, he also wanted them to *fulfill their mission* as *beacons of hope*, so *others* wouldn't *get lost* in their disoriented world.

Much like the "*knack*" of survival in the bush, the *Apostle Paul* explains the "*knack*" of being *beacons of hope* by telling the *Philippians*: *what* and *what not* to do, *how* to do it, and *why* they should it.

Because he wanted them to *know it so well* they'd know how to be *beacons of hope* without have'n ta *think about it!*

And *that's what* I want to talk to *you about* this morning: I want to tell you about the "*knack*" of being *beacons of hope* in a *disoriented world*.

Know'n what and what not to do as beacons of hope

5

Know'n what and what not to do as beacons of hope

¹⁴ Do everything without grumbling or arguing, ¹⁵ so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation. Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky....Phil 2:14,15



Knowing *what to do* to survive after getting lost in the bush (according to Hec) involved a procedure of:

*"head'n down hill till ya find a river,
then walken down the river till ya come across a way up to a high point, so ya can find ya way out."*

Paul knew that *in the past* the *Philippian church* had *obeyed his teachings* when he was *with them*,

but now he was *absent, stuck in prison* for preaching the gospel, *unsure* of whether he'd *be released*, or end up *dying* there!

So he says in his letter to them,

"Therefore my beloved friends, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence, but much more now in my absence, work out your own salvation..."

He was telling them they needed to know *what* to do and *what not* to do, for *themselves*!

Then they'd be able to *work out their salvation* as *beacons of hope* in the world, *even though* Paul wasn't with them to tell them *how*.

So Paul gives them a *procedure to put into practice*, that *like Hec's "knack" of survival in the bush* will enable them to be *beacons of hope* whatever their circumstances, whether *with or without Paul*. He says:

5a

¹⁴ Do everything without grumbling or arguing, ¹⁵ so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation. Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky....

Just as there was a *reason* why Ricky Baker had ended up *getting lost in the bush* because he'd run away from home after his foster Mum had died, there's also a reason why the Philippian church was in danger of *'getting lost'* in an argument that was threatening to *spoil their unity together*.

We don't find out what the issue is until *chapter 4*, and *even then* we're only told that it was a *dispute between two prominent members* of the church.

It was *inconsequential* to Paul what the argument was about. But it was *highly consequential* to the church that *two of their members* were in *conflict* with each other!

So before confronting them about it, Paul wanted the *whole church to learn the 'knack'* of being *beacons of hope in a disoriented world*.

According to Paul, this *'knack'* starts with knowing *what* and *what not* to do:

"In *everything* you do together, don't grumble or argue with each other." he says.

Paul was *remembering* back to the *Israelites in the desert* after they'd been miraculously *freed by God* from *slavery in Egypt*, and were on route for the *promised land*.

But despite having been *re-oriented as God's holy people*, who were to be *the light for the nations*, yet when things got difficult, they *grumbled and argued* amongst themselves about the situation they were in.

And by doing so they had *undermined their unity* as the nation whom God had called to be a *beacon of hope for all the nations of the world!*

That was the *heart of the matter* that was threatening to *undermine the unity* of the *Philippian church* whom God had called to be a *beacon of hope in the world*.

According to Paul, the *'knack'* of being *beacons of hope in the world* requires that in *everything we do together* as a church we mustn't *grumble or argue* with each other.

Now just to be clear, Paul's *not* meaning we *shouldn't speak up* about something that's *obviously wrong!*

He does *exactly that* a bit later on his letter when he warns them to *"watch out for those dogs, those evildoers, those mutilators of the flesh"* - cautioning them against some *over-zealous individuals* who were trying to convince the *non-Jewish Christians in Philippi* that they should *practice the Jewish religious laws* (such as circumcision) in order to be *fully blessed by God*.

Which was just another version of *salvation by works* rather than *by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ!*

But Paul *is* talking about the differences of opinion that *aren't crucial to anyone's salvation*, yet *so often* become the cause *grumbles and arguments* that promote *disharmony and division* and

which prevent the church from being the *beacon of hope* we're called to be in the *world*.

The importance of unity for survival was brought home to me on my favourite reality TV show: *Bear Grylls: Mission Survive!*

Former SAS marine and adventurer, turned reality TV star *Bear Grylls* took a group of *8 British celebrities* into the inhospitable jungle of *Central America* on a *12 day survival mission* to test their survival skills.

At the end of each day, the celebrity whom *Bear Grylls* judged to be *incapable* of surviving in the jungle was eliminated.

Last week it was singer/presenter *Jamelia* who was eliminated because she'd been *grumbling and complaining* and *wouldn't work together* with the other team members. Which went against the *fundamental survival principle* that: *you have to work together to survive!*

Not only is that a *basic survival principle* for the *jungles of Central America* and the *New Zealand bush*, but according to the *Apostle Paul* for a church to have the '*knack*' of survival *and* of being *beacons of hope in the world*, we have to *work together without grumbling and complaining* to accomplish *God's mission in the world!*

Know'n how to be beacons of hope

6

Know'n how to be beacons of hope

'Therefore... (Phil 2:12)

'In your relationships with each other, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus had.' (2:5-11)



But knowing *what* and *what not* to do is only the *first part* of having the '*knack*' of something.

As *well as that* you also have to know *how* to do it.

When *Uncle Hec* tells *Ricky Martin* that the "*knack*" of survival in the bush involved knowing that,

"if ya get lost, ya head down hill till ya find a river, then walk down it till ya come across a way up to a high point, so ya can find ya way out",

he was *passing on* his survival '*know-how*' to *Ricky*, which had been learned from *years of experience* in the bush.

Bear Grylls does the same in his *Mission: Survive* reality show, passing on the *fundamental survival principles* he's learned from years of experience as an adventurer.

The *Apostle Paul* does the same when right at the start of the passage I read before he says:

6a

"Therefore..." before going on to tell them *what* and *what not* to do, to be *beacons of hope in the world*.

A good Bible study principle that's been *passed on to me* is:

"Whenever you come across a 'therefore', look back to see what the 'therefore' is there for!"

Looking back to see what *this 'therefore'* is there for, takes us back to the *Christ hymn* in chapter 2 verses 5-11, that's immediately before this passage.

Paul introduces the *Christ-hymn* by saying:

6b

'In your relationships with each other, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus had.'

Which means that Paul's instructions about *what* and *what not* to do to be *beacons of hope in the world* are contingent upon *having the same mindset as Jesus Christ!*

Or in other-words having the '*know-how*' or '*the knack*' of thinking and acting like Jesus did.

The *Christ-hymn* of verses 6-11 narrate the *cruciform pattern* of how *Jesus lived* that is characterised by *cruciform: faith, love, power and hope*.

How does this '*know how*' or '*knack*' of thinking and acting *like Jesus* relate to being *beacons of hope* by *doing everything without grumbling or arguing*?

It's like this:

Whenever I choose *not to grumble or argue* with others out of *faithful obedience to God*, I practice *cruciform faith* as part of the "*knack*" of being a *beacon of hope in the world*.

Whenever I *practice voluntary self-giving regard for others* by deciding *not to grumble or argue* even though I think *I'm right and you're wrong*, so we can work together for the gospel (instead of arguing), I practice *cruciform love* as part of the '*knack*' of being a *beacon of hope in the world!*

Whenever I *give away the power of winning an argument* to prove *I'm right and you're wrong*, I allow God's *cruciform power* to act through *my weakness* in refusing to enter into the dispute, which is *also part of the "knack"* of being a *beacon of hope in the world!!*

And whenever God works through all these ways to *reverse our disputes & disagreements* to bring unity and harmony out of conflict, we *practice cruciform hope*.

All this is having the "*knack*" of being *beacons of hope in the world!!!*

This is the '*know-how*', the '*knack*' that comes from *having the same mindset* as Jesus, which is the "*knack*" Paul was *passing on* to the Philippian church.

Having the '*knack*' of knowing *what and how* to do something,

is like the difference between *wearing an item* of clothing (like the cool sweat shirt Raewyn got me for my birthday)- which I can *put on* and *take off* at any time, *whereas having the 'knack'* is like a *new skin* that's on you *all the time!*

When our *mindset* has become so much like the *mindset of Christ* that without *have'n ta think about* it we practice *cruciform: faith, love, power and hope* like Jesus, *then the 'knack'* of being *beacons of hope- has become like a new skin that's on us all the time!*

Know'n why we are beacons of hope

7

Know'n why we are beacons of hope

1. We become blameless & pure children of God (Phil:2:14)
2. So pastors like Paul can be proud on the day of Christ that they haven't laboured in vein (v16)
3. So we can be glad & rejoice with Paul (v18)
4. So we can live in a manner worthy of the gospel working in unity for the gospel (1:27,28)
5. Because we work together in the presence of God! (2:12)



Yet there's still *one final part* to the "*knack*" being *beacons of hope in the world*, **without which** it'll *never* become the skin that's on us all the time.

Uncle Hec, told *Ricky* that the reason *why* you needed the '*knack*' of survival in the bush was because if you *didn't have it*, you'd end up *going crazy* and yer mind'll *start playing tricks on ya*, mak'n ya think ya *hot*, when ya *cold*, so you start *take'n off ya clothes* and then you'll *end up dead!*"

Paul gives the Philippian church *five good reasons why* they should develop the '*knack*' of being *beacons of hope in the world*.

- *The 1st* reason is:

7a

'so that they may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a warped and disoriented generation. (v14)

- *The 2nd* reason is: **7b**
'so then I will be able to boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor in vain.' (v16)
- *The 3rd* reason is:
'So you too should be glad and rejoice with me.' (v18)
- *The 4th* reason is: **7c**
'So that whatever happens, as citizens of heaven, you will live in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, standing firm in the one Spirit courageously working together in unity for the faith of the gospel.' (1:27,28).
- And the *5th* reason is the *most important reason of all*: **7d**
When Paul told them to *work out their salvation with fear and trembling*, he *wasn't* trying to *frighten them* into being *beacons of hope in the world*, he was reminding them that in everything they did together as a church, they were doing it *in the presence of God*. (2:12)

Next time *you or I* feel like *grumbling or arguing* with someone, remembering that *everything we do together we do in the presence of God* should be a pretty *powerful motivator* for *regulating our behaviour* towards each other- *don't you think!*

In one part of the *Hunt for the Wilderpeople*, Ricky had gotten separated from *Uncle Hec* and realises that he has to get back to *warn him* that the police are on their way to the hut where he left him. But when he finds Hec *not there* he wonders where he's gone.

Then he remembers the *'knack' of survival in the bush*.

He knew that uncle Hec would've *headed downhill till he got to the river, then gone down the river till he found a way up to high-ground*.

And by doing exactly that, Ricky *found his uncle Hec again*.

But he was only able to do so because *now* Ricky had the *'knack' of survival in the bush!*

So *what about us?*

How do we know whether we *have the 'knack' of being beacons of hope in a disoriented world?*

Paul would say you'll know that by *how well you work together*. If there's *grumbling and arguing* going on that's ruining our work together for the gospel, then we *don't yet* have the *'knack' of being beacons of hope in the world*.

But when *despite* whatever differences of opinion we may have, there's happy, harmonious *teamwork* together *for the gospel of Christ*, that's a *sure sign* that we *have* the *'knack' of being beacons of hope in the world!*

Yet having the *'knack' of being beacons of hope in the world* is an *impossibility.....* if *weren't* for *'God working in us, to will and to act according to his good purpose.'* - says the Apostle Paul.