

PASTOR'S PATCH

"BELL"

No, not the sort of BELL that rings, although perhaps it is something that constantly needs to ring in our ears, metaphorically speaking.

BELL is the acronym we have been looking at in our recent sermon series throughout May. It (*of course?*) stands for BLESS, EAT, LISTEN and LEARN. This week we turn it into a plural, BELLS, where the 'S' is supposed to stand for SENT.

However, try as I might reading the book by the internationally recognised missiologist, I can't get my head around that. Sorry Michael Frost.



In this fifth and final part of the series, the concept is that we solidify and identify ourselves as "sent" people by journalling what we have been doing during the past week in terms of the first four habits; blessing, eating, listening and learning. Okay, I get that, but the 'S' word that comes to me is either "SCRIBBLE", or "SUMMARIZE", both of which at least keep to the same grammatical group (*verb*) as the first four.

I know, I know, I'm weird like that. But it's what makes me beautifully unique!!

It got me to thinking though. Last Sunday I was preaching at a small Baptist chapel at the end of a very long lane in the middle of the Blackdown Hills. "Remote" is an understatement! But a church isn't a building, it's a people. When I arrived, the small congregation blessed me with a wonderful welcome. A couple in the church invited me to lunch and fed me a pork roast followed by chocolate pudding and cream (*note it is reasonably unlikely I will be able to pay them back – something we talked about in this series*). We listened to one another and encouraged one another, and together during the sermon we engaged in what it means to listen to the Spirit at all times. We also shared how we must continuously "learn Jesus" through the Scriptures. The walls of their church and hall are also adorned with many modern hangings containing verses of Scripture. It was a wonderful sight, and testimony to their faith.

To '*summarize*' (*ie. BELLS*), on returning home I wrote down just how I had been blessed by them. It reminded me they had quite naturally displayed the BELL principle, and I shared that with them. It's not the emphasis of the book, which is to write for our own benefit. 'Encouragement' is a key word in the New Testament. It is good for us to, "**encourage {each other's} hearts and strengthen {each other} in every good deed and word**" (2 Th. 2:16-17), just as Paul prayed that Jesus would do for us. Perhaps instead of (*or at least as well as*) writing down stuff for our own reflections, we would do well to spend time and SCRIBBLE down what we see in others and encourage them in their missional work. We could give such discernment of growth and maturity in Christ, to them, in writing. Let that be one of our weekly blessings to others!

Colin Opie