

Saving and changing the world one meal at a time?**(The 5 habits of highly missional people: Eat together)****Julian Doorey**

(Mark 10:45, Luke 7:34, 7:36-50, 14:7-14, 19:1-10, 24:28-32, John 2:1-11, 21:1-14)

Journey to Easter III

- Easter reflection (Jesus' mission): John 2:13-22: Jesus clears the temple courts: 5 mins. Roly
- Missional habits (Our mission): Part 3, BELLS #2 - Eat together: 25 mins: Julian

Interview - Sharon Tipler - Breakfast Church (3 or 4 mins; 2 hand-held microphones)

- What is Breakfast Church?
- Why 'Breakfast Church', and not just 'Church'?
- Can you tell us a Breakfast Church story about food, fellowship and faith?

Introduction

We're on week 3 of our month-long focus 'The 5 habits of highly missional people', based on a book by Michael Frost, an Australian practical-theologian (and the Bible). I encourage everyone to join in... Sunday services and home groups. This is framed around the key question: Are we living 'questionable lives' that provoke curiosity in others about our Christian faith? ... are we being missional, a signpost pointing to God? Frost says: To be missional is a set of 5 habits called the BELLS challenge: (1) Bless others (generous), (2) Eat together (hospitable), (3) Learn Jesus (Christlike), (4) Listen to the Spirit (Spirit-led), and (5) Sent by God (missional) - into others' lives. Today is Habit #2: Eat together (with others) showing hospitality. We're talking food and drink!

Are you a foodie?

I first heard the 'foodie' term in NZ about 10 years ago. Wikipedia says: "A foodie is a person who has an ardent or refined interest in food, and who eats and seeks new food experiences as a hobby rather than eating out of convenience or hunger." I'm not a foodie. I have the least knowledge, skills, experience and confidence to prepare good food and feed others. Some horror stories...

- Flating... started cooking... asked butcher shop for sheep meet... he said didn't have any.
- Tried frying rice (out of the packet)... didn't add water... resulting in hard gravel.
- Frying meat - steaks... boiling in their own juice... got tough... more cooking... got tougher.
- Main menu - grilled sausages, boiled frozen vegetables and rice... for years... also fishfingers.
- Visiting Mum - cooked up baked beans... ate from the pot at the table... 'living in a cave'.

Like I said, I'm the last one to boast about showing hospitality by eating together (with others). The whole topic challenges my very core. Anyone else also feeling inadequate? Stay with me...

Food and the Bible

The story of God is full of references to food and drink - from (i) the Garden of Eden to (ii) the wedding in Cana; from (iii) the feeding of the 5000 to (iv) the last supper; from (v) the risen Jesus' barbeque on the beach to the (vi) Wedding Feast of the Lamb. God sets a table before us and invites us to join Him and other people there. Contrast God's table of rich filling, compared with our computer based bite-sized lives. God invites us to set 3 tables - at home, at church and in our neighbourhood.

It's time we looked up from our tablets of virtual reality and returned to the table of real life relationship. [It is time we saved and changed the world, one meal at a time!](#) It all make perfect sense: food along with air and water are humans' most basic needs.

Vid 2 - The 5 Habits - BELLS - Eat together - 2m 08s

Why did Jesus come?

How would you complete the sentence: 'The Son of Man (Jesus) came ...'?' [ask folk] The New Testament completes the sentence 3 ways. The first two are well known, the third is surprising:

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(i) [Mark 10:45](#): For even the Son of Man (Jesus) did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.
(ii) [Luke 19:10](#): The Son of Man (Jesus) came to seek and to save what was lost.
(iii) [Luke 7:34](#): The Son of Man (Jesus) came eating and drinking... and you (religious leaders) say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.' (TNIV)

Yep, eating and drinking. The first two verses tell us what Jesus came to achieve (i) giving his life a ransom for all, (ii) seeking and saving the lost. But the third tells us how he did it - around tables. We surprise the world by using tables, rather than tablets. *How does the table shape our mission?*

1. The (food) table facilitates reaching out

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Frost says we should be 'radical socializers' offering 'missional hospitality'. What does this mean? Alan Hirsch and Lance Ford in their book, 'Right Here Right Now', say: "[Sharing meals together on a regular basis is one of the most sacred practices we can engage in as believers. Missional hospitality is a tremendous opportunity to extend the Kingdom of God. We can literally eat our way into the Kingdom of God! If every Christian household regularly invited a stranger, poor person, friend, neighbour, work mate, or social contact into their home for a meal, we would literally change the world by eating!](#)"

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Instead of inviting our friends and neighbours to a church event, it's better to start by inviting them to our table. It's easier to invite our Christian friends, but Jesus calls us to reach out to others.

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Recently we had Sam Young (Carey Pastoral student) at church for 2 months over December and January. I think Sam had about 20 meals with others. This was partly due to Karene's organisation and Sam being single. Even I (non-foodie) had him for a lunch - very risky. He went home to Auckland raving about the hospitality of Cavy Baptist. What wonderful hospitality.

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When our family returned to Dunedin in 2015, the first people to invite us for a meal were Victoria and Shane. Victoria cooked delicious corned beef, mashed potatoes, greens and gravy. As the 4 of us sat there eating this wonderful meal, for me it felt like we were in the presence of God. Only God could have brought us 4 people together, with our hugely different life experiences. Surely this was a Kingdom of God experience. Eating with others can be a profoundly theological practice.

- Jesus is calling: Bring people to your table and practise missional hospitality.

2. The (food) table is where you meet Jesus

Surprising things happen at the table when Jesus is present. Let's look at a few...

14 Bad company: Jesus ate and drank with sinners, tax collectors and prostitutes - surprising / shocking. Religious leaders accused him of being a drunkard and a glutton, which he wasn't.

15 More wine: In [John 2:1-11](#), Jesus began his public ministry by turning water into wine at a wedding feast in Cana - a surprising table event. The water jars used by Jesus to turn water into wine were for ceremonial washing and purification. If a Jew felt contaminated by contact with a non-Jew they would wash in that water, reciting prayers to restore themselves to a clean state before God. Jesus took these symbols of separation between Jews and non-Jews, between holy and unholy, and filled them with wine, which Frost says is the universal symbol of hospitality, inclusion and fellowship. Ironic - replacing purification water with wine!

16 Sinful woman: In [Luke 7:36-50](#), while having dinner at a Pharisee's house, Jesus accepted a sinful woman's worship (tears, hair, perfume, kiss - on feet) and criticized the self-righteousness of the Pharisee who complained about the woman.

17 Social upheaval: In [Luke 14:7-14](#), while eating at a Pharisee's house, Jesus gave advice: (i) they should not seek the place of honour at a feast, and (ii) they should invite the 'poor, disabled and blind' (rather than friends, relatives and rich) to a luncheon or dinner.

18 Conversion: In [Luke 19:1-10](#), Jesus eats at home of the tax collector Zacchaeus (social outcast). This leads to repentance and conversion. Ben Myers says of Jesus' presence at a sinner's table: "Contact triggered repentance; conversion flowered from communion."

19 Barbeque: In [John 21:1-14](#), Jesus appeared to his disciples who had fished all night - unsuccessfully. He instructs them to throw their net on the other side of the boat where they immediately catch 153 large fish. Peter recognises it's the risen Jesus. They come ashore to find Jesus has prepared a barbeque with fish and bread. Jesus invites them: "Come and have breakfast".

- Jesus is calling: Come to the table and eat with me (Jesus), and experience real life.

3. The (food) table builds community

20 The table is a forum for conversation and friendship, for rest and reconciliation. At the table we talk and build community - family, church and world. Simon Carey Holt, a theologian and a professional chef says how the table creates community: "It is through the daily practice of the table that we live a life worth living. Through the table we know who we are, where we come from, what we value and believe. At the table we learn what it means to be family and how to live in responsible, loving relationships. Through the table we live our neighbourliness and citizenship, express our allegiance to particular places and communities, and claim our sense of home and belonging. At the table we celebrate beauty and express solidarity with those who are broken and hungry." At the table we talk and build community.

21 Building community or 'common-unity' is very challenging. Our world has become very polarised into different groups with different values and views.

Our differences include: left vs right politics (labour vs national); progressives vs conservatives in moral / social values (Jacinda Ardern vs Simon Bridges); social welfare vs personal responsibility (welfare funding vs tax cuts); climate change believers vs sceptics (mix of faith and science); evolution vs creationists (science vs religion); pro-refugee vs anti-refugee (cultural diversity vs sameness); government vs market forces (intervention vs laissez-faire); gender equality vs

complementarity (equal opportunity vs traditional roles); sexual diversity vs traditional sexual orientation (conflicting beliefs and experiences); pro-Israel vs not pro-Israel (conflicting belief, justice, eschatology / end-times) etc, etc.

We development and defend our group's orthodoxy (way of thinking / system of belief / our values / our behaviour / our habits / our reality). I don't mind all sorts of people having all sorts of different beliefs and thinking - freedom of belief and association is a fundamental human right. What does worry me, the thing that really alarms me, is that there is increasingly less listening and less goodwill between groups. My experience, is that you have to carefully navigate each group and find out what their norms are, and decide whether to share your opinions or not.

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I think we the church are also challenged and splintered by most of the same issues. I think there is only one solution... that is to meet around the table, share food and drink, extend hospitality, share and listen, and grow social capital / goodwill between us. I used to say (in Bangladesh) that one approach to peace-making was to sit and drink tea together. I still believe it, but am happy to concede some folk just don't do tea - any food and drinks will do. I encourage you to use your table to break down the walls that separate people in our families, the church and society. Let's begin here at church... in our post service tea and coffee time. My observation is that we are splintered by age (and maybe culture, social and political views). Most people who go out for tea and coffee are 50+, while most people who stay in here are 49-. Why is this? Is it a problem? Should we try to change this? How could we change this?

In Jesus' time a person would try not to eat with someone of a different social standing or religion (ie: Jews didn't eat with non-Jews). I don't think much has changed. But Jesus turned this on its head. And we need to try harder!

- Jesus is calling: Eat with others at tables and build community in the family, church and world.

4. Remember me at the (food) table

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At the last supper (table event) Jesus gave his disciples a ritual to remember him by - breaking of bread and drinking wine. Today, we celebrate communion or the Lord's Supper in a more formal and liturgical way. But the first Christians celebrated it in the context of a banquet. The table (of bread and wine) is the primary symbol of Christian worship. Not the pulpit or the band. The table.

Habit #2: Eat together

We're called to live 'questionable lives' - lives that intrigue others and provoke their questions about our faith. From 'The 5 habits of highly missional people', we're called to...

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- Habit #2: Eat together (with others) showing hospitality.
- Frost's goal: Eat with three non-household people weekly, with one being outside the church.

I think we can all see that hospitality has an amazing potential to provoke curiosity in others about our faith. But as a non-foodie, I'll need to set my own goal, according to what I can manage. My goal is to invite my 6 neighbour households (assuming non-Christians) to our house for some sort of food and drink event (meal, morning or afternoon tea) this year. What could your goal be?

Advert: For those of us who feel inadequate or would like to improve our cooking and hosting skills, I hope some training will happen. This church is blessed to have some very good cooks and professional chefs. I've talked with Julie and Hamish Blair about the possibility of cooking classes and / or coaching to help people create tasty and attractive meals. Maybe in the 2nd or 3rd term.

Conclusion / Homework

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Just as Jesus came eating and drinking showing the Kingdom of God, so we go eating and drinking... hospitality is a major 'modus operandi' of mission. [Let's save and change the world one meal at a time.](#) [Let's be missional and build community.](#) I would like you to consider and discuss with others this week:

- Are you bringing people to your table and practising missional hospitality?
 - What goal could you have to invite non-church folk to your house for food and drink?
 - Next week: Habit #3: Learn Jesus (Christlike) & Habit #4: Listen to the Spirit (Spirit-led).
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- Sat 10 Mar: Contemporary Apologetics workshop: Mark Powell - Pastor & former Warehouse CEO. Fliers inserted in church newsletters.

Prayer