

- Listen to your heart - What is it saying? By faith we believe the Holy Spirit is living in us. Examine your heart before the Lord, and ask God for wisdom (e.g. *James* 1:5).
- Seek the council and prayers of others - If you hear God's encouragement and leading, test it among other believers and seek their prayers and support (e.g. *Romans* 15:4-6).

4. LEARN

Your Bible study leader might prepare a short talk based on a Bible passage about Jesus for the group.

5. SENT

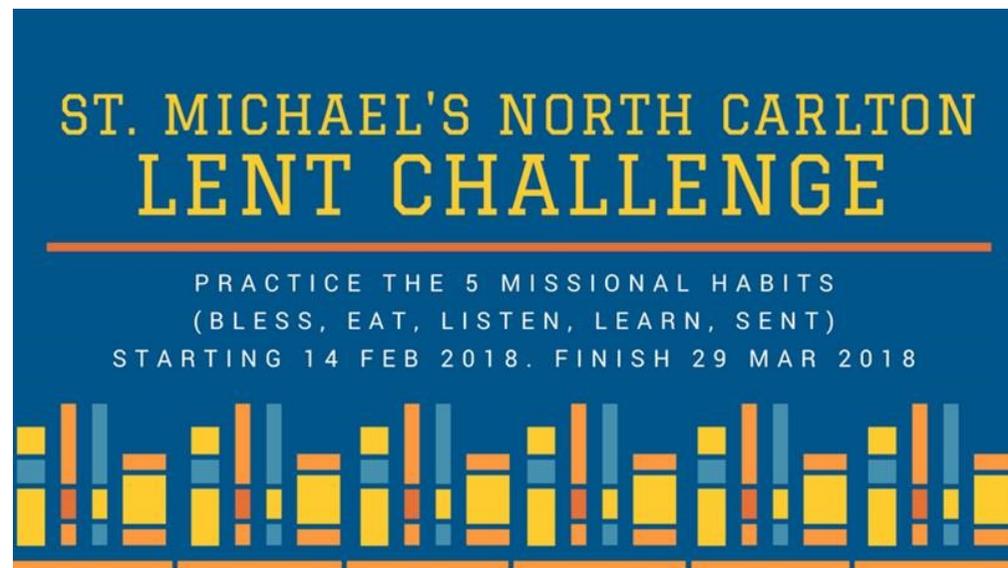
Meaning: Identifying oneself as a "sent one" because we are part of the apostolic church that Jesus commissioned to "go and make disciples..."

Readings: Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; Colossians 4:5-6

Discuss in pairs: Approximately how many people did you talk with today before coming to church? Did any of the following topics arise in your conversations today: Relationships? Justice? Beauty? Wholeness or healing? Did anyone ask your opinion or experience? What if they did?

A prayer of blessing: Go forth into the world in peace; be of good courage; hold fast that which is good; render to no one evil for evil; strengthen the faint-hearted; support the weak; help the afflicted; give honor to all; love and serve the Lord, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit; and know the blessing of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and always. (Adapted from *A Prayer Book for Australia*, 1995, p.93)

Practical tip: Anne Broyles writes, in keeping a journal, "what our mind is thinking and our heart is feeling becomes tangible: ink on paper." Consider keeping a short record of every day in Lent in a book of how God has been close to you in the day's events. At the end of Lent, look back to see how journaling has shaped your thinking about being a "sent one" with other Christians in your ordinary daily living.



Bible discussion guide for B.E.L.L.S missional habits

Written by Steven Webster

Based on the BELLS method, by Michael Frost, author of *Surprise the World: The five habits of highly missional people*, Navpress, 2016.

Check our website for more Lent Challenge resources
www.stmichaelsnc.org.au



Lent Challenge 2018

The Church season of *Lent* is traditionally for many Christians the period of 40 days leading up to Easter. In the past, many Christians fasted during this period as a means of devotion and spiritual growth. It is used well to creatively focus on the significance of Jesus' sacrifice of himself for the world, and our humble and thankful response of devotion and service to God.

At St Michael's we are challenging ourselves to practice **5 missional habits** promoted by author Michael Frost in his book *Surprise the World*. The 5 missional habits form an acronym: B.E.L.L.S. This spells out **Bless, Eat, Listen, Learn, and Sent**.

The bells atop ancient church buildings used to ring out across our city to call the faithful to gather. In a "post-Christendom" environment, according to Frost, we need a different kind of "bells" where Christians go out into the community ringing out the Gospel by respectful and humble actions and words in their normal day-to-day living.

B.E.L.L.S.

The Lent Challenge encourages members of St Michaels to set some weekly goals around the 5 missional habits, not as spiritual obligations, but as opportunities to grow in faith and in love:

Missional Habit	Missional Value	Action (Suggestions) during Lent
BLESS	Generous (e.g. through service, encouragement, etc.)	I will bless 3 people each week, at least one of whom is not a member of our church
EAT	Hospitality, (e.g. sharing your table, or at a café)	I will eat with 3 people each week, at least one of whom is not a member of our church
LISTEN	Spirit-led (i.e. open to God's wisdom)	I will spend at least 1 time per week of Bible reading & prayer and will "listen" to God

- Pray that our hospitable God will give you joy in demonstrating his character to others.
- No ulterior motive—the heart of hospitality sincerely communicates: "It's my honor to be with you, let's do this again soon."

3. LISTEN

Meaning: From the book *Satisfy your soul*, Bruce Demarest writes: "A quieted heart is our best preparation for all this work of God... Meditation refocuses us from ourselves and from the world so that we reflect on God's Word, God's nature, God's abilities, and God's works... So we prayerfully ponder, muse, and 'chew' the words of Scripture... the goal is simply to permit the Holy Spirit to activate the life-giving Word of God."

Readings: Matthew 6:6; Romans 8:5; James 3:17

Silence: Use this time to ponder some words of Scripture of your own choice in silence (e.g. Psalms, Matthew 5-7, 1 John 1-2)

A song of petition may be sung at intervals:

**O Lord, hear our prayer
O Lord, hear our prayer
When we call, answer us**

**O Lord, hear our prayer
O Lord, hear our prayer
Come and listen to us**

Practical tip:

- Set a quiet environment—For you to read, listen and pray to God in this noisy, busy life, try making a quiet space and time for listening to God (e.g. Matt. 6:6).
- Know God's Word -God's will is already made known in the Bible, and can be "weighed" and considered in community with other Christians. We should particularly focus on the one who fulfilled all God's promises—Jesus Christ. Learn to read, meditate on, and pray God's Word (e.g. *James* 1:25).

give God thanks for attributes and gifts God has shown us in Christ (e.g. patience, mercy, comfort, healing, hope, etc.)

2. EAT

Meaning: As we study Scripture we find that the home and table served as a center for evangelism in the early expansion of Christianity. Sharing a meal at your table or another's table is an opportunity to deepen relationships and honor others. May God give us grace to respond to his welcome in Christ by welcoming others with grace and openness.

Readings: Romans 12:13; Hebrews 13:2; 1 Peter 4:9; Luke 7:34

Discuss: How many people do you already have opportunity to share a meal with each week (e.g. at church, at work, in neighbourhood, gym, hobby)? What sort of opportunities might arise if you invite someone to share a meal with you?

A prayer of blessing for your group: "Give us eyes to see the deepest needs of people. Give us hearts full of love for our neighbors as well as for the strangers we meet. Help us understand what it means to love others as we love ourselves. Fill us with generosity so we feed the hungry, clothe the naked and give drink to the thirsty. Let us be a healing balm to those who are weak and lonely and weary by offering our kindness to them. Inspire us to go out of our way to include those in the margins. Help us to be welcoming and inclusive to all who are nearby. Let us be a sign of God's hospitality in the world. **Amen.**

Practical tips:

- Collect and file simple, inexpensive recipes for desserts and meals and/or cheap café's near work or home
- Make a mental list of people who would be encouraged by your offer of hospitality
- Pray and set out to invite your first guests soon
- Start simple—spontaneously inviting someone you don't know home after church is a great practice run!

LEARN	Christ-like (i.e. knowing for ourselves what God has done for us in Jesus Christ)	I will read a chapter (or more) of the Bible each day. The books recommended this Lent are Judges 1-21, Micah 1-7 and Hebrews 1-13.
SENT	Mission-minded (i.e. understanding we are living as God's "ambassadors")	I will journal regularly about the ways I alerted others to the love and grace of God through Christ (Reconciliation, Justice, Beauty, Wholeness)

Readings & Prayers

The following readings and prayers will lead us through five stations/locations around the church property...

1. BLESS

Meaning: In the times of the Church, to bless has often meant "to speak well of; to praise", or "to pronounce or make happy." It is mostly a term related to conferring happiness on another and seeking to encourage the other in word or action.

Readings: 1 Corinthians 4:12; 2 Corinthians 9:8; James 3:8-10

Discuss: What variety of practical ways to bless others around us can you think of? Share examples in your group.

A prayer of blessing for your group: "I pray that from His glorious, unlimited resources He will empower you with inner strength through His Spirit. Then Christ will make His home in your hearts as you trust in Him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong. And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high and how deep His love is. May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God. Now all glory to God, who is able, through His mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think." (from *Ephesians 3:16-20*)

Practical tip: A prayer of blessing for others can be simple. Try praying by asking God to provide for another person the grace and mercy and help that is just right for that person's life, and