



How to ...

Encourage Holy Habits

What are Holy Habits?

Holy Habits is a discipleship resource designed to help nurture and form followers of Jesus. Christian disciples who when they gather as Church and go to wherever God calls them to be - at home, at work, in the community and in the wider world – live out their discipleship in an adventurous, Christ like way. It is a resource that fits perfectly with one of the Diocese of Bristol's three core priorities; Making Disciples.

Holy Habits is based on Acts 2.42-47, Luke's cameo portrait of the early church. A 'delightful' portrait according to John Stott and a deliberate presentation of a model Christian community according to the biblical commentator CK Barrett. It is according to Professor James Dunn a picture we see reemerging whenever the Holy Spirit renews the church in mission and discipleship. So what might happen if we intentionally sought the Spirit's help to see this picture remerge in our day? That is the question that sparked Holy Habits.

At the heart of the Acts passage is a favourite phrase of Luke's 'signs and wonders'. Holy Habits suggests a Christian Community living life as portrayed in Acts 2.42-47 is in itself a powerful sign of God's presence and a wonder of God's grace. It agrees with David Watson that it is not actually a surprise when 'The Lord adds to the number daily' when discipleship is lived out through the habits Luke describes.

The Holy Habits Resources

The book Holy Habits was published in January 2016 and is selling strongly. It is written by Andrew Roberts who works as a Discipleship specialist for the Methodist Church and previously served as Director of Training for the Fresh Expressions agency.

The book is in two parts. The first part explores the nature and origins of Christian discipleship and includes chapters on the call of the first disciples, the aims of discipleship, the place of suffering and signs and wonders. The second part introduces the holy habits, has a chapter on holy habitats (communities and relationships), a chapter on each of the ten habits and a final visionary chapter entitled *Dare to Dream*.

The ten habits are:

- Biblical teaching
- Fellowship
- Breaking of bread
- Prayer
- Giving
- Service
- Eating together
- Gladness and generosity
- Worship
- Making more disciples

At the end of each chapter there are suggestions for further reflection and action that can be used individually or by smaller or larger Christian communities. There is also a biblical passage

to reflect upon and suggestions for further reading. There is a full and detailed bibliography at the end of the book.

The book was written with individual and small group usage in mind – and hundreds are using it in this way. Many churches and groups of churches have also chosen to ‘adopt’ the book with several preaching series now being developed around the habits in particular. For those seeking to develop discipleship in Messy Church, Holy Habits provides an ideal framework to support intentional growth.

What others are saying

“Holy Habits” is about the heart of the Christian life – about being shaped by Jesus Christ as we follow him. Andrew writes simply and compellingly from his own experience as a church leader and pioneer, and most of all as a human being seeking to know and share God’s love. He takes the rich traditions of Christian discipline and translates them into language that anyone can access and put into practice. His book will help you find holiness. I commend it warmly.”

Paul Bayes, Bishop of Liverpool.

“Grounded in practice and real life stories and surrounded by theory, erudition and wide reading, this is one of the best books I’ve read on discipleship. The examples come from all round the world, from different sources, from fresh expressions and traditional Christians, from elderly people and young ones, women as well as men. I love the way the habits are every day, ordinary, do-able ones: this feels very godly.”

Lucy Moore, Messy Church.

Risks

In all the excitement around Holy Habits there are some risks. The biggest two are is that it gets reduced to ten worthy activities and/or becomes very insular. How can these risks be avoided?

By remembering:

- That the Acts2 community was one that was on fire with the Holy Spirit. So constantly seeking the presence, power and renewing of the Spirit is vital.
- That Holy Habits is about whole life, missional adventurous discipleship. So teaching this before embarking on exploring the habits is vital as is repeating this through the journey of exploration.
- To keep on asking how can these habits be lived out at home, at work, in the community as well as in the gathered Church.

How can you find out more?

The resources, including some short videos are available online at:

<https://www.brfonline.org.uk/holy-habits>

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www.holyhabits.co.uk