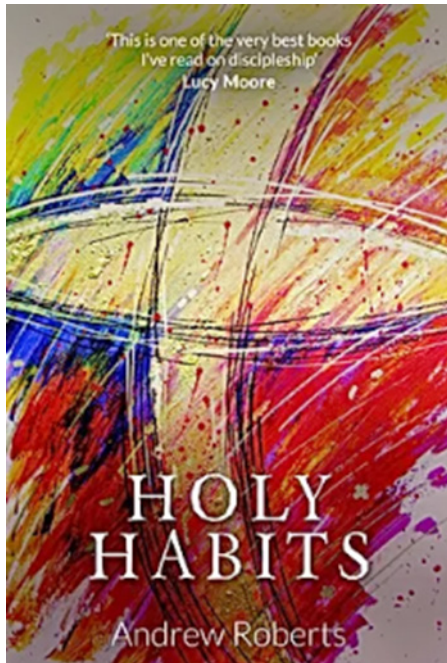


HOLY HABITS - WEEK 2



Holy habits prayer:

Gracious and ever-loving God, we offer our lives to you.

Help us always to be open to your Spirit in our thoughts and feelings and actions. Support us as we seek to learn more about those habits of the Christian life which, as we practise them,

will form in us the character of Jesus by establishing us in the way of faith, hope and love. Amen

RECAP:

Week 1 – introduction to Holy Habits followed by Prayer

- how do you feel about the concept of spiritual disciplines as part of faith?
- what did you try from the prayer ideas over the last week?
- what did you find challenging about last week?

BEGIN WITH THE PRAYER.

Use your notebook to write down answers in point form.

Work your way through the holy habit.

If you can, phone someone else and discuss and share your answers.

It's hard when we can't be physically together but we're trying to get zoom up and running for those who'd like to give it a go.

In the meantime, let's find creative ways to connect.

Enjoy!



HOLY HABITS – WORSHIP

RICHARD ROHR

God calls us to “not conform to the pattern of the world but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds” through relationship with those who see differently than we do (Romans 12:2).

ACTS 2:42-47

They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

WHAT IS WORSHIP?

ACTIVITY

Begin by writing WORSHIP in the middle of the page and then list everything you can think of around it, anything that relates to worship.

The purpose of worship is to praise God and to help the people of God form into a community of faith engaging with God and developing in discipleship. It can be argued that worship involves the whole of the Christian person’s life as described in Romans 12:1-2, but for the purposes of this study, worship refers to the times the faith community gathers together *specifically* for praise and prayer.

ELEMENTS OF WORSHIP

ACTIVITY

Can you identify the liturgical movement or rhythm in the service that you normally attend? Perhaps there isn’t a usual rhythm but there is always a rhythm.

A liturgical movement creates a rhythm for worship – gather, word, pray, sacrament send out.

- sharing the word by reading the scriptures and reflecting upon them
- prayer – calling the community to worship, prayer for others, seeking forgiveness, Lord’s prayer
- sharing sacraments
- sending out from the gathered community

The liturgy includes music, words, movement, images, experiences, thinking, feeling.

Worship is focused on God solely, not on worshippers or leaders – worship is the perfect antidote to narcissism. In worship, God becomes the central focus so the aim of the liturgy is to draw our attention as worshippers on God alone, not on our own ‘needs’.

As you leave a service of worship, never tell the minister at the door that your needs have not been met in a service!

ACTIVITY

How does this challenge you and what do you agree with?

To ponder

Rev Dr Stephen Burns is an Anglican minister from the UK and someone who has written and researched liturgy extensively, including UCA liturgy.

Stephen Burns states that conscious participation is an essential component of worship quoting the *Sacrosanctum Concilium* of the Catholic Church from 1963.¹ The aim of liturgy and ritual used in worship is for everyone gathered to be enriched by it,² that participation taps into worshippers’ ‘longings’,³ and that authentic worship requires full participation of all. He suggests that liturgy in worship is more than words but

1 Stephen Burns, *Worship in Context*, p3.

2 Stephen Burns, *Worship in Context*, p4

3 Stephen Burns, *Worship in context*, p16

is 'tactile', 'kinetic', 'aural and visual'⁴ thus encouraging participation at different levels. He uses an interesting example from the Torah to illustrate what participation may look like for differing ages: 'Children were not expected to keep the Law, so the child-likeness may refer to being obedient to, not obligated to, the Law, with the stress instead on direct dependence on God's mercy.'⁵ He quotes US Catholic Bishops who talk about the most important liturgical symbol in worship being the 'assembly of believers'.⁶ Thus the author concludes, the entire gathered community is vital.

ACTIVITY

Highlight if you've printed this out or write in your books what challenges you in Stephen's comments.

Now do the same with one thing that makes you think differently.

Remember participation in worship is not about everyone being given a 'role' but participating fully in what is going on ie praising together, praying together.

Walker and Parry speak about the whole congregation worshipping together communally, as people of faith and not just individuals. They write that the individuals or parts are nothing without the whole, 'only finding their identity in relation to others'.⁷ Walker and Parry state liturgies used in Christian worship should be Christ-centred, focussed on God rather than the worshippers. They explain that the sacraments and other physical aspects of worship can aid worshippers to engage in the rituals and liturgical words so that their focus is beyond themselves. They emphasise this by quoting John Chrysostom, 'the unseen visible from the seen'⁸ and by advocating for engaging the senses through the worship:

Worshipping well also involves learning how to engage *the body* in

worship. Modernity encourages a focus on the cerebral side of worship

4 Stephen Burns, *Worship in context*, p16

5 Stephen Burns, *Worship in Context*, p106

6 Stephen Burns, 'Acts of uniformity', in *Liturgy with a difference: Beyond inclusion in the Christian assembly*, edited by Stephen Burns and Bryan Cones. (Norwich: SCM Press, 2019). P22

7 Andrew Walker and Robin A Parry, *Deep church rising: the third schism and the recovery of Christian orthodoxy*. (Oregon: Cascade books, 2014), p110.

8 Walker and Parry, p108.

-getting the words right in the sermons and prayers. But humans are embodied beings and need to learn to respond aright to God in embodied ways.'⁹

Activity

Do the same for Walker and Parry's reading – what challenges you and what is one thing that makes you think differently?

Read the following 2 stories from Holy Habits p.214-215:

"Who we are is how we worship

When exploring prayer we noted how there are many different ways in which followers of Jesus prefer to practise that holy habit, much of this being related to our character, temperament and personality. The same is true when it comes to worship.

I once went to a Christian conference in Birmingham. It was a good conference but there was one worship song that we sang several times every day that drove me nuts. It was called 'Come help change the world' and had a ponderous chorus line 'Hallelujah, maranatha' that was repeated ad infinitum and droned on and on. A cat scraping its nails on a chalk board would have been more enjoyable. I was a very grumpy and reluctant worshipper.

A few months later I was idly browsing through some magazines when I met my friend Keith staring at me from the cover of a mission periodical. He was crouched next to an African child. Intrigued I found the associated article and discovered that Keith had felt called to go to Africa after attending a conference. In Birmingham. At which they had sung this 'wonderful' song called 'Come help change the world'.

'I couldn't sing that wonderful song and not go', said Keith.

That taught me. I might not like a particular style or way of worshipping but if it helps another to express their worship and transforms them, and through them, the world, then Hallelujah – quite literally.

9 Walker and Parry, 136.

Candles and chainsaws

Some years later I attended a seminar exploring different forms of worship. The leader was carefully introducing a range of ways in which worship could be led or curated with a view to helping those new to the practice of worship express their thoughts and feelings in adoration and praise. The ideas were introduced well and many in the room were appreciative. But there was one man who was getting more and more exasperated as a host of reflective ways of worship were introduced, many involving candles. Finally he could contain himself no more and cried out, 'I can't be doing with all this touchy feeling stuff! I like to express my worship with my chainsaw!' He did go on to point out that he liked to create large sculptures with his power tool to express his worship.

I've never forgotten that seminar, not least because of the stunned reaction to the thought of using a chainsaw in worship. But I remember it, too, as a reminder for those who lead gathered worship of how vital it is to take care when creating or curating worship events to allow all those present to express their thoughts, feelings and emotions. There is a particular challenge here in creating worship events that don't inadvertently exclude men."

ACTIVITY

Think about your 'chainsaw' moments in worship! Are you a candle or chainsaw person in worship? Draw 2 columns on your page – label one candle and one chainsaw and you decide which is which for you. In one column list everything you love about worship and one listing everything you don't like.

eg. I'm with Andrew on ponderous choruses!

QUESTIONS

- What is essential for worship? Go back over your previous lists and circle what is absolutely essential for worship.
- What should we be focused upon during worship? Where can this go wrong?
- What does communal worship look like in today's covid19 world?
- What do these readings say about intergenerational worship? ie all ages learning and teaching together in the same space?

- Now look at your 2 columns – candles and chainsaws – and ask yourself which are actually important if we are gathering as a community of believers, if worship is the participation of ALL believers?
- Why do we spend so much energy worrying and arguing about worship styles? Why do we think *our* way of worship is the best way? Go back through the stories from Holy Habits and writings of Stephen Burns and Walker and Parry and ponder this question deeply. Remember, worship is the perfect antidote to narcissism!



HOLY HABITS – FELLOWSHIP

RICHARD ROHR

God calls us to “not conform to the pattern of the world but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds” through relationship with those who see differently than we do (Romans 12:2).

WHAT IS CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP?

ACTIVITY

Write down FELLOWSHIP in the centre of your page and write down all the things that relate to Christian fellowship.

Think about all the churches that have signs saying ‘everyone welcome’. Is everyone welcome? Or do we welcome people like us?

Christian fellowship is:

- koinonia
- participation, sharing, contributing
- builds relationships of integrity, authentic which then allows other habits to flourish
- not an individual faith, communal – remember definition of spiritual disciple last week – holy habits form us as individuals in our faith, but in forming us so also is the community formed
- connected
- new monasticism – love for God, love for one another, love for the world eg Boiler Room (example later)
- practiced within a culture of safety protocols

ACTIVITY

Think back to when you first joined a church.

What were the opportunities for fellowship?

What are the opportunities now for fellowship?

What could be the opportunities for fellowship, looking ahead at our new church?

Read this from Holy Habit p134:

Andy Freeman and Peta Grieg: ‘If community itself becomes our aim, we risk becoming elitist, considering that we are somehow more learned or authentic than others. If pursuing community itself becomes our aim, we lose the sense of welcome, lest the stranger unsettle our balance.’

ACTIVITY

Obviously covid19 impacts on our understanding of fellowship. We can almost think about this in terms of before covid and after covid.

Church is much more than a social club and much more than a clique. Write down ways we can be authentic with each other as a church community within culture of safety protocols.

What do you think it means by ‘If pursuing community itself becomes our aim, we lose the sense of welcome, lest the stranger unsettle our balance.’

How can we avoid this?

Now read on Holy Habits p134:

‘This is a trap so many Christian communities, newer and older, have fallen into. Self-identifying themselves as ‘friendly’ they have ceased to be welcoming. Those new to the community ironically feel excluded by the commitment that established members have to each other. Andy and Pete suggest the way to avoid following into the trap of excluding fellowship is to constantly centre the community on Jesus not the community itself. Jesus who calls and welcomes all sorts.

So we need to constantly work at welcome and openness. Hospitality is a big part of this and....eating together can play a major part here. We also need to work hard at honesty. Truthfulness and integrity are vital in community. Part of this involves creating a climate in which it is not just OK but positively encouraged to ask questions and express doubts.’

ACTIVITY

Be honest – there's no point otherwise. How do you feel about this?

What challenges you here and what can you find yourself agreeing with?

Have you ever felt excluded from a church?

So often in churches there are people who act as 'gate keepers'. They may not even realise they are doing it but their behaviour, rather than being welcoming and loving, emulating Jesus, makes people feel uncomfortable.

How can our liturgy be welcoming to everyone? Remember, dumbing down the message doesn't help anyone!

THE BOILER ROOM

The example of the Boiler Room is from Holy Habits p133 and the Holy Habits website. It came from the 24/7 movement in UK – intentional Christian communities praying ceaselessly, new monastic communities which are now present and embedded around the world, but they began in Chichester.

Introducing Boiler Rooms

This information is taken from the Boiler Room website:

What's in a name? A lot of people ask why we call them 'Boiler Rooms'. Good question...

To be honest, the name 'Boiler Room' was originally just a working title for 24-7's first intentional community in Reading, England. It was simply a nickname that stuck! The title harkens back to the great days of steam when boiler rooms powered vast machines and systems. In these places fires were fuelled night and-day, pistons converted pressure into unprecedented levels of power and generators turned heat into light for the community.

Much later we discovered that C.H. Spurgeon, one of the greatest preachers of the late 19th Century, attributed the fruitfulness of his entire ministry to his 'Boiler Rooms'. These were prayer meetings – often established in basements - that facilitated intercession

while he preached Spurgeon, who often preached to crowds of 10,000 in days before amplification, considered these 'Boiler Rooms' to be the very power-source of his ministry.

Where did the idea of 'Boiler Rooms' come from?

In September 2001, our first Boiler Room opened in Reading, England. Based for its first three years in an old pub complex (incorporating three semi-derelict apartments, a basement and of course the original bar) the Reading Boiler Room has sustained a continuing rhythm of prayer throughout its history. The community has also endeavoured to nurture creativity; it has received over 200 pilgrims from around the UK and all over the world; it has worked extensively with and for the disadvantaged locally, building friendships with many marginalised young people and receiving the recognition of local statutory bodies. All this in the context of prayer.

As this wild experiment has taken shape, some exciting things have happened:

A discipline of prayer has developed. Many people visit the Boiler Room venue regularly, coming in week after week to seek God as part of a missional community. Prayers have been answered. The venue has two volumes full of testimonies to answered prayer.

The poor and lost have been reached. For instance, about 150 needy young people come in and spend time with the Boiler Community each week. Most of them are not Christians. Local Government has recognised the effectiveness of what is going on and has sought partnership and funded projects.

ACTIVITY

Having read this, can you think how we could do Christian fellowship differently ourselves?

Can you imagine an intentional prayer community? Perhaps you've been part of one in previous years.