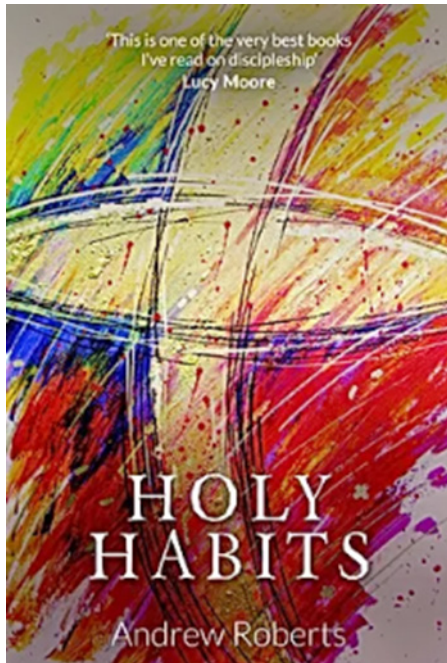


# HOLY HABITS - WEEK 3



## TO PREPARE

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 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

Week 2 – Worship and Fellowship

- Can you write some notes of what you appreciated from the previous 2 weeks and what you were challenged by?
- What do you think you can take with you in your discipleship journey?



# HOLY HABITS – BREAKING BREAD

## TEXTS:

‘Breaking of bread’ is a distinctive term of Luke – used also when Cleopas and his companion say Jesus had been made known to them ‘in the breaking of the bread’ (Luke 24:35).

Breaking bread mentioned twice in Acts 2:42 and 46:

<sup>42</sup>They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

<sup>46</sup>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

## ‘Holy Habits’ p141:

Why have we made something Jesus deliberately made so simple and transferable, so complicated?

## OPENING QUESTIONS:

- What are the different names for communion?
- What is your first memory of communion?
- When did you first participate in a communion service?
- What do you feel is important for a communion service?

## WHAT IS LUKE ACTUALLY DESCRIBING IN THE GOSPEL AND ACTS?

- Is Luke describing the act which opened a common Jewish meal?
- Is it a specific liturgical and sacramental act?
- Is it an early Christian development, an embryonic

communion service rather than having a Jewish foundation? ‘breaking bread’ is not a Jewish expression

## QUESTIONS:

- How does this affect how we think about communion? An everyday event with sacred significance? An act of remembrance of Jesus’ last meal with the disciples?
- What do you feel about the following quote from ‘Holy habits’ p142: ‘[breaking bread is] A holy habit to be practiced with due reverence for the one who instituted it, anytime, anyplace, anywhere. Whenever believers meet together they can break bread as part of a meal as well as part of an act of worship, and not just remember but experience the risen Jesus in the midst of their koinonia (fellowship). Hans Conzlemann points out that Luke makes no attempt to distinguish between an ordinary meal and the ‘Eucharist’ and suggests that ‘the unity of the two is part of the ideal picture of the earliest church.’
- Breaking bread is distinguished from eating food or eating together which is described separately in Acts 2 and which Andrew Roberts describes as a separate holy habit. Read the following text and identify the differences between breaking bread and eating together.

Luke 24:28-35

28 As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. 29 But they urged him strongly, saying, ‘Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.’ So he went in to stay with them. 30 When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. 31 Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. 32 They said to each other, ‘Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?’ 33 That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. 34 They were saying, ‘The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!’ 35 Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made

known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Church live out those 2 points described in 'Holy Habits'?

## DOMESTICATED SCENE:

- They broke bread *at home* as opposed to the temple, so it's a domesticated scene, 'Holy Habits' p143:

'The domestic context in which the breaking of bread began as a holy habit of Christian discipleship also supports the view that it is a practice that should be partaken of by children. This view is reinforced by the active presence of Jewish children at the Passover meal, the celebration of creation and salvation, at a sharing of which Jesus instituted what became the Lord's Supper'.

- Bread is every day, a common food. In other countries, it will look differently, for example fish and rice in Japan, or different types of bread and flat breads. Wine or grape juice may not be available in some cultures and so they may use other drinks. Bread and wine would have been on the table at the last supper, but that was a Jewish culture from Palestine. What are your experiences of different forms and settings of communion?
- We know from Paul's letters to the early churches that they made mistakes, but they came together to eat and to break bread – they broke it, gave thanks to God and shared it.

## CONVERTING ORDINANCE

- 'Holy Habits p146. John Wesley believed breaking bread each day as communion was a converting ordinance ie not something to be only offered to those who believed and understood church doctrine, but to all regardless of whether they had faith or not as, through communion, they had the opportunity to come to faith.
- Ministers describe communion as a barometer of discipleship as people move through stages of watching, praying, receiving blessing and then partaking. They also describe how people withdraw from communion at times of crisis or confusion. Such occasions are regarded as discipleship opportunities.  
How do you feel about this? Does the Uniting

## JESUS IS MADE KNOWN

In breaking bread, Jesus is made known – what does that mean for the sacrament of communion? How does this affect our understanding of communion?

Holy Habits p147:

'In Shropshire a group of churches were concerned for those in their communities who were housebound, some of whom used to attend church services but were no longer able to. So they set aside a lady called Trish to break bread as part of an extended communion in the homes of several housebound people. What began as a pastoral exercise with small groups of Christian disciples practising holy habits together, soon became a missional enterprise with the homes becoming hope-filled holy habitats, as those blessed by Trish and the habit of breaking bread invited their neighbours to join with them. Small missional communities forming around the holy habit of breaking bread.'

What does this mean for us as a congregation?

What does it mean whilst we are socially distancing from each other?

How do we deal with food allergies?

## CONCLUSION

What can you do with this holy habit?

Write down Breaking Bread in the middle of the page and plot your thoughts and ideas around the page. Which are your 3 priorities?



## HOLY HABITS – GLADNESS AND GENEROSITY

Again, write down your answers in your notebooks so you can reflect back later. You'll need your Bible for reference for this holy habit.

### Text:

Acts 2:46

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

### EMOTION AND RESPONSE

Can you think of a time when you were overtaken with joy?

These are rare moments but even remembering them can make us smile.

Can you describe the time and, most importantly, can you describe HOW you felt?

Imagine being present at Pentecost – the dramatic arrival of the holy spirit, the inspired preaching of the disciples in different languages, the sheer numbers of people finding faith.

Can you describe the feelings that may have been present at that time – in the room, in the crowd, in the temple?

Gladness is a feeling or emotion and generosity is a response to that feeling.

Again, thinking of Pentecost, read the whole of Acts 2. Make 2 columns – one labelled emotions and the other responses. Can you identify the emotions and the responses? Look at the two columns. Is this telling you anything? Don't worry if not, you can return to this at the end.

Write Gladness in the middle of the page and plot your reasons for being glad. Circle which are the most important ones for you.

### MOUNTAIN TOP MOMENTS

Can you think of some other mountain top moments in our sacred texts and stories?

Mountain top moments are important for faith formation. They are recognised as essential markers in the formation of young people eg baptism, confirmation, church camps, youth gatherings. But they are essential for adults too – this is why we are keen to develop rituals for all the moments of life. God created us as humans with feelings and emotions. The whole of our humanity is blessed by God.

But the mountain top moments are just a small part of our lives. Between the euphoric spiritual experiences is the plodding nature of life generally, so how do we find gladness there too? Again, gladness is a habit we need to practice before it can become a normal pattern of our behaviour or rhythm of life.

### THE PRACTICE OF GLADNESS

'Holy habits' p202:

'Gladness is a gift of the Spirit but also one we can choose to receive and one that we need to practice. It is a holy, transformatory gift for the individual, the church and the world.'

'In an age when many are anxious about the future, gladness can change the landscape.'

How do you feel about these 2 quotes? Can you see this at work in your life? What does it say to us today in our present situation?

Doctors report that people who know they are going to die within a period of time often dwell upon the life that is left rather than the end that is coming. They might create bucket lists and go out intentionally to create memories for those left behind. They show gladness for what they have despite the challenges of what they lack. It's often at the darkest times in life that the light of gladness shines the brightest, but not always. But sometimes gladness can be hard to feel and the very idea of a bucket list sounds trite or naïve.

How does this make you feel? Do any examples come to mind?

To be honest, gladness can be elusive at times. It takes practice to see gladness in the little things of life – sometimes, it can be very, very hard to find anything to be glad about. Does this resonate at all with you? Remember, if anything triggers you, talk to someone you trust or phone Rev Claire.

## GENEROSITY

From the 'Holy Habits' website:

'Gladness and generosity go together in this holy habit because they are inextricably linked. A generously forgiving and trusting nature is often – though not necessarily – a cheerful one. The act of giving gives rise to a cheering feeling; most of us feel better after being generous to someone else. But the root of giving that is generous and cheerful is thankfulness, as we realise what God has done for us and respond with gladness and joy.

There is no 'ought' about being glad – we don't choose how we feel about life – but gladness is more than just a happy or cheerful feeling. Consider what it was like for New Testament churches when they heard Paul was coming – perhaps a bit like an Ofsted announcement! Yet, Paul knew the objective joy of our faith that remains whatever mood we may be in. As loving communities, we seek not just to share each other's burdens but also to share each other's joys as we respond to the generosity of God.'

What a time to be looking at gladness and generosity!! The greed we have seen of late could be motivated by fear – fear of survival, fear of the unknown. Fear could be an indication of a lack of hope. In what do you trust? Where do you find your hope and importantly why? What generates your gladness and generosity?

Think about voluntary work that people undertake. We volunteer for others but also for ourselves – we volunteer where our gifts lie or in areas that bring us joy or a sense of purpose. There's nothing at all wrong with this, but we do need to exercise self-awareness. So often people have adopted causes because they make them feel good rather than doing any good for those they claim to help!

## COUNTER CULTURAL?

'Holy habits' p203

'The holy habitats embodied the extravagant generosity that is at the heart of the divine Trinitarian community. They were prophetic counter-cultural symbols in a world of avarice and greed.'

How is Christianity counter-cultural today towards greed? Is the church always counter-cultural though?

The prosperity gospel is a dangerous message preached by some churches around the world. It teaches that, if you are blessed by God, you will be rewarded financially,

and if you give generously to the church then you will be rewarded with even more. This is not what is preached by the gospel and can lead to exploitation of those who are living in poverty or who are vulnerable.

## FORGIVENESS

One way to live out the holy habit of gladness and generosity is to embrace the gift of forgiveness and reconciliation. It is transformational but very challenging too. Reconciliation Day is celebrated in South Africa on 16 December and began in 1995 with the end of apartheid. It was chosen as a significant day for both Afrikan and African cultures so that it could become a day of healing. It isn't perfect and it hasn't been easy, but it has been adopted by the population.

What could this teach us in Australia today?

Ponder the words of the Lord's prayer – Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us – and how they challenge us to forgive others before we go to God seeking forgiveness.

Read Matthew 5:23-24:

<sup>23</sup>So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, <sup>24</sup>leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift.

How can we live this? How could this bring gladness and motivate generosity?

Watch or listen to the news or read a newspaper. Can you find examples of gladness and generosity? Can you find examples of where this holy habit may have made the difference or changed the course of events?

## CONCLUSION

Gladness is an emotion, generosity is the response.

Generosity includes sharing our wealth but also every aspect of our humanity.

Do you feel ready to make one commitment relating to this holy habit?

Don't forget to revisit any questions you have not felt able to answer.