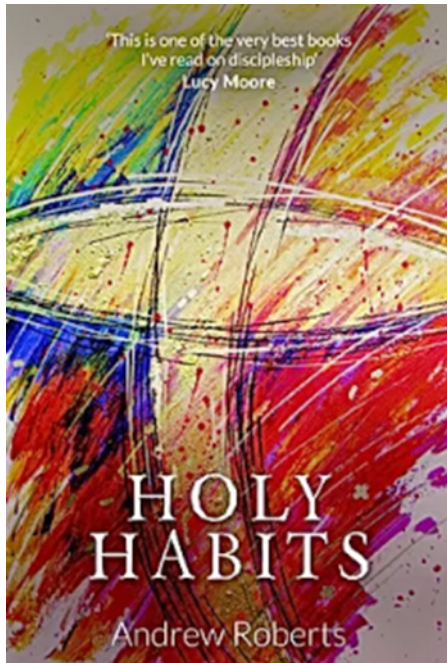


HOLY HABITS - WEEK 6



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.

Zoom connections are a good option – ask if you need help connecting.

In the meantime, let's find creative ways to be a faith community learning and teaching together in this space.

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

MY PERSONAL DISCLAIMER.

I have problems with what I refer to as 'kingdom language'. To me, this has connotations of colonialism and misuse of power. However, I have not yet found different language to describe the kingdom of God as opposed to the earthly kingdoms and power. If you have any ideas, please share!

Let's remind ourselves of Richard Rohr's words from week 1:

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).

RECAP:

Week 5 – Giving and service

- How were you challenged by the sessions on giving and service?
- How did your understanding change and solidify?
- Will you think or do anything differently as a result?



HOLY HABITS WEEK – MAKING MORE DISCIPLES

TEXT - ACTS 2:42-47

42They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. 43Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. 44All who believed were together and had all things in common; 45they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. 46Day 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, 47praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

ACTIVITY

Look at the Acts reading – who's job is it to make more disciples?

Who is involved in the process of making disciples?

Can you identify the roles each has in this holy habit?

What experience do you have of this? Both good and bad in your experience?

This is a really challenging one for us within the UCA. It isn't often language that we use readily and yet it is something we are called to do. But what does it actually look like in reality?

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURE READINGS:

1 John 4:17-21

¹⁷Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness on the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world. ¹⁸There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. ¹⁹We love because he first loved us. ²⁰Those who say, "I love God," and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love

a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. ²¹The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.

Matthew 5:21-26

²¹"You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, 'You shall not murder'; and 'whoever murders shall be liable to judgment.' ²²But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, 'You fool,' you will be liable to the hell of fire. ²³So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, ²⁴leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift. ²⁵Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on the way to court with him, or your accuser may hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. ²⁶Truly I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.

Matthew 5:43-48

⁴³"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' ⁴⁴But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. ⁴⁶For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? ⁴⁷And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? ⁴⁸Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

ACTIVITY

Spreading the Good News is at the heart of Acts and it's hardly surprising a faith community, which others could see looked after one another, would attract more people. People find faith in many different ways – for some it is a 'Damascus Road experience', for others it is a slow burn, for others still it is a cultural way of life which they come to own as their own. Think about how you came to faith or realise you had faith. Is it a one off event or a continual series of events? What do these extra readings tell us?

READ HOLY HABITS P223:

'When discussing the aims of discipleship I suggested that the big picture aim of discipleship is the transformation of the world. For the Kingdom of heaven to be real on earth. It is important to bear this in mind when seeking to make disciples. Steve Hollinghurstargues that making disciples is 'not about getting people into heaven but getting heaven into people'. Expressing concern about proclaiming what he calls a 'partial gospel' focused on the forgiveness of the individual and his or her access to heaven.'

ACTIVITY

Write down how you feel about this? What is your understanding of sin? What is your understanding of what Steve calls 'access to heaven'?

READ HOLY HABITS P224:

'In the Western church too much emphasis has been placed on getting into heaven to the detriment of how we are called to live on earth.

To live on earth in a way that embraces, embodies and displays the Kingdom of heaven. To demonstrate that we are truly following Jesus by living with Christ-like character. To live life that blesses others.'

ACTIVITY

Do you have a story you can share about living on earth whilst displaying the kingdom of heaven?

Can you pair up with someone else doing the study and share your stories?

READ MATTHEW 28:19-20

¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'

'make disciples' is an imperative verb in Greek. It was Jesus' prime objective to make disciples, but it was definitely Jesus' role.

ACTS 1:6-8:

So when they had come together, they asked him,

'Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?' ⁷He replied, 'It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.'

Jesus is speaking to the disciples about the role of spirit.

Holy Habits p224:

'In describing the new disciples who were being added to the early Christian community Luke says they were being saved. The use of the present participle emphasises that salvation is a process of which repentance, initial belief, baptism and the gift of the Spirit are only the start. It is a process of transformation to a life of holiness that continues in community. There is no solitary Christianity here. Those who are being saved are added by the Lord to the community which, guided by the apostles' teaching and the Spirit, continues his mission and ministry – and grows.'

ACTIVITY

Go back to your previous answers.

Having read the verses from Matthew, Luke and Andrew Roberts' words, how do you feel about your previous answers? What does 'there is no solitary Christianity here' actually mean? Indeed, what does that mean for our current situation? What is the role of the spirit in faith formation and discipleship?

READING HOLY HABITS P227:

'I would love to see the mission of the Christ's people increasingly focus on blessing. Blessing works. I don't fully understand how or why, but I believe that it does! Perhaps in part because in blessing we are stepping consciously into the flow of God's ever creating goodness! Perhaps too because the act of blessing changes us – both blesser and receiver. We begin to perceive ourselves and the world in a different way.'

ACTIVITY

What do you understand as blessing?

How does that fit with your understanding of discipleship? How can you practice this holy habit in your life?



HOLY HABITS – WHAT NEXT?

TEXT - ACTS 2:42-47

⁴²They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. ⁴³Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. ⁴⁴All who believed were together and had all things in common; ⁴⁵they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶Day 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, ⁴⁷praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

RECAP OF ALL 10 HOLY HABITS

The Holy Habits are spiritual disciplines, ancient traditions reimagined for today. They have been a part of the history of our Christian faith for centuries and are embedded in the reading from Acts 2. It's about becoming spiritually fit and healthy, training oneself to become closer to God, closer to the mystery of God and enter that dark unknown with a sense of trust and awe, wonderment and a posture of seeking.

Christian discipleship is primarily about hope in and through God, the grace of God, about *living* the way of Jesus, not just knowing the way, and living that out through service in church community, home, workplace and wider community.

A habit is a pattern of behaviour regularly followed until it has become almost involuntary. These holy habits need to be practiced in order to become our normal way of life and faith.

WHAT NEXT?

So what now? Together, we have worked our way through 10 habits or disciplines: prayer, fellowship, worship, gladness and generosity, breaking bread, biblical teaching, eating together, giving, service, making more disciples.

ACTIVITY

Write down each of the holy habits in your notebook and recap what you know briefly about each one.

Think back to the first habit prayer – prayer life is the powerhouse of faith so how have you practiced your prayer life differently or in a new way? Remember, the aim is for each habit to become almost involuntary.

What about fellowship? How can you personally ensure that all can truly enjoy the fellowship that you enjoy so that no-one is left behind?

Really challenge yourself for each habit and commit to one action for each which you know you can practice until it becomes part of your life.

If we develop our spiritual disciplines in our own lives, the benefits for us will ripple out into the wider faith community and benefit everyone.

How do you feel you can make such a personal difference? And what difference do you feel this will have for the faith community and beyond?

Phone a friend here and share your thoughts.

Remember, you can get a copy of Holy Habits from online booksellers such as book depository, amazon and wordery:

Andrew Roberts, Holy Habits. (Malcolm Down Publishing: 2016)