

# WORSHIP

“ They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. ”



# HOLYHABITS

MISSIONAL DISCIPLESHIP RESOURCES FOR CHURCHES

Edited by  
ANDREW ROBERTS  
NEIL JOHNSON  
and TOM MILTON

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## **The Bible Reading Fellowship**

15 The Chambers, Vineyard  
Abingdon OX14 3FE  
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## Remember the context

This Holy Habit is set in the context of ten Holy Habits, and the ongoing life of your church and community.

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.

ACTS 2:42-47

## A prayer for the faithful practice of Holy Habits

This prayer starts with a passage from Romans 5:4-5.

Endurance produces character, and character produces hope,  
and hope does not disappoint us...

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

# INTRODUCTION

**Worship** features prominently in Luke's writings. He presents people praising God in response to experiencing God's loving help or saving grace (Luke 2:13, 20; 19:37; Acts 3:8, etc.). Praise and **Worship** flow from gratitude for who God is and what God has done. The first story he tells is set in the context of **Worship**. Zechariah receives the news that his prayers have been heard and that he and Elizabeth are to have a son (Luke 1:5–13). His Gospel concludes with Jesus' ascension and the disciples **Worshipping** him before returning to Jerusalem where 'they were continually in the temple blessing God' (Luke 24:53). When Acts unfurls, **Worship** is at the heart of the early church. Spirit-filled, exuberant praise offered in the home, the temple and on the streets.

There is a risk that we think of **Worship** only as something that happens when Christians gather for an hour or two. While gatherings are a habit to be encouraged, there is much more to **Worship** than this. **Worship** is a way of life, one encapsulated in the Jewish Shema: a prayer which is the centre piece of Jewish morning and evening prayer services. It includes these words from Deuteronomy 6:5:

Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.

**Worship** offered as grateful response involves all of our lives; our work, rest, enjoyment of creation, service, eating, giving – and, yes, our gatherings for the focused activity of services of **Worship**. Tending the crops, forming an algorithm, building a house or serving a customer can all be done as acts of **Worship** to the glory of God, as can the singing of songs, the offering of dance, sculpture or art and the praying of prayers.



Resources particularly suitable for children and families



Resources particularly suitable for young people

CH4 Church Hymnary 4 (also known as Hymns of Glory Songs of Praise)

RS Rejoice and Sing

SoF Songs of Fellowship 6

StF Singing the Faith

## Reflections

There are times when **Worship** is instinctive and obvious – when we have such a sense of deep joy that we cannot help but worship God. And there are times in life when the last thing we feel like doing is worshipping God.

The Psalms offer a lovely example: honest and open with God in good times and bad; whether moaning or praising, always in touch with God. In many psalms, the psalmist is clearly excited about God and wanting to praise God with every part of their being. They also regularly recount troubles and moans, and tell God what to do. In Psalms 42 and 43, the psalmist shares difficulties with God but, despite everything, trusts, hopes and praises. This is not because the psalmist feels like it, but because God deserves praise – because God is God regardless of circumstances. So, because God is God, the psalmist knows there is hope.

**Worship** can arise from a glad heart, but it can also be the deliberate choice of a hurting one. All of life can be **Worship** when lived for love of God. So, resourcing for **Worship**, learning to **Worship** even when we don't feel like it, learning to make everything we do in our daily lives a **Worship** offering to God, is about 24/7, everyday discipleship.

In exploring this Holy Habit, we pray you will discover more of God; we hope that you will be able to have conversations which help deepen your relationships with God and with each other as you build lives which **Worship** God.



- The peace of the earth be with you (CH4 798, StF 774)
- There's a quiet understanding (RS 412, StF 36)
- This, this is the God we adore (StF 67)
- To God be the glory, great things he has done (CH4 512, RS 289, StF 94)
- What of those Sabbaths? (RS 659)
- When in our music God is glorified (RS 414, StF 731)
- When the music fades (StF 437) 😊
- With gladness we worship (StF 17)
- With joyful lips we sing to you (CH4 671)
- Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness (CH4 201, RS 187, StF 34)

## Introduction to the theme

Prepare four or five 'smelly' things in containers, presented on a table for all to see. This could include vinegar, a fragranced candle, some expensive perfume or aftershave (sprayed on a card so it's not easily identifiable from its bottle), a piece of blue cheese, crisps or fabric softener. They could be hidden and revealed one at a time, for example under boxes or a cloth.

Also prepare postcards, a large sheet of paper (a roll of lining paper or a paper tablecloth would work well) with 'Wow!' printed or written on, felt-tip pens, a bottle of bubble bath, a plastic sheet or large tray and some cloths or kitchen roll for cleaning up. You may also want a can of air freshener for afterwards!

Open the time by stating that we place value on different things – depending on what we believe they're worth, how rare they are or how much they mean to us. Ask if we might be able to place the following things in their order of worth or which has the lowest/highest value.

Invite a couple of members of the congregation to participate and smell each item, then place them in the order they value them. Follow this by spraying some air freshener around the room, seeing how it fills the space with its fragrance. Talk about how our actions, attitudes, behaviour and words can make a difference to those around us. Offering praise or **Worship** to God changes the atmosphere of our situations.

Explain the close relationship between the words 'worship' and 'worth-ship', and that the latter helps us better understand what **Worship** is really all about. Sometimes we might assume it simply describes how we use music to praise God, but it's so much more than that! It's about how we express our awe and wonder of

who God is in a million different ways. Invite the congregation to recall a time they said ‘Wow!’ out loud on experiencing something amazing. (You may wish to ask for a few of these to be shared.) Alternatively, put the word ‘Wow!’ on to postcards or a large sheet of paper and encourage everyone to draw or write their moment on it. Add that when we encounter something or someone amazing, our response is important – it’s rare that we would feel the need to do nothing!

In Matthew 26:6–13, a woman arrives while Jesus is eating with friends and does something extraordinary. To demonstrate, invite a volunteer to stand with their hands cupped in front of them – pour a whole bottle of bubble bath over their hands (protect the surrounding area!). Make a display of using every last drop of the liquid. It seems extravagant – that’s exactly what Jesus’ friends thought too, but the woman wanted to demonstrate just how important he was to her, how much he was worth, so it was an act of her ‘worth-ship’ to use such expensive perfume. Jesus was much more precious to her than the fragrance. I wonder what we might want to give as our **Worship**?

Talk about some ideas with the person next to you or in small groups. Take some suggestions. Invite the congregation to shout out one word that describes the awesomeness of God on the count of three... (Feel free to repeat this if there is enthusiasm!)

Close this time by praying and thanking God for who he is – alternatively, invite one or two to do this on behalf of everyone.



# GROUP MATERIAL AND ACTIVITIES

Some of these small group materials are traditional Bible studies, some are more diverse session plans and others are short activities, reflections and discussions. Please choose materials appropriate to whatever group you are working with.

## God-centred worship

### Psalm 100; Ephesians 2:1–10; Romans 12:1–2

All true worship is God-centred. As we acknowledge the mystery and glory of the eternal God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we are moved to offer our praise and confess our sins, confident of God's mercy and forgiveness. God's acts of grace and love in creation and salvation are recounted and celebrated, and we respond with thanksgiving, intercession and the offering of our lives.

*The Methodist Worship Book (1999), p. vii*

This session looks at three passages of scripture which illustrate these themes. You may want to print copies of each passage for people to annotate or write thoughts on.

#### Psalm 100

Take time to read slowly through this short psalm. You may well be struck by the repeated encouragement to joy and delight in **Worship**. The source of such exuberance is not to be found simply in our emotions or circumstances, nor can it be artificially constructed. Rather, it comes when we recognise the truth about God.

Verse 3 celebrates God's very existence. The words 'Know that the Lord is God' invite our imaginations to run riot. All that we know of this energy-filled, expanding, beautiful, pulsating, mysterious, wonder-filled universe is, we believe, but a pointer to its creating source: the living God.

The last verse of the psalm spells out why joy, thanksgiving and praise are at the heart of **Worship**, for it speaks of God's character: God is good. Merciful love is the very heart of God's being, and God is truly faithful.

- What does it mean for you to delight in God? What helps you to do so?
- How do you delight in God when faced by tragedy, difficulty or grief?
- ‘God is good. Merciful love is the very heart of God’s being, and God is truly faithful.’ How helpful are these words in expressing your experience of God?
- The psalm calls on all the earth to shout for joy. How does creation aid **Worship**?
- What is your experience of the **Worship** of people from other parts of the world? How has it enriched your own **Worship**?

### Ephesians 2:1–10

The letter to the Ephesians is a little different to some of the other letters attributed to Paul. It may have been rather like a circular letter to a number of churches, and its language suggests that it could be used particularly in **Worship**. Its whole theme can be summed up as praise for God’s act of salvation in Christ. In chapter 2, this saving work is spelled out in more detail.

Take time to read through the passage, underlining words that inspire you and circling words which you find challenging or invite questions.

Paul describes his readers as being ‘dead’. This may well carry the sense that they were cut off from the life of God, which can only be experienced through a lively relationship in the risen Christ. Such a relationship and life, Paul stresses, cannot be achieved through human endeavour. It is God’s gift. The reason for **Worship** and celebration is that God, by reason simply of love, has given us this gift.

So **Worship** is a celebration of life-giving grace. Paul speaks in verse 7 of the ‘immeasurable riches of his grace’; in part, this richness is seen in the extent of grace – it is for everyone without distinction. In part, the richness is seen in the effectiveness of grace – it really works. Later in the letter (3:18, NIV), Paul prays that his readers will ‘grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ’.

- Read the words of Charles Wesley’s hymn, ‘What shall I do, my God to love’ (below) and explore how far they reflect your own experience and thinking.
- Paul describes the human condition from which God rescues us in Christ as being ‘dead through the trespasses and sins’. To what extent does that ring true for you? How would you describe the human condition?

# ARTS AND MEDIA

There are many films and books containing scenes about **Worship** which could be used as an illustration in **Worship**. However, it is suggested that the following films and books are watched or read in their entirety and followed by a discussion to go deeper into the topic of **Worship**.

## Films

 **Billionaire Boy** (U, 2016, 1h)

Society pursues wealth and status but money can't buy everything, as Len and his son find out when he develops a new kind of toilet roll.

- Does this film challenge you to reassess your priorities and relationships?
- Prayerfully consider how far you worship wealth, status or possessions.

You might also consider *Gangsta Granny* (U, 2013, 1h) – the story of a young boy whose parents want him to become a ‘celebrity dancer’ when all he wants is to become a plumber, or *Mr Stink* (U, 2012, 1h) – the story of a smelly old tramp with more to him than meets the eye. They can be used to explore issues of **Worship** in relation to celebrity culture and current affairs/news respectively.

All three are adapted from books by David Walliams.

**Leap of Faith** (PG, 1992, 1h48m)

Promoted as a romantic comedy, this film raises some important questions about **Worship**, emotion and signs and wonders. It exposes the risks, dangers and hypocrisies of hype and fraudulent behaviour in **Worship**, but also promotes the values of sincere faith and real relationships.

- How do we avoid manipulation in **Worship**, whilst allowing God to be God?

**Rev** (15, 2011 onwards, 30m episodes) – especially series 1 episode 2

Revd Adam Smallbone and his congregation raise questions familiar to many **Worshipping** communities:

- ‘Where 2 or 3 are gathered in my name...’ – does size matter when it comes to a **Worshipping** congregation?
- Does God only listen to those who shout the loudest – are loud music and quiet reflection equally valid forms of **Worship**?

- How do ‘acts of **Worship**’ relate to the day-to-day reality of our lives?

**Silence** (15, 2016, 2h41m / 15, 1971, 2h9m)

Two Jesuit priests travel to Japan to spread Catholicism and to locate their mentor.

- How can we **Worship** God when God seems absent or silent?

**Sister Act** (PG, 1992, 1h40m)

When a nightclub singer who has witnessed a horrific gang crime is disguised by the police as a nun in a traditional convent, neither the convent nor the singer will ever be the same.

- What does this film have to teach us about stepping outside our ‘comfort zones’?
- What might we learn about the exuberance and sincerity of **Worship**?

## Books: fiction

Are there people in your church or local community who would like to discuss some of these books at a book club? Guidance on how to form these is widely available online, and you could also ask denominational training officers for help.



**A Friend for Little Bear**  
**Harry Horse** (Walker Books, 1996)

Little Bear gets so distracted by all the things that keep washing up on his small island that he forgets his best friend, Horse. It isn’t until Horse is washed away in the tide that Little Bear realises that Horse is the most special thing of all in his life. There is a happy ending when Horse is found again.

As Christians, we may want to say that Horse represents Jesus/God and that a friendship with Jesus is the thing that is of most worth in our lives.

## Glory

**Marilyn Kok** (Multnomah, 1995)

Visiting Taiwan held adventure and love for beautiful widow Mariel Forrest, and also revealed a transforming encounter with God. This will challenge you to think deeply about who God is, how we encounter him and the ways he reveals himself to us.



**Good Good Father**  
**Chris Tomlin** (Thomas Nelson, 2016)

A little bear goes to visit the king to ask for help when the townspeople are in trouble. He has many adventures along the way as he tries to work out how to please the king, but ends up discovering just how much the king loves them and wants to help them. This will help primary

school-aged children understand about God's unconditional love.

### Reunion

**Karen Ball** (Multnomah, 1996)

A wonderful story about two people who learn to trust and to love again through their shared interest in nature. As they open themselves up to one another, they also open themselves up to God's love for them and grow closer to God and each other through shared experience. Scripture readings are interspersed into the story.

## Books: non-fiction

### Breakfast with God

(Quiet Moments with God)  
Honor Books (2005)

This book is full of inspirational stories to read as you enjoy sharing breakfast with God each day. There is a scripture reference and reflective story for each new day. There are also companion books in this series for you to share a Coffee Break, Teatime and Sunset with God.

### Facedown

**Matt Redman** (Kingsway Publications, 2004)

Matt Redman says, 'When we face up to the glory of God, we find ourselves face down in worship.' This is a challenging read about how we should be **Worshipping** God.

### 😊 Here I Am to Worship

**Tim Hughes** (Survivor Kingsway, 2009)

This book is recommended for teens. It describes **Worship** as a time of **Fellowship** with God; and discusses planning and preparation for **Worship**, especially focusing on the use of music.

### Pray, Love, Remember

**Michael Mayne** (Darton, Longman & Todd, 1998)

A book describing the author's time as Dean of Westminster Abbey.

### The Weaver, the Word and Wisdom: Worshipping the triune God

**Michaela Youngson** (Inspire, 2007)

An inspirational book packed full of ideas which can be used for personal reflection or small groups. The book encourages the reader to explore their understanding of the Trinity and personal relationship with God and is also an excellent resource for those leading **Worship** as it offers reflections, prayers, poems and creative ideas.

### The Worship-Driven Life: The reason we were created

**A.W. Tozer** (Monarch Books, 2008)

The supreme importance of **Worship**: the purpose of humankind and the expectation of God.

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HOLY HABITS is an initiative to nurture Christian discipleship. It explores Luke’s model of church found in Acts 2:42–47, identifies ten habits and encourages the development of a way of life formed by them. These resources, which include an introductory guide, have been developed to help churches explore the habits in a range of contexts and live them out in whole-life, missional discipleship.

Biblical Teaching  
 Fellowship  
 Breaking Bread  
 Prayer  
 Sharing Resources

Serving  
 Eating Together  
 Gladness and Generosity  
 Worship  
 Making More Disciples



Edited by Andrew Roberts, Neil Johnson and Tom Milton



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