

HOLYHABITS

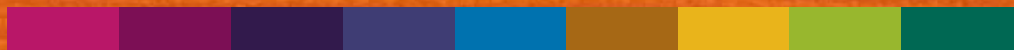
EATING TOGETHER



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GROUP STUDIES

LEADER'S GUIDE



Edited by Andrew Roberts

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ANDREW ROBERTS



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About the writers

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Introduction

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 (NRSV)

Holy Habits is a way of life to be lived by disciples of Jesus individually and collectively. As Alison Morgan points out in the subtitle of her book *Following Jesus*, the plural of disciple is church. When Jesus calls us to follow, he gifts us others to journey with us, just as he gifted his first disciples – others who will help to teach us and who will learn from us; others who will pray with us and check how we are; others who will watch over us in love and keep us accountable in our discipleship. In the light of this, these Group Studies and the complementary daily Bible Reflections have been written for both group and personal usage. In this booklet, you will find material to help you as a church or a small group reflect together on the particular holy habit being explored.

The authors (who also wrote the complementary Holy Habits Bible Reflections; see page 62) have formed questions for reflection and discussion. Each author has selected two of the readings from the ten they wrote about and provided six questions on each for discussion. Some have a more personal focus, while others relate more to the church or group as whole. With questions of a more personal nature, you may wish to invite people to discuss these in the confidence of pairs and then make time for anyone to share a response with the whole group if they would like to. This



approach can also be a good way of making sure everyone has a chance to share if your group has newcomers or people who are shy or dominant.

You will then find a series of take-home questions about the habit. These have been collated from questions submitted by the authors, which mean they vary in style, tone and focus. As such, you may find some more helpful than others, so feel free to add or amend questions. As you work together, you might like to see what emerges in the responses and see if some of the questions should be revisited regularly (perhaps annually or every six months) as a way of reviewing the life of your small group or church as a discipleship community against the picture Luke offers us in Acts 2. Similarly, individuals could be invited to keep a journal to regularly reflect on their living of the holy habits.

In Acts 2:47, Luke says the believers enjoyed ‘the goodwill of all the people’, so there are also some creative ideas for ways in which your church or group could collectively practise the habit being explored in the local or wider community. These are thought-starter ideas, so be open to other ideas that emerge in your conversations.

You will also find some prayers and creative media ideas for this habit at the back of the book.

In all of this, keep your hearts and minds open to the Holy Spirit and be alert to the wonders of God’s grace and the signs of God’s love that emerge as, individually and collectively, you live this down-to-earth, holy way of life that Luke invites us to imitate.



Session outline

One way your group time could be structured:

- **Opening prayer**
(for example, the Holy Habits prayer on page 59)
- **Music moment**
(see 'Listen', page 61)
- **Bible reading**
- **Reflection**
- **Discussion questions**



- **Time for stories, testimonies or questions/issues that arise from the discussion**
- **Prayer**
- **Ideas to do as a group**
Spend a few minutes to agree when this will be carried out or to come up with other ideas
- **Take-home questions/creative media ideas**
- **Closing prayer**







| Deborah Humphries

Week 1

Entertaining angels

Read Genesis 19:1–3

The two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gateway of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them, and bowed down with his face to the ground. He said, 'Please, my lords, turn aside to your servant's house and spend the night, and wash your feet; then you can rise early and go on your way.' They said, 'No; we will spend the night in the square.' But he urged them strongly; so they turned aside to him and entered his house; and he made them a feast, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate.

(NRSV)



Reflection

I wonder if you have ever entertained angels without realising it.

As two angels enter Sodom, Lot greets them at the city gate. In those days, the gateway was the equivalent of today's town hall, where administration, trade and legal business were conducted. Maybe Lot's working day is ending or maybe he fears for the visitors' safety.

Lot's eager welcome is marked with reverence and respect. He rises to greet the visitors and bows before them, calling them 'my lords' and himself 'your servant'. Perhaps he knows they are angels or perhaps he is simply extending traditional hospitality.

Lot offers overnight shelter and clean feet. Who could resist after travelling along dusty roads in the heat of the day? Lot advises against a night in the square, the city's meeting place. He provides for them 'a feast' accompanied by bread, which is unleavened as he prepares the meal in a hurry.

As I walk through the city centre, I see people living on the streets. Sometimes I give away a cereal bar or coffee voucher; often I walk hurriedly by, embarrassed by my comparative wealth and inadequate response.

I share more than a cereal bar with one man. Perhaps it is the book he is reading that gives me the courage to share common ground; or perhaps, because I take the time to stop, I see the angel within and become the guest at his feast.

Hospitable God, may we treat everyone we meet as a messenger from you.



Questions

- 1** Why do you think the angels came to Sodom in the evening?
- 2** Why do you think Lot is sitting in the gateway?
- 3** Who are the gatekeepers in your church/ community?
- 4** How does Lot welcome the angels?
- 5** How does that compare with the way you welcome those who come to your home or church?
- 6** Lot is insistent that the angels should be his guests. When is it appropriate to urge people strongly to accept hospitality?





Ideas to do as a group

1 Find out about projects in your community that help feed the homeless, and invite someone to come and tell your group about their work. Think and pray about how you might eat with the homeless in your community and effect long-term change.

2 On your own or with a friend, invite a homeless person to share a drink or a meal with you in a café or restaurant.



Take-home questions

1

When does eating together become 'a feast'?

2

Have you ever shared a meal with someone and sensed that you were 'entertaining angels'?
Share your story in pairs or within the group.

3

Do you prefer to be a guest or the host at a meal?

HOLYHABITS is an adventure in Christian discipleship. Inspired by Luke's model of church found in Acts 2:42–47, it identifies ten habits and encourages the development of a way of life formed by them.

This Bible study group material has been created to help churches explore the habits through prayerful engagement with the Bible and live them out in whole-life, missional discipleship.



Whole-church resource book and Bible reading notes also available

- Provides eight sessions of study material for church groups
- Each session includes a Bible passage, reflection, group questions and community/outreach ideas
- Art and media links and prayers also included

Praise for **HOLYHABITS**:

'A great tool that just gets better with use.'

Olive Fleming-Drane and John Drane

BIBLICAL TEACHING
 FELLOWSHIP
 BREAKING BREAD
 PRAYER
 SHARING RESOURCES
 SERVING
EATING TOGETHER
 GLADNESS AND GENEROSITY
 WORSHIP
 MAKING MORE DISCIPLES

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