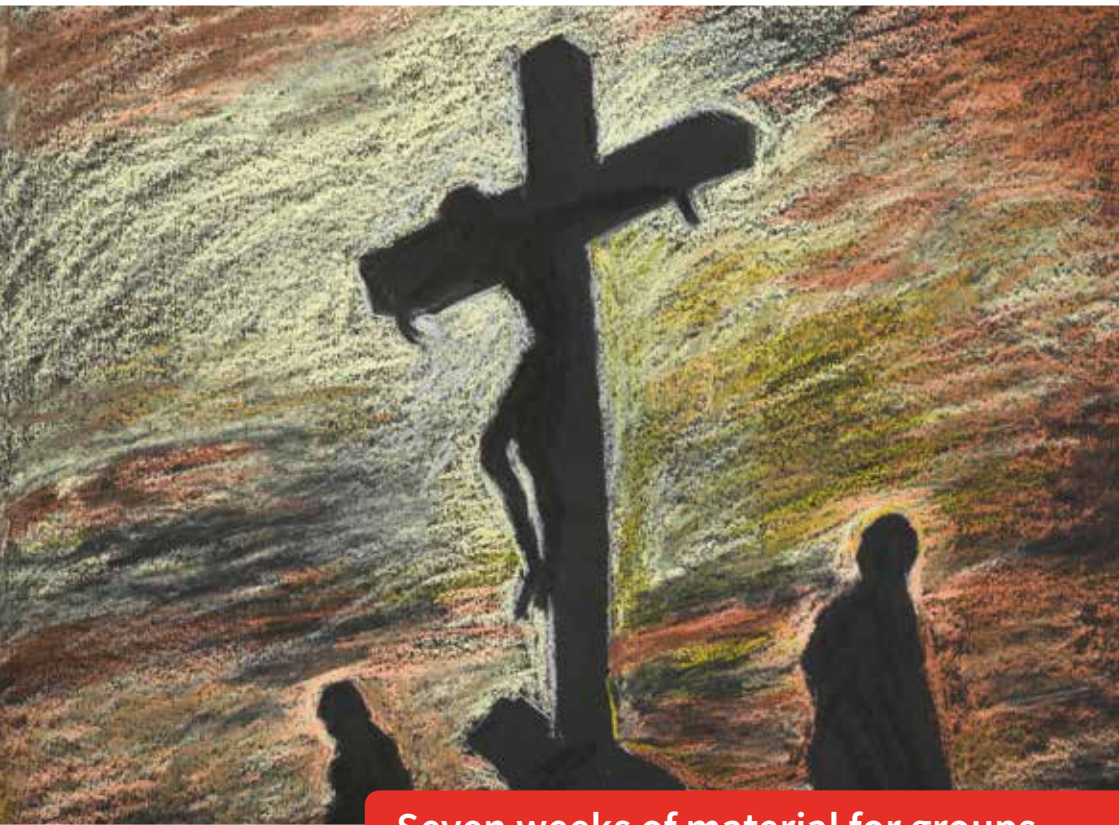


HOLYHABITS

Holy Habits: Following Jesus

Ideal for Lent and other times



Seven weeks of material for groups

Andrew Roberts

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Introduction

Welcome to this Lenten and Holy Week course, which takes participants on a journey looking at Holy Habits in the life and passion of Jesus. The prayer of those who have produced this material is that it will draw those who engage with it into a deeper experience of following Jesus in today's needy world and living the way of life both he and the early church modelled.

The material in this book is designed for use with small groups or small congregations. All of the biblical material is taken from Luke's gospel. The Holy Week material draws on texts from Luke's account of that week.

Holy Habits is an adventure in whole-life Christian discipleship that draws on Luke's cameo of the early church in Acts 2:42–47. It encourages the development and renewal of ten key practices, or holy habits, that were modelled by Jesus and were formative for the earliest Christian communities. They remain foundational for healthy growth in discipleship today in both the gathered church context and the dispersed discipleship of day-by-day life at work, at home and in the community. The ten habits are: **biblical teaching, fellowship, breaking bread, prayer, sharing resources, serving, eating together, gladness and generosity, worship and making more disciples**. In each session, particular focus is given to one or more of the habits, and these are highlighted at the beginning of the material for the session.

This material is suitable for both those who are new to Holy Habits and those who have journeyed with this way of forming disciples for some time. For those who are new to this approach to discipleship, more information about Holy Habits and details of other resources can be found at holyhabits.org.uk. The vision for the website is that it will grow as a community of learning, so if you have any stories to share from your journey through Lent and Holy Week, please make contact via the website.

I originally wrote the material in this book before the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. I read the proofs when, in the UK, death and infection rates had mercifully declined, though there were concerning signs that they were rising

again. I was struck by how many of the applications, questions and take-home ideas were highly relevant to the pastoral needs, challenges and opportunities brought into being by the pandemic. As I write this, no one can know with any certainty the range and scope of challenges that will be present when you use this material, but I believe that whatever they are, the life and example of Jesus and the way he responded to the challenges he faced will always be of utmost value in shaping our lives as we seek to follow in his footsteps.

The form and structure of the sessions

All of the sessions follow a similar structure of gathering, reflection and response. Under the heading 'Gather', there are suggestions for:

- the creation of a simple symbolic 'worship centre'
- a song or songs to sing (you can of course use your own alternatives if you wish)
- a prayer to use
- the reading for the session, which is printed in full (all texts are from the NRSV Anglicised)
- alternative media (poetry, art, music and video suggestions – the media varying across the sessions).

The resources for the worship centre should be readily available or inexpensive to purchase. The same is true of the alternative media suggestions, many of which can be downloaded for free.

Under the heading 'Reflect', there are questions for whole-group conversation. Before exploring the questions, participants can be asked to talk about what they noticed in the text, so that these things can be discussed later if they do not come up through the suggested questions.

In every session, there are several questions for whole-group discussion; some sessions also have questions for reflection either personally or in the confidence of pairs. You can of course add your own.

Under the heading 'Respond', there are suggestions for:

- a song or songs to sing
- a prayer to use
- a simple take-home idea – again, where this involves resources, they should be readily available or inexpensive to purchase.

Please note the Holy Saturday session is deliberately different, with an emphasis on stillness and silence.

The sessions are not timed, to allow you to lead as you wish. As a guide, 60–70 minutes per session would seem appropriate.

May the Lord guide, bless and renew you as you journey through Lent and Holy Week or explore these events at another time of the year.

Andrew Roberts



Week 2:

Jesus serving with gladness

Focus habits for this session:

SERVING and GLADNESS AND GENEROSITY.

Gather

Worship centre suggestion

Place a scroll on a small table alongside a Bible open at Isaiah 61:1–2, a picture of an organisation working to help the poor or bring relief to the oppressed, and a pair of spectacles. Place a symbol of the Spirit (maybe a candle) in the middle.

Suggested song

‘God’s Spirit is in my heart’ – Alan Dale

Prayer

Lord Jesus, in this place and at this time, open our eyes to your word and our hearts to your call, that we may join with you in living out your manifesto of justice, hope and peace. Amen

Reading

When [Jesus] came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.’

LUKE 4:16-19

Alternative media

There are many charities living out Isaiah’s and Jesus’ vision (Christians Against Poverty, Mercy Ships, Torch Trust, Christian Aid, to name just a few). Play a video from one of these organisations’ websites and be attentive to any ways in which they depict ‘the Lord’s favour’.

Reflect

Invite people to say which words or phrases they noticed when the text was read. Note these and return to them later.

This passage is often called ‘the Nazareth manifesto’, with Jesus laying out his understanding of his calling. Note the link to last week’s session in the opening words, ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me.’ What is it that the Spirit anoints Jesus for? A ministry of proclamation and service. Serving is a hallmark of discipleship. It is a Christlike way of living. Jesus himself pointed out that he came ‘not to be served but to serve’ (Matthew 20:28).

Characteristically, Luke presents Jesus with a ‘bias to the poor’ (the title of a seminal book by the former bishop of Liverpool and England cricketer David Sheppard), something that recurs in Luke’s version of the beatitudes (Luke

6:20). The words of Isaiah, quoted by Jesus, convey a real sense of gladness and generosity in serving. The vision is not one of drudgery, but one of good news, release, freedom and favour.

Questions for whole-group conversation

- 1 Drudgery or delight – what does serving feel like to you?
- 2 Jesus was anointed to serve. Is serving something you associate with the Spirit's anointing for you, or do you tend to associate anointing with worship and preaching? What might you need to do about this?
- 3 How does Jesus' manifesto compare to the mission statement of your church or group?
- 4 Luke presents Jesus with a particular passion for serving and bringing good news to the poor. Whom do you have a calling to serve, both as a church and in your day-to-day lives – at work, at home, in your local community or the wider world?
- 5 How might you more fully support one another in the day-by-day service you are involved with?
- 6 Returning to the words you noted in the text, which other things might you need to pay attention to?

Respond

Suggested song

'Beauty for brokenness (God of the poor)' – Graham Kendrick

Prayer

God of the poor, grant us compassion and anoint us afresh with your Spirit, that we may be bearers of good news, freedom and sight to those we encounter as we follow your Son. Amen

Take-home idea

This week, be attentive to ways in which you can be good news to others, especially those who can easily be overlooked or neglected. It could be something as simple as an attentive smile, a careful thank-you or patient listening that conveys a real sense of love and care.



Enabling all ages to grow in faith

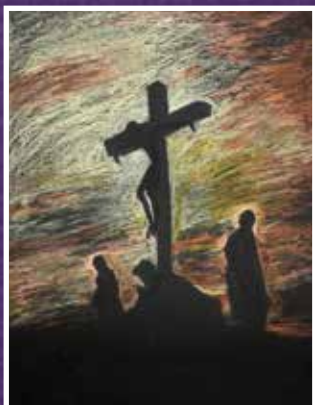


Anna Chaplaincy
Living Faith
Messy Church
Parenting for Faith

The Bible Reading Fellowship (BRF) is a Christian charity that resources individuals and churches. Our vision is to enable people of all ages to grow in faith and understanding of the Bible and to see more people equipped to exercise their gifts in leadership and ministry.

To find out more about our ministries, visit

brf.org.uk



‘Accessible, relevant, practical and, most importantly, will lead new disciples into a deeper understanding of following Jesus and more mature disciples into greater depth of faith. I warmly commend it to be used not only during the special season of Lent but indeed anytime.’

Revd Richard J. Teal,
President of the Methodist Conference

Explore the Holy Habits through the life of Jesus

This resource provides seven weeks of material for church groups to use during Lent and at other times as an introduction to Holy Habits through the person of Jesus. Each session includes the printed Bible passage, a suggestion for a simple symbolic worship centre, music suggestions, reflection, poem, questions, prayer and take-home ideas. Additional material for Holy Week provides daily reflections that can be used as the basis of a gathered act of worship, or for personal devotion.



Andrew Roberts is the visionary behind Holy Habits, an approach to discipleship formation that is being widely used around the UK and internationally. He is a writer, speaker and Methodist minister, author of *Holy Habits* (Malcolm Down Publishing, 2016) and editor of the BRF Holy Habits church handbooks, Bible reflections and group studies. He was previously Director of Training for Fresh Expressions.

Find out more at [holyyhabits.org.uk](https://www.holyhabits.org.uk)



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