

SERVING

“ All the believers were together and had everything in common; they sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. ”

HOLYHABITS

MISSIONAL DISCIPLESHIP RESOURCES FOR CHURCHES

Edited by
ANDREW ROBERTS
NEIL JOHNSON
and TOM MILTON

SERVING

“ All the believers were together and had everything in common; they sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. ”



The Bible Reading Fellowship

15 The Chambers, Vineyard
Abingdon OX14 3FE
brf.org.uk

The Bible Reading Fellowship (BRF) is a Registered Charity (233280)

ISBN 978 0 85746 683 9
First published 2018
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0
All rights reserved

Text © individual authors 2018
This edition © The Bible Reading Fellowship 2018
Original design by morsebrowndesign.co.uk & penguinboy.net

The authors assert the moral right to be identified as the authors of this work

Acknowledgements

Unless otherwise acknowledged, scripture quotations are from The New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, Anglicised edition, copyright © 1989, 1995 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations on cover and title page are taken from The Holy Bible, New International Version (Anglicised edition) copyright © 1979, 1984, 2011 by Biblica. Used by permission of Hodder & Stoughton Publishers, a Hachette UK company. All rights reserved. 'NIV' is a registered trademark of Biblica. UK trademark number 1448790.

Scripture quotations from the Good News Bible published by The Bible Societies/ HarperCollins Publishers Ltd, UK © American Bible Society 1966, 1971, 1976, 1992, used with permission.

Photographs on pages 37, 46 and 62 copyright © Thinkstock; photographs on pages 4, 7, 11, 23, 26 and 35 copyright © Tom Milton and the Birmingham Methodist Circuit; photograph on page 40 copyright © Southwark Diocesan Communications; photograph on page 50 copyright © Rachel Pell.

Every effort has been made to trace and contact copyright owners for material used in this resource. We apologise for any inadvertent omissions or errors, and would ask those concerned to contact us so that full acknowledgement can be made in the future.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Printed and bound by CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon CR0 4YY

CONTENTS

Introduction	6
UNDERSTANDING THE HABIT	9
Worship resources	10
Group material and activities	22
FORMING THE HABIT	33
Stories to show the habit forming	34
Practices to help form the habit	38
Questions to consider as a church	49
Connecting the habits	51
GOING FURTHER WITH THE HABIT	53
Developing further practices of serving	54
Arts and media	56

To order more copies of the Holy Habits resources, or to find out how to download pages for printing or projection on screen, please visit brfonline.org.uk/holy-habits.



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

Serving is a Christ-like way of living. Jesus himself came as one who served (Matthew 20:28). Throughout the history of the church, Christians have grappled with how to live out the good news of Jesus that the kingdom of God is both here and yet to come. Our calling as followers of Jesus is to proclaim the good news by living on earth as if in heaven. Every act of love, justice and peace is a taste of how God's world is to be.

We live this calling personally in our daily work and in our local communities. In exploring this habit, it will be important to both honour and support those who serve day by day in all sorts of ways.

We live this calling corporately as churches, for example through youth and children's work, care for older people, Street Pastors, debt advice or refugee welcome centres. Exploring this Holy Habit will give you the opportunity to celebrate what is being done and consider what God may be calling you to do.

We live this calling in partnership with others, with other churches, with people of peace in the community, and with other groups – including other faith groups who are committed to **Serving** the common good. As you explore this habit be mindful of those you partner with or could partner with.

Serving is best when it is mutual and reciprocal. We need to beware of patronising do-gooding culture and seek a Christ-like way of **Serving** that is glad to honour others by receiving as well as giving.



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

The church believes that it has a message of hope and good news to share with the whole world – the transformation offered by and through Jesus Christ. The new life that Jesus brings to individuals will be seen both in active membership of the Christian church and in a life of mission and **Serving** that mirrors Jesus' own life. How the message of good news is shared effectively through our words and deeds in the 21st century is one of the biggest challenges for the church today. This is why we must continue to practise the Holy Habit of **Serving** as we reach out to others.

As Christians, we are part of a tradition that seeks holiness wherever we are and whatever we are doing. As such, our theology of Christian **Serving** is an expression of our understanding of God's desire for a just world and our common calling as the people of Jesus to be agents of that divine yearning.

Inspired by this Holy Habit, the Birmingham Methodist Circuit (who first developed these resources) decided to launch a Social Justice Network – a network of Christian activists seeking to further partnerships with organisations which share their values of peace and justice. More of that later...

It is our hope and prayer that through this Holy Habit, you too will be inspired by the Holy Spirit to discover what **Serving** means in your context. Who is today's 'all' in Acts 2:45? Does **Serving** always involve sacrifice? What are the marks of Christian **Serving**? What is the link between **Serving** (in all senses of the word) and ministry?

Introduction to the theme

Preparation

Before the service, invite a member of the congregation to play the part of ‘trip organiser’ – someone with some drama experience would be good. You could play this part yourself.

Some props are needed – a clipboard, pen, giant sheet/roll of paper or PowerPoint slide of a complex Excel spreadsheet, maybe some large spectacles, a flipchart.

There is a comedy element to the role, so exploit the humour opportunities. The role demonstrates how it’s easy to get lost in the planning so that the actual purpose is missed altogether.

Introduction

Introduce the ‘trip organiser’ to the congregation, saying they’re here to talk about the upcoming church day out, picnic or shared lunch (whatever works in your context). The organiser enters carrying all the relevant equipment awkwardly as there’s so much and they seem in a bit of a flap. Adapt this sample script for the organiser so it suits your church and congregation (names could be changed to members of the congregation if appropriate):

Right, everyone, now we’ve been busy making plans for this event – I hope you’ve all got the date in your diaries. Now, where did I put my diary... (*Fumble through bags etc. Check page.*) Ah yes. Good, all set. Before we go there is A LOT to organise and we all know that to have fun takes organisation. It’s no good just hoping to have fun ‘off the cuff’, as it were, or leaving it to the last minute. It never works. So, we need to plan and we need to be planned and organised. What do we need to be? (*Encourage the congregation to reply, ‘Planned and organised’.*) Right, none of this spontaneous malarkey.

So... (*Flick through sheets on the clipboard.*) There’s a programme for the day: we’ve still not allocated any tasks to the 2.47 pm to 3.04 pm slot. 17 minutes precisely. Quite a critical moment as we’ll just have returned from the whole group toilet stop. We could always squeeze in a quick singalong. Three songs? That might work. Now who’s bringing what: no one’s volunteered to bring any fish paste, we also need at least 13 bottles of hand sanitiser and we really can’t go without the multipacks of Wotsits – come and see me after if you can offer

anything. Can I just say, we don't need any more Jaffa Cakes. Currently there are offers for 162 boxes on the list...

Now, finally, the rotas. Who loves a rota? Me, that's who! (*Start unrolling paper or put slide up on screen.*) So, jobs for the day. We still need someone to be pet coordinator to look after the two hamsters, five gerbils, one dog and seven goldfish that will be left behind. Any animal lovers? The litter team is very depleted – please bring your own black sacks. We've got a first aider now – Tina, you said you're good with plasters – and we still need four people to oversee the mobile phone charging point. Ezra's bringing his extension lead and phone charger so have a word if you can help him out...

That's it for now. Is there anything I've forgotten...? Gosh, there's still sooooo much to do... (*Exit the scene.*)

As you return to the front, mention to the congregation that it's great to hear about plans for the day out but you're a bit worried for the trip organiser as they've been so busy it doesn't look like they will be able to take part and enjoy themselves. What a shame!

Say that it reminds you of the story in Luke 10:38–42, when Jesus talked to Martha when he visited her house and she was preparing dinner. So busy and lost in getting things ready, she was missing out on so much more that was happening. It's easy for us to become like that sometimes, maybe so obsessed with making sure everything is how we'd like it to be that we can miss out ourselves. If we're the kind of person who likes to be 'doing', it can be difficult to make space – to balance our **Serving** roles/helping others with the times we receive. What might that look like for you?

Close with a minute to reflect on this and/or a prayer that invites God to help us to serve others as well as receiving ourselves.

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.

Bible study usually starts with the passage and we allow the passage to ask questions of us, or we bring questions to it. There are, however, other approaches. Sometimes it is good to approach Bible study from the other direction – to reflect on experience and then to bring the scriptures to shed light on the experience. The two studies that follow offer this kind of approach, although both refer to specific passages. The starting point, however, is human experience. The questions that follow each reflection refer to the specific passage but the group might look for other passages that shed light on the experience – or reflect on their own experience of **Serving** and consider what Bible passages speak to it.

Serving others

The two studies that follow reflect on what it is to be a follower of Jesus and to serve others in the community.

Matthew 25:35–40

I am privileged to work as a police officer, a job often thought of as chasing burglars, locking up the baddies and helping people across the road, but it is and should be so much more than that.

This passage challenges, inspires and teaches me that serving is about being alongside people. Jesus teaches that to serve is to offer food, drink, hospitality, clothing, care and presence. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote: ‘It is so easy to overestimate the importance of our own achievements compared with what we owe to the help of others.’ True serving also has a cost, whether that be in your giving, the views of others or other sacrifices to which discipleship leads.



My memories are often punctuated by what seem trivial happenings, but they are significant in my walk as a Christian. I recall a lady living alone whose home was broken into. She had chased the burglar away (hitting them with her walking stick!), but was still very shaken when we arrived. Making her a cup of tea and calling her family led to a ‘thank you’ that made me realise how it is the small things that often make the biggest difference. True serving, no matter what your role, is in being present where we are placed. There is no greater way to engage our communities than through the model of Jesus: the love and light of Christ can be glimpsed even in the most challenging of times.

My husband, also a police officer, collects the tokens from McDonald’s when he buys a coffee. Once he has collected six, he hands the card to one of the many homeless people he meets. This means that they can have a free cup of coffee and an hour indoors.

I am often challenged by the attitude of fellow officers to other people; I think of the man who has murdered his ex-wife, leaving their children without a mother. Treating him with compassion was a real challenge, but Jesus calls us to true serving.

As you think upon this reflection, consider the following questions:

- How have others served you in times of need?
- How are your values challenged in your work or life? How do you and can you respond to that?
- What opportunities do you have to demonstrate God’s love and tell of your faith?
- What Bible passages come to mind?

In **Serving** others, we are not only responding to the needs of others in a challenging and often dark world, but we are also glorifying and **Serving** God.

ARTS AND MEDIA

There are many films and books containing scenes about **Serving** 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 **Serving**.

Films

 **Big Hero 6** (PG, 2014, 1h42m)

Tadashi makes a robot, Baymax, whose primary function is to heal and help the sick. But when Tadashi dies after his college is burned down by a masked attacker, his younger brother Hiro seeks revenge on the attacker. Hiro turns this loving robot into an evil hero. Only later on in the film does Hiro realise he is abusing Baymax's real calling for his own personal gain/desires.

- Do we ever make people or possessions serve us, or others, in ways that are wrong?

 **A Bug's Life** (U, 1998, 1h35m)

In this film, we witness what happens if you don't appreciate and share with the workers. The grasshoppers force the ants to slave away, bringing in their food for the year. The resulting workforce of ants is tired and scared. Eventually, they are pushed too far. The result of this is a revolt; the ants

take on the grasshoppers, who are left with no food and the ants go back to worrying about their own food.

- How do you show your appreciation to others who serve you?
- How might you serve them?

The Mission (PG, 1986, 2h5m)

This is a film about Jesuit missionaries in 18th-century Latin America, when Spain and Portugal fought to expand their empires. The story tells how two Jesuits take opposing approaches to **Serving** the indigenous people.

- How can we ensure that **Serving** is a mutual process and not unwittingly patronising?

 **Robots** (U, 2005, 1h31m)

In a world of robots, Rodney Copperbottom travels to the big city in order to speak to Bigweld, the inventor. His dad is starting to break down and Rodney knows Bigweld is the only one who used to sell parts for his dad.

However, things don't go according to plan as Rodney ends up **Serving** all the poor and broken-down robots in a desperate attempt to fix them.

- Who might we need to serve, who might otherwise be overlooked?

Romero (15, 1989, 1h42m)

This film is a 'biopic' of the Archbishop of San Salvador, Oscar Romero. The film tells of his opposition to the military dictatorship and church hierarchy of his day, as he took a stand for the poor and oppressed.

- In what ways can **Serving** be a prophetic act?
- What part does courage play, and where does courage come from?

War Horse (12A, 2011, 2h26m)

A story of self-sacrifice told through the struggles of a faithful horse at the time of World War I. Based on a book of the same name by Michael Morpurgo.

- In this film, a horse is seen to serve sacrificially. But is the horse **Serving** or just determined to get home?
- What does this film have to say about how we serve and what is expected of others who serve us?
- How important is our motivation in **Serving**?

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.



Echidnas on Everest

Andrew McDonough (Authentic, 2013)

The Echidnas want to climb Mount Everest. They all look out for number one and think they will be able to do it alone. It's only when they begin to help each other and work together that they are able to succeed.

- In our **Serving** of God and others, with whom might we serve?

Harry Potter and The Deathly Hallows

J.K. Rowling (Bloomsbury, 2007)

Harry has a choice to make. Does he sacrifice his own life in order to serve his friends? Only through dying can Harry give life to all the people he loves. This book has been adapted into two films.

- In what ways does this story mirror the story of how Jesus served us?
- In **Serving** others, how often do we have to go against our own gain?

To order

Online: brfonline.org.uk

Telephone: +44 (0)1865 319700 Mon–Fri 9.15–17.30

Post: complete the order form and send to the address below

Delivery times within the UK are normally 15 working days. Prices are correct at the time of going to press but may change without prior notice.



Title	Price	Qty	Total

POSTAGE AND PACKING CHARGES				Total value of books	
Order value	UK	Europe	Rest of world	Postage and packing	
Under £7.00	£2.00	£5.00	£7.00	Donation	
£7.00–£29.99	£3.00	£9.00	£15.00	Total for this order	
£30.00 and over	FREE	£9.00 + 15% of order value	£15.00 + 20% of order value		

Please complete in BLOCK CAPITALS

Title First name/initials Surname

Address

..... Postcode

Acc. No. Telephone

Email

Method of payment

Cheque (made payable to BRF) MasterCard / Visa

Card no.

Valid from Expires Security code* Last 3 digits on the reverse of the card

Signature* Date/...../.....

*ESSENTIAL IN ORDER TO PROCESS YOUR ORDER

The Bible Reading Fellowship Gift Aid Declaration

giftaid it

Please treat as Gift Aid donations all qualifying gifts of money made

today, in the past four years, and in the future or My donation does not qualify for Gift Aid.

I am a UK taxpayer and understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax in the current tax year than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations, it is my responsibility to pay any difference.

Please notify BRF if you want to cancel this declaration, change your name or home address, or no longer pay sufficient tax on your income and/or capital gains.

Please send your form to:

BRF, 15 The Chambers, Vineyard, Abingdon OX14 3FE | enquiries@brf.org.uk

To read our terms and conditions, please visit brfonline.org.uk/terms.

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



brf.org.uk