



BIBLICAL TEACHING

GROUP STUDIES

LEADER'S GUIDE

The Bible Reading Fellowship

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Edited by
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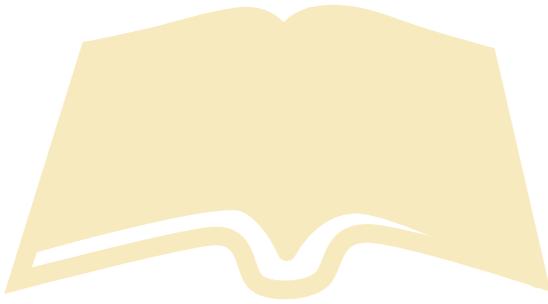
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About the writers

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Ed Mackenzie is a discipleship development officer for the Methodist Church and an associate lecturer in New Testament studies at Cliff College. He has written on biblical engagement and family spirituality and is also the co-host of the Together with God podcast (togetherwithgod.org.uk/podcast). Ed lives in Derbyshire with his wife and two children.

Caroline Wickens has been a minister in the Methodist Church for 25 years and is currently the superintendent of the Manchester Circuit. She has taught biblical subjects to student ministers in Zambia and Kenya, where she was also part of a team developing responses to HIV/AIDS. She has served in various churches in the West Midlands, been involved in ecumenical theological education in Salisbury and Birmingham, and supported people exploring discipleship and vocation within the church and beyond. Her writing is regularly published in *Roots* and various online sites including Christian Aid. She is married to Andrew and they have two adult children.

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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





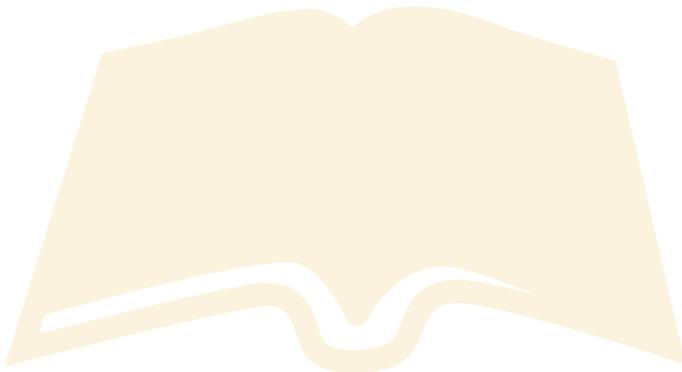
approach can also be a good way of making sure everyone has a chance to share if your group has newcomers or people who are shy or dominant.

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

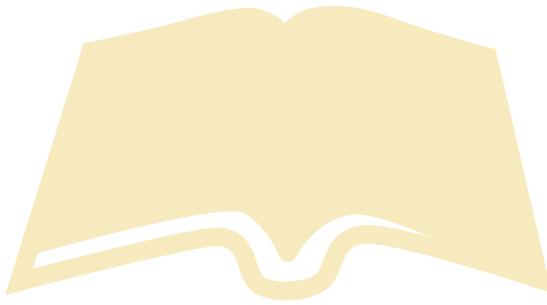
One way your group time could be structured:

- **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**







| Beth Dodd

Week 1

What we owe to one another

Read Exodus 20:1–4, 7–8, 12–17

Then God spoke all these words: I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth... You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not acquit anyone who misuses his name. Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy... Honour your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you. You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour. You shall not covet your neighbour's house; you shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour.

(NRSV)



Reflection

The 'ten words', or decalogue, are among the most famous texts of the Judeo-Christian faith. They adorn church walls and are taught to children and adults alike. They are the first commands given to God's people on reaching Mount Sinai, after escaping from Egypt. These words are the foundation and summary of the law, but they are more than a list of 'Thou Shalt Nots'. Jesus summarised them in two great commandments, one like the other: 'love God' and 'love your neighbour as yourself'. God's people make this commitment to love because they were loved first by the one who saved them from slavery and death.

The opening words remind us that who we are we owe to another. God brought Israel out of slavery, but all of us alive are 'saved' from death by those who bring us into the world and see us through the dangers of infancy. Knowing that we are already saved binds us to each other and to God. Writing after the Holocaust, the Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas taught that meeting another person face-to-face shows up our obligation to each other. Each is looking for love from the other, each is fearful of harm from the other. By choosing to love, we recognise in our common humanity a worth and dignity that we all share. It is easy not to face up to what we owe to one another by seeing people as things, but that way lies tyranny and violence. The God who saved us first calls us to save each other, to love and not to harm.

Think of a person that you find it difficult to love. Imagine yourself looking at them face-to-face. What do you owe to them as part of your service to God? How does God's word shape your response? Pray for that person.



Questions

- 1** Can you remember how you were first taught the ten commandments? What impression of the ten commandments did this teaching give you?
- 2** What do the ten commandments mean to you in your life of discipleship today?
- 3** Which of the commandments do you find the most difficult to understand or to follow?
- 4** What difference does it make to how you hear these words to think that the God who speaks them is the God who has saved us?
- 5** If we are saved not by law but by grace, why do you think the ten commandments have remained so important in Christian tradition?
- 6** What do you think we owe to one another, in the light of God's love for us?





Ideas to do as a group

1 Make a commitment as a group to change in your daily life one habit that leads to harm for others.

2 In your daily life this week, as you look into the faces of others remember to see the face of Christ.



Take-home questions

1

In what ways are you called to live out biblical teaching in your place of work?

2

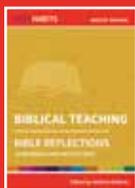
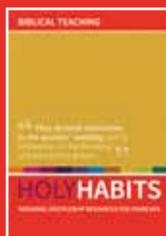
In what ways are you called to live out biblical teaching in your home and family life?

3

In what ways does God come alongside you in your calling to live out biblical teaching in loving and service of others?

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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