

**Lincoln Methodist Circuit**  
**Notes for “theory into practice”**  
**services**  
**+**  
**Group Material**  
**for the**  
**“Holy Habits” Lectionary**

**Quarter 3**

**March- May 2018**

## Letter to churches

### Holy Habits Quarter 3

Dear Everybody:

We hope that you are finding the Holy Habits material helpful now that we have moved on from the concepts of discipleship to the habits themselves. At the date of writing only one church has had any element of the “practical” sessions and for them it was combined with the basic teaching. So if over the next few weeks you have feedback or suggestions (including anything relating to what follows) please let us know (ian3105@yahoo.co.uk): it may be possible to put out revised material later in the quarter.

These notes contain “material and Ideas” for the practical sessions which we hope will replace the conventional sermon on those weeks which follow on from some of the Holy habits teaching services. In Quarter 3 this applies to “Prayer” and “Service” : “Breaking Bread and Eating Together” (which will be taken by a minister) and “Gladness, Generosity and Giving” are “single sessions” although it is likely the CLT will suggest that churches consider a special offering for the latter to set up a fund to help churches who decide to do some form of community outreach in Quarter 4, such as a BBQ and need support. This offering will then be an example of practical action arising from the teaching, just as communion (or even a shared church meal) will be practical action based on the “Breaking Bread” session.

We attach the outline Quarter 4 plan as well to give you an idea where the circuit is going. We aim to finish the series before the school holidays with a circuit service which would “book end” with the launch service last September but before this there are the habits of “worship” and “making more disciples” to include. It would be great if you as a church could begin to think about the “practical” sessions now: you will probably have lots of ideas for “worship” but may need to think harder about how you could reach out with the love of God in word as well as action. It might be an idea to check when local galas and fetes are happening even if they are on a Saturday -could your church have a giveaway and chat stall? Or perhaps you could invite folk to a non-fundraising cream tea with a short reading and sharing of what Jesus means to you? We have good news for everyone - let’s not keep it to ourselves! And as mentioned above there may be help from a circuit fund, so we can all share together in sharing!

We know that during Lent many churches will be using the “40 Stories of Hope” material for mid-week groups but to give you a choice we have included material for every Holy Habit week (except “Breaking Bread”). It starts at p10.

For completeness we include the material for the first week of Quarter 3 on “Reading the Bible 2” which we distributed with the Q2 part 2 notes. These notes are sometimes different in style and content to the previous ones: the idea is to encourage groups to take the initiative in helping each other strengthen the holy habits, in the same spirit as traditional Class meetings did.

Our prayer as the preparation group continues to be that we will together be enabled to build each other up so our discipleship as individuals and churches makes us more like Jesus. Every blessing as you work together !

Tim Hirst            )  
Ian Lacy             )  
Chris Marsh        )     “The team”  
David Sheehan     )  
David Stubbs       )

### Q3 Holy Habits Programme

	Theme	Holy Habits chapter	Possible readings
March 4th Lent	Reading the Bible 2   - practice (congregation/worship leader)	9	Nehemiah c7 v73b – c8v 8 Luke c4 v16-21 2 Timothy c3 v12-17
March 11 <sup>th</sup> Mothering Sunday	Eating together and Breaking of Bread - minister (as this will presumably be a communion service it will be either 11 <sup>th</sup> , 18 <sup>th</sup> or 25 <sup>th</sup> )	10,14	Isaiah c25 v6-8 John c2 v1-11 Luke c22 v13-23 1 Corinthians 11 v23-29
March 18th Lent 5	“free choice” (LP)		
March 25 Lent 6 Palm Sunday	“free choice” (LP)		
April 1 Easter	“free choice” (either)		
April 8th	Prayer 1 ‘theory” (either)	11	Jeremiah c29 v12-14 John c15 v4-8 Colossians c1 v9-13
April 15th	Prayer 2 – “practice” (could be led by congregation/worship leader so could be OA)	11	1 Kings c8 v22-24 and 27-30 John c17 v20-26 Philippians c1 v9-11
April 22nd	Service 1- ‘theory”	16	Deuteronomy c10 v17-19 Matthew c25 v 31-46 1 Corinthians 12 v1-7, 27-31
April 29th	Service 2 – “practice” (can be led by congregation/worship leader so could be OA)	16	Genesis c12 v1-3 Matthew c5 v13-16 Ephesians c2 v4- 10
May 6th	“free choice” either or OA		
May 13 <sup>th</sup>	Gladness, generosity and giving (ether)		Deuteronomy c15 v7-11 Acts c2 v44-47 2 Corinthians c9 v1-15
May 20 <sup>th</sup> Pentecost	“free choice” -	12	
May 27 <sup>th</sup> Trinity Sunday	‘free choice” (or OA)	12	

People have asked for lectionary readings, so we have included the main readings for “Holy Habits”

The dates for “Hoy Habits” services are nominal in that different churches will have particular services on different days depending on availability of preachers, having a minister available for communion services etc. You will see that there are plenty of “free choice” Sundays as well as Easter and Pentecost when preachers will be able to make their own decisions on their topic.

**March 4<sup>th</sup>**

**Material and Ideas for “Holy Habits - Reading the Bible 2 –Practical”.**

The idea is to explore and develop the teaching and ideas on the nature and importance of the bible that were shared in the “theory” section in a previous week. The aim is to get us all excited that we can actually get to hear God speaking through his words/Word and that it will change our lives!

1) There are all sorts of ideas you could try –here are some.

a) Organise a groups or individuals in advance in advance to read a short passage from each of the “genres” of the Bible:

- Beginnings and the Law – (first 5 books)
- History
- Poetry and wisdom
- Prophecy
- Gospels
- Church history and letters
- Prophecy (Revelation- technically “Apocalypse”)

You could perhaps look at modern equivalents to show how the Bible’ structure still resonates today.

b) Or take the big themes

- Creation in Genesis 1-2
- Fall and rebellion= Genesis 3
- Incarnation
- Redemption
- Consummation – a new beginning – Revelation

2) Perhaps include practical activities as well such as:

- Group memorisation of a verse.
- Demonstrating how we can meditate on a verse (read it several times – break into phrases - what do they say to me? – into words – when I say “faith, what does it mean? – turn it into prayer
- “Sword drill” – someone reads out a reference while people hold their bibles ready. At the word - everyone looks it up –first to find it reads it out (and gets a prize?!)
- Two or three people sharing how they read the Bible and what they find helps them
- Read the same passage in different versions

3) A table with a range of different bible reading aids- Scripture Union and Bible Reading Fellowship notes, E100, "Everyday with Jesus" (remember to put a note to say how you can get these on line as well- some will send you a daily email with the passage and comments). See the small group notes for more details

4) And lots more!

The key concept is that if we are friends of Jesus and the Bible –always there - is the main way God speaks to us then it is very odd if we only listen once a week, even if we talk to him every day. It is not like that (usually) when we share a house with someone.... scope for a small drama?

**March 13<sup>th</sup> - 'Breaking Bread and Eating Together'**

Your minister may have ideas for this and will be in touch!

**April 15<sup>th</sup>**

## **Church material and ideas for “Prayer 2 – Practical” (Holy Habits c 11)**

### **Introduction**

“We go upon the practical mode of teaching, Nickleby; the regular education system. C-l-e-a-n, clean, verb active, to make bright, to scour. W-i-n, win, d-e-r, der, winder, a casement. When the boy knows this out of book, he goes and does it.”

*Mr Squeers in “Nicholas Nickleby” – Charles Dickens*

Although Mr Squeers is not someone we would describe as a good teacher he does make the point that theoretical knowledge needs to be put into practice. As Andrew Robert’s “Holy Habits” makes clear discipleship is “learning by doing” and that is especially true of prayer. In fact, it is only as we pray that we begin to discover what it is and the difference it makes. A week or so ago we looked at the “what, when and why” of prayer. This week we will look together at the “how” by “go and do it”, working with each other as an intentional praying community.

What follows are ideas and suggestions for a service based on praying: they are not guidelines, let alone a prescription to follow. As a community you will have between you a wide experience of different sorts of prayer and far more ideas than we have been able to come up with.

### **Planning**

However, the church will have to do some advance planning (“Lord, teach us to pray”) if this is to work well: you could see it as an Own Arrangement focussed on prayer and as it is not intended to include specific preaching you will not have to have a LP present, though the leader/coordinator will of course need to put in a bit of explanation and leading. You might decide to have “prayer practice” where the sermon would usually be, or you might decide to have different sorts of prayer done in different ways throughout the service, with prayer themed hymns and songs between them.

### **Ideas**

#### **Exploring different “categories” of prayer**

- Adoration
- Confession
- Thanksgiving
- Petition \_ praying for ourselves (individually and as a church/discipleship community)
- Intercession – praying for others (family, friends, our local community, country, world)

#### **Exploring different “words” of prayer**

- Written prayers (e.g. The Methodist Worship Book, The Lion Prayer Collection)
- Responsive prayer

- Extempore prayer
- Silent prayer
- Written prayers – read out, pinned up. Or perhaps “letters to God”
- Prayers in the Bible

### **Exploring different “styles” of prayer (perhaps with prayer stations” to move between)**

- ‘tactile” prayer – using physical objects as symbols and aids to focus – stones, cloth, wood, water
- Candles
- Taize – repetitive simple melodies and words
- Celtic - focus on God in creation, his all-pervading presence (see Davis Adam’s books such as ‘The Open Gate” published by Triangle and available from eden.co.uk)
- Prayer trees- to hang thanksgiving and requests on
- Pictures- to stimulate imagination and inspiration (remember the Methodist Modern Art exhibition>)
- Photographs, newspapers, video clips of particular contemporary situations that need prayer
- Some hymns are prayers in themselves or focus on prayer – e.g. 517-531 in Singing the Faith or Hymns and Psalms 484-574 which works through the “categories”

### **Exploring different “postures” of prayer**

- Sitting
- Kneeling
- Standing
- Walking
- Outdoors
- Eyes open -or closed.

And of course, you can “mix and match” – silent intercession for refugees whilst focussing on a picture of “The flight into Egypt” whilst listening to the Taize “O Lord, hear my prayer”.

This only scrapes the surface. If you went to “Stepping Out” at Burton Rd on Jan 31<sup>st</sup> you will probably have come away with even more ideas to add to your own. Some ideas may not “work” for individuals or the church as a whole, some may surprise you so you want to use them again. The important thing is that we are speaking to God – and he loves us to do that: it shows we are responding to his speaking to us.

**April 29<sup>th</sup>**

## **Church Material and Ideas for “Holy Habits – Service 2 – putting it into practice”**

*“the Word became flesh and moved into the neighbourhood. John 1 v14 “The Message”*

### **Introduction**

In the first session on “Service” we learned how as God’s Community we are to be Intentional in Mission – being sent out by God to be his people in his world. For us his world starts in our own community (Acts 1 v8) whether that is geographic or the community of family, work or Facebook. In this session we want to get a taste of what service in our community could feel like. Of course, service implies ongoing commitment - but perhaps something that you do on the day might lead to a longer-term call to serve.

As the idea is that this should replace an “ordinary” service you will not have much time and will need to think beforehand of what people might do. So perhaps meeting together for a song and a prayer and then going out for an hour or so for “outdoor” service while those who would find the outdoor service difficult for whatever reason do “indoor “service”. The principle is the same: we are doing something together to show practical love and care.

What follows are only suggestions: you know your own community and at least some of the needs and opportunities. Some of the ideas may need a bit of a risk assessment and prior arrangement but as long as our approach is ‘doing for” and not “doing to” we won’t go far wrong.

### **Ideas for “Outdoor Service”**

- Litter picking in a local park (check with the council-let them know this is a church thing)
- Put on a coffee morning in a residential home
- Simply take cakes round to people who can’t get out (let them know in advance you are coming)
- Ask your local council if there is a job you can do together to improve the environment (this might work best in a village where you probably know some of the Parish Council)
- A garden tidy for a neighbour who can’t do it for themselves

### **Ideas for “Indoor Service”**

- See if the food bank/community larder would be happy to distribute a little plant pot with growing seeds in it as a little extra. Then plant them up in church and get them to the distribution point once they have germinated
- “Phone a friend” or acquaintance you know is a bit isolated for a chat
- Knit a blanket square or three.

- A “we’ll come and fetch you” non-fund-raising coffee morning (or even lunch) for those who do not usually come to church. You could do this as a fellowship group activity in a group member’s home, or if you are not in such a group with 2 or 3 friends.

“Christ-like hospitality is radical action because the ‘powerful’ host has all the obligations and the ‘vulnerable’ guest-the stranger has almost all the rights. True hospitality:

- Is never sold
- Involves a friendly caring spirit
- Is an obligation to be receptive to the guest’s needs
- Is an obligation to hear the guest’s story

“True hospitality is reciprocal: the host’s role is to learn from the guest – rather than attempt to change the guest”

Ann Morisy, quoted by Andrew Roberts, “Holy Habits” p181

### **Summing up**

You may want to make time for a “debrief” at the end (alternatively this could be done in mid-week groups) – as Jesus did with the disciples when they returned from going out (Mark 6 v30-32, though that debrief was interrupted by all the people who had been impacted by the service of Jesus and the disciples...) And you may want to spend time in fellowship/cell groups praying about the service you are already involved in as individuals, groups and church and asking God if he is calling you to something more and if so, what.

“it is very easy to become disconnected from the neighbourhoods that we are situated in and the communities we are called to serve.... (Jesus) got involved, walked the streets, sat in the market place, spent time in people’s homes. He got his hands dirty and offered the life-changing touch of holiness. He brought heaven down to earth.”

Andrew Roberts, “Holy Habits” p 179

## Group Material

### Group material for “Reading the Bible 2” (this was included in the Q2 notes)

The aim of the time together is to help develop a framework for not only reading the Bible but really getting to grips with what it says.

#### Icebreaker

Past experiences of starting a task without reading the instructions (IKEA furniture assembly?)

How do you set about reading something you know will be complicated but is important? (the small print in say a car insurance policy).

In contrast how do you set about reading a story? A poem? What do you do if you lose the thread?

God’s word is truth and truth can be very simple and very complex, often at the same time. So it is not surprising that we may find some parts hard to grasp (especially when it talks about situations very different to our own). But even then it often turns out that our world today is not as different as we might think – and the people of the Bible not so different to us !

But it does help to have a method (or methods) for reading. This will help us to get the most out of it, perhaps especially if we are reading a passage that is unfamiliar or difficult. It will also be useful for when we don’t really feel like reading it!

**A simple approach** I have found helpful is the “Scripture Union Bible Reading Method” –used by millions of people round the world for 150years!

- 1) Pray- you are starting a dialogue with God so ask him to speak to you through his word “Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening (1 Samuel 3 v9)
- 2) Read slowly and carefully through the passage – perhaps several times and perhaps with the bits immediately before and after to set the context.
- 3) Reflect
  - What is this passage actually saying?
  - What is the main point?
  - What does it show me about God? About me?
  - What does it require of me, in thought, words, action?
- 4) Apply it The Bible is not just there for information but to help us live in the right relationship with God and others (2 Timothy 3v16)
  - How am I going to apply it in my life today – situations at home, work, school, church? (Bible study notes are often helpful –they have questions that challenge us if we are trying to duck out of what God wants us to hear!)
- 5) Pray - about what you have learned, about how you are going to use it.

Now, as a group **try it out together!** Take a short passage (how about Matthew 7 v24-27?). read it- slowly and imaginatively (it is a story). Go through the questions above. What are you going to do with the answers in your group, as individuals? Pray through your response.

This is not the only way to read the Bible of course. It is well worth reading a whole book in one or 2 sittings – try Esther for a gripping drama, or Song of Songs as a love poem or Mark’s gospel to get the pace and excitement of Jesus’ life and ministry. There are schedules available to help you read right through the Bible in a year without getting bogged down in Leviticus!

If you don’t read the Bible as much as you would like to, then why not set yourself **a challenge** – 10 minutes a day, perhaps using the framework above –for a week? You could follow on from Matthew 7 by working through Matthew 8 in a translation you find easy to follow

	Chapter	verses
Day1	8	1 - 4
Day 2		8 - 13
Day 3		14 -17
Day 4		18 - 22
Day 5		23 - 27
Day 6		28 -32
Day 7	9	1 - 8

### Sources of help/schemes to read the Bible

“How to read the Bible for All its Worth” – Gordon D Fee and Douglas Stuart

Bible Reading Fellowship (biblereading notes.org.uk). Several different styles of notes for different people at different stages of life e.g.” Day by day with God”

Scripture Union (contents. Scriptureunion.org.uk) “Daily Bread”, “Encounter with God”

These are available as a daily email in several formats including audio from [www.WordLive@scriptureunion.org.uk](mailto:www.WordLive@scriptureunion.org.uk). They are free, though donations help in production costs.

E100 – 100 OT and NT passages to give the Big Picture of the Bible to read over 100 days (www.e100.scriptureunion.org.uk)

**NB** There is no specific group material for “breaking Bread and Eatng Together”

## **Group material for “Holy Habits – Prayer 1”**

**Icebreaker:** Are you someone who finds prayer easy or difficult? Share with the group what styles of prayer you’ve come across, and which ones are most precious to you.

### **Bible Study**

#### ***Look at John 15:4-5***

How does prayer help us to “remain” in Jesus?

What does Jesus say about what happens if we don’t “remain” in him?

Does this ring true in your own experience?

#### ***Look at Ephesians 6:18***

What is praying “in the Spirit”?

How can we pray “on all occasions”?

Note how the passage speaks of “all kinds of prayers and requests”. Do we sometimes become limited in the ways we pray?

#### ***Look at Colossians 1:9–13***

Imagine Paul is praying this prayer over your small group. How does it make you feel? What do you find particularly encouraging in this prayer?

It is good to have people praying for us. Can you think of people in your own past or present who have prayed for you? Who can we bless by praying for them? Who do you feel needs the encouragement of being prayed for?

### **Prayer**

If possible have some “tactile” aids to prayer (stones to represent prayers; wooden cross to hold or look at, prints of artwork (from the Methodist art collection for example), some written prayers (the methodist prayer handbook, or any other book of prayers).

## **Group material for “Holy Habits – Prayer 2- practical”**

We have not written detailed notes for this session. The group leader will probably find it helpful to have the “Church Materials and Ideas” for the practical session on prayer.

Unless you spent all day in church it is unlikely you covered the whole range of possibilities! Discuss the church session on practical prayer:

- What went well?
- What would you like to try again?
- Was any style of prayer unhelpful for you? Why?
- What ideas would you like to try that you didn't have time for on Sunday? – Go ahead!
- What other ideas do you have that have not been mentioned?
- What personally do you find hard/helpful when you pray? Share with each other.
- Does your group have a prayer journal -things you pray for - with space to record the answers?
- Think about what “pray without ceasing” might mean in in practical terms on your life.

Pray!

## Group material for “Holy Habits-Service 1”

These notes are taken from “Holy Habits” c13 p185-186

**A Biblical passage to Reflect On** – Matthew c25 v31-46 (*although this passage may well have been one of the readings on Sunday it is always good to go back and re-read and re-reflect!*)

What do you notice in this passage?

What will you (*as an individual and a group*) do or change in the light of what you have read and noticed?

### **Personal suggestions**

Bless your local bank or other people and groups that may be under pressure or underappreciated with some cakes. Let the staff know someone loves them.

Master or servant? As a disciple of Jesus how do you operate? Take time to ponder this especially if you have a leadership role at work, in the community or in your church. How do you kneel at the feet of those you lead?

### **Local suggestions**

How connected/incarnate is your church within the wider community of which you are part (*both geographically and socially*)? Is there a neglected or needy part of your community you might be called to serve?

If your local Christian community is already active in serving the wider community take a little time to reflect on ‘the Christ part’ of this. How is the service you offer distinctively Christian? How is the presence of Christ revealed in what you do?

### **Global suggestions**

To help serve the poorest renew your commitment to or get involved with an organisation that works to tackle the causes as well as the effects of poverty. There are any number of good organisations that do this but if you are stuck good places to start are:

- Internationally with Christian Aid and its partners ([www.christianaid.org.uk](http://www.christianaid.org.uk)) or tearfund ([www.tearfund.org](http://www.tearfund.org))
- In the UK the Joint Issues Team of the Baptist, Methodist and United Reformed Churches campaigns on issues surrounding poverty and injustice ([jointpublicissues.org.uk](http://jointpublicissues.org.uk))

Before next week it might be a good idea to collect ideas and material on what you might do personally, locally and globally for discussion, planning and action at next week’s group.

## Group material for “Holy Habits -Service 2 – putting it into practice”

Read Luke c10 v1-16. Although it is unlikely our service for others in the name of Christ will involve trampling on snakes and scorpions (v19) there are some principles for service her that might help us work out our own service in a very different context to first century Galilee.

- Why did Jesus send out the 72?
- Is there any significance in his sending out this big group rather than the 12 “full time” followers?
- What were the task of the 72? (see especially v9-10)? Does this differ from our service?
- Should we make clear we serve in the name of Jesus? What problems might that create
- Is there a potential conflict “serving” to show love and change communities and “speaking” to show love and change people? What do we do with the accusation “You’re only doing this to make converts?”
- What do vs 3-4 say about resources for service that might help us?
- What do you make of v16 in the light of the possibility of people not accepting what we seek to do (assuming we are serving in the Spirit of love)

Read Luke c10 v17-23

- Have a debrief on whatever you did as a church in service to others recently.
- How do Jesus’ words encourage and challenge us as we look at what we have done and what we are planning to do?
- What “privileges” do we have as we serve Jesus and see his power work through us?

If you have brought material and ideas for possible personal, local and global action share them.

Pray about them.

Discuss what you might do as a group to encourage individual service. Is there something it would be good to do together as a group to serve? Are there any ideas to share with your church leadership team?

Plan what you are going to do. Write it down!

Do it!

Make time at future group meetings to share with each other how the plans are going and challenge and encourage each other.

Pray!

## **Group material for “Holy Habits- Gladness, Generosity and Giving”**

### **Introduction**

- 1) You will have seen the images of forest fires sweeping across California. If your house was in the path of the fire, what things (as well as your family of course!) would you want to grab to take with you before you made your escape?
- 2) Now run over those items in your mind and consider what those things are made of..... When we really think it through, it becomes clear that everything we value is part of the bountiful provision that God makes for the world.

Giving back some of those gifts we have received from God has been a part of the Christian tradition right from the very beginning. In the reading we are looking at today, Paul is planning a third return visit to the Corinthians and is taking some representatives from the church in Macedonia with him. The people he is writing to have, apparently, been generous in the past but reading between the lines we can see that Paul is not totally confident that their liberal giving will be repeated!

### **Read 2 Corinthians 9:1-15**

- 1) In verses 1-5, how does Paul subtly encourage the people in Corinth to donate to the growing churches in surrounding areas? (see also 1 Corinthians c16 v1-4)
- 2) Paul is not only interested in what people give but why they are giving it. How does he make this clear?
- 3) How do we decide how much to give? Does Paul give any advice on this?
- 4) What does Paul suggest are the benefits to being generous? Do you agree with him?
- 5) There may be an implication in what Paul says that those who give will receive in proportion to their giving. How do you react to this in the light of people’s differing levels of wealth? You might want to look at Luke 21:1-4
- 6) What outcome from the giving for others and for us does Paul foresee?

In the end Paul brings the subject of generous giving back to its rightful foundation. It is the abundant giving

of God that makes it possible – the act of giving is a gift in itself. Not only does the means to give come to

us by the grace of God, but the generosity we show is inspired by Jesus and encouraged by the Holy Spirit.

“Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!” Amen to that!

### **Afterthought**

It is worth noting that Paul gives advice to ensure probity amongst those handling money. (1Corinthians c16 v3). Although we are to give generously we are not meant to give recklessly: we are to be good stewards of the resources God gave us in the first place. This may be especially important when giving to

organisations. What reports do they give of their projects? Do you look at their annual reports to see how

June 3rd	Worship 1 (either)	16	
June 10th	Worship 2 - practical	16	Church devised session, using worship leaders etc Try different forms of worship (as well as Songs of Praise format) – drama, dance, art...
June 17th	Making more disciples (either)	17	
June 24th	Making more disciples - practical	17	Each church to have a specific outreach project –free community BBQ etc. ?Financed by joint giving from all churches into a central pool raised at the Gift Day.
July 1st	“Dare to dream” –circuit service	18	Whole circuit in one place – “bookends” the circuit launch. ?Love feast

much of what is given goes into administration and fundraising (some has to of course) compared to other similar organisations. So- yes, give wisely – but do not let wisdom be separated from willing!

#### **Provisional Holy Habits for Quarter 4**