

## **Holy Habits**

Jubilee Mennonite Church  
April 28, 2019

**Purpose:** To preview the Holy Habits Series

**Message:** As people of faith, we are welcomed to engage with that which feeds and connects us to God and others.

**Scripture:** Philippians 4:2-9; Psalm 6

**Synopsis:** We have a high minded ideal when it comes to spiritual disciplines. Most of the time we think of what we do around and for God in very specific terms: the Bible Study, specific prayer forms, formal acts of service. While these are all well and good, we also do well to broaden the scope of how we know our spirituality and the ways we connect with it. Connecting our every day habits with that of our spiritual habits helps us broaden how we connect with and understand God in day to day life.

Notes: this is meant to be not more than 10 minutes as an introduction, combined with some prayer time and star word/prayer reflection time

Phillipians 4:2-9

Don't fret or worry.  
Instead of worrying, pray.

Let petitions and praises  
shape your worries into prayers,  
letting God know your concerns.

Before you know it,  
a sense of God's wholeness,  
everything coming together for good,  
will come and settle you down.

8-9 It's wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the center of your life.

Summing it all up, friends,

I'd say you'll do best by filling your minds and meditating  
on things true, noble, reputable, authentic, compelling, gracious—

the best, not the worst;  
the beautiful, not the ugly;  
things to praise, not things to curse.

Put into practice what you learned from me,  
what you heard and saw and realized.

Do that, and God, who makes everything work together,  
will work you into his most excellent harmonies.

Our habits define us. They set the routines and rhythms of our lives. Yet, they are the parts of our lives we are least likely to share with others. There is a fine line to be walked between a habit and obsession. Like the fact that I get ready each morning basically in the same order each day: shower, deodorant, brush hair, shave, brush teeth. More or less like clock work each day. I can't tell you why I function in this way—it is just how I go through the check off for morning tasks, perhaps maintaining the certainty of routine until my brain kicks in with a cup of coffee. Maybe its our way to work, what time and place that we take our coffee break in the morning, how we make our way through a grocery store (is it bread first or produce first), our habits make our lives, define our edges. One of the things of getting married at an older age is the number of times I look at Emily in the day-to-day stuff of living and stand amazed at how we do the small things of life so differently, having needed to both form habits independently of one another. Our habits very much a part of our lives, so much so that we are either a little bit embarrassed that our routines are as strong as they are

We are no different with our holy habits: those things that we do (or think we ought to do) when it comes to relating to and living out faith in our lives. We hold them closely, and guard them tightly, and generally don't talk about them too much because 1) they are habits—they are ours and we reserve the way and means of how we live out our faith as a very individualistic thing and 2) they holy—they are the elevated ways and means that we relate to God within, and as such we are not terribly inclined to expose our Spiritual disciplines least we be found out to be lacking in our zeal, incomplete in our Spirituality, or otherwise not taking all of this sufficiently seriously to be good enough to be shared in public.

But our habits, our rituals are important. Our Anabaptist tradition has often failed to remember that. We have so closely tied what we do in day-to-day life, our ethics, our decisions, our way of being, that we can forget that it is not by the things that we do that we become more like Christ. We can easily substitute the long list of proper ways of being for remembering why we live this way in the first place. The logic goes that if we were the holy church that we were called to be, we would remember that we are like Christ and we would not need any fancy pants rituals to remind us of that. We could do things in a way that would connect us to God. Yet, time and again, we need to be reminded that the things that we do—speak for peace, seek justice, share the gospel, live simply, love freely our neighbors as ourselves—are in and of themselves

rituals (with a lower case r) meant to remind us of whose we are; children of God, embodying the face of Christ in the here and now. We need to build habits into our reality not so we can add one more rule against which we are judged, but so we remember the ruling force in our life in the first place. Like the church at Phillipi to whom Paul is writing to commend them to remember the noble things of faith, we too need a strong enough habit of our Spiritual selves to connect ourselves to who we really are more that just an hour or two a week.

Our habits, our rituals takes ordinary things and makes them sacred. We need rituals to connect us to God; not in some legalistic way to satisfy a requirement, but to simply re-connect our ordinary lives with the extraordinariness that is all around us. It's a connection that never was lost, but one that we loose sight of and consciousness around so easily. We forget that we work in the kingdom of God and that everyone—EVERYONE—that we meet is the incarnation of God. We need to ritualize our life to keep the fact that God is at work in my life is a present reality, not just an idealistic fairy tale. You don't need the bells and incense of the sanctuary to be reminded that the world is holy. You just need the will to do something as a matter of routine with the purpose of remembering God. And when you do it, remember that what you are doing, what ever it is, is holy and a reflection of God in the world. How would we think of our world differently if we touched base with the holy purpose in life in the ordinariness of life? Islam has the daily call to prayer 5 times a day—remembering God is central. We might roll our eyes at this, but I wonder how different our world would look if Christians remembered that it is Christ in them that is the point even twice a day.

Over the next several weeks we are going to be sitting with our holy habits, calling them to mind to consider how they work for us. Some will be predictable—prayer, devotion, service—but others may be less expected—why do we give; how might we might Jesus in our daily exercise; how do we connect who we are in the world with who we are in Christ in real ways? How do we work at finding habits that go beyond the basic forms that we might have received as kids—now we lay me down to sleep—or the ways we think we SHOULD pray—and offer ways and means of understanding who we are and how we connect with God, in our own ways. In it, we will be finding what works for us, connects us, and moves us to a closer walk with the living Christ.