



Susan Stevens is a retired bio-medical scientist who now spends most of her time volunteering on a range of committees and leading Walking for Health groups in 'the very large village' of Womborne, near Wolverhampton. She is the URC rep on the local parish magazine committee and contacted BRF when she was writing a report on the **HOLY HABITS** fellowship group she joined a year ago.



THE STORY begins...

'Having enjoyed what we've done with Holy Habits so much I thought BRF might be encouraged to know that people are using and benefitting from these resources. If something has been so good, then it's worth sharing it!'

Sue's URC church is one of a group of three. Their previous pastor encouraged them to get involved in the URC's discipleship programme, Walking the Way, which in turn makes use of the Holy Habits resources. A study group was formed to work on the habits over the course of a year and Sue and another member of her congregation decided to join.

'Nine of us have been meeting for a year and we've really gelled. It's been very enlightening. Some members of the group used the new Holy Habits resource booklets from BRF but I just had Andrew Roberts' original book (*Holy Habits*, Malcolm Down Publishing, 2016). It was led very well. We met monthly and we always planned the next meeting before we left at the end of the evening.

'We did one habit each time we met and we really missed people if they weren't there. We followed a lot of the suggestions – there were some lovely activities and great materials. I particularly enjoyed taking communion in the group, in a home setting, which is outside our normal practice. That stood out the most for me.'

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Womborne Holy Habits study group

Looking back over the year, what did Sue take away from the Holy Habits group?

'I think I'd have to say, none of us can really know what being a Christian means in another person's life until you get opportunities to share and listen to each other. So the experience of meeting together, answering the questions, agreeing or disagreeing or just putting another slant on things, was very powerful. You don't get that on a Sunday morning. We hear what's preached and we sing and pray, but we don't hear from others the way you do in a small group.

'I've been involved in various groups over the years, not always with the URC, and the Holy Habits group encouraged and taught me so much. Listening to others' testimonies, I was struck

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by how several people had continued to worship God, despite going through some very difficult times.'

Was Sue surprised that more people didn't join the group?

'Sadly, it wasn't for everyone: some might say, 'I've been a Christian long enough to know, I don't need this', but personally I think Holy Habits is as valuable for people who have been Christians all their lives as it is for new Christians.

'Someone did say "What's new about Holy Habits?", and of course, the passage from Acts 2 on which it's based isn't new, but it's certainly a different way of looking at the disciplines of a Christian life and bringing people together. For me, it's been a way of applying the Bible much more directly to my day-to-day Christian life.'

What would Sue say to people who might be hesitating about getting involved in Holy Habits?

'I'd say, "Just come and try it – how do you know it's not for you if you don't try it?" I think some people might be anxious that they don't know the Bible well enough and will be embarrassed if they're put on the spot. But the fellowship you gain by meeting in a home, or even a small room in the church, is so

encouraging and illuminating, it is good to encourage others to try it.

'If they do, they can know the Bible better, gain confidence with each other and grow as a Christian. Otherwise they might go on for years and years and not realise how the different bits of the Bible fit together and what it all means. Just hearing short passages read in church on a Sunday, and listening to the preaching, could mean missing out. Learning to study the Bible and realising what blessings are there in its pages is for all.'

And what is the group carrying into the future?

'We're going to continue to meet, but try something a bit different. I'm glad it's not going to stop. I would love to think that others from our church would want to do Holy Habits. That is why I wanted to put an article in the parish magazine, to encourage others to consider it. I hope the group will keep going and not be something that people think 'Oh yes, Holy Habits, I remember that: we did it in 2019.' Or 'Oh yes, Holy Habits, that was another craze but then we moved on to something else.' 

We hope you've enjoyed this Holy Habits story!