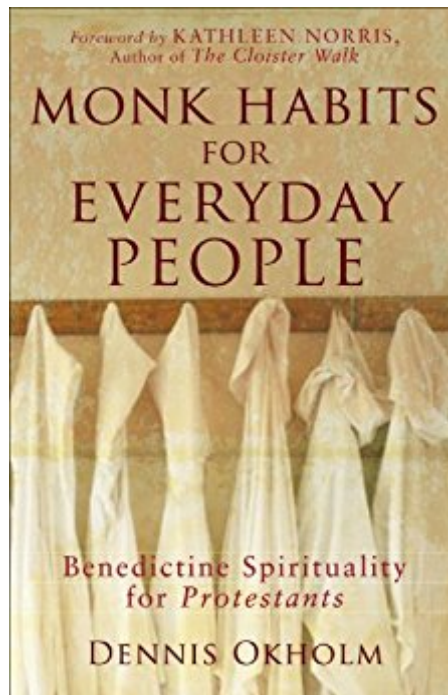


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Monk Habits For Everyday People: Benedictine Spirituality For Protestants



Synopsis

In their zeal for reform, early Protestant leaders tended to throw out Saint Benedict with the holy water. That is a mistake, writes Dennis Okholm, in *Monk Habits for Everyday People*. While on retreat in a Benedictine abbey, the author, a professor who was raised as a Pentecostal and a Baptist, observed how the meditative and ordered life of a monk lifted Jesus' teachings off the printed page and put them into daily practice. Vital aspects of devotion, humility, obedience, hospitality, and evangelism took on new clarity and meaning. Paralleling that experience, Okholm guides the reader on a focused and instructive journey that can revitalize the devotional life of any Christian who wants to slow down and dig deeper.

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Customer Reviews

This is a little book. If you exclude things like the Foreword, the Afterword and Notes, it's only 99 pages. But it packs a spiritual wallop. Evangelical theologian and educator Dennis Okholm offers this spiritual memoir of his pilgrimage into monastic culture in an era when a chorus of evangelical

voices are crying out for changes in their branch of the church. Various evangelical writers are arguing: The movement's become stale. It's been hijacked by political operatives. It's turned Christianity into an easy-bake recipe for prosperity. And, where many of these writers wind up trying to take us is back into centuries-old Christian traditions that once were considered exclusively "Catholic." And, when evangelicals said that word in the past, they often sneered. Don't mistake Okholm's book for one of those angry evangelical books trying to shake up the movement from its foundations, but not offering much of a pathway through the resulting rubble. No, this is a thoughtful, careful, mature memoir from a man who set out through back roads to visit his first monastery in the spring of 1987. He admits that, at the time, he suspected monastic life was a tired old "relic of the Middle Ages." Instead, he wound up exploring this world for two decades, finding elements of Christianity that were missing in the version of the faith that had been handed down to him. Kathleen Norris wrote the Foreword to Okholm's book and Norris fans will understand right away that this is a strong vote of confidence in Okholm's voice.

This concise, dense, thoughtful book provides a good introduction to Benedictine spirituality for those of us raised on the prejudices of the Reformation. If you are a fan of the recent books on Christian community by writers like Shane Claiborne or Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, but you've been frustrated trying to actually make such a community, this book might set you on the right path. Unlike many recent books on the New Monasticism, which are full of exhortations but little practical advice, Dennis Okholm mixes spirituality with insight into how communities are built and how they thrive. Utilizing Benedictine principles that have held houses together for centuries, like obedience, stability, and humility, he posits how Christians can grow together in service to the Lord and the world. But Okholm's directives are not limited to monastic communities. He suggests how Benedictine spirituality can overcome the star-power trend he sees in many Protestant churches. He suggests that if more pastors held obedience, balance, and listening at the heart of their ministries, the dissent that strikes many congregations could be kept at bay, and the Gospel of Christ better served in our mission fields. This book is slim, and can be read in a single night. But it's rich in content that can be used for prayer, study, group discussion, and private meditation.

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