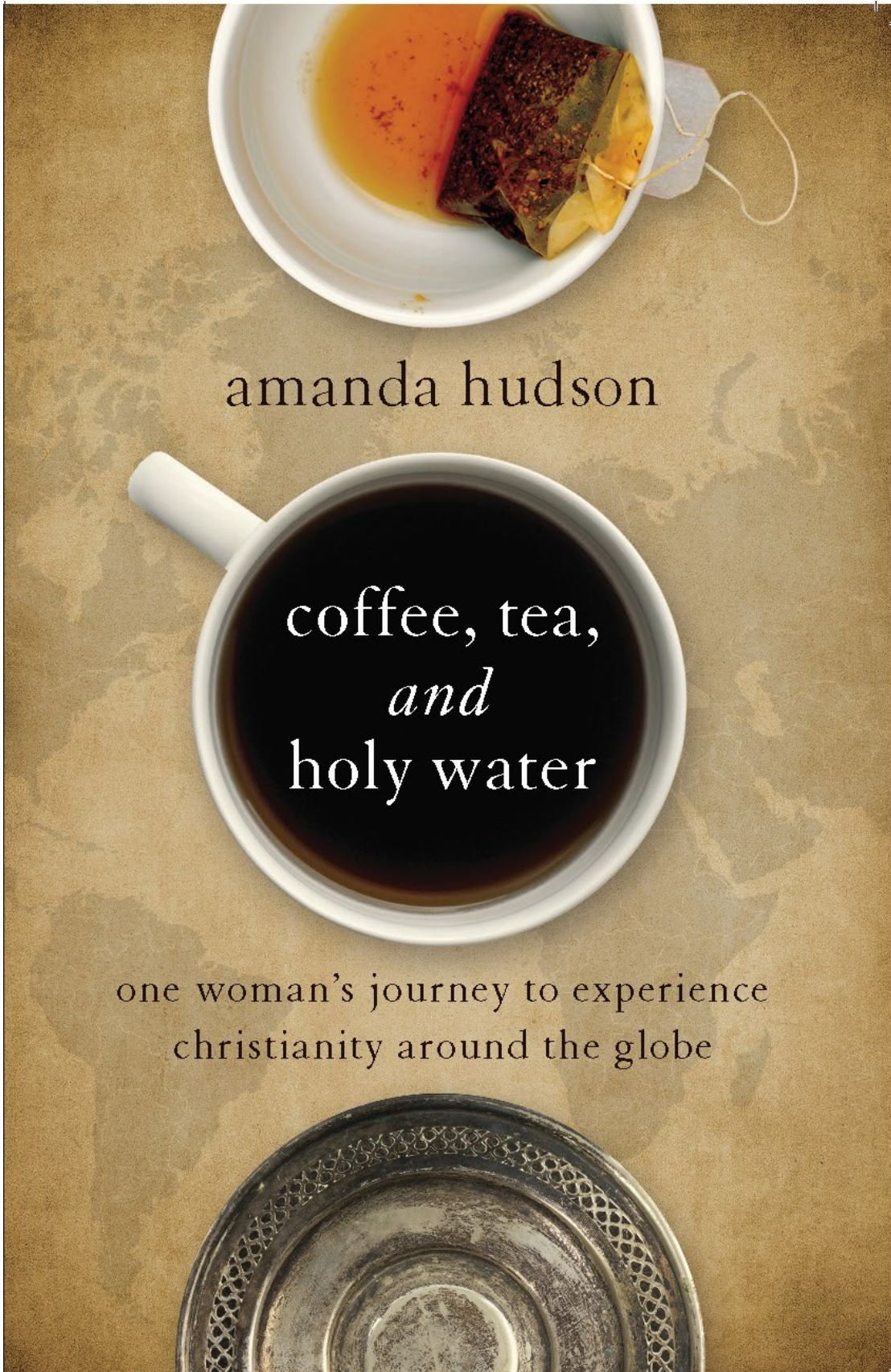


COFFEE, TEA, AND HOLY WATER / *Online Study Guide*



amanda hudson

coffee, tea,  
*and*  
holy water

one woman's journey to experience  
christianity around the globe

# Coffee, Tea, and Holy Water

## Book Club Study Guide

*Coffee, Tea, and Holy Water* takes the reader on an entertaining journey to five countries: Brazil, Wales, Tanzania, China, and Honduras.

From the wildlife of Ngorongoro Crater, the Eighth Wonder of the World, to the banana trees of Honduras, join author Amanda Hudson in a cross-cultural trek that will appeal to everyone interested in faith beyond their own backyard.

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### W E E K 1 : Brazil

*I began to see ordinary things from a new perspective. Why does that matter?*

*For starters, it reminds us that we are all connected, despite the continental drift. It helps us put our needs in context and shows us how to fill the needs of others. And it reveals the depth of God's kingdom and his love for all of us.*

*And that, dear reader, was the entire point . . .*

1. In the introduction, the author talks about seeing “ordinary things from a new perspective.” Do you think this is important? Why or why not? Think of any specific examples in your own life to share with the group.
2. In *Beyond the Red Sea*, the author describes a morning revelation in her apartment. Have you ever had a similar revelation or awakening?
3. In *Going to See the Christ*, the author describes her reaction to Brazil's *favelas*:

“Out of nowhere are hundreds upon hundreds of dilapidated shacks on the hillside, leaning together, roofs tilted, like a rusty house of cards. *Such an eyesore on the skyline*, I muse, noting their graffiti. *I wonder why the city doesn't tear them*

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*down.* Then I see washlines hung from the windows and realize with shock that people *live* in these shacks.”

Have you ever had a similar experience or cultural reaction?

4. The author also describes her experience under Rio’s Corcovado statue of the Christ. Have you ever had a similar experience? Explain.

What three questions would you like to send into the wind?

5. In *City of the Magi*, the author details the local ritual involving a spiritual bucket of holy water next to busts of historical figures. Have you ever felt our own culture blends the two? Why or why not?
6. Also in *City of the Magi*, Bryan says, “Power is power . . . people want anything they think will give them an edge.” What are some specific things people will do to get an edge in modern society?
7. What do you think are three idols the average American

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faces? What are the two biggest idols you personally face?  
Are they the same? Why or why not?

8. Have you ever experienced hospitality in another country?  
How did it compare to hospitality in the United States?  
What are the similarities? Differences?

9. In *The Sound of the Bride*, the author was surprised that the former prostitutes were children. Have you ever had an experience where you surprised by a stereotype?



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W E E K 2 :  
Wales

*Flying over the Atlantic Ocean the next day, I turn my attention to the next country on my journey—the U.K., or more specifically, Wales. As the plane approaches the runway, I can see a classic British trademark: houses squeezed together in long strips called “flats.” Row upon row, hundreds upon hundreds. Just before touching down, we skim over a rolling green pasture with grazing sheep, so close it seems like we will land among them.*

1. The popular British Alpha class featured in *Land of the Cymru* provides a safe place for skeptics to ask questions. What skeptics’ questions do you have about faith?

2. The author writes:

“As I review my notes, I find myself annoyed because we got off the lesson. Then it occurs to me . . . maybe that *was* the lesson. What I mean is, the conversation tonight was a microcosm of what is going on all across the country. While people might like to attribute their doubts to more intellectual motives, most people’s objections to God aren’t actually coming from answers to the Alpha questions—they’re coming from a reaction to the church, which many see as a lifeless institution. Try to lead a discussion through the basics of the Christian faith . . . and you may as well be herding cats.”

Do you think this is true in your own city? Why or why not?

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3. In *Viva*, the author writes, “When Christians are not linked together, every new regional problem such as food shortage, disease, or resource scarcity has to be dealt with as if for the first time.” Do you see any particular examples of this in your city or state?
  4. Karen says, “I always thought of God . . . as an uncle. . . . I finally came to realize he was my Father.” How do *you* view God personally?
  5. How do you think America sees “God” as a country?
  6. In *The Prosperity Gospel and the Problem of Pain*, the author writes, “I am beginning to think that this ‘problem of pain’ is what ultimately turns people away from God—not the intellectual argument for a supreme being,” as many suppose. Do you think this statement is true? Why or why not?
  7. In *Feed the Birds*, the author says, “Perhaps, in a world of theories and theology, we are missing the obvious—maybe all Christ wants us to do is ‘feed the birds.’” Discuss this statement.



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*Journal question:* What does “feeding the birds” mean to you?



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W E E K 3 :  
Tanzania

*I depart London's Heathrow Airport the next day. But it isn't until I look out the window of the plane and see nothing but sand that I realize: I am really going to be in Africa in a few hours' time. My next stop is Tanzania, in the heart of east Africa.*

1. What types of “efficiency” do we take for granted in the U.S.? Have the group break these into six categories by *Housing/Utilities/Transportation/Communications/Social/Healthcare* and list ten examples of each.
2. The author compares doing humanitarian work in Africa to the metaphor of trying to “empty the ocean with an eyedropper.” Do you agree? Why or why not?
3. Have you ever had an “eyedropper” moment? Give an example.
4. Personally, do you believe in the *paternalist* or *indigenous* theory of Western humanitarian work? Why or why not? Realizing this is a complex issue, discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each with the group.



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5. Have you ever noticed the principles of paternalist vs. indigenous at work in an example close to you? If so, share with the group.
  6. What is your favorite life-quote or proverb?
  7. What questions or concerns have you encountered when giving money to Africa? Realizing this is a complex issue, discuss briefly with the group.

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W E E K 4 :  
China

*China's most famous landmark, The Great Wall, snakes for an impressive four thousand miles along the country's northern border. Symbolic in so many ways of China's attempts at isolationism, it remains the longest man-made structure ever built, constructed of brick, mud, stone, and wood. The wall is thirty-five feet tall at its highest remaining point, reduced to vandalized rubble and graffiti in other areas.*

1. What three Chinese cultural differences would influence you the most and why?
2. The author writes, "Is it expectations, then, that determine a person's contentment level? Maybe." Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Discuss.
3. What other factors do you think determine a person's contentment level?
4. The author tells the story of her childhood friend Ginger and their "life notebooks." Did you ever do anything similar as a child? Share with the group.
5. The author writes:

"While the culture is atheistic, the Chinese way of living—  
with its emphasis on sharing, avoiding gluttony, responsibility

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for family, and being content with what one has (in general, putting others' needs above oneself)—seems inherently more 'Christian' than the American lifestyle of *me, me, me.*"

Do you agree? Why or why not?

6. List five qualities of American independence we take for granted.

*Journal question:* Does having control over your life make you happier? What do *you* think?

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W E E K 5 :  
Honduras

*The vistas beyond Tegucigalpa's congestion are startlingly beautiful. Meanwhile, stacked houses—mostly beige, with spots of peach and teal, roped off with sticks and barbed wire—cover the hillside in what looks like the favelas of Rio, with banana and mango trees all around.*

1. Have you ever been on a humanitarian trip with a group? If so, where? Share with the group.
2. The author tells the story of her trip out West as a teenager and the stash of SunDrop. Have you ever bought the off-brand version of an item and been sorry? Share with the group.
3. In what areas of life do you think it's OK to accept imitations?
4. In what areas would you accept no imitations?
5. The author says, "Somewhere along the dusty roads of Tegucigalpa, I decide I will stop living inside the box."

*Journal question:* "The box" is different for everyone. What does *the box* mean to you?

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WEEK 6 :  
Appendix

*As an adult, I am convinced that one of God's most overlooked kindnesses is the beauty of no. It usually takes hindsight to realize this, of course. Looking back, I am thankful for a few key moments in my life when I asked God for something and he gently said no. Sometimes not so gently.*

*As a result, I am not really afraid of no anymore. That doesn't mean I'm not disappointed when I pray diligently for something and don't get it. But I feel secure enough now in God's character to generally not be terrified when he tells me no.*

*I wish the opposite were true—that I could say the same thing about yes.*

*Yes leads to a whole series of events; not no.*

*No is safe. Yes is not. . . .*

*And therein lies the shift.*

*I used to be afraid of no. Now I think I am afraid of yes.*

1. Having reviewed the five countries in *Coffee, Tea, and Holy Water*, which country would you most like to visit and why?
2. What themes could you tell the author considered in the book, and which theme resonates the most personally with you?
3. What three things about humanitarian work interest you the most?
4. What would be the hardest thing to consider about humanitarian work?

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5. Share with the group your answer to last week's question #5—"What does *the box* mean to you?"