

Awaken

The Lord is doing a new thing



Anne Calver & John McGinley

Leaders Notes Awaken introduction

Awaken was written to stimulate people and church communities to engage with what God is saying to his church at this time. It is a resource to pray over and talk about, and to dream and explore what God might be calling you to step into as he begins to move in a fresh way. So as you read it and discuss it together, the aim is not to complete the task of answering all the discussion questions but to help your group to apply it to your context, listen to God and act upon what you sense he is calling you to.

Pre-reading

The structure of the sessions will involve reading one or two chapters beforehand. At the end of each session there is an encouragement to read the chapter(s) ahead of the next session, prayerfully looking for the areas that God might be speaking to you about and pausing at those points. The aim of reading the chapters is not to assess whether we like what Anne and John have written. If there are issues raised by the content there will be the need to discuss these. But try to avoid debating rights and wrongs of different approaches, look for where there is opportunity to grow in faith and life.

Values of the Group Meetings

Awaken addresses a number of the cultural issues within the church that prevent us being awake to all God is calling us to. The group resources have been structured in a way that is designed to address these issues and help people to engage in ways that reflect the lives and relationships Jesus calls his disciples to live. Here are some of the values that the group resources are based on.

Word and Spirit

Each group is centred on Jesus being present by his Spirit. The priority is then to enable people to recognise his presence. To do this we want to create opportunities to worship him, listen to him through Scripture and through the Spirit leading us, and to pray together. These moments take us beyond a human discussion and fulfil the communion with Jesus that he promised when he said “when two or three meet together in my name, there I am in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:20).

Participation

Everyone comes together as equals with lives to share and as a gift to one another as we love one another as the family of God. To build these loving relationships we have to offer ourselves, our experience, our vulnerability, and our sense of what God is doing/saying to others in the group. Leading a community to do this requires us, as leaders, to go first and then as we share to look for opportunities to affirm others when they do this and to stop and pray for people, ensure people are safe when they share pain and struggles, to celebrate testimonies and rejoice together. As you prepare for each session, pray over the group members, anticipate when there might be opportunity

to build love and support between members, and look to take people deeper in trust as we share what is going on in our lives.

Obedience

The simplest definition of a disciple of Jesus is someone who hears him speak to them and obeys. It established obedience as the pattern of discipleship. One of the issues that the church faces is that we have reduced discipleship to learning information and missed the fact that we need to be listening and responding to what God is saying to us.

Reproducible

The simplicity means this can be led by many people with little experience, making it reproducible. But its simplicity doesn't mean it is simplistic; it is profound when led well. But it does require certain principles to be understood to achieve this.

Brave Communities

These principles enable us to form communities who love one another vulnerably, seek to obey Jesus, pray and act as witnesses longing to see people come to know Jesus and create space for God to speak and move in their midst. These are brave communities willing to go beyond surface Christianity or intellectual assent and information sharing. This requires leaders to be brave and to grow in their love, humility, spiritual maturity and emotional intelligence as they seek to form this culture in their groups.

Structure of the Group Sessions

Each group meeting uses a Three-Thirds Framework of three different sections. This is used for disciple-making communities across the world in Disciple-making Movements. The meeting is divided into three parts:

- Look back
- Look up
- Look forward

As we describe these different sections you will see how they enable us to engage in the values of discipleship described above.

1. Look Back – “Caring and Accountability”

Focus: Relationship, Obedience, Testimony and Vision

Purpose: Strengthen relationships, celebrate obedience, and learn from experience.

Steps:

i) Care for one another –

In the informal start as the group gathers ask questions that show care and interest in what has been happening for people:

“How are you?”

“What’s something you’re thankful for this week?”

“What’s been challenging this week?”

“Where have you noticed God at work this week?”

The key is to have conversations about our lives, connecting with others as we follow Jesus. This builds community and trust. The leader must set the tone in sharing openly and speaking of how Jesus has been present in their lives.

ii) Accountability – Review how people obeyed what they felt God was calling them to do in the last session:

“How did you do with what you committed to last week?”

“Who did you share with or pray for?”

“What happened?”

iii) Celebrate obedience, not just knowledge. Encourage honesty, grace, and growth.

Where there is something to reinforce, celebrate it, but take the chance to link that testimony with a vision for the disciples and community Jesus is calling us to be. Where there is struggle, disappointment or failure ensure there is no criticism or shaming of that person – express thanks for them being willing to share this. You can ask the “why do you think that happened?” and questions about “what can we learn from this?” and questions of support “how can we help?”

2. Look Up – “Worship and Word”

Focus: Worship and Hear from God together

Purpose: Let everyone engage directly with Scripture and hear the Spirit’s voice.

Steps:

i) Worship or thanksgiving

Sing, pray, or share testimonies of what God is doing.

If you are not used to doing this the group must learn to sing together and worship, as this enables the presence of God to be expressly recognised and for us to bring our hearts before God.

You could use youtube / iSingWorship online songs. And for each session there are some suggested songs. Or a Psalm based suggestion for worship is also provided.

Explain what the practicalities of the worship will be: e.g. using the songs on a TV, how many songs, and how you want people to enter into this – standing / sitting, after the songs encouraging them to pray prayers of worship, or having a time of quiet as we listen to God, etc

Pray for the Holy Spirit to come close to you as you worship, ask him to reveal Jesus to you, and ask for his help to be sensitive to whatever gifts and words he wants to release among you.

Then lead into worship. The leader provides an opportunity for the Spirit to lead in prayer and in prophetic gifts during this time.

ii) Engaging with Scripture

To introduce each session’s theme, the leader can read out the introduction provided and can adapt with their own words according to the group’s needs. Or you can play the video provided on the Big Church read site and add your own introductory words.

But avoid long teaching or sermons. The key is to let everyone discover the truth together through discussion and Scripture.

What to Do

Read through the questions in advance and decide which ones to use / adapt.

Decide when to bring in the passage of Scripture – this is what will ground the theme in God’s word

Facilitate, don’t teach. Your job is to draw out discovery, not provide answers.

Ask open follow-up questions. Avoid yes/no questions – invite reflection.

Encourage everyone to speak. Go around the circle or gently invite quieter members.

Listen well. Model humility and curiosity.

Create a safe space. No one should fear being “wrong.”

End with a way for people to put this into practice

What Not to Do

Don't preach or explain everything. This is about discovery, not lectures.

Don't argue or debate. Allow Scripture to speak and stay on areas that are alive and with potential for growth.

Don't rush. Leave silence for reflection.

Don't try and use all the questions

Don't dominate.

Don't skip obedience and accountability. It's vital for growth.

3. Look Forward – “Obey and Go”

Focus: Obedience, Mission and Training

Purpose: Turn learning into action and multiplication.

Steps:

i) Plan obedience:

“What will you do this week in response to what you’ve learned?”

Be specific and tangible.

You can encourage people to make an “I will” statement about what they will do this week

Look for opportunities for people to support one another in their plans

ii). Plan sharing –

How can what we have learned overflow into the lives of others who do not know Jesus yet?

Encourage simple evangelistic steps

iii) Pray and commission one another.

Pray for people's needs and plans

Pray for boldness, the Spirit's power, and fruit.

Pray for lost people who we long to come to faith

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Session 1: Awaken (Chapter 1)

Pre-reading

Chapter 1. Awaken: An Introduction

Look Back

How are you (any news, important updates, how' is work / family life like at the moment)?

Where have you seen God at work recently?

As we begin these sessions on being awake to the things of God, what is your hope or prayer for what God might do in your life?

Look Up

Take some time to worship God together.

Here are some songs that would connect with the theme of Awakening.

I will make room

I surrender all

All for Jesus

Majesty

Or you could use this Psalm 146 that declares the Lord's reign and rule.

Print it out / ensure everyone has access to the same version.

Ask people to read it out as a psalm of praise to God.

Then ask them to read it quietly and find a verse that they connect with, and then ask them to pray a prayer of thanksgiving based on that verse. Give people time to prepare this and then invite people to do that.

The Word

Theme Introduction

To introduce the discussion you could play the Big Church Read Session 1 video from John or Anne for this session or you could introduce it using the following summary:

Chapter 1 is a prophetic "wake up" call to the UK church, arguing that God is already stirring a fresh spiritual awakening and the danger is complacency—thinking we are awake while actually asleep. The signs of this are the signs of hope: new forms of church emerging, younger generations seeking Jesus with hunger, and wider culture showing renewed spiritual openness. This moment is not due to human strategy, but to the Spirit of God creating spiritual hunger—through dreams, curiosity, Bible-seeking, and people turning up at church.

From this comes the call to a sustained urgency because we may be unprepared to meet those being drawn to Christ. The Titanic becomes a parable of pride and unreadiness, contrasting those who ignore warning signals with those who respond and rescue. Like Noah, the church must act on God's

call to prepare for “things not yet seen,” even if it feels absurd, and prepare for a harvest that current patterns of church cannot contain. Rather than bigger programmes or platform-led Christianity, we need many “rescue boats”—mobilised disciples and communities ready for mission.

Four contributing attitudes to the sleepiness in the church are explored: atheist, intellectual, independent, and comfortable. And five heart-postures are offered to awaken to God; saying yes, repentance, surrender, consecration, and the lordship of Jesus—rooted in “word and Spirit,” self-examination, and a willingness to be reformed for what God is doing now.

As you were reading the introduction of the Awaken Book what really struck you?

Or: what sections of this chapter felt particularly relevant to your life or our situation in the church today?

Read Romans 13:11–14

1. What reasons does Paul give for waking up now? (“present time,” “salvation nearer,” “night nearly over,” “day almost here”)

This is all about the significance of the time they are living in, which produces an urgency. For Paul it is the imminence of Christ’s return, and this is something we believe God wants us to recover. But in our time, where do you see signs of “slow awakening” in our context (or where do you not)?

2. Paul’s call to “wake up” implies they are asleep and complacent.

In what ways do you recognise this in your experience of the church

Which part of the Titanic story most challenges how the current state of the church?

Which of the four attitudes that contribute to the church’s sleepiness (atheist, intellectual, independent and comfortable) are relevant in your context?

3. What two actions does Paul command (put aside / put on)? What do they imply?

Which of the five postures (saying yes, repentance, surrender, consecration, a fresh submission to the lordship of Jesus) feels most needed for you right now?

What “business as usual” assumption might Jesus be disrupting in your discipleship or church culture?

4. This passage talks of God working out his plan of salvation in this world. The chapter gives examples of moments of God breaking in through his word and Spirit and renewing his people in biblical and church history. What gives you hope that God can move again in our nation?

Look Forward

How is God calling you to wake up: awareness, repentance, urgency, prayer, mission, obedience?

In pairs discuss what is one concrete “put off” and one concrete “put on” you will act on this week?

Pray for each other and agree how you can connect during the week.

Or as a group you could pray together and ask for holy urgency and a hunger for God in your lives and for him to move in your church and community.

Next Session:

Remind people to read Chapter 2 “The Journey Out of Captivity”. Encourage group members to read it prayerfully looking for what God is saying to them and to come ready to share at the next session.

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Session 2: The Journey Out of Captivity)

Pre-reading: Chapter 2: The Journey out of Captivity

Look Back

What are you thankful for at the moment?

How did you get on living out the practice of 'putting something off / and/ or putting something on, that you identified in the last session?

Where have you seen God at work recently?

Look Up

Take some time to worship God together.

Here are some songs that would connect with the theme of Freedom.

Songs to use in worship

- I speak Jesus
- Reckless Love
- My Jesus My Saviour
- There is power in the name of Jesus to break every chain
- What can wash away my sin – nothing but the blood

Or use Psalm 139 in your worship

Have one or two people read verses 1-16

Then pause and invite people to pray prayers of praise inspired by the Psalm

Then read verses 17-24

Pray for the Spirit to come and bring revelation and help us to step into the freedom Jesus has won for us.

Encourage people to pray as Spirit leads and share any words of revelation he gives.

The Word

Theme Introduction

To introduce the discussion you could play the Big Church Read Session 2 video from John or Anne for this session or you could introduce it using the following summary:

Chapter 2 frames awakening as a journey out of captivity into intimacy with God. The Biblical story is God's relentless rescue-story—Eden's "Where are you?", Israel's deliverance, and Jesus "tabernacling" among us—showing that God initiates return, and repentance is woven into his heart from the beginning. The chapter re-centres the church on the cross and the blood of Christ: freedom, cleansing, humility, and renewed joy flow from daily returning to Jesus' sacrifice.

Our Egypt today is the spiritual strongholds that keep churches and believers captive (fear, pride, control, religion/works-based striving, and political spirits). The freedom Jesus brings is based on his victory on the cross, and is found through truth, repentance, and Spirit-led discernment.

The need for freedom is both corporate and personal: God exposes mould in “houses,” shakes compromised structures, and calls leaders with courage and humility.

Personally, our “spiritual slavery” comes from orphan-mindedness, performance identity, fear, independence, religious rule-keeping, etc. And it is in embracing our identity and our heavenly father’s sons and daughters, we discover freedom in his love.

The chapter ends by locating the call to freedom in the call back to Eden and intimacy with God and how in that freedom we can see the promised land of his kingdom come through our lives.

As you were reading this chapter of Awaken what really struck you?

Or: what sections of this chapter felt particularly relevant to your life or our situation in the church today?

Read Exodus 3:7–14 (God hears and rescues)

1. What does this passage reveal about God’s character toward suffering and bondage?

In what ways can a church be “freed from Egypt” through Christ’s victory and yet still carry slavery inside it? Which stronghold (fear, pride, control, religion, political spirit) do you think most commonly shows itself in your context of the church, and why?

2. God said to Moses “I have heard... so now, go”.

What might God be saying to the church at this time about leading us out of what is binding us. What might obedience require?

3. What does “a good and spacious land” suggest about God’s goal for his people (beyond mere escape)?

In this chapter the line from a song about God “chasing us down” is quoted to express his desire to restore intimacy in our relationship with him. How do you respond to that?

Thinking about personal slavery and freedom.

Which of the “slave vs son/daughter” contrasts felt uncomfortably accurate—and why? (please share at whatever level you feel able to).

4. What can we learn together about how to come back to the cross daily in practice? What does this look like for you?

Look Forward

What “cry” (personal or corporate) do you want to bring honestly to God this week?

What practical step would represent moving from captivity-thinking to freedom-thinking? What will you do to choose to believe the truth and reject the lie in this area?

Pray:

Ask each person to share the area they need freedom in

They could simply share this out loud .

Or you could set up a cross and invite people to write that area of their lives on a piece of paper and place it in a basket at the base of the cross.

Then pray for God to come and bring freedom:

Make a declaration that "In the name of Jesus we break agreement with any lies that have led us into captivity"

Invite people to ask God for forgiveness (quietly or out loud)

Then make the declaration: "Lord we thank you that the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin, and we receive that blood on our behalf and we declare that the power of the enemy to keep us enslaved in this area of our life is broken by the power of the blood of Christ"

Pray for the Holy Spirit to come and fill us with the love of God and to speak to our spirits that we are God's children.

Next Session:

Remind people to read Chapter 3 "Personal Revival" and Chapter 4 "Honouring the Holy Spirit". Encourage group members to read it prayerfully looking for what God is saying to them and to come ready to share at the next session.

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Session 3: Personal revival / Honouring the Holy Spirit

Pre-reading:

Chapters 3 Personal Revival & Chapter 4 Honouring the Holy Spirit

Look Back

How are you?

If you were to use weather forecast language how would you describe life at the moment?

How did you get on stepping into personal freedom in the area you identified in the last session?

Does anyone have a testimony of God at work in their life or answering prayer?

Look Up

Take some time to worship God together.

Here are some songs that would connect with the theme of Revival and the Holy Spirit.

- Holy Spirit you are welcome here
- Spirit Break Out
- God of revival
- Be still for the presence of the Lord
- Oceans
- Spirit of the Living God fall afresh

Or you could use Psalm 51: 10-19

Speak about building an altar of worship to the Lord

Pray prayers of self-offering and ask for the Spirit to come and consume your offering with his fire.

The Word

As you were reading these chapters of Awaken what really struck you?

Or: what sections of this chapter felt particularly relevant to your life or our situation in the church today?

Theme Introduction

To introduce the discussion you could play the Big Church Read Session 3 video from John or Anne for this session or you could introduce it using the following summary:

Chapter 3 Personal Revival calls us to personal revival as the birthplace of corporate awakening. God is doing a new thing, and revival begins not with programmes or strategies but with repentance, surrender, consecration, and intimacy with Jesus. The Lord is seeking a remnant whose hearts are fully his—people willing to be broken, cleansed, refined, and filled with holy fire.

Personal revival begins in brokenness, as pride is dismantled and lives are yielded to the loving

hands of the Potter. God reshapes both individuals and churches so that inward transformation can overflow outward in mission. The chapter also introduces the image of the crucible and refining—the crucible through which God purifies his people so they may reflect Christ. The link from this chapter into the next is the call to keep the flame of love and faith alive through hunger, intentional pursuit, and daily yielding to Christ's lordship. Personal revival positions God's people to bring the Kingdom of God to earth with authority, purity, joy, and power.

Chapter 4 calls the church to honour the Holy Spirit as God himself—not a “moment” in services but the defining presence in whom we “live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28). Awakening is a divine takeover: choosing to be “under the influence” of the Spirit rather than other forces (Eph 5:18). The Spirit’s leading should make the church responsive to allow the wind to blow us where he wants to (John 3:6–8), not rigid, or powered by human “engines” of control.

True awakening is by the Spirit and for the lost. The church must become “disciples worth multiplying,” ready to disciple spiritually hungry people, and bringing them into the fulness of the Spirit. This is expressed in the picture of the river of God in Ezekiel 47 in which we have to submit to the Lord allow the Spirit to carry us where he wants to. We are to fear the Lord and put him in his rightful position and seek his glory.

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

1. The passage references the fire of the Holy Spirit – what have your experiences been of God’s Spirit falling upon you and empowering you?

2. Part of the Spirit’s work is refining us in the crucible of his holy presence.

Why do you think refining and cleansing are necessary before revival and fruitfulness?

What emotions or reactions does the idea of refining fire stir in you?

3. What does it mean to “quench the Spirit” in the context of this passage—what attitudes or behaviours might do that? How does this passage challenge passive or superficial understandings of the presence of the Holy Spirit?

4. In Awaken we are encouraged to enquire of the Lord. How can Paul’s instructions in verse 21–22 to test, hold on, and reject help us to enquire of the Lord?

What does this mean in practice in discerning what the Spirit is saying to us?

5. These chapters emphasise placing Jesus as Lord and seeking the leadership of the Holy Spirit. When did you last sense the Spirit directing you (interrupting plans, prompting prayer, shifting perspective)? What helped you notice?

6. This passage comes in the context of the rest of chapter 5 which begins with another call to wake up because of the day of the Lord approaching and the need for salvation. The purpose of God awakening the church is for the sake of the lost – where is Jesus calling you outwards to share Jesus with those around you?

Looking Forward

1. What practical steps could you take this week to “keep the flame alive”?
2. Where do you need discernment right now—personal decision, church direction, mission opportunity? How will you seek, test and then hold on?

Close by praying together and for one another:

Pray for the Holy Spirit to come and fill each person. Pray “come Holy Spirit” and wait for him to come and minister. And then pray personally for one another for the filling of the Holy Spirit.

Next Session:

Remind people to read Chapter 5 “Religion v Relationship” and Chapter 6 “Positioned for Revival”. Encourage group members to read it prayerfully looking for what God is saying to them and to come ready to share at the next session.

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Session 4 Religion v Relationship & Positioned for Revival

Pre-reading:

Chapters 5 Religion v Relationship & Chapter 6 Positioned for Revival

Look Back

How are you?

What are you sensing God doing within you as we follow this Awaken series?

Look Up

Take some time to worship God together.

Here are some songs that would connect with the theme of relationship and revival.

- I will make room for you
- When the music fades
- I will build my life
- God of revival
- Father / Jesus / Spirit we love you
- Or you could use Psalm 2 to focus on the Lordship and Victory of Jesus. Read it together and then encourage people to imagine Jesus ruling in heaven over the nations. Out of this revelation ask people to pray prayers of praise and declaration to our King – or you could give people passages of worship from Revelation to read out to stimulate praise.

The Word

As you were reading these chapters of Awaken what really struck you?

Or: what sections of this chapter felt particularly relevant to your life or our situation in the church today?

Theme Introduction

To introduce the discussion you could play the Big Church Read Session 4 video from John or Anne for this session or you could introduce it using the following summary:

Chapter 5 contrasts religion with relationship, arguing that the church is built on one foundation: love for Jesus that overflows into love for others. Just as Jesus restored Peter (John 21:15–17), Jesus is “chasing down” failed disciples, rekindling wholehearted love, and commissioning them from intimacy into mission (“Feed my sheep”). Awakening, is being “awakened to love”: returning to first love and letting the Spirit pour God’s love into hearts so loving relationships become the environment of church life.

Family is God’s primary form of the church. The New Testament emphasis shifts from “disciple” language to that of the family, and the household (oikos) model that cultivated shared life, daily commu-

nity and devotion to Jesus. Church programs, hierarchies, and professionalised “corporate” patterns often hinder this love, producing shallow Sunday Christianity. The table is at the centre of church as family—meals, hospitality, and the Lord’s Supper—as a sacramental centre where belonging, reconciliation, and Jesus’ presence shape community. This family is an intergenerational community with spiritual parenting and a “family business” of kingdom work.

Chapter 6 presents awakening as repositioning for revival—moving from burnout, fear, and passivity into readiness, faith, and spiritual authority. Ezekiel’s vision of the valley of dry bones is the defining picture: despair is acknowledged, but not final. God releases revival through the Word and the Spirit, forming not just awakened individuals but a vast army. This awakening is missional and confrontational: the church is being mustered for spiritual battle, not against people but against the powers of darkness (Eph 6:12). The chapter emphasises intimacy before warfare. Revival flows from prayer, consecration, and humility—Levites and Nazirites devoted to worship and holiness. Finally, God is forming new relational networks (“a new net”), repositioning people by calling and geography, so that ordinary believers become rescue teams in a collapsing old church system—ready to save people, not preserve structures.

Read: John 21:1–19

1. In John 21, what do you notice about how Jesus restores Peter by asking him to express his love three times to cancel his three-fold denial?

What does that say about Jesus and how he restores his people?

And what might this mean for the church at this time about the need to return to our first love?

2. This takes place during a meal. How could “the table” (meals, hospitality, Lord’s supper) become more central to our discipleship and church community?

3. Where do you see a gap between your experience of the church and the call to love one another as Jesus loved us? (Do your Christian relationships feel more like friends in a club you belong to or a family sharing life together?) What would need to change for “family” to become real?

4. In the midst of this meal Jesus commissions Peter to his calling – to feed Jesus’ sheep. God is moving in younger generations and they will need authentic church family and spiritual parents to walk with them. Who could you intentionally “parent” spiritually (invest in), and who could “parent” you (support, model, challenge)? What would that relationship look like?

5. Awaken chapter 6 uses the image of Ezekiel’s vision of an army being resurrected to present the call to the church to be ready to engage in the spiritual battle, to love and pray to see people saved. What does it mean for the church to be a humble, loving army?

Looking Forward

1. What would “returning to first love” look like practically this week (a practice, a decision, a repentance, a conversation)?

2. Who is God calling you to in his rescue mission? And who can you do this with and live out authentic community with?

What is your next step?

Share next steps with one another and pray for God’s Spirit to strengthen and equip one another.

Next Session:

Remind people to read Chapter 7 “New Leadership” and Chapter 8 “New Wineskins”. Encourage group members to read it prayerfully looking for what God is saying to them and to come ready to share at the next session.

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Session 5: New Leadership & New Wineskins

Pre-reading:

Chapters 7 New Leadership & Chapter 8 New Wineskins

Look Back

How are you?

How did you get on taking a step to engage in God's missionary call?

What are you thankful for?

Look Up

Take some time to worship God together.

Here are some songs that would connect with the theme of Jesus as Lord of the church.

- I believe in God the Father . . . When the music fades
- I will build my life
- Living Hope
- I speak Jesus
- Holy Forever
- Or you could use Psalm 100

The Word

As you were reading these chapters of Awaken what really struck you?

Or: what sections of this chapter felt particularly relevant to your life or our situation in the church today?

Theme Introduction

To introduce the discussion you could play the Big Church Read Session 5 video from John or Anne for this session or you could introduce it using the following summary:

Chapter 7 calls the church into a new era of leadership shaped not by platform, power, or celebrity, but by servanthood, shared authority, and Christlike character. Drawing on Mark Sayers' image of platforms versus pillars imagery, the church needs to repent of worldly leadership—driven by performance, prominence, and control—and embrace Jesus' model of leadership as a slave who lays down his life.

The form of leadership that will enable this is one that ensures the 5 fold ministry of Jesus is expressed in leaders who then equip all the body of Christ in their calling. This leads into a renewed understanding of fivefold leadership (apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, teacher) as the ministry of Jesus distributed across his body, equipping the whole church for mission and maturity.

The foundational role of apostle and prophet is not hierarchical but because they establish a Spirit-led kingdom advancing culture rather than inward focussed one that currently exists.

Chapter 8 reframes Jesus' "new wineskins" as primarily people, hearts, relationships, and Spirit-shaped community, not merely church structures. New wine—the fresh outpouring of the Spirit for mission—requires flexible, surrendered communities capable of stretching without bursting. The Western church has often tried to patch the inherited model with new ideas (including charismatic renewal), containing the Spirit inside existing systems rather than releasing a Spirit-empowered movement into the streets. Jesus' sober warning stands: many who prefer "the old wine" will resist the new.

The recovery of the meaning of ekklesia is important: the "called-out" assembly, gathered not for services but for a kingdom purpose—to enact Jesus' rule, push back the "gates of Hades," and use the "keys of the kingdom" to bind/loose as the intersection of heaven and earth.

Patterns are emerging of apostolic centres (harbours) and apostolic networks (boats) that resource mission and multiplication. Finally, you call believers to "build arks for my glory"—mobile, safe, revelation-led, presence-centred communities prioritising prayer, worship, unity, and rescue in turbulent times, with younger generations often leading the way.

Read Luke 5:36–39 — New wine and new wineskins

Read: Luke 5:36–39 twice (different readers). Sit in silence for 30 seconds.

1. How would you summarise what Jesus is using the imagery of wineskins to communicate about the tensions between old and new? Where has the church tried to patch the new of what God is doing into an old model or culture?

2. What "old wineskins" might describe church culture today?

You might want to reflect here on aspects of the chapters content such as, the dangers of "platform leadership" or the understanding of the word Jesus uses for church "ekklesia" and what that challenges in current church culture, or the dominance of a church leader as a pastor.

3. What might "new wine" represent in this chapter (Spirit outpouring, mission, deliverance, prayer, fresh community)?

4. How do you respond to the warning Jesus gives about people preferring the old?

5. How do you respond to the need for new shared leadership that reflects the five aspects of Jesus ministry as apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher?

6. In your context, what would "boats and harbours" look like—small missional communities and a resourcing hub?

Looking forward

1. In which area might Jesus be asking you to let go of the old and enable his Spirit to renew you? What will you do to enable him to do this?

2. What might it mean for your group to "build an ark for God's glory" in the next 6 months.

Pray together for the Holy Spirit to release fresh hope and vision for the future however hard that might be.

Awaken

The Lord is doing a new thing

Anne Calver & John McGinley

Session 6: Pilgrimage

Pre-read

Chapter 9: Pilgrimage

Look Back

How are you?

As we come to the end of these Awaken sessions what have you sensed God working in you?

What are you thankful for?

Look Up

Take some time to worship God together.

Here are some songs that would connect with the theme of pilgrimage.

- Goodness of God (or other Psalm 23 based songs)
- I will build my life
- Faithful one so unchanging
- 10,000 reasons
- Or you could use Psalm 84

Read it and pray prayers to enter into God's presence

Offer to God whatever is your current "Valley of Baka," and give thanks for God's promise to turn it into a place of "springs"

The Word

Theme Introduction

To introduce the discussion you could play the Big Church Read Session 6 video from John or Anne for this session or you could introduce it using the following summary:

Chapter 9 frames awakening as a pilgrimage of faith: a costly, purposeful journey into deeper intimacy with Jesus and into his mission of reconciliation. Using Helen of Troy as an image of the spiritual battle as a "war for love" to bring the Bride back to the Bridegroom, the church is called to arise, live by faith and move before we can see outcomes. Pilgrimage becomes a guiding metaphor—an outward journey and an inward re-ordering of the soul—where valleys of weeping become places of springs (Psalm 84:5–7). Pilgrims are contrasted with spiritual tourists: tourists consume experiences and stay shallow; pilgrims travel in community with loyalty, formation, and a destination that shapes how they walk.

An example of pilgrimage is the road to Emmaus: Jesus walks with disillusioned disciples, opens Scripture, and reveals himself in ordinary table fellowship, turning despair into mission. Finally,

Hebrews 13:12–13 calls believers to go to Jesus “outside the camp”—beyond rigid, presence-less religious systems—accepting the cost of misunderstanding and loss of status in order to find Jesus where he is already moving.

Read: Hebrews 13:11 –14

1. What did Jesus do “outside the city gate,” and why? (cross outside the city walls reflects the burning of the carcass’s of the sin offering on the day of atonement outside the camp. This communicates the place outside the camp as a place of uncleanness and rejection).
 2. What are we commanded to do, and what are we told it will involve? Why are we called to do this? Why is our hope of an eternal city important in this call?
 3. In the chapter’s terms, comfort, control, reputation, rigid systems, safety are the interpretation of our camp today. What aspects of the “camp” might you personally be tempted to cling to (role, routine, tradition, approval, certainty)?
 4. Why might the place of “rejection” become a place of presence and encounter?
 5. Where do you already see Jesus “outside”—among the young, the broken, the spiritually hungry, the overlooked?
- What might it mean for the church to join Jesus there?
6. How does the concept of journeying on pilgrimage help you to understand awakening as a process and not an event?

Look Forward

Where do you sense God calling you to “wake up” and walk by faith, not sight right now?

What is one concrete step of obedience your group could take in the next month that is costly in some way, but moves you toward Jesus?

Pray together:

“Pray for Jesus, set your hearts on pilgrimage to more of all he has for you

Pray for courage to follow him outside the camp

Pray for God to seal you with his love so that you burn with hope for others.”