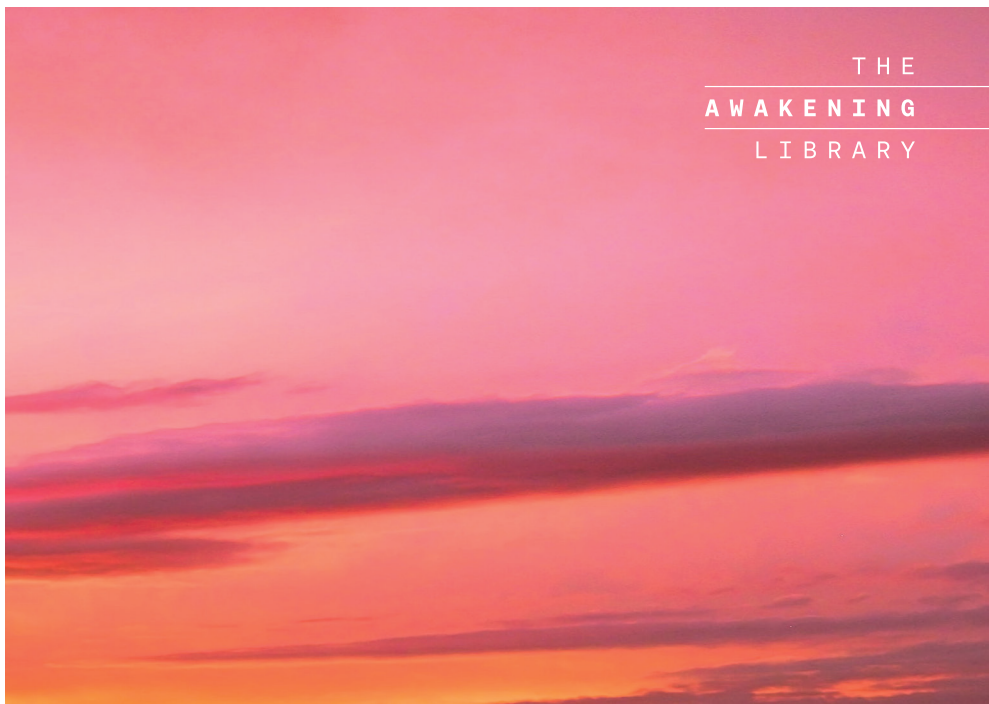


How to Host a Meeting with God

THE
AWAKENING
LIBRARY



THE AWAKENING LIBRARY

Why We Need Awakening

What Is Awakening?

How to Pray for Awakening

How to Host a Meeting with God

How to Minister in Prayer

How to Prepare for Outpouring

How to Lead Worship for Encounter with Jesus

How to Develop Leadership Culture for Awakening

How to Cultivate Relationships
That Sustain Awakening

How to Host a Meeting with God

THE

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The Awakening Library represents collected learnings from more than a decade of ministry as Seedbed and New Room. These pieces have been contributed by writers, leaders, and practitioners in fellowship with the goal of providing practical insights for individuals and churches desiring awakening—an encounter with God that both results from and leads to deep wholeness in people, renewal of the church, evangelization of a generation, and transformation of society.

With special thanks to David Thomas for his contribution to this resource.

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INTRODUCTION

Awakening begins in the human heart but quickly moves to relationship. It is community that is the context of deep wholeness in people, renewal of the church, evangelization of a generation, and transformation of society. The corporate nature of awakening calls for revisiting how we gather, the intent and manner of how we assemble together—“and all the more as you see the Day approaching” (Heb. 10:25).

If you have ever been to a New Room Conference, you know we often say it is the “*un*-conference: no glitz, all God!” When we assemble each September, it has never been for a conference in the way many of us have come to expect—presentations stacked one on top of the other with lots of informercials and hype sandwiched between. From the beginning, New Room has sought to be a meeting with

God. This is what we need: not more new ideas and clever programs, not more slick production and marquee speakers. We need more of God. *A meeting with God*. “My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?” (Ps. 42:2).

This Awakening Library resource is one that will weave many of the others together. Much of the preparation, leadership culture, manner of prayer, approach to worship, practices of altar ministry, and other topics explored here all converge in our meetings with God.

THE ORIGINAL CULTURE OF MEETING WITH GOD

The environment and character of a meeting with God is best modeled by the archetypal gathering of Pentecost.

The Gospel writer Luke, always so careful with verified details, lists those who were present: the eleven remaining disciples and the women (likely the disciples' wives and others like Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Susanna, who had supported Jesus). Mentioned also, here for the last time in the New Testament, was Mary, his mother, and her sons, Jesus's brothers, now believers—120 people altogether, Luke specifies.

Luke is clear about *who* was in the room, but we can guess *what* was in the room. Coming out of the whirlwind of crucifixion, then forty days of stunning, often pop-up resurrection appearances, with Jesus now having been taken up into heaven with an angelic confirmation—it was not a room

where everything was unfolding like clockwork. No church yet, no leadership, no record of Jesus's sayings, no Helper yet in the Holy Spirit. Everything was so fragile in all the disorientation, the decisions to make, the confusion and fear, different levels of belief in the group, and nothing but a memory of Jesus's firm command to wait. "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised" (Acts 1:4).

It is not an exaggeration to say that these were the most consequential moments of human action in the history of the world: What would these men and women do now? Luke tells us: "They all joined together constantly in prayer" (Acts 1:14), which continued for ten days until the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in fulfillment of God's promise. Leaders of the great awakenings in our history have considered this moment the great paradigm of church in its essence, that *meetings with God are essentially prayer meetings*.

Have you ever noticed that we never once see the disciples praying in the Gospels? Jesus asked them to in Gethsemane, but they fell asleep. What we see is the disciples really struggling to *get it*, missing the point much of the time, taking a good bit of correction and rebuke from Jesus. But from this moment of waiting in prayer on, that kind of thing really doesn't happen anymore. We don't get a sense that the friends of Jesus are clueless in the book of Acts. Right from the start, we see these men and women praying. Twenty-five of twenty-eight chapters in Acts include a story of what happens as people pray.

Meetings with God are essentially prayer meetings marked by waiting and lingering and strenuous seeking. There can be teaching and exhortation, but meetings with God are not primarily preaching events. They are gatherings,

instead, that give God time and access to us, not worrying if what we experience together is a bit unpolished and clunky so long as God is with us.

That the first Christians joined together in prayer underscores the primacy of participating over spectating in a meeting with God. Everyone was involved, joined together. Meetings with God allow for inhibitions to fall, liturgy to come to life, all egos and logos to be set aside, and freedom with wisdom to support encounter with Jesus.

They joined together “constantly” in prayer—a word Luke uses multiple times, as does Paul in his letters—conveys a kind of perseverance and tenacity in meetings with God, which for these ten dozen people probably meant praying around the clock. Nehemiah had done this in his *what-do-we-do-now* moment, learning of Jerusalem’s destruction. The prophet Anna had stayed on that same temple mount centuries later, praying night and day for Messiah to appear. Praying into extended times had been Jesus’s pattern long before Gethsemane where he called on his friends to keep watch with him through the night. And in recent decades, thousands of night-and-day prayer rooms have sprung up, mainly organized by students and young adults filled with passionate expectation.

Meetings with God steward time with urgency and tenacity, with “importunity” in the old King James language. Jesus taught in the parable of the friend seeking help from his neighbor at midnight that “Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth” (Luke 11:8 KJV). Whether for an hour or all day and night long, the atmosphere of a meeting with God is persistent, bold, and full of faith.

GIVING HIM ROOM

We often say that New Room is a fellowship of people who meet with God out of our desperate need for God to do something *new* in our day, and our willingness to give him the *room* in our lives to do it. During the outpouring of God's presence at Asbury University in February 2023, we witnessed students embodying this impulse of giving God room, becoming ready to meet with God, in their innovation of what came to be called "the consecration room."

Being among the first to recognize how God was moving among their friends, student worship leaders began to gather in advance of reaching the platform to meet with God in an upstairs room tucked away from others. Oversold and church-hurt, they were seeking after a manner of leading based less on talent and social-media-driven appearances

and more on authentic givenness to God. The consecration room became a place of readiness, of giving God room before going into the room.

We have come to understand the difference between preparation and readiness. Too much of the time, leaders have poured hours into rehearsing, planning worship services down to the half-minute, designing captivating slide decks and production details, then gathering in the green room for final checks, pre-service banter, and a prayer. The consecration room displaced green room culture with a shift in time and emphasis, inverting the pattern of much planning with a bit of prayer to much prayer and enough planning to be okay. It is possible to be very well-prepared for our meetings but not really be ready—in our life of prayer, our personal intimacy with Jesus, in the open channels of our relational world, in the integrity of our hidden lives.

Meetings with God emerge from the leadership of those who are ready. Giving God new room calls on us to meet with him before the meeting, to ask and seek and knock on his door to know his agenda for our time in his presence. This is why perhaps the most important spiritual gift for preparing to meet with God is discernment—seeing as God sees and hearing as God hears. All of us should eagerly desire this gift. (We would encourage you to read *How to Hear God* by Pete Greig as a way of growing to know the voice of God in prayer and leadership.) Our aim as leaders learning to host a meeting with God is to wait on him in our hidden places to know and hear from him ourselves before making any other move. That it might be said of us as it was of Peter

and John by the Sanhedrin: realizing “they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13).

And not only those leading but also those assembling to meet with God need to make room and become ready as well. The God we meet with is able (Eph. 3:20) and eager to answer our prayers (Isa. 65:24)—an incredibly generous God who always gives more than we deserve. But we also know that prayer does not totally depend on God. In *How to Prepare for Outpouring*, we said readiness involves doing the hard work of self-examination to resist presuming on God in our petitions. Psalm 66:18 teaches, “If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.” We call upon all those gathering to make an approach to the meeting out of “every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord” (Heb. 12:14). So we don’t rush in. We check our preferences at the door, coming in with a generous attitude to others and a single focus on God himself. We lay aside bashfulness and reticence to be open and responsive, exerting ourselves from the start to engage. When expectations are explained and culture begins forming on the way, everyone can arrive ready to meet with God.

LETTING JESUS HAVE THE ROOM

In the outpouring, what began as a trickle of lingering in God's presence grew to become a Niagara of his love as men and women, particularly the young, encountered Jesus. Freedom and healing were abounding. The gospel was proclaimed boldly and responded to with thorough conversion among hundreds. The call to surrender and mission was given without compromise, and many said yes. Leaders often had a sense of Jesus saying, "You American Christians. I have appreciated all of your buildings and production and resourcing. You have worked hard and raised money and given it your best, and I've done all I could with that. But I want you to look in Hughes Auditorium and see what I can do if you just give me the room." This is the glorious

paradox of leading a meeting with God: it is fundamentally about offering the platform to Jesus.

Up front, we gather the embers of awakening already stirring into the fire ring of our meeting where all of us then can burn more brightly. Leadership of a meeting with God involves expounding on the culture we're after, distinguishing it from the service patterns we may be accustomed to in other settings, and helping those coming in to feel connected to one another. Worship is aimed at ministering to Jesus and experiencing His presence, as explained in *How to Lead Worship for Encounter with Jesus* in this series. The Word of God is read and shared under the unction of the Spirit of God for the purpose of Scripture-engagement; often during the outpouring people were invited to share a passage from the Bible, which could continue for an hour or more. Testimonies can be invited from people bearing witness to how God has been working in or around them, raising faith and prompting prayer. See the resources titled *How to Minister in Prayer* and *How to Pray for Awakening* in this series for a theology and practice of prayer in meeting with God.

But the aim of all of these components is to allow Jesus to lead, to hand him the mic, deflect attention to him, and step out of the way. This flows out of the posture of "observe and respond" explored at the close of the booklet in this series titled *How to Prepare for Outpouring*. Leading a meeting with God involves staying ready for mid-course adjustments, discerned by a plurality of vetted and trusted leaders who are reading the room and listening to the Spirit to pick up on what he is doing now and may want to do next.

In Jesus's final days, some curious onlookers were trying to find their way to an encounter with him. "They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. 'Sir,' they said, 'we would like to see Jesus'" (John 12:21). This, we have become convinced, is the cry of our cultural moment. What people are craving is the opportunity for meeting with Jesus. The church is desperately in need of leaders who can learn to host a meeting with God. And this comes down to entrusting the meeting to the actual Host himself.

Sow righteousness for yourselves,
reap the fruit of unfailing love,
and break up your unplowed ground;
for it is time to seek the LORD,
until he comes and showers his righteousness on you.

Hosea 10:12

The Awakening Library is a series of
print and digital resources that represent
collected learnings of Seedbed and New Room.

This suite of resources shares practical
experience and accessible teaching with
Christians seeking to partner with the Holy
Spirit in sowing for a great awakening.



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