

Awakened to a Calling

Lesson 1

Adoration: Isaiah 6:1-4

Outline of Lesson:

1. Opening prayer
2. Introduction to the study-What does it mean to be called?
3. Adoring God
4. Practicing adoration
5. Journaling assignment
6. Closing Prayer

Materials

1. Journals
2. Writing Utensils
3. Proper items to make the meeting room a prayerful environment (i.e. candles; bibles)

Introduction to the Study:

All Christians are called by God. Not just the pastors, not just the missionaries, but all people who believe they are a disciple of Jesus Christ are called into some sort of ministry. There is no one way that God calls people either. The Bible is the greatest proof of this. Moses was called through a burning bush, Jeremiah was called when he was a young boy, Ruth was called through her family situation and struggles, Nehemiah recognized a need and asked God if he could do something about it, Mary was approached by an angel, David was called by the anointing of Samuel, Paul was blinded by a light on the road to Damascus. The call stories could go on and on if we wanted them to, but we are here today to see what God is calling each and every one of us to. I think one of the easiest ways to understand a calling by God is to see how God is guiding you in your faith. As we seek God's guidance for our lives, God reveals to us what we are to do as a "disciple of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world." (The United Methodist Church BOD ¶120)

One of the most common ways we seek God's guidance is through prayer. It is through prayer that we praise God, confess to God our sins, thank God for his wonderful mercies, and ask God for our needs and the needs of others. In these next four weeks we are going to explore what it means to pray to God for guidance, for a calling, upon our lives as to where we are to be in ministry. We are to ask God where are gifts, talents, and abilities can be best used for the furthering of his kingdom on earth. Ultimately we are asking God for our eyes to be awakened to the ministry we as individuals and as a body of Christ are to be doing. We will be asking to be awakened to a calling!

To help guide our awakening to a calling through prayer, we will be using a prayer practice known as the ACTS prayer method. ACTS is a four-part method that is meant to help focus ourselves as we pray. Its four parts are: adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication. As we practice the spiritual discipline of prayer, we will also be reading scripture from Isaiah 6:1-8, the call story of the prophet Isaiah, which coincides with the four-parts of this method.

Let us begin to prepare ourselves now to be awakened to a calling by God through prayer and scripture!

1. Do you have any questions about this study?

Adoring God: Being Awakened to the Praise and Worship of God

Imagine you are holding a newborn baby. What are some of the things you do? What are some of the things you say? Most people would probably agree that most people make fools of themselves around newborns. We want to shower them with love and attention and let them know how special they are.

How we love on a newborn baby is a great way for us as Christians to approach God in prayer. Maybe we could cast the baby-talk and silly faces aside, but the words that we say and the actions of love we give to young children are the same words and actions we should offer up to God in our prayers.

Adoration of God is hard for most of us to do. It is hard to lavish continuous praise on someone or something we cannot physically hold or see. Yet, the adoration of God is necessary, because it helps us to realize how great God is and it also is a sign of our respect of God and God's power and goodness.

It is important to realize that when we adore God, we are not thanking him, but merely praising God for who God is. I think sometimes we are truly afraid to let ourselves completely adore God, and instead allow ourselves to immediately move to thanking him for what he has done. When we do this, we are actually placing focus immediately upon ourselves and what God has done for us. When we truly participate in the act of adoration, we give to God the glory for all. We praise God for just being God, not expecting anything in return or include ourselves in what we are saying-we simply praise!

1. What does the word "adore" mean to you?
2. At this time, how do you adore God?

Definitions for adoration:

- the act of paying honor, as to a divine being
- worship
- fervent and devoted love
- profound love or regard

In our scripture lesson for today, we meet Isaiah as he enters the temple and finds himself in the presence of God. He witnesses God in all his glory and sees how the heavens and heavenly beings react to the presence of God. It is a powerful story full of grand imagery, but the essence of the scripture shows us that there is a God who is worthy to be praised and ultimately worthy to be served.

It may seem odd to begin a bible study on calling by just speaking about and practicing the praise of God. It may be odd, but it is entirely appropriate. When we praise God we are reminded of why we want to serve him and why we desire to hear a call from him. Adoration draws our focus to God, who will do the calling upon us. It prompts us to be aware of God and his power and how that power can guide us in our life and decisions; in essence, our answer to God's calling.

3. Who or what adores God in this scripture?
4. What images or actions stand out to you?
5. What does this scripture tell us about adoration?
6. When was the last time you truly adored God?
7. What can adoration awaken us too?
8. How does adoration awaken us to a calling?

Practicing Adoration:

We are going to practice the adoration of God now. Let us assume a spirit of prayer and prepare our hearts to praise God. I will begin and we will go around the room and each of us will say a word or short phrase in adoration of God. It is ok if a phrase or word is repeated several times as we adjust to simply adoring God for being God. We are going to continue going around the room and do this for at least five minutes or longer if the Spirit allows. Remember, this is not a time to be thanking God for all God has done, but is a time to celebrate God for just being God. Let us adore God now...

Debrief:

1. Was it difficult to simply praise God?
2. Did you want to move on to something else, like thanking God or asking God for something?
3. What did it feel like as time went on? Did you feel like you needed to have more words to say to God or were you ok hearing the same things repeated over and over?
4. After doing this exercise, what do you think the adoration of God awakened you too?

Journaling Assignment:

Take time each day this week to write down things you see that you want to adore God for. Perhaps it is a bird singing, a child playing, or a beautiful sunset; anything that reminds you of God and God's holiness and glory. Next to your entries, write down a short word or phrase as a prayer of adoration to God. Try to see how many different ways and/or words you can use to adore God. We will take time to share them next week.

Other Scripture References of Adoration you can read during the week:

- Genesis 1
- Psalm 8:1-4
- Psalm 47
- Psalm 117
- Psalm 148
- Psalm 150
- Matthew 16:16
- Philippians 2:5-11
- Hebrews 1:10-12
- Revelation 7:9-12

Songs of Adoration:

Hymnody (United Methodist Hymnal)

- Praise to the Lord, the Almighty (#139)
- All Creatures of our God and King (#62)
- O Worship the King (#73)
- Praise God, From Who all Blessings Flow (#94, #95)
- Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee (#89)
- All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name (#154, #155)

Contemporary

- Praise to the Lord, the Almighty (Christy Nockels)
- All Creatures of our God and King (David Crowder Band)
- Holy is the Lord (Chris Tomlin)
- Wonderful Maker (Jeremy Camp)
- Let Everything that has Breathe (Matt Redman)
- O Worship the King (Chris Tomlin)
- Doxology (David Crowder Band)
- How Great is our God (Chris Tomlin)
- O Praise Him (David Crowder Band)
- Open Skies (David Crowder Band)

Awakened to a Calling

Lesson 2

Confession: Isaiah 6:5

Outline of Lesson:

1. Opening Prayer
2. Review of Last Week's Lesson-Sharing of Journals
3. Confession to God
4. Practicing Confession
5. Journaling Assignment
6. Closing Prayer

Materials

1. Journals
2. Writing Utensils
3. John Wesley's 22 questions
4. Proper items to make the meeting room a prayerful environment (i.e. candles; bibles)

Last Week's Review

Spend a few moments to share your adoration moments from this week with others. In what circumstances did you find yourself adoring God this past week? In what ways was it difficult for you to adore God? Did you discover any new ways or phrases to adore God? How hard was it to devote yourself to the adoration of God this week?

Confession to God: Being Awakened to Who we are and Who God is

1. What does it mean to confess our sins to God?
2. How often do you confess your sins to God? Could you be doing it more often?

When we feel as if someone has wronged us, what are some of the things we do? How do we feel? What do we want for them to do? Now switch the scenario, and now you have wronged someone. What do you do? How do you feel? What do you want for the one we have wronged to do? I would hope that most of us would want to apologize for doing something that wrongs someone else. We would want to confess to them that what we did was wrong and desire their forgiveness, because that is what we would want if the tables were turned.

Confession is a scary concept to think about, especially when we learn to practice the act of confession right after we practice adoration of God. When we simply adore God we begin to realize how insignificant we are in comparison to who God is. The praise of God often makes us realize how we are not any of the things that we have just called God. So confession is an admittance of our true selves before God, admittance to our faults and failures in the presence of the Perfect One. In our scripture passage for the day, we read how Isaiah responds to being in the presence of God in the temple. He sees the seraphs worshipping the Lord and the temple was shaking with praise and in the midst of it all, Isaiah remembers who he is. He remembers that he

is a man of unclean lips who lives among a people of unclean lips, yet he has been allowed to see God in all of God's glory. To Isaiah, there was something wrong about this picture. He was not worthy to be where he was and he openly confessed this. The adoration of God opened his eyes to his unworthiness and showed Isaiah his faults and failures.

3. Does the adoration of God bring about the same response to you as it did to Isaiah?
4. If not, what does awaken you to your need to confess your sins before God?
5. Do you find it hard to fully confess your sins to God?

Confession does have two parts. It is an admission of guilt to the sins we have committed but it is also a time to pray for guidance in how to move forward from committing this sin again. Therefore, confession consists of both an admission of guilt and a desire to grow in grace beyond the commission of that sin again. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, had a unique way of confessing his sins. Each day, sometimes multiple times a day, he would answer a set of twenty-two questions in his journal. All of these questions had a confession component to them, but because he wrote the answers to these questions in his journal daily, he could also track his progress in how he was responding to these questions and how he was either growing in the grace of God or backsliding further into acts of sin. Now this might seem a bit OCD in our day and age, but the truth of the matter is that this act of confession is a necessary part of the Christian faith. In order for us to move forward in faith and discipleship, we must be willing to confess our sins and seek after God with a fresh set of eyes and a fresh heart. It is only through confession that we can lay our failures out on the table where God can take them and refine them for his purposes. Confession is a necessary step to uncovering what God is calling us to do, because it opens our eyes to where we have neglected to follow God and be guided by his hand. And, just as John Wesley practiced with his twenty-questions, this act of confessing our sins is a daily action, as we draw closer to God each and every day. In this daily confession, God will refine us, and begin to prepare us for life with him to come. Confession opens our ears to listen and our eyes to see what it is God can do in our lives, as we become more open and honest to God about how we have failed to follow and how we desire for those faults to be taken away to better serve him.

6. What sins do you need to confess today?
7. Are some of these sins ones that you have confessed to God before?
8. What can confession awaken us too?
9. How can confession awaken us to a calling?

Practicing Confession

We are going to practice our confession to God now. Let us assume a spirit of prayer and prepare our hearts to be in the presence of God. Last week we practiced adoration by going around and saying a word or short phrase of praise to God. I want to begin with this practice again, but this time we will go around three times. After we have opened our time of prayer by praising God, I want us to spend some time in silent, written confession to God. In front of you is a copy of John Wesley's twenty-two questions and I want you to spend time answering these in your journal. Treat them as a confession and if you need to explain something in your confession, take time to do that. After you have answered the questions spend time in prayer

over them and see if perhaps there is more upon your heart to confess to God. Remember, confession is a time of self-emptying and it is not easy to admit our faults, but it is a necessary and needed action as we look towards God for guidance in how to live our lives. Let us adore God now...

God we stand in awe of your greatness and in your presence we realize that there are some things we need to admit to you, because your greatness has made us realize what we are really like. So hear our confessions now...

Debrief:

1. Was it difficult to confess your sins in writing?
2. Were there some questions you had difficulty answering or ones you did not want to answer?
3. Have you confessed some of the same sins before?
4. Are there any of these sins you would like to confess publicly so we as a Christian community can help to hold you accountable for this sin?
5. Did you see room for growth in Christian faith and discipleship?
6. After doing this exercise, what do you think taking time to confess your sins to God has awakened you too?

Journaling Assignment:

Take a copy of the twenty-two questions with you and take time to journal them at least three days this week. Preferably, connect the journaling of these questions with a time of adoration like what you did last week. Take note of the areas where you are continually confessing the same sins. Mark these areas as a place in your Christian walk that you need to work on and be held accountable too. We will take time to share them next week.

Other Scripture References of Confession you can read during the week:

- Leviticus 5:5
- Ezra 9:5-15
- Nehemiah 1:6-8
- Nehemiah 9:1-3
- Psalm 51:1-17
- Daniel 9:3-12
- Acts 19:18
- Romans 10:10

Songs about Confession:

Hymnody (United Methodist Hymnal)

- I Stand Amazed in the Presence (vs. 1; #371)
- O For a Heart to Praise My God (# 417)

Contemporary

- I Stand Amazed in the Presence (vs. 1; Chris Tomlin)
- Empty Me (Jeremy Camp)
- Lay Down My Pride (Jeremy Camp)

Awakened to a Calling
Lesson 3
Thanksgiving: Isaiah 6:6-7

Outline of Lesson:

1. Opening Prayer
2. Review of Last Week's Lesson-Sharing of Journals
3. Thanksgiving to God
4. Practicing Thanksgiving
5. Journaling Assignment
6. Closing Prayer

Materials:

1. Journals
2. Writing Utensils
3. Thank-you cards
4. Extra copies of John Wesley's twenty-two questions
5. Proper items to make the meeting room a prayerful environment (i.e. candles; bibles)

Review of Last Week's Lesson

Take a few moments to share your confession journaling with one another. Try to be as honest as you feel like you can be with one another. Was it difficult to find time to write out answers to the twenty-two questions? Did you try to avoid confessing? What is difficult about the practice of confession? What did you learn about yourself and what sins you are prone to commit?

Thanksgiving to God: Being Awakened to the Thankful Life

We all love to receive gifts. Birthdays, weddings, graduations, and many other occasions in our life are times when most people can expect to receive gifts. Many of us look forward to these times and relish them. What does it feel like to receive gifts? What do you want to do after you have received a gift?

Now what if someone were to give you a gift for absolutely no reason? You came home one day and found in your mailbox a card from a friend with a little spending money in it or you had a nicely wrapped gift sitting on your desk at work from a colleague.

1. What does it feel like to receive gifts that are seemingly undeserved and unwarranted?

In our scripture reading for today, we are shown what happens to Isaiah when he admits his guilt for being unclean but still in the presence of the Lord. A seraph placed a coal that had been on the altar on Isaiah's mouth and told him his guilt was no more and his sin had been blotted out. From first glance, it might be confusing as to why this passage speaks of thanksgiving. But, when we think back to what we have covered the last two weeks and we remember how great God is (adoration) and how great we are not (confession) this act of forgiveness bestowed upon

Isaiah is something to be thankful for. God offers us forgiveness for our sins when we do not deserve it. It is a gift, a free, undeserved gift bestowed upon us. The action of blotting out a sin that is confessed is a reason to be thankful. This is why the passage we are reading today in Isaiah points to thanksgiving. We are to be thankful for the forgiveness of our sins.

2. What sin in particular are you thankful for being forgiven from?
3. How do you act upon your thankfulness to God?

Though we have enough to be thankful for in the forgiveness we have been given by God, there is even more to be thankful for beyond that. God sent his son to die upon the cross for our sins and Jesus was resurrected to bring us life everlasting! Jesus said that he came to give us life abundantly and when we realize our forgiveness from sin and seek to live life as a disciple of Christ, we experience that abundance in amazing ways. Abundance does not necessarily mean that we will be rich or have lots of things, but it means that we will experience the joy of life so much more. We appreciate the gifts we have, our family, our health, our situations so much more because we know that God somehow has a hand in it and is guiding us. When we practice thanksgiving, we are thanking God for what he has done for us in each and every situation: good or bad. To be thankful to God is to remember where we have come from, where we are at now, and the hope we have in moving forward by his guiding hand. Alongside of this guidance in our current situations is the acknowledgement that God is still at work in our lives and in our world and continues to call each and every one of his children to service in God's kingdom, even when we are unsure about what our individual service is. Thanksgiving is about reminding ourselves how God is still active and moving in this world and in us to forgive us and to guide us as to who we are, what we can be, and what we are to do.

4. What "abundance" do you have in your life to be thankful for?
5. Is there something in your life that perhaps you are not thankful for and what is it?
6. How can you learn to be thankful in every situation?
7. What can being thankful for all things awaken you too?
8. How can being thankful for all things awaken you to a calling?

Practicing Thanksgiving

We are going to practice thanking God now. This is one of the easier things to do out of all the prayer steps so this exercise should be easy and fun for most of us. Before you is a thank-you card and as we go to the Lord in prayer, I want for you to write a thank-you note to God. If you think you will need more room, use your journal, but use the card as a reminder of what you are doing. Just like last week we are going to build this practice upon the prayer exercises we have already done. So we will begin our time of prayer by going around the group three times and saying a word or short phrase of adoration to God, then we will move to journaling our written confessions using the twenty-two questions as a guide. After we have confessed our sins then we will move into thanking God for all he has done. Remember, thanking God is not just about thanking him for all of the good things in our life, but for everything God has done that we see as his hand guiding and leading us closer to him. Let us assume a spirit of prayer and prepare our hearts to be in the presence of God.

Debrief:

1. What emotion do you feel after practicing thanksgiving to God?
2. Do you think this emotion is one that is common after every time?
3. Did enough of you find it difficult to thank God for anything? Why or why not?
4. Are there some thanksgivings you would like to share with us today?
5. Did you see room for you to grow in faith and discipleship during your time of thanking God?
6. After doing this exercise, what do you think the thanksgiving of God awakened you too?

Journaling Assignment:

Take time each day to write down things you were thankful for that day and next to it, write a simple statement of thanks to God for these blessings. Perhaps you will feel God's forgiveness strongly one day or understand how a situation you thought was bad turned out to be a blessing from God. Again, though it is not required, it would be great if you could connect this practice with the other two we have already practiced. Try to keep a tally of how many blessings you experience over the week. We will take time to share them next week.

Other Scripture References of Thanksgiving you can read during the week:

- Ezra 3:11
- Psalm 95:1-2
- Psalm 100
- 1 Chronicles 16:7-36
- Isaiah 51:1-3
- 2 Corinthians 4:1-15
- 2 Thessalonians 1:3
- 1 John 1:9

Songs of Thanksgiving:

Hymnody (United Methodist Hymnal)

- We Gather Together (#131)
- Come, Ye Thankful People, Come (#694)
- Amazing Grace (#378)
- How Great Thou Art (#77)
- To God Be the Glory (#98)
- Now Thank We All Our God (#102)
- When I Survey the Wondrous Cross (#298, #299)
- Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing (#400)

Contemporary

- Amazing Grace; My Chains Are Gone (Chris Tomlin)
- Thy Mercy (Caedmon's Call)
- Your Love is Extravagant (Casting Crowns)
- Jesus Paid it All (LaShun Prince)
- Forgiven (Relient K)
- The Wonderful Cross (Chris Tomlin)
- Come Thou Fount (David Crowder Band)
- You Never Let Go (Matt Redman)

Awakened to a Calling

Lesson 4

Supplication: Isaiah 6:8

Outline of Lesson:

1. Opening Prayer
2. Review of Last Week's Lesson-Sharing of Journals
3. Asking God?
4. Practicing Supplication
5. Journaling Assignment
6. Closing Prayer

Materials

1. Journals
2. Writing Utensils
3. Extra copies of twenty-two questions
4. Copies of the Spiritual Gifts Inventory
5. Proper items to make the meeting room a prayerful environment (i.e. candles; bibles)

Review of Last Week's Lesson:

Take a few moments to share your moments of thanksgiving from this week with others. In what circumstances did you find yourself thanking God this past week? In what situations was it difficult to thank God? What did the practice of thanking God open your eyes to? Did it propel you to some kind of action?

Asking God?-The Asking Goes Both Ways...

Supplication is the simple act of asking God for our needs as well as for the needs of others. It is not hard to ask God for things, and it is probably what humans are best at doing. God wants us to ask him for things and expects us to. God wants us to talk to him about our problems and the problems of others, though he already knows what they are. He desires a conversation with us about our fears, doubts, hopes, and dreams. Notice I said God desires conversation instead of just hearing us talk. When we ask God for our needs and the needs of others we should also be open to what God is asking of us. The asking goes both ways!

1. What have you been asking of God lately?
2. Do you feel like God has been answering that request?
3. What do you feel like God could be asking of you?

In the scripture passage for today, we meet Isaiah before the throne of God listening to what God is saying. God is looking for someone to send to his people, he is asking something of someone. Isaiah answers God with a resounding, "Here I am, send me," and his entire ministry is thrown into action. In this passage, Isaiah was not just asking of God for forgiveness, but was listening to what God could have been asking of him. Isaiah was made aware of a need in the Kingdom of

God and answered that need with himself. He offered to go wherever God sent him and if you read the rest of Isaiah, you would see that he remained faithful to that offering of himself.

4. When was the last time you spoke to God about your needs?
5. When was the last time you listened for God to speak?

Our requests are important to God, but we cannot let them get in the way of what God is asking of us. We must remember to stop and listen to God guiding us as to what we are to be doing in response to the needs we recognize in ourselves and in others. Supplication literally means to plead humbly. We plead to God for our needs and the needs of others, but when we are humble about it, we realize there is an act of submission to our requests as well. We plead to God while remaining ever knowing of who we are asking and what God could ask us to do. We plead to God for a calling and the truth of the matter is, God is almost always answering back. God's speaking to us, are we listening?

6. Has God revealed any needs to you through your prayers on behalf of others or yourself?
7. What do you think you can do about some of the prayer requests you make to God?
8. How does God guide you in your prayer requests?
9. What can the practice of supplication awaken us too?
10. How can the practice of supplication awaken us to a calling?

Practicing Supplication

We are going to practice asking God on behalf of others and listening for what God is asking of us. Let us assume a spirit of prayer and prepare our hearts to ask and hear God. We are going to go around the circle and offer up a prayer for someone we know or a situation we are aware of. If it is too personal to say aloud just say the name or situation and we will move on, but if it is not, please say the name or situation and the specific request you are making to God on its behalf. After we have said this request we will have a few moments of silent prayer and then go around the circle again but this time we will offer up a way in which God could be calling us to respond to this request. Each person will start with the statement, God I believe you are asking me to...and then finish the sentence. This might be difficult to do at first, but just let yourself listen to God as you pray to him about the situation.

Just like the previous weeks, we are going to build this practice on upon the prayer exercises we have already done. We will begin our time of prayer by going around the group three times and saying a short word or phrase of adoration to God, then we will move to journaling our written confessions using the twenty-two questions as a guide. After we have confessed our sins then we will move into thanking God for forgiving us and for all the blessings he has bestowed upon us as we are guided closer to him. We will practice thanking God this week by going around the group three times with each of us saying a work of thanks to God. Then we will practice supplication as I have already explained. Let us now assume a spirit of prayer and prepare our hearts to be in the presence of God.

Debrief:

1. Was it difficult to find things to ask God for?

2. Have you asked God for these things before?
3. Do you normally stop to listen for God's guidance in the requests for these people or situations?
4. Was it difficult to stop and think of what God could be asking of you to do about some of the needs or situations of others?
5. Did you see room for you to grow in this exercise?
6. After doing this exercise, what do you think taking time to ask God and then taking the time to listen to what God is asking of you awoken you too?

Journaling Assignment:

Take time each day to write down prayers for other people or situations around you. Perhaps your neighbor is sick or a colleague has a big decision to make. Pray for these people or situations as you write them down. Next to the prayers for others and situations pray for yourself as to how God wants you to respond to these prayer requests. Is God calling you to action through your prayers for others? Perhaps you feel the need to take soup to your sick neighbor or offer a comforting word to your colleague. See what God could be calling you to do as a response to your prayer, write it down, and actually do it. We will take time to share them next week.

Alongside of your journal entry, take some time this week to complete the spiritual gifts inventory. We will take time to share them next week. This will take about ½ an hour to 1 hour to complete so set aside enough time to do it. This is very important for next week's lesson so make sure you take it.

Other Scripture References of Supplication you can read during the week:

- Genesis 25:20-21
- 1 Kings 9:1-5
- Psalm 4
- Psalm 42
- Philippians 4:6
- Matthew 21:18-22
- Mark 11:20-25

Songs of Supplication:

Hymnody (United Methodist Hymnal)

- Here I am, Lord (#593)
- Take My Life, and Let It Be (#399)
- Be Thou My Vision (#451)
- Where He Leads Me (#338)
- Spirit of the Living God (#393)
- Lord, Speak to Me (#463)

Contemporary

- Take My Life, and Let It Be (Chris Tomlin)
- Take Me In (Kutless)
- My Desire (Jeremy Camp)
- Wholly Yours (David Crowder Band)
- You Said (Shane and Shane)
- Lifesong (Casting Crowns)
- Be Thou My Vision (Jars of Clay)

Awakened to a Calling
Lesson 5
Praying towards a Bigger Picture: Isaiah 6:1-8

Outline of Lesson:

1. Opening Prayer
2. Review of Last Week's Lesson-Sharing of Journals
3. An Awakening
4. Practicing Awakening
5. Final Words
6. Closing Prayer

Materials:

1. Journals
2. Extra copies of John Wesley's 22 questions
3. Writing Utensils
4. Extra copies of the Spiritual Gifts Inventory
5. Proper items to make the meeting room a prayerful environment (i.e. candles; bibles)

Review of Last Week's Lesson:

Take a few moments to share your supplications to God with others. What did you ask God for? Did you ask for these things several times? Did God reveal to you a way in which you could respond to these requests? Did you do something about it? Did the asking really go both ways this past week?

An Awakening-Moving Forward Towards What?

These last few weeks we have learned and practiced the ACTS prayer method in great detail. We have adored God, we have confessed our sins to God, we have thanked God, and we have asked and allowed ourselves to be asked by God. In spite of this learning experience, you are probably wondering, "I still do not know what calling I am supposed to be awakened too."

That is what today is for. I explained in the very first lesson that this study was about being awakened to a calling. A calling that comes through examining ourselves and looking towards how that might be telling us what we should be doing in ministry. Last week we specifically talked about asking God but in return listening for what God is asking of us. We were asking for God's guidance in our lives, and we were trying to take the time to actually listen. Being called is allowing yourself to be guided by God's asking of you and responding to it. It is listening for the urgings of the Spirit in your everyday life as to what it is your gifts and abilities are and how they can best be used to serve God. Sounds easy right? Well, to be honest, it is a lot easier than what it seems to be on paper, discovering our gifts and abilities is not something we have to make up, but is something we have to uncover about ourselves. Let us start with a few questions.

1. What do you love to do? These can be hobbies, activities, or pastimes, anything that you like to spend your time doing.
2. What are you good at? These can also include the above mentioned things, but add to that other things like, helping, or teaching. Do not be shy or think you are being boastful. We are trying to name your gifts so tell us what you are best at doing.
3. What things about you do other people tend to notice? Are you always smiling, are you always the first to volunteer, do you listen well, do you have a good speaking voice...

Take out your spiritual gifts inventory that you took last week. We are going to go around the room and see what this inventory listed as our top 3 spiritual gifts.

4. Were any of you surprised by the spiritual gifts your inventory said you had?
5. Do any of your gifts make sense to you?
6. Look at the things you listed as loving to do or things you are good at. Do any of these coincide with the spiritual gifts from the inventory? Do any of them seem completely opposite?

Two of the greatest misconceptions by Christians today is that God only calls certain people and that God never calls us to do something we want to do. The truth is that God calls all people to ministry and that if we are seeking God and God's guidance, there is much joy in serving him. We like to do the things we are good at and the gifts and abilities given to us by the Spirit are things that we are good at doing, and these can be cultivated to be even better as well. Being awakened to a calling is really about realizing how our gifts and abilities, what we are good at doing, can be best used to serve God and others around us. Being awakened is putting all the pieces of the puzzle we have been doing over the past few weeks together to see the big picture. Adoration awakens us to the God whom we serve and why he deserves it. Confession awakens us to our failures and our need for God's grace to be ever-flowing into our lives to be guided in a closer walk with God. Thanksgiving awakens us to our gratefulness to God for his forgiveness and action in our lives even when we did not deserve it and for his willingness to work in us and in this world still. Supplication awakens us to the God who desires us to be in conversation with him; to not only request and ask on behalf of ourselves and others, but to listen for God's asking of us.

We have been awakened to God in a new way, and we see ourselves in a new light as well. Praying for God's guidance is a way to hear and/or see our callings and to act upon them out of love of God and love of God's people. Take some time to look back on your journals and to answer these questions.

7. Where do you see God in your entries over the weeks?
8. Do you see how God might be leading you towards something over these weeks?
9. What have you learned about yourself?
10. What have you learned about God?
11. Where do you see God at work and guiding you in your life?

Now I want you to take a particular look at the supplication entries you worked on last week. I know we have already discussed them but I want us to look at them now in light of the results

from our spiritual gifts inventory and from our own personal analysis of what we like to do and what we are good at.

12. When you wrote down a response to what you think God was asking of you in a certain situation you were praying about, did that response coincide with any of your gifts or abilities?
13. If it did, how do you think God is asking you to use your gifts and abilities to be in ministry to the world and its people?
14. If not, how do you think you could use some of your gifts and abilities to minister in the situations you were praying about?
15. How can you use your gifts and abilities to serve the kingdom of God?
16. Do you think that this use of your gifts and abilities something you could be “called” to do?
17. What calling are you being awakened too?

Practicing Awakening:

We are now going to pray through the entire ACTS prayer method that we have learned and practiced over the last few weeks. This time, though, we are not going to do it all together in a large group, but are going to practice this on our own, in our own unique way. Take some time to go through each of the steps on your own. Let yourself enter into the presence of God, remind yourself of who you really are, thank God for his many blessings, ask God on behalf of yourself and for others, and listen for God to tell you how to respond. Ask God to guide you and be with you as you grow and learn what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ in service and ministry to the world. God calls all of us to different tasks and in different ways, so let us be prepared to be called to our unique task in the way that only God can. Let us assume a spirit of prayer as we go to God for his guidance.

Final Words:

Being awakened to God’s calling is about realizing the God we serve and responding to it using the gifts and abilities that have been bestowed upon us. In our time of prayer we have earnestly sought after God’s guidance and asked him to be present with us as we walk in ministry with him. That is what calling is all about and that is why each and every person who is a child of God is called to some sort of ministry to the kingdom of God.

I want to encourage you to continue using this method of praying to be continually awakened to what God is calling you to do. Maybe you cannot do this every day, but perhaps you can do this once a week or once a month. Let yourself continually be awakened to God and God’s calling on your life. Be perpetually open to God and God’s guidance on your life as you seek to serve him and his people. Keep your eyes open and your heart alert to the Spirit’s leading you into service. Pray to remain awake to God and God’s call.