

The Way to Awakening

By David Thomas

When all the dust has settled, it's hard to predict all the details of what form our new connection will take. But this we know for certain: what our moment requires is not just a better Methodism. Long ago we left behind the times when denominational improvements were a sufficient hope. If denominational corrections were enough to stem the tide of societal decay and renew the church, it would have happened by now. We are the best-resourced Christians who have ever lived, and look where we find ourselves. At the least, our current ecclesial crisis is confronting us with unambiguous proof of how human excellence is too small a thing. What we are needing is something only God can do. We need awakening.

The Methodist tree sown and husbanded by our forebears, the fruit and shade of which shaped our society, has deteriorated down to little more than a stump compared to the great "oak of righteousness" (Is 61:3) that we once were. In its deep taproot beneath that stump, however, Methodism was—and, I believe, still is—an awakening movement. We began as a protracted movement of God that produced deep wholeness in people, renewal of the church, evangelization of generations, and transformation of society. And that awakening sap still lies dormant in the cherished root system of what we are becoming. We steward the archetype in our story of what the Church can be when it expresses the fullness of "plain scriptural Christianity," in John Wesley's words.

"There is a wide-open door for a great work here," Paul wrote the Corinthians (I Cor 16:9 [NLT]), and we could say the same of our moment now. The stakes are too high for the Global Methodist Church to be about little more than cobbling together whatever remains of traditionalism in the hope that liberated affinity will revitalize us. We will have to dig deeper than that, beneath the surface, down to the sacred root system from which we came and where there is awakening life still nascent.

What we find there is not complicated. Thirst, heartcry, and holy love. Safe and honest soul-friendship among the faithful. Passionate concern for the unbelieving. Endurance married to urgency. Overflow into culture-change. It's all down there in our inheritance.

We can never squeeze new life out of this legacy any more than we can restructure ourselves back into vitality, now or at any other time. Awakening is not something we can manufacture. But we can remove impediments to it. We can position ourselves to receive it. We can crucify careerism and offer ourselves afresh to these hopes. And we can join hands and hearts to cry out to God for His new work of grace until He sends it. More than at any other moment in our lives, this could be the way to awakening.

A Suggested Pattern of Prayer

As you pray through the following prayer points, invite the presence of the Lord into your time of prayer. Each day's prompt has a Scripture reference for you to pray through. As you pray allow time to also listen to what the Holy Spirit is saying to you. When you have prayed through the Scripture and prayer point, you may be led to add your own prayers. Pray and consider what

action steps might you take in response to the Lord's leading. Repeat this prayer pattern weekly for the month.

Daily Prayer Points

Sunday: Pray for personal awakening in all of us. Our awakening hopes emerge from our own fresh encounter with Jesus leading to the humility and repentance that opens all channels to His working. (Psalm 66:18)

Monday: Pray for deep embrace of a chosen desperation that defies any self-sufficiency and removes the veneer of abundance and capacity that can mask the actual urgency of our need for God. (Psalm 79:8)

Tuesday: Pray for a soaring vision of what the Christian movement has been at its best and can be again. Ask God to make the gap between that hope and our everyday experience of Church *intolerable* to our spirits. (Colossians 3:2)

Wednesday: Pray for a willingness to enter the posture and to receive the gift of travailing prayer. Ask God to give you in prayer a share of His burden for this world Jesus died to save, expressed from a heart filled with Gethsemane love. (Luke 22:44)

Thursday: Pray for the outpouring of the spirit of prayer in our hearts, homes, churches, and cities—that our petitions would be marked by a fervor and unity unexplainable in human terms. (Zechariah 12:10)

Friday: Pray for a renewal of evangelistic passion leading to boldness in the advance of Gospel, particularly among emerging adults. (Acts 4:29 / 28:31)

Saturday: Pray for a depth awakening—the healing and authenticity made possible in relationships formed from bonds of safety and courage. Ask God to breathe again on our inheritance in banded discipleship for the kind of relationship our world is craving and He could use to transform us from the inside out. (Galatians 6:2)

He proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ—with all boldness and without hindrance! Acts 28:31

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