



SMALL GROUP NOTES

HOW TO USE THESE NOTES

Welcome to our notes for small groups! We know every Church does small groups a little differently, so feel free to use these notes as they work best for you in your context! In general we think a great small group should be fun and engaging so we've included some ideas to break the ice and have a balance of content, social time and prayer.

WHY PROVIDE NOTES FOR SMALL GROUPS

- We believe that God made us to be together and to live life in relationship, **Awaken is about being together**. So we'd love to see existing friendship groups within Churches decide to attend Awaken together, these notes are here to help you talk about the event with your group.
- **Awaken is about going deeper**, we want Awaken to spur you on in your Christian walk, empowering you to live out a God filled life in your own context, that doesn't have to start at our annual event, we think it's great to take an opportunity to lay some foundations and to prepare our hearts to encounter God together.
- Life is meant to be enjoyed, and Awaken is a space to have fun and express yourself with other like minded people, **Awaken is about enjoying the gift of life together**. Small Groups are the perfect space to be yourself and celebrate who God has made you to be.

THE NOTES

- Are split into four sections, Welcome, Worship, Word and Response some sections have options for you to pick and choose from so you can make the session your own. If you want to split the session over two weeks choose one of the options for each week and do part one of the word in week one, and part two in the second week.
- Try to cover all the sections if you can, to cover all the material should take about an hour and a half - depending how chatty you are!
- Enjoy yourselves and have fun, and why not let us know how you get on?

WELCOME

Choose from the two options below to get your group chatting!

ICEBREAKER GAME

If your group loves a game you can use our Human Bingo game to get everyone talking!

Instructions: Give each member of the group a grid, they have to ask around the room to find someone who has done the activity in the boxes and write their name, try to find different people if you can to get the group mixing. Complete a row (Across, Down or Diagonally) to win and shout BINGO!

STORY TELLING

If your group prefers to chat then go around the room and share your favorite adventure story, it could be:

Somewhere fun you've visited

A time you got stuck or lost

Your holiday plans for this year

Human Bingo grid:

_____ has jumped out of a plane	_____ is wearing something red	_____ has been sick or fainted in public	_____ became a christian at a christian festival	_____ has been in local news
_____ has milked a cow	_____ has met someone famous	_____ loves camping	_____ can do a handstand	_____ has read the whole bible
_____ has an unusual hobby	_____ has more than one sibling	_____ is booked in for Awaken!	_____ is a vegetarian or vegan	_____ plays an instrument
_____ has climbed a mountain	_____ has seen a miracle	_____ has shared their faith recently	_____ has a sporting accomplishment	_____ can rub their stomach and pat their head at the same time
_____ has broken down in an awkward place	_____ has been on a missions trip	_____ can name all the books in the bible	_____ can speak multiple languages	_____ once got a parking ticket

WORSHIP

Choose from the two options below to start your evening in worship

REFLECTION

Share...

Start by taking some time to reflect on where God has been at work in your lives this week:

- Has anyone had an answer to prayer?
- A new revelation?
- What bible reading or word for the day has impacted you and why?
- What's inspired you?

Take a moment to thank God for how he's been at work in your lives this week.

Read...

Ask someone in the group to read aloud Psalm 100 as follows in the NIV

*Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth.
Worship the Lord with gladness;
come before him with joyful songs.
Know that the Lord is God.
It is he who made us, and we are his[a];
we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.
Enter his gates with thanksgiving
and his courts with praise;
give thanks to him and praise his name.
For the Lord is good and his love endures forever;
his faithfulness continues through all generations.*

Listen...

Listen together to the song 'God of Revival' by Bethel Music ([You can find it on YouTube here](#))

Pray...

Take it in turns to pray and thank God for all he's done in and amongst your group members this week

Turn the direction of your prayers to pray that God would impact you through his word this evening

GETTING READY

Share...

Take it in turns to share how you prepare to go away on a trip or holiday,

- How do you remember to pack everything
- What do you always forget?
- Are there some places you return to year after year? Or do you prefer something new?

Read...

Ask someone in the group to read Psalm 42:1-4 as follows in the NLT

*As the deer longs for streams of water, so I long for you, O God.
I thirst for God, the living God. When can I go and stand before him?
Day and night I have only tears for food, while my enemies continually taunt me, saying,
"Where is this God of yours?"
My heart is breaking as I remember how it used to be:
I walked among the crowds of worshipers,
leading a great procession to the house of God, singing for joy and giving thanks amid the sound of a great celebration!*

Share...

Take a moment to share how God has impacted you through a Christian festival, church event, conference e.t.c. what did God do in your life and how has it shaped the person you are today?

Pray...

Spend some time as a group thanking God for all he has done and how he has been at work in your lives

Turn the direction of your prayers to pray that God would impact you through his word this evening

WORD

Our word tonight focuses on the importance of making space in our lives for God to move, to step into God's creative heart to bring new life and restoration to this world, and how we too can be a part of the restoration of the world we live in.

PART ONE: The principle of festival

In the Old Testament God appointed certain events to the Israelites as 'sacred assemblies' or 'appointed festivals of the Lord'. (You can read all about them in Leviticus 23 if you want to do some more study!)

What we see in this passage is God setting apart these annual events as markers for the Jewish community, each festival carrying a sense of purpose, like a holy practice throughout the year. They reminded the Jews of the journey they had been on, God's provision, his sovereignty and protection over them as a community, these are the festivals they celebrated:

(We suggest you pass the notes around here and take it in turns to read aloud a festival each!)

1. **Passover** - A reminder of the last plague in Egypt when the angel of death 'passed over' the children of Israel who had applied the blood of a lamb, marked in a cross to their doors
2. **Unleavened Bread** - In the haste of the Israelites to leave Egypt there was no time to add leaven (yeast) to their bread, during this festival the Israelites remember the hardships of Egypt and how God freed them from captivity, eating nothing leavened.
3. **First Fruits** - Is one of three Jewish harvest feasts to thank and honor God for all he provided. Although they didn't know it at the time, the children of Israel were celebrating what would become a very important day. As this feast was celebrated on the same day in the Jewish calendar that Jesus resurrected from the dead. In 1 Corinthians 15:20 Paul refers to Jesus as the first fruits of the dead. He represents the first of the great harvest of souls - including you, that will resurrect to eternal life because of the new covenant in his blood (Luke 22:20).
4. **Feast of Weeks or Pentecost** - Where traditionally people were expected to bring the first harvest of grain to the Lord including two leavened loaves of bread. We all now know Pentecost as the Outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2.
5. **Feast of Trumpets** - In a beautiful declaration God commands his people to rest. During this time all regular work is prohibited, and men and women present a food offering to God.
6. **Day of Atonement** - To make "atonement" is to make restitution for wrongs committed. As a day of humility and repentance to God, it was a time for the Jews to get their hearts, consciences and lives right before him.
7. **Feast of Tabernacles or Booths** - Celebration always follows the Day of Atonement. The Feast of Tabernacles celebrates God's provision and protection for the people of Israel during their 40 years wandering in the wilderness; for the seven days of the feast, people live in temporary structures like they did in the wilderness. The Lord himself was with the Israelites in the desert, in a tented temple called the tabernacle, so the feast also celebrates his presence as he tabernacles (dwells) with us.

Discussion 1

- What times of year are important for you as 'markers'?
- What do you see about the heart of God for his people in these passages?
- What is the importance of 'festivals' in today's world?

PART TWO: God's heart to bring New Life

The festival rhythm provides the basis for a number of transformational principles in our lives, as we take time away from our 'normal' and set aside time to remember who God is, what he has done for us and his good plans for our lives.

We see the festivals were:

- **Reflective** - They looked back at what God had done for his people
- **Inconvenient** - They required a break from normal rhythm, and in some cases the instruction to eat or live differently
- **Sanctifying** - They pointed to holiness and repentance
- **Uniting** - They brought the community together in celebration of the journey they had been on
- **Celebratory** - They focussed on thanksgiving and celebration
- **Re-energising** - Allowing time for dedicated rest

Much like the festivals in the Old Testament, time away as a community of believers is still important today, to reflect on all God has done, come back in repentance united as a family to see God move in power in our lives and over our land in our time. Time away like this has to be intentional - as we say it's worth the time, cost and inconvenience for the impact it will have upon us. As we look back over these festivals, if we look a little deeper they are all completed in Jesus, from the passover lamb to the restoring first fruit of the world, we see a beautiful picture of God's redemptive plan outworked to bring about the renewal of all things

Colossians 1:18-20 MSG says

He was supreme in the beginning and leading the resurrection parade he is supreme in the end. From beginning to end he's there, towering far above everything, everyone. So spacious is he, so expansive, that everything of God finds its proper place in him without crowding. Not only that, but all the broken and dislocated pieces of the universe - people and things, animals and atoms - get properly fixed and fit together in vibrant harmonies, all because of his death, his blood that poured down from the cross.

This paraphrase paints a beautiful picture of the restorative heart of God to bring new life in all the brokenness we see in our world, like a giant supernatural jigsaw puzzle. Take some time to read about God's renewing power through the scriptures below and then conclude with some final discussion questions.

Renewal for us - 1 John 2:2 NIV

He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

Renewal in us - Ephesians 4:22-24 NIV

You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Renewal through us - Matthew 5:14-16 NIV

"You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

Discussion 2

- Which of the principles of festivals do you find most challenging and why?
- What does it look like for 'all the broken pieces' to come together in your life?
- How do you see God's restoring power at work?

RESPONSE

We see Awaken as a unique opportunity for us to come together and pursue everything that God has for us, and that in doing so we will see the transformative power of the Holy Spirit outworked in our lives and the lives of those around us. We must hold tight to the promise of God that he will restore and transform us and our world.

Our response tonight is an opportunity to raise our faith levels and our reliance for the Holy Spirit to move in our lives - we start by raising our expectations and asking the simple question: What does it look like for _____ to awaken?

INCREASED EXPECTATIONS

Write...

Give each member of the group a slip of paper, ask them to write on one side the blank from: What does it look like for _____ to awaken? I.e. 'my school', 'my home', 'my friend John'

Ask the group to pass the slip to someone else in the room, take some time to pray over what is written and then turn over their piece of paper and write on the back an encouragement, word or bible verse for the area on the front. Then return the slip to the person who wrote it

Share...

Share with each other what you have written and the responses on the back

Pray...

Pray for each slip that God would move in power

PROPHETIC DRAWING

Draw...

In plain pencil draw a scene where you are longing to see God move.

Then go over the picture in color and draw on what it looks like for God's power to come

Share...

Share your picture with the group and talk about what you've drawn and why

Pray...

Pray as a group for each scene that God would move in power

Conclude by praying for each other's weeks and any particular needs in the group.