

STAYING

AWAKE

DISCUSSION

AND ACTION

GUIDE

WELCOME!

Thank you for gathering a group to read *Staying Awake: The Gospel for Changemakers!*

I hope you find this guide to be a helpful template for you to start creating your own group experience. I believe that you are leading this group for a reason. God is up to something good!

The preparation for this class is simple. As a leader, all you need to do is:

- Make sure that everyone has access to a book before Session 1
- Print out the Practice Check-Ins worksheet for the whole group (one per person per session)
- Read the guide ahead of time and gather necessary materials (often just paper and writing utensils)
- Pray!

Feel free to adapt this guide to your particular context. This guide is for ten sessions (an introduction then one for each chapter of the book), but you may want to double up or extend it longer. The goal is to create a thoughtful, hospitable space where people can be appropriately vulnerable in a way that drives action.

Try to assign as many roles to group members as possible. Ask people to read Scripture, send out email reminders, bring snacks, design a flyer, clean-up after everyone is done, and so forth. This will help protect you from burnout and, more importantly, give group members a chance to co-create the experience.

Protip: Don't assume that everyone in this group is Christian. Even if you are familiar with all of them and know for a fact that that is how they identify, prepare as if they were not. That way, when someone who doesn't identify as Christian comes to your church/group, you will already be prepared.

God bless you!
Tyler Sit

SESSION 0: INTRO

The purpose of this session is to establish a base layer of trust between participants. As always, adjust any of these activities to match your leadership style and the people in the room.

To start, prepare a hospitable space.

To the best of your ability, try to prepare a place that is welcoming and comfortable. Consider: handicap accessibility, art, food/drink, bathroom access, noise level, safety, etc.

Do a round of introductions

Name, gender pronoun, and why you signed up for this group is always a solid start.

Create a Group Covenant

Because *Staying Awake* covers topics that can be very personal, it is important that the group understands gets a chance to name what needs to be in place for them to best show up to the space. It's a good idea to write these down on a big sheet of paper and have it hanging on the wall for each meeting. Common considerations include:

Confidentiality. Is the group committed to holding personal stories in confidence? Does confidence mean "absolutely never repeating anything said here" or does it mean "I can tell the story but keep names out"? If you are a mandated reporter (i.e., you must report child abuse, etc.), that is worth naming here as well.

Make Space, Take Space. At New City, we say, "We want to hear from everyone in this room. *And*, as a community dedicated to centering marginalized voices, we especially want to create space for people of marginalized identities, such as people of color and queer people, etc., to be able to speak because there are fewer platforms for that in broader society. If you have a question about this, feel free to talk to a facilitator." Note: It is your job as the facilitator to guide the discussion with questions like "What about people who haven't shared yet--any thoughts?" or "I wonder if any of the people of color in the room would like to share? No pressure!"

Harm is different from discomfort. Read the definitions on p55 and discern ahead of time how you will manage disagreements and conflict. Micky ScottBey Jones' poem "Brave Space" is an excellent poem to accompany this.

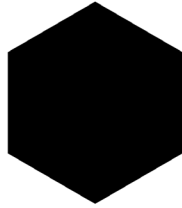
Self-regulate how you need. If people feel anxious and need to stand up, that's okay! If things get heavy and the group needs to pause to take a breath, that's okay! If people need a minute outside to collect themselves, that's okay! Normalize this ahead of time.

Review format of class

Showing them the Practices Check-In is a great idea.

Close in a group prayer

Something as simple as, "go around the circle and say one thing you thank God for and one thing you ask God for"



SESSION 1: WORSHIP

(Also, the Opening + Introduction)

Opening

Go around the circle and ask for a highlight and lowlight of the week. If you like, the good ol' Methodist question "How is it with your soul?" can be a good opening question too!

Refresher of the Group Covenant

Practices Check-In

Fill out a new page of the Practices Check-In. Remind people that at the end they will be reviewing all of their check-ins, so try to keep them in one place (as a leader, it may be wise for you to offer to hang on to them for people).

Read Scripture

Acts 2:42-47

Icebreaker Activity

Give everyone a piece of paper to write a "recipe" for their ideal worship service if resources/time/money/talent is not a barrier. Share in group. Are there themes?

Discussion Questions

What stuck out to you from this chapter?

Sit asserted 3 things as key parts of worship (embodied experiences, critical thought, celebrated together). Which is the most important to you? Are there any you would add or take away?

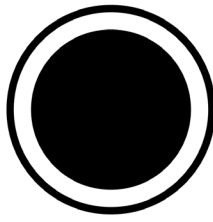
If worship doesn't matter much to you: what would need to happen in a worship service to make it relevant to you? If worship *does* matter to you, what keeps you coming back?

Application

Have the group reflect quietly for 30 seconds, then share in group: what is one small, faithful step that God is inviting you to regarding worship? Go around the circle and have every person respond (while reminding folks that it is always okay to say "pass")

Closing

Popcorn style, ask people to call out one word that describes how they feel leaving this session. Note folks who might need following up with (whether they said "inspired!" and you want to ask them to lead, or because they said "confused" and they might need extra support).



SESSION 2: CENTERING MARGINALIZED VOICES

Opening

Refresher of the Group Covenant

Practices Check-In

Read Scripture

Matthew 5:1-12 (or any other of your favorite Scriptures that fits the theme)

Icebreaker Activity

Give people a piece of paper, then ask them to respond to the prompt: "Let's pretend that your life has a news site that only reports *good* news. Write on this piece of paper what the headlines would be." Share in group. How does it feel to share good news?

Discussion Questions

What stuck out to you from this chapter?

What are spaces you have been in that successfully had a diverse gathering of people? What made that possible?

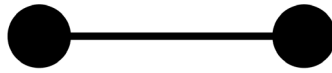
Sit introduced some key theological ideas: Empire, Christianity vs. Christendom, and the role of "judgment." How does this contrast with what you have heard in church?

Application

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Closing

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SESSION 3: PRAYER

Opening

Refresher of the Group Covenant

Practices Check-In

Read Scripture

Mark 11:22-25 (or any other of your favorite Scriptures that fits the theme)

Icebreaker Activity

Distribute paper and ask people to divide the paper into four equal sections. Title each one "Scripture," "tradition," "reason," and "experience." Then, give people 5 minutes to write their own "bibliography" of people, experiences, and places that informed them in that area. For Scripture, they might write their favorite verses, teachers, or preachers. For reason, they might write the book/movie/professor who taught critical thought. Ask people to share what they notice about their paper. Which area is the fullest? Which has the most positive associations?

Discussion Questions

What stuck out to you from this chapter?

Sit contrasts Gehenna, a landfill where things are stuck, with a compost pile, where the conditions for life can happen again. What was a time when you felt "stuck" in your life? Or you saw an experience "composted"?

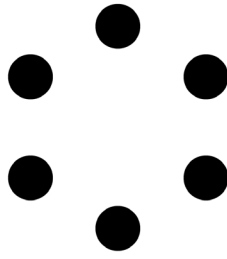
Have you ever had an experience of God in prayer? What was it like?

Application

Have the group reflect quietly for 30 seconds, then share in group: what is one small, faithful step that God is inviting you to regarding worship? Go around the circle and have every person respond (while reminding folks that it is always okay to say "pass")

Closing

Popcorn style, ask people to call out one word that describes how they feel leaving this session. Note folks who might need following up with (whether they said "inspired!" and you want to ask them to lead, or because they said "confused" and they might need extra support).



SESSION 4: GROUPS

Opening

Refresher of the Group Covenant

Practices Check-In

Read Scripture

John 15:9-17 (or any other of your favorite Scriptures that fits the theme)

Icebreaker Activity

Using their phones for reference, ask people to pick three emojis that describe the previous year of their lives. If people don't have phones, you can do the same exercise by asking people to make "statues" with their bodies that reflect the different moments. Ask a few people to share (you might not have time for everyone), then ask: what did it feel like to craft this story, to decide what to leave in or take out?

Discussion Questions

What stuck out to you from this chapter?

Sit writes, "the opposite of belief is not doubt but isolation" (p93). Are there any areas of your life where you feel isolated?

What do you think about the idea of meeting in groups? What are the worst- and best-case scenarios that could come out of a group like Sit describes?

Application

Have the group reflect quietly for 30 seconds, then share in group: what is one small, faithful step that God is inviting you to regarding worship? Go around the circle and have every person respond (while reminding folks that it is always okay to say "pass")

Closing

Popcorn style, ask people to call out one word that describes how they feel leaving this session. Note folks who might need following up with (whether they said "inspired!" and you want to ask them to lead, or because they said "confused" and they might need extra support).



SESSION 5: SABBATH

Opening

Refresher of the Group Covenant

Practices Check-In

Read Scripture

Genesis 2:1-4 (or any other of your favorite Scriptures that fits the theme)

Icebreaker Activity

This is a movement exercise, which you will obviously need to modify based on the mobility of people in the room. Ask people to create a “statue” or pose that shows what it feels like when you do not have enough rest. Ask everyone to look around and notice what pose other people chose. Then say, “I will slowly count to ten, and ask you to shift your body into a statue that shows what it feels like to have enough rest.” Count very slowly. Once people hit their well-rested post, ask them to look around again. What do people notice?

Discussion Questions

What stuck out to you from this chapter?

If you don’t observe Sabbath, what might your life be like if you did? If you do observe Sabbath, what has that practice taught you?

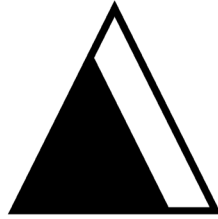
At the end of the chapter, Sit challenges us to imagine a world where everyone could observe a day of rest (p118). What do you think that would look like?

Application

Have the group reflect quietly for 30 seconds, then share in group: what is one small, faithful step that God is inviting you to regarding worship? Go around the circle and have every person respond (while reminding folks that it is always okay to say “pass”)

Closing

Popcorn style, ask people to call out one word that describes how they feel leaving this session. Note folks who might need following up with (whether they said “inspired!” and you want to ask them to lead, or because they said “confused” and they might need extra support).



SESSION 6: LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Opening

Refresher of the Group Covenant

Practices Check-In

Read Scripture

John 13:13–17 (or any other of your favorite Scriptures that fits the theme)

Icebreaker Activity

Ask people to step outside and spend time with a natural element (whether that be a tree or the sky, etc.) that resonates with them. Remind folks to pause, breathe, and notice fine details that you wouldn't if you were rushing by. After some deep breaths, invite people back to debrief the experience: how did it feel to just be?

Discussion Questions

What stuck out to you from this chapter?

Have you ever had either a “Oh hell no!” or “You, yes you” moment? How did that change you?

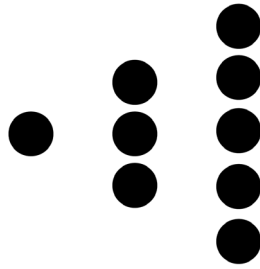
How do you relate to conflict? How does your culture relate to conflict? For better or for worse, how has that made a difference in you?

Application

Have the group reflect quietly for 30 seconds, then share in group: what is one small, faithful step that God is inviting you to regarding worship? Go around the circle and have every person respond (while reminding folks that it is always okay to say “pass”)

Closing

Popcorn style, ask people to call out one word that describes how they feel leaving this session. Note folks who might need following up with (whether they said “inspired!” and you want to ask them to lead, or because they said “confused” and they might need extra support).



SESSION 7: GENEROSITY

Opening

Refresher of the Group Covenant

Practices Check-In

Read Scripture

Matthew 23:23-24 (or any other of your favorite Scriptures that fits the theme)

Icebreaker Activity

Give people this prompt and three minutes. "What is an image that describes how you relate to money? Like we see on p156, you might think of it like a bird of freedom, a home (security) or a star (status). You can draw on a piece of paper or use your phone to search on a website like Pexels." Debrief.

Discussion Questions

What stuck out to you from this chapter?

Have you ever felt the fears listed on p157-159? What are you afraid of in your relationship to money?

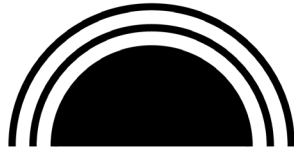
On p166 there are three images describing stewardship, hoarding, and overgiving. Which of these is the most resonant for you right now? Are there some areas of your life where you feel one more than the other?

Application

Have the group reflect quietly for 30 seconds, then share in group: what is one small, faithful step that God is inviting you to regarding worship? Go around the circle and have every person respond (while reminding folks that it is always okay to say "pass")

Closing

Popcorn style, ask people to call out one word that describes how they feel leaving this session. Note folks who might need following up with (whether they said "inspired!" and you want to ask them to lead, or because they said "confused" and they might need extra support).



SESSION 8: PLANTING

Opening

Refresher of the Group Covenant

Practices Check-In

Read Scripture

Acts 8:27-39 (or any other of your favorite Scriptures that fits the theme)

Icebreaker Activity

Ask the group: what are big challenges our community is facing? Write the responses on a big sheet of paper. Then, divide people into groups of three, assign them one of the problems listed on the paper, and give them these instructions: You have \$500, 50 people, and access to any space in the city. What is something you could do to address that problem?

Discussion Questions

What stuck out to you from this chapter?

What lesson are you taking with you from the story of the Ethiopian eunuch and Phillip?

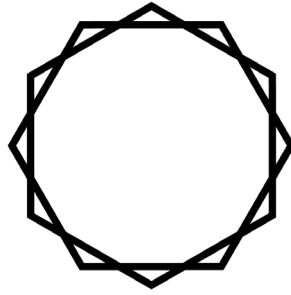
Have you ever wanted to start something that would make the world look a little more like the Kingdom of God? What would that be?

Application

Have the group reflect quietly for 30 seconds, then share in group: what is one small, faithful step that God is inviting you to regarding worship? Go around the circle and have every person respond (while reminding folks that it is always okay to say "pass")

Closing

Popcorn style, ask people to call out one word that describes how they feel leaving this session. Note folks who might need following up with (whether they said "inspired!" and you want to ask them to lead, or because they said "confused" and they might need extra support).



SESSION 9: PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER + EPILOGUE

Opening

Refresher of the Group Covenant

Practices Check-In

Read Scripture

Ephesians 4:1-6 (or any other of your favorite Scriptures that fits the theme)

Icebreaker Activity

Give people a few minutes to look at all of their Practices Check-In sheets. Debrief together: what patterns do you notice? Based on these sheets, might God be offering you an invitation? If you notice shame rising up, pause and take a breath.

Discussion Questions

What stuck out to you from this chapter?

Evaluation

Ask people to evaluate: what lessons are you taking away from this class together? What will you continue to wrestle with? If you plan on offering this class again, you may want to have a paper evaluation where people can candidly write "this is what I would do to make this better next time."

Closing

In a circle, ask people to say a blessing for each other. A blessing may be as simple as saying the person's name, then "May God give you _____." If the group is more familiar, this would also be a sweet moment for the group to offer affirmations.

Done!

STAYING AWAKE

PRACTICES CHECK-IN

Date:

Check each of the sentences below that apply to you. Check them even if you have only made small progress (baby steps are still steps!)

Monitor how you talk to yourself as you complete these exercises. If shame comes up (“I should have” will be the death of us all!), pause, and take a breath until you can reconnect with the sense of love God has for you. This exercise is not about shame, but about awareness. As you progress through this study, you have a chance to practice playful curiosity (“I wonder why I always avoid groups?” “I wonder why I get a stomachache when I think about money?”).

You will mature your faith more impactfully if you are *consistent* and *warm* with yourself, rather than one burst of energy or beating yourself up.

This week:

- I had a meaningful worship experience
- I intentionally centered someone more marginalized than I in my life
- I allowed myself to take up space to represent one of my marginalized identities
- I prayed (or practiced a spiritual practice, such as reading the Bible, etc.)
- I connected meaningfully with people I consider my community
- I observed Sabbath, the day of rest, this week
- I met with someone I’m mentoring (or being mentored by) to grow as a leader
- I made progress moving how I relate to money from *fear* to *provision* (gratitude for how God provides) to *stewardship* (wisely managing/giving away what God has given me)
- I have supported a new ministry
- I have ‘braided’ my practices in a way that feels appropriately challenging and natural