

AWAKE – WEEK 3

AWAKE
1.17.2021

START

To get things started, go around the circle and answer the following question:

What is the best piece of advice you've ever been given? Who gave it to you?

STEP 1

"Dream Big."

As we begin a new year, we all have dreams of what we hope it will become. Last year was unlike anything we have ever experienced, we all anticipate what is next, it is human nature. For some of us, this year, we are dreaming of that promotion that we have worked so hard to see materialize. For others, it is an opportunity on the horizon, but we just need some things to line up, maybe it will be any day now.

We have big plans and we set our gaze on that big idea...that distant formless hope, when right in front of us is a tangible reality we can touch and embrace. Right smack in front of us are actual people, oxygen to breathe, friendships, family members, resources, giftedness, and a God that wants you to get to know Him and His plans for you, right now.

There is nothing wrong with dreaming big dreams and to pursue the God given ones, but the moment we make the dream more important than the God who gives them, we create a lifeless idol for ourselves and grow distant from the living God who loves us. Our dream job is the one we have right now, that dream spouse is the one you live with, that dream opportunity is the one you have each day you walk out your front door.

We can dream big but live better.

As Christ followers, we need to be wide awake to the reality all around us. Instead of believing that there must be something better way out there in the future, we can live with purpose, power, and joy today through the power of God at work within us. We can live awake to life in all its fullness each and every day.

How has this series been for you so far? What has been your biggest take away?

STEP 2

Read Philippians 3:1-16

What do you think Paul means when he says, "But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ?" How can we apply that to our lives today?

Comparison is a thief. It steals our joy, our peace, and our contentment. And in Philippians 3 you can feel how badly Paul wants the church to know that.

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Paul spent the majority of his life tirelessly building his resume. He was caught up in the comparison contest. And he lays it out for us:

If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless” (Philippians 3:4-6).

In other words, when it comes to being religious, Paul is the winner of the contest. He does it better than just about anyone ever has. And where does it get him? Nowhere. He realizes through it all that it is nothing more than striving after wind. There is no reward for winning the comparison contest.

Through all of this, Paul learned that a relationship with Jesus is the only thing that brings us the lasting joy we are searching for. This is why he goes on to write: “But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ” (Philippians 3:7-8).

We now live in a world that makes it incredibly difficult to avoid the comparison trap. We have a device in our pocket that gives us access to everyone’s highlight reel on social media. Everywhere we turn we see what we lack and who we are not. But, there is truth and the truth is in God’s word. Let us contemplate Paul’s words in Philippians 3.

- Take some time to do that by discussing the following questions.
- In what ways do you find yourself falling into the comparison trap?
- Describe how you feel when you are comparing yourself to others?

C.S. Lewis once said, “Pride gets no pleasure out of having something, only out of having more of it than the next man.” What do you think he meant by that?

STEP 3

Read Philippians 4:1-13

Imagine receiving this letter from Paul in the first century? How do you think the church in Philippi responded to this part of the letter?

In the final chapter of his letter, Paul shares the secret of being content in every situation. Paul has reached a point where he is no longer concerned with comfort, riches, or fame. Which is really impressive because he is writing the letter from prison, so his circumstances are obviously far from ideal.

How has he managed to do this? What is the secret to being able to rejoice in all circumstances?

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For Paul, he learned how to get his focus off what he lacked and focus in on what he had. And what he had was something no circumstance can ever change: a relationship with Jesus! The Gospel is so beautiful to Paul that nothing else matters. This is how he was able to “Rejoice always” and “be content in all circumstances.” What he had in Jesus was enough.

There is much we can learn from Paul’s life and the way he lived day in and day out. Paul had this heart of gratitude no matter what. Having a heart of gratitude can shift everything. This is why Paul calls us to think about all things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and admirable (v. 8). When we begin to focus on the things we have to be thankful for, we can learn to rejoice in every situation! Here is a simple exercise we can do together.

Make a list of things that have frustrated you the most so far in 2021. What situations, relationships, or circumstances have caused you the most stress?

Now go back through your list and find something in each item to be thankful for. Find a way to put a positive spin on each thing on the list, even if it is something small. Has that thing brought you a different perspective?

MEMORIZE

[Matthew 6:25-26](#)

“Therefore, I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?”