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What's a HOST?

You can do this! We ask that each of our hosts do four things:

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H - Have an open heart O - Open your home S - Serve a snack

T - Tell a friend

HOSTs facilitate intentional conversations with people in their spheres of influence. Our hope is that our HOSTs will provide hubs of connection, set the stage for spiritual conversations, and positively impact their community.

We're here for you!

As a host you're not alone. You have a team at ALIVE cheering you on and ready to serve. We provide two resources for each of our HOSTs.

Study Guide – This study is designed to make facilitating group conversations easy and fun. Each study starts with a Connect question to help break the ice. This is followed by questions to Discuss the main content of each lesson, and followed with a Live it Out section that provides some practical ways for you and your friends to live out what you learn. Consider reading questions before the group arrives and marking the ones you want to discuss first.

Coach – Each HOST will be paired with a coach who will reach out to you over the next 6 weeks. They are there to support you, pray for you, and answer any questions you have as you lead.

And if you need anything, don't hesitate to reach out to me at jtegen@alivewesleyan. com.

Week 1: Road Map

Connect:

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What is one of the best trips you have ever taken and why?

Have you ever gotten really lost? What did you do to get out?

Discuss:

 If you want to get to your desired destination, you have to have a plan.
What are some areas in your life where you have plans in place? How have your plans guided your decisions?

2. "Direction, not intention, determines your destination." Andy Stanley How have you seen good intentions fall short?

3. Have you ever felt like you have connected with God? If so, what was that like? If not, what might that look like?

4. What are some activities or habits that you think might helps someone grow spiritually? 5. How can you know if someone is growing spiritually? What evidence might you expect to see in someone's life?

6. In his talk, Pastor Tom shared that, "The goal of spiritual growth is to be like Jesus." What do you think that might look like?

7. Do you have a plan for your spiritual growth? If so, what is it?

Live it out:

Take a few minutes to write a short list of activities or practices you have done to try to connect to God. (ex: pray, read a book about Jesus, spend time outdoors)

Look at that list, and draw a circle around things that have helped you connect with God. If you aren't sure, take some time to discuss this as a group.

What is one way you can practice connecting to God this week?

Week 2: Starting the Journey

Scriptures:

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1 Chronicles 16:11 Look to the Lord and his strength; seek his face always.

1 Chronicles 22:19 Now devote your heart and soul to seeking the Lord.

2 Chronicles 7:14 if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

Jeremiah 29:13 You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

Matthew 6:33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Psalm 27:4 One thing I ask of the Lord, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple.

Connect:

What comes to mind when you hear the word seek? What are some things in your own life that you are currently seeking?

If you were able to physically see God, what do you imagine God's face would look like?

Discuss:

1. Pastor Tom started this conversation with an image of sitting "Eyeball to eyeball with God." What do you think it might be like to be "eyeball to eyeball with God? How do you think you might feel, and why?

2. Read the scriptures listed above.

What can we learn about seeking God from these verses? What else stands out to you as you read through these verses?

3. What do you think it means to seek God's face?

4. Theologians and the writers of Scripture agree there is some kind of process; some direction we follow as we seek the face of God. How would you describe the process of getting to know a person and growing in that relationship? How would you describe the process of meeting and getting to know God? or

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Week 2 Starting the Journey

5. This week, Pastor Tom introduced us to St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross who helped reform the Catholic Church. What do you remember about their biographies? How might their upbringing or life experiences, impacted the way they view God?

6. "Let nothing disturb you, nothing frighten you, all things are passing, God is unchanging. Patience gains all; nothing is lacking to those who have God: God alone is sufficient." Teresa of Avila What can we learn about how St. Teresa related to God from this prayer? Which word or words from this prayer most encourage you?

7. Stage theory of spiritual growth is one way to describe the process people go through as they become like Jesus. How might talking about or understanding the process of growing spiritually, help you as you think about your own faith journey? 8. The stages of spiritual growth in stage theory are:

Awakening – coming to see ourselves and God as we truly are

Purgation – purifying or cleansing, bringing our behaviors into alignment with God

Illumination – God is no longer seen as out there, but is within our being, and is given absolute control of the relationship

Union. – final stage and involves full union with God, prayer of quietness

At first glance which stages do you think you have experienced and why? What might move someone from one stage to the next?

Live it out:

In a couple of words how would you describe your relationship with God right now? (If you don't feel like you have a relationship with God, talk about that.)

What is one thing that you could do regularly to grow in (or begin) that relationship? Choose one verse from the list at the beginning of this lesson to read each morning this week.

Week 3: Awakening

Scriptures:

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Isaiah 6:5 5 "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty."

Gen 28:16 Surely the LORD is in this place; and I did not know it.

Connect:

Are you a morning person or a night owl? In the ideal world, how would you like to be woken up each morning?

Other than waking from sleep, what are some other ways you have seen something awaken inside you in your life?

Discuss:

1. Awakening is the moment in our lives when we become aware or are awakened to the divineness of God.

When do you first remember becoming aware of God? Or if you haven't experienced this yet, what do you think this might be like?

2. Read the scriptures.

How do the people in these passages experience awakening? Can you think of other places in the bible where people were awakened? If so share those verses or stories.

3. Awakening is the process of coming to see something of ourselves as we are and coming to see something of God as God is. Sometimes this is a gradual experience. Sometimes this is a crisis or a more radical experience.

As you think of your own experience of awakening was it a gradual or a more radical experience? If you haven't experienced this personally, how have you seen this play out in someone else's life? or

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Week 3: Awakening

4. In awakening we are also awakened to our true self.

What do you think that means to be awakened to who God is and who we are? What might it look like for someone to be awakened to their true self?

5. The awakening to our true selves and to the reality of who God is usually produces two basic emotions in us. It is a comfort and it is a threat.

How might awakening to God and ourselves bring comfort? How might it be a threat?

6. What role do fear and trembling play in our relationship with God? What is the difference between healthy and unhealthy fear in that relationship? 7. Pastor Tom shared some ways we can know if we've experienced awakening. We should be able to think back on ourselves and say this is who I was before Jesus and this is who I was after Jesus. What other ways may someone know if they have experienced awakening?

8. How would you describe yourself before and after Jesus?

Live it out:

What are some ways that you can know who God is and who you really are?

Awakening is the beginning of becoming more like Jesus.

If you have experienced awakening, how have you seen yourself becoming more like Jesus? Take some time to thank God for the work He has done in your life.

If you haven't experienced awakening, is this something you want to experience? If so take some time this week to ask God to "awaken" you to who he is and who you are. Or ask someone in " your group to pray with you about this. Domin ions of

Week 4: Urga-what? Purgation - Cleansing

Scriptures:

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Galatians 5:19–21 (NIV84) 19 The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; 20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions 21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Philippians 4:6–7 (NIV84) 6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Connect:

When you think of purifying or cleansing what comes to your mind? What are some household objects that you cleanse or want to be pure? Are you someone who generally likes or dislikes cleaning? Why or why not?

Discuss:

1. Purgation simply means the purification or cleansing of someone or something...It is the process of bringing our behavior, our attitudes, our desires into increasing alignment with Jesus. What might it feel like to go through a cleansing process? How might you know if God wants to cleanse you of something?

2. How have your attitudes and behaviors changed as you have come to know Jesus? If you wouldn't describe yourself as knowing Jesus, how might you expect someone else's attitudes or behaviors to change when they meet Jesus?

3. During his talk, Pastor Tom has described his own spiritual journey in this way: My spiritual development has not been too linear. I have shared my personal spiritual growth seems to take the shape of a coil.

What image or shape would you say best describes your personal or spiritual growth? Why? or

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Week 4: Urga-what? Purgation - Cleansing

4. In his talk, Pastor Tom described three stages of purgation:

- Turning away from deliberate sin in our lives

- Look at the unconscious sin in our lives, addressing sins of omission

- Facing deep seated attitudes and inner orientations, growing in trust Which stage sounds the most challenging to you and why? How do these three stages each relate to the process of cleansing?

5. Read Galatians 5:19-21.

What are some of the things we are asked to turn away from here?

6. Keep looking at Galatians 5:19-21. How is this passage calling us to live differently from the pleasure-driven lifestyle? Look at the surrounding verses. Where do we find the power to live differently?

7. In his talk, Pastor Tom shared that, "Purgation is the process of moving from what God can do for us to falling in love with God." What do you think it means to fall in love with God? How might someone move from wanting something from God to wanting to know God? 8. Read Philippians 4:6-7.

How is growing in trust related to letting go of sin? How has your trust in God impacted your daily life? How might someone grow more trusting?

Live it out:

The topic of purgation deals with letting go of the things in our lives that are not from God. In this stage, we consider deliberate acts of sin, unconscious sins or sins of omission, and deep seated attitudes of misplaced trust.

Take a few minutes to pray asking God to reveal any areas of sin in your own life.

Is there anything you are doing that you believe God wants you to stop?

Is there anything you are not doing that God wants you to start?

Are you trusting in anything other than Jesus?

If any areas come to mind write them down and confess to God. If you are ready, consider sharing these areas with one person in your group.

End your time together praying Philippians 4:6-7. You may want to pray something like this:

Jesus help me not to be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present my requests to you God. And I believe Your peace, which transcends all understanding, will guard my heart and my mind in Christ Jesus.

Week 5: Illumination Total Surrender

Scriptures:

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Galatians 5:22–23 (NIV84) 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Connect:

What comes to mind when you hear the word surrender?

Have you ever surrendered in a fight, game, argument, or contest? If so what was that like?

Discuss:

1. Illumination describes the experience of total surrender to God in love.

When someone surrenders to God, what exactly are they surrendering? What might it look like to totally surrender to God?

2. In illumination we "shift from seeing God as 'out there' to an experience of God deep within our being, in here."

What are some ways that we may see God as "out there" or as distant from us? What might it look like for someone to see God as near and experience His presence within?

3. How might you describe the relationship between love and surrender? Does this dynamic play into your relationships with people as well as with God? Why or why not?

4. In purgation we let go of destructive patterns and sins and in illumination we embrace new, spirit-empowered attitudes.

How might purgation and illumination be related? Why do you think we go through purgation first? or

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Week 5: Illumination Total Surrender

5. Read Galatians 5:22-23.

Which fruits of the spirit do you see in your own life? Which fruit of the spirit from this list would you like to experience more of in your life and why?

6. In illumination a new peace is discovered by releasing ourselves to a God we trust and as a result, we discover the presence of God within. How might giving God control of our relationship lead to peace? How might you know if you have given God control of your life?

7. Illumination is also characterized by increasing social concern, not out of obligation but out of a real sense of God's love poured into our hearts for others.

What do you think the difference is between loving others out of obligation and loving others out of an overflow of God's love?

8. Have you ever seen someone embracing this others-centered stage of illumination? If so, what did that look like?

Live it out:

Before experiencing the power of God, this stage describes us surrendering control of our lives to God. Take a quick inventory, are there any areas of your life you are still trying to take control? Tell God "I trust you to take control of (you fill in the blank).

In the stage of illumination, we also talked about the connection between our relationship with God and our relationship with the world.

How has your relationship with God impacted the way you relate to others around you?

If you don't have a relationship with God, what are some of the things that motivate you to love others?

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Week 6: Union

Scriptures:

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Galatians 2:20 (NIV84) 20 I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Job 13:15 (NIV84) 15Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him;

Matthew 27:46 (NIV84) 46 About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"—which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

John 17:20–23 (NIV84) 20 "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, 21 that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. 22 I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: 23 I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

Connect:

Who in your life would you say you have the closest relationship to? (A friend, sibling, spouse?) What is your closest relationship like? What makes you so close?

Discuss:

1. Over the last several weeks we have worked through several stages on the spiritually journey—awakening, purgation, illumination and now union.

Which of these stages is easiest for you to relate to and why? Which stage do you think you are in right now? Explain.

2. Union is the experience of being at last in the kind of relationship with God for which we were created and for which we long.

What are some of the characteristics you hope to see in a healthy relationship with God? How do you one day hope to relate to God? or Domin ions of

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Week 6: Union

3. The union stage involves these four key components:

- **Prayer of Quietness** – This is a posture of giving ourselves totally to God's presence and purposes. Our deepest motivations and desires are for God to be in everything.

- **Dark Night of the Senses** – This refers to the period of time when we surrender our need to rely on our mind and our emotions to know God.

- **Full Union with God** – This is the point when our mind aligns with the will and loving designs of God. We want what God wants, and think like God. We are assured of his loving presence.

- **The Dark Night of the Spirit** – This is the stage of finally losing ourselves and finding God. It involves a feeling of falling between the loss of control and the everlasting arms enfolding us in Love. As you read through these four stages, which one sounds the most challenging to you and why? How might you know if you are walking through one of these stages?

4. Read Job 13:15 and Matthew 27:46. Which of the 4 stages of union do you think these scriptures describe and why? Can someone learn to trust God even when they feel abandoned by him? Why or why not?

5. How are the dark night of the senses and the dark night of the spirit different? How might these stages lead someone to a closer relationship with Jesus?

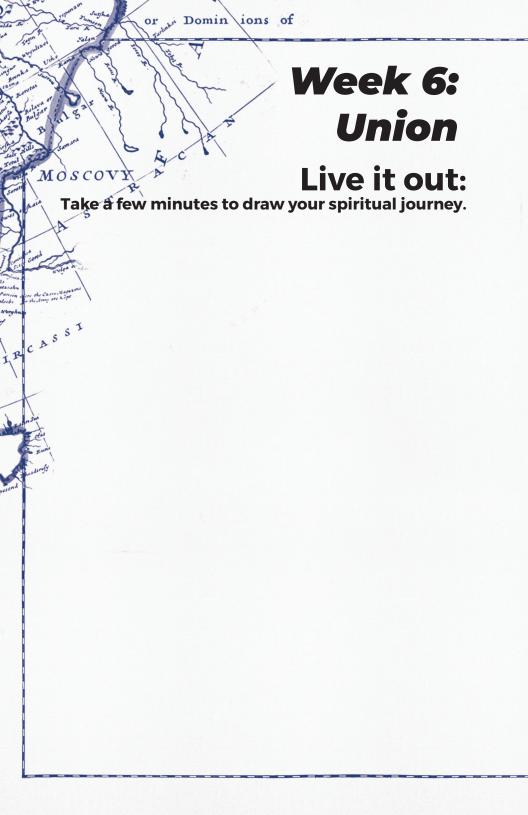
6. Have you ever walked through a dark night? If so, what was that like? What encouraged you during that season?

7. Read John 17:20-23.

How does this passage describe union with God? What do you find most appealing about union from these verses?

8. What might it look like to want what God wants or to think like God?

9. Have you ever been around someone who you believe was experiencing union with Christ? What were they like?





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Your Life Now

Have you met Christ? If so what was your life like before Christ?

How did your life change after Christ? What is God doing right now in your spiritual life?

If you have not yet met Christ, draw where you think you are in relationship to Christ. What have been the highs and lows of your spiritual journey.

Look at your maps, if you can label the stages of spiritual development you see in them. (Awakening, Purgation, Illumination, and Union). Now pick a point out in the distance, where you hope to end up spiritually.

How are you going to get there? Take some time to pray as a group over each other on this journey.

What's Next?

If you loved HOSTing, contact us to see if you leading a Group at ALIVE is a good fit you can sign up on alivewesleyan.info. Group Leaders lead healthy communities that produce missional believers.

We ask all our Group Leaders to:

- Attend Discovery Class and become a member of ALIVE
- Attend a Group Leader Training
- Meet with a Team Leader

If you aren't ready to lead a group, consider joining another small group, going through the 4Ds, or ask about additional HOST group curriculum.

Helpful Resources:

Follow Up Studies:

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or

The Circle Maker – Mark Batterson study on prayer, video available

The Hour that Changes the World by Dick Eastman – how to book on prayer

The Celebration of Discipline by Richard Fos-

ter – book on spiritual disciplines Unforced Rhythms by Gwen Jackson – book on rhythms people follow in spiritual growth Life Guides by Intervarsity Press – Short studies on various topics and books in the bible Five Things God Uses to Grow Your Faith by Andy Stanley – Group study Sermon Discussion Questions – Follow the weekly messages at ALIVE Youversion – Bible reading plans etc.

Sources used for this study:

Dark Night of the Soul by St. John of the Cross Invitation to a Journey: A Road Map for Spiritual Formation by Robert Mulholland Sacred Flame by Ronald Rolheiser The Shattered Lantern by Ronald Rolheiser The Way of Perfection by St. Teresa of Avila



