

Foreword by CRAIG GROESCHEL

AWAKENING

A New Approach to Faith, Fasting, and Spiritual Freedom

21 Days
to
Revolutionize
your
Relationship
with
God

STOVALL
WEEMS



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Praise for
Awakening

“I began fasting as a teenager simply out of a hunger for more of God. It was during a fast that I experienced an awakening. This moment propelled me into my calling to preach the gospel. Through these pages, Pastor Stovall Weems challenges the reader to believe God for a Christian life that is not just focused on the glory of someday but on the glory of today—living in His presence, awakened by His Spirit, and walking in His purpose. Your awakening is not far off! This book will give you the keys to your breakthrough.”

—JENTEZEN FRANKLIN, senior pastor of Free Chapel and *New York Times* best-selling author of *Fasting: Opening the Door to a Deeper, More Intimate, More Powerful Relationship with God*

“There is an awakening simmering in this generation. It’s an awakening of power, integrity, and a wholehearted pursuit of Jesus. Nobody embodies these characteristics more than my friend Stovall Weems. If you want your soul to be ignited with the passion it was created to possess, you need to read this book.”

—STEVEN FURTICK, lead pastor of Elevation Church
and author of *Sun Stand Still*

“In order to effectively lead others as a church leader, one of the most important things you will ever do is learn to lead yourself well. In *Awakening*, Stovall Weems shares some valuable principles to help ensure that *your* spiritual leadership remains healthy, vibrant, and full of the life and fire of God. The message of *Awakening* is one that is vital for every church leader, and I’m so glad Stovall is sharing these principles with the body of Christ. *Awakening* will not only encourage you today, but it will also prepare you for tomorrow.”

—JOHN C. MAXWELL, author, speaker, and founder
of EQUIP Leadership Inc.

“Passion. Zeal. Authenticity. These are the characteristics that should describe the life of one who loves God. I want them to describe mine, and if this book is in your hands, then you most likely want the same. There is no one better suited for giving us insight into how to obtain all three than Stovall Weems. His enthusiasm for spiritual things is genuine and contagious. Choosing to read these pages will dramatically transform your walk with the Lord. So wipe your tired spiritual eyes and prepare for your awakening.”

—PRISCILLA SHIRER, author and Bible teacher

“This world will never be changed by passive people. All the greatest accomplishments of humanity have come about through passionate people who weren’t afraid of what others thought or spoke of them. *Awakening*, my friend Stovall Weems’s book, is a wake-up call to every Christian to get off the sidelines, discover the passion inside of them, and live the extraordinary life God calls them to live.”

—JOHN BEVERE, author of *Extraordinary: The Life You’re Meant to Live*, speaker, and cofounder of Messenger International

“We know deep down in our hearts that we really are meant to live in an exciting, passionate, ongoing, head-over-heels relationship with Jesus, but many of us just don’t know how to maintain it. In *Awakening*, Stovall Weems shows us how easy it really is! Thanks for reawakening my soul through this life-changing book!”

—ROBERT MORRIS, senior pastor of Gateway Church

“If you want to experience God in a rich, powerful, and passionate way every day, then without a doubt you will want to read *Awakening*. Knowing God through prayer and fasting can be something that changes you forever. My friend Stovall lives this way daily, and he is revealing secrets that I’ve never seen or read before. We all need this book, and we need it now.”

—RICK BEZET, lead pastor of New Life Church, Central Arkansas

“In His own words, Jesus said that He came to earth so that we could experience an abundant life. In other words, the personal and intimate relationship we can have with God should usher in nothing short of extraordinary experiences every single day. Yet far too often, Christians find their relationship with God lacking something. In the pages of *Awakening*, my close friend Stovall Weems unpacks the power and potential of a revitalized and reenergized relationship with God. And he shows us exactly what it takes for us to remain alert and expectant in our faith so that we will encounter the extraordinary every day!”

—ED YOUNG, pastor of Fellowship Church and author
of *Outrageous, Contagious Joy*

“In *Awakening*, Stovall Weems unpacks the timeless truth that there is power in praying and fasting. Your relationship with God will receive a jolt like you’ve never experienced before with the practical teaching that is revealed throughout this book. As you read, my prayer is that you’ll find yourself more excited than ever before about the present and future of your life.”

—DINO RIZZO, lead pastor of Healing Place Church

“Stovall Weems is a modern-day prophet. In this groundbreaking book he helps to awaken us to the fact that God wants us to live a radical, passionate Christianity. Jesus did not come to give us a religious obligation but abundant life. I was left with a renewed love and passion for Jesus and a clearer understanding of the privilege and purpose of prayer and fasting. This man lives this message, and read it at your own risk. You will never be the same.”

—CHRISTINE CAINE, director of Equip and Empower Ministries
and founder of The A21 Campaign

“One of the things I love most is seeing people have a ‘get it’ moment that changes their life. This book will do that for you. I love the fact that it is both inspirational and informational. Stovall’s passion has impacted my life, and

through this book, it will impact your life too. Read it and experience an awakening. As Stovall puts it, ‘After an awakening, life is never the same.’”

—JOHN SIEBELING, lead pastor of The Life Church,
Memphis, Tennessee

“At a time when the moral fabric of our generation is eroding and people’s hearts are further and further away from God, Stovall Weems calls us back to God with all of our hearts. In this powerful and timely book, you’ll be both inspired and informed about the life-transforming power of prayer and fasting. This is a must-read at any stage in your walk with God.”

—CHRIS HODGES, senior pastor of Church of the Highlands,
Birmingham, Alabama

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This book is dedicated to all our Celebration Church family.

I'm thankful for the privilege of being your pastor and love doing life with you guys. It's an honor to serve God with such an authentic, devoted, fired-up group of people.

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FOREWORD

I feel obligated to warn you. The author of this book, Stovall Weems, is not a normal person. You don't have to spend more than a few minutes with him to realize there is something different about this guy. His family is different. His church is different. His take on knowing and serving God is different.

You might say Stovall is a bit weird—in the best sort of way.

Let's face it. Normal is not working very well, is it? It's normal for marriages to end in divorce or limp along pathetically for years. It's normal for people to struggle financially, living paycheck to paycheck, hoping for a better day that never comes. It's normal for people to believe in God but live as if He doesn't exist. When it comes to most things in the world today—normal isn't working.

Thankfully, Stovall has written a book that is nothing close to normal.

When I first met Stovall several years ago, I realized we had similar stories. Although we are both pastors today, we weren't raised in Christian homes. In fact, we were both party guys. We both got into lots of trouble, chased lots of girls, and drank lots of cheap beer—and we both met the God we'd heard about in a very personal way. Because of God's love through His Son, Jesus, neither of us would ever be the same.

Overwhelmed with passion for this amazing God, both of us stepped into full-time vocational ministry. To be honest, when I became a pastor, I envisioned Bible studies, prayer meetings, and constant spiritual bliss. Instead I discovered that ministry is a real job and has real problems just like those every other person faces in this real world.

My once-raging fire for God started to cool. The light that had shone brightly for years quietly dimmed. My time in prayer became shorter and less meaningful. Before long, I read the Bible to prepare messages but not out of

personal longing for God. I told scores of people that I'd pray for them, but I rarely did. I spoke the spiritual language but lacked real spiritual passion.

Spiritually, I started to fall asleep.

But one day, God clearly showed me something that jarred me awake: I'd become a full-time pastor and a part-time follower of Christ.

Perhaps you can relate. Maybe there was a time when you were closer to God than you are today. You loved His Word, craved His presence, and recognized His voice. God was everything to you. But life started happening. You didn't notice at first, but you started to slowly drift from Him. Weeks passed, then months, maybe even years. One day you realized that you'd been on a long spiritual nap. Now you're a full-time mom or businessperson or student or whatever—and a part-time follower of Christ.

If that's you—it's no accident you're holding this book in your hands. Like I said, Stovall is not a normal person. And this is not a normal book.

I can tell you honestly that Stovall's awakening message has impacted me personally in a life-altering way. When he first challenged me to seek God for twenty-one days, I was open to it—until he explained that we would be fasting. I quickly found several excuses to avoid anything that got between food and me. And my excuses held for two years straight.

However, after spending a weekend with Stovall at his church, God (through Stovall) convinced me to seek Him for an awakening—one that included fasting. Though it wasn't an easy journey, it was worth every sacrifice and more. Life, my church, my marriage, my family, and my passion for Christ have never been the same. I promise you that if you take this journey seriously, you'll see similar or even better spiritual results.

Open your heart. Open your mind. Open your spirit.

It's time for your awakening.

—CRAIG GROESCHEL
Senior Pastor, LifeChurch.tv
Edmond, Oklahoma

Awakening

Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.

—ROMANS 12:11, NIV

HOW CLOSE DO YOU FEEL TO GOD? Most of us sense that there's *more* to a relationship with God than what we currently are experiencing. But how do we develop a more intimate bond with Him?

As a devoted follower of Jesus, I have learned some secrets to staying consistently fresh in my relationship with God. This deepening friendship begins with what I call an *awakening*.

After an awakening, life is never the same.

A relationship with God is the most fulfilling thing a person can experience. Yet I have observed that while the vast majority of believers start out with a lot of passion and zeal in their relationship with God, over time that enthusiasm subsides.

On a day-to-day basis, their relationship with God eventually becomes passive. There are occasional bursts of excitement, but even that excitement is short-

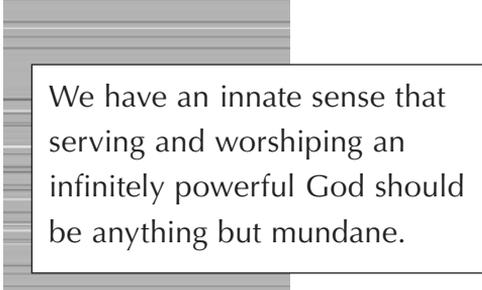
lived. Their walk with God seems to have a few highs, some lows...and a whole lot of mundane in-betweens.

Passionate Christianity should be the norm for every believer—not the exception.

Why is that?

Does it strike you, as it has me, that there is something terribly wrong with that picture? Jesus said, “I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly” (John 10:10). Aren’t we vaguely unsettled with the idea that somehow a daily relationship with God...*the* God of the universe...can end up with the flavor of stale bread? The Bible is clear that our passion and “spiritual fervor” should be constant (Romans 12:11, NIV). So why have so many Christians accepted a faith experience that is so far below what God intended for them?

I believe we have an innate sense that serving and worshiping an infinitely powerful God should be anything but mundane. However, many people appear to think that dynamic interactions with God occur only at random times or, for some unknown reason, just are not happening now. And they certainly don’t expect such encounters on a consistent basis. These believers find themselves at a loss as to how to recover the freshness and excitement they once felt and end up walking through life unaware that a passionate, thriving relationship with God should be the norm, not the exception, for every follower of Christ.



We have an innate sense that serving and worshiping an infinitely powerful God should be anything but mundane.

exception, for every follower of Christ.

Does any of this sound familiar to you? Maybe at one time you were excited about God, and were full of His life. Maybe you once felt free and

were enjoying your relationship with God. But now, if you’re honest, you know other things have grabbed your attention, and your heart has hardened to the joy and freshness you once felt. Or maybe you are far from God and struggling with addictive behavior or other issues. (And, by the way, is there really anyone who doesn’t have issues?)

How is it that we can become content with a mediocre spiritual life? It’s as if our soul itself grows dull and numb and needs to be shocked back to an

awakened state. The good news is that the potential for a lasting, thriving relationship with God really is there. It just has to be awakened!

When I surrendered my life to Christ, one of the most powerful components of that experience was *awakening* to the very presence of God. I still remember the feeling. All of a sudden, my soul woke up. Deep inside, in an area I didn't even know existed, I felt new emotions and was so alive and full of joy, excitement, and freedom—all at the same time. This feeling was so good, so real, so authentic that I never wanted to lose it.

Since my awakening more than twenty years ago, I have been in a constant fight to keep that state of newness and freedom in my soul. And to this day nothing is as important to me as keeping my relationship with God fresh and new.

You may think that is an unrealistic, perhaps even undesirable, goal. After all, aren't new believers full of emotion and zeal? Eventually we have to calm down and get serious about following God, right? You may have even heard something like this a few times: "You can't always live on a mountaintop!" or, "You will be an emotional roller coaster if you base your walk with God on feelings."

On the contrary, this pursuit of "first love" or freshness has kept my spiritual walk consistent and thriving all these years. In how I relate to God and how I obey and trust Him, my heart has stayed in a posture of "want to" instead of "have to." Guarding the fire of devotion in my heart is the most foundational spiritual discipline of my Christian life. When that fire burns brightly, I love worshiping, praying, and obeying God. I hear His voice clearly, and my daily life is an overflow of power and grace. But when that fire dims and smolders, I find that even basic commitments become burdensome as I try to maintain them in my own strength.

Guarding the fire of devotion in my heart is the most foundational spiritual discipline of my Christian life.

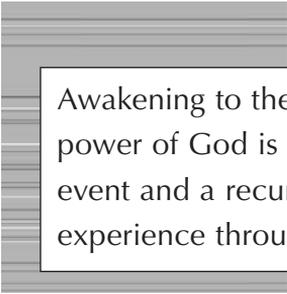
We can have now, on a daily basis, the same vital connection with Christ that we had on the day He saved us. “As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him” (Colossians 2:6). We are all called to be “zealous for good works” (Titus 2:14), and we’re going to have to fight to “never be lacking in zeal” and always “keep [our] spiritual fervor” (Romans 12:11, NIV).

Maintaining this newness and freshness with God is something we must literally fight to protect. Make no mistake about it—we have a very real enemy who wants nothing more than for our souls to be lulled to sleep, all while we think everything’s okay.

LIVE ON A MOUNTAINTOP?

So how do we continually experience newness in a world where everything ages? How do we experience freshness where everything quickly becomes stale? We have to wake up!

Awakening to the presence and power of God is both a one-time event and a recurring newness we experience throughout our lives. Some would say that this state of newness is a mountaintop experience, one that is nice to have every once in a while, but unsustainable in real life. But if you will stick with



Awakening to the presence and power of God is both a one-time event and a recurring newness we experience throughout our lives.

me, I will show you that not only is it possible to live a life fully awakened to God at all times, but it is the desire and will of God that you do so.

If we are not living that way, we have no one to blame but ourselves. If you don’t believe me, then go ahead and put this book down and live how you want to live. But if you want an ongoing mountaintop experience, and if you’re ready for your relationship with God to go to the next level, then keep reading and get ready for an incredible journey to your own personal awakening!

Your entire life really *can* be one big breakthrough. You *can* consistently feel God in your emotions and experience joy, even in the most difficult seasons of your life. That's what this book is about—I promise you that your immediate future can become the best time of your life! And this experience with God can be sustained year after year.

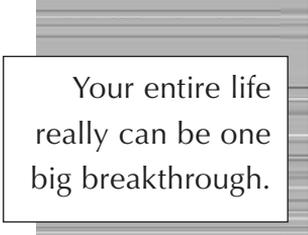
Don't allow the pain of this world to push you down into just biding your time here on earth and hoping for a better day in heaven. Yes, let's hope for a better day when we are all in heaven with Jesus, but until that time, let's live life as God intended it to be lived—fully awake, fully alive, and walking in a *continual* state of freshness and newness before God!

Regardless of where you find yourself today, you can live a life of passion for God. Remember, passionate Christianity is supposed to be the norm, not the exception. The principles of awakening to God and living a sustainable awakened lifestyle are the same principles that can get you free from addictions, bad habits, or anything else that is holding you back from God's best for your life.

I am not saying that every day will be like heaven on earth. I am not saying that you won't have days and seasons that feel drier than others—I have had my share of those. In my two-plus decades of walking with God I know what it is to suffer, be disappointed, and feel discouraged. Neither am I saying that we should only live according to our feelings or base our relationship with God on experience alone.

I am saying I believe the Bible is clear about this: experiencing God and feelings go hand in hand. The Holy Spirit inside of us brings a whole new set of incredible emotions to life. God wants us consistently passionate for Him, and passion involves feelings!

Over the next chapters and in the “Awakening 21-Day Plan,” I will show you how I keep things fresh and alive in my relationship with God. You, too, can apply these principles of spiritual renewal to your own life, and experience God's very best.



Your entire life
really can be one
big breakthrough.

In this book I will tell you some of my story, walk you through a process of having your own personal awakening or reawakening with God, and show you how to keep that awakening experience vital, day after day and year after year. This book is about totally revolutionizing your walk with God so you can have the lasting, exciting relationship with Him you have dreamed about.

Awakening is an experience, but it must be based on a foundation of biblical truth and principles. There is no formula to this, but I believe there are progressive steps of understanding and decisions that if followed will lead almost everyone to a much deeper spiritual awareness and relationship with God. In the chapters that follow I will share what I call the steps of awakening. They are—

- experiencing surrender
- experiencing passion for God
- experiencing God's goodness
- creating space for God to fill

In a world where we're constantly bombarded with images, sounds, and counterfeit experiences that demand our attention and threaten to distract us, we can lose our spiritual focus and settle for cheap substitutes. We must discover how to remain awakened to God so that we can feel Him, hear Him, and have clear vision for our lives.

If you have lost your love, your passion, your “want to” attitude in your relationship with God, let's get those back. It is time to get your fight back, hit the reset button, and experience God in an incredibly fresh, new way.

Hold on and get ready for an awakening!

Resources including

Video

▪

Devotional

▪

Fasting Plans

available at Awake21.org