



The Awakening of Hope: Why We Practice a Common Faith

Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove

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According to Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, faithful action is always inspired and sustained by common convictions—the basic truths that have sustained God's people throughout every generation.

The Awakening of Hope re-presents Christian faith by beginning with stories of faithful witness and asking, Why? Why do Christians eat together? Why do we fast? Why would we rather die than kill? These are the questions that help us see why creation and the fall, covenant and community, ethics and evangelism matter.

This book and its accompanying DVD project is a contemporary catechism, celebrating lives and stories that wouldn't make sense if the gospel were not true. And then going one step further, this project shares the good news of Jesus and the way of life that he makes possible.

The Awakening of Hope: Why We Practice a Common Faith Details

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Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove**

From Reader Review The Awakening of Hope: Why We Practice a Common Faith for online ebook

Benjamin Vineyard says

The Awakening of Hope (Wilson-Hartgrove) [Book Review]

Who can help guide us in the Jesus way of life as we live together, establishing rhythms and traditions in our communities?

What would be helpful, I feel, is a catechism that helps establish an answer for the way of life we've taken on rather than just answers for the doctrines we hold to be true.

Why a catechism? Well, because such books have been held by communities of faith as a rule and guide for nurturing their communal identity. They're stepping stones for educating new folks to the community on what the community believes to be important.

Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove has taken on such a project with The Awakening of Hope, a contemporary catechism.

I borrowed this line from Goodreads: "The Awakening of Hope re-presents Christian faith by beginning with stories of faithful witness and asking, Why? Why do Christians eat together? Why do we fast? Why would we rather die than kill? These are the questions that help us see why creation and the fall, covenant and community, ethics and evangelism matter.

I think this approach to catechetical guidance is beautiful and paramount. It assumes a way of life to be lived into and guides others into it as the elements of life together are explored.

Once a life is examined, it is easy to explain to others why we do things, where the hope to do such things (like frequently eating together) come from, and why, if someone were to take those rhythms into their own life, they'd discover redemption that Jesus has freed and forgiven all people for.

This conversational feel is also where I discover a major hurdle for the life of The Awakening of Hope book in today's American Christian life. The book is written from a perspective of people who are already living a certain way of life and inviting and teaching others into those rhythms.

For many of us, life inside a Christian community with a common way of life (traditionally called a Rule) is foreign. So, for those reading with this feel, Wilson-Hartgrove's guidance comes to us as more of a "these are things we could/should be about," rather than the tone he has the privilege to extend to those around him on the basis of his community life: "These are things we practice as a community; come and live redemptively into them."

This same hurdle is what I felt when I finished the book, but it is also a tremendous invitation for the common Christian church in America. I've personally held for a while now that it would be beneficial to have congregations write up a "rule of life" that spells out rhythms much like what Hartgrove's book wrote out.

(This was the first time I felt the similarity between a Rule of Life and a Catechism. What's needed is a

merge, like Wilson-Hartgrove's book.)

As for the contents of the book, here's the chapter breakdown:

Why we eat together:

Why we fast:

Why we make promises:

Why it matters where we live:

Why we live together:

Why we would rather die than kill:

Why we share Good News:

All of the chapters were grounded in what God first has been doing, and then our human awakening to participate or enter into the work/grace of God. The chapters all have a hunger element to them - they aim to cultivate a hunger for the life of Jesus within our own lives. Hence the title: Awakening of Hope. The practices we live out form us deeply, particularly when they are filled with the narrative of Jesus, and point us to hunger for him and his redemptive way. Wilson-Hartgrove's book does that for us.

When I closed The Awakening of Hope, I paused to imagine what the book could be if it had the authority like a modern, Mainline Christian catechism would have (like my own family's Luther's Small Catechism). I feel like the catechism I inherited spelled out some of the logic of faith, and talked about the substance of a life of faith, but didn't so much talk about the life itself, the rhythms and the practices that extend beyond getting more assurance for forgiveness of my personal sin and rather find myself, my community, propelled to participate in the kingdom of God as it unfolds, which begins with the announcement, "You are forgiven."

I end with this question:

What could a catechism that weaved something like Luther's Small Catechism in with something like St. Benedict's Rule do for our faith communities?

Tim says

A book that reflects on historical practices of the church, examining them from Scripture, from history, especially that of monasticism, and from Wilson-Hartgrove's own experience within and beyond the New Monasticism. It is a kind of catechism, focused on discipleship, without ignoring doctrine. The practices he focuses on include: why we eat together, why we fast, why we make promises, why it matters where we live, why we live together, why we would rather die than kill, and why we share the good news. Wilson-Hartgrove's writing is simple and direct and always challenging. I did find some of the earlier chapters rambled on me some - I lost the train amid the many excellent stories and examples coming paragraph by paragraph. The last three chapters cohered better for me and are moving and eloquent, a real force with their insistent and winsome message of what the message of Jesus means. It is a book clear-eyed about the necessity and work of community and confident in the power of grace. Wonderful.

Josh says

Seemed like a jumbled mess of disconnected thoughts, but I don't think the audio did it justice. Probably better in print.

Katie says

The Awakening of Hope answers several seemingly simple questions in order to get to the heart of why Christians believe what they believe rather than talk about what they're supposed to believe: Why do we eat together? Why do we fast? Why do we make promises? etc. It aims to clearly present the basic truths that have formed the foundation of Christianity throughout the ages, and while it does so by relying on assumptions that more secular or liberal Christians may not necessarily share, it's still a very well-presented and interesting argument for why there is hope despite the difficulties and challenges Christians face in modern America.

This book was a gift from a respected colleague who highly recommended it, so I was determined to read it cover to cover despite a rather off-putting remark in the foreword: "No doubt many post-modern, post-Christian, post-evangelical, post-everything folks will cringe at the idea of discipline"—don't let this language scare you away, because the rest of the book is much more generous. I was particularly impressed that the author readily admits that "[w]ithout the church there is no salvation" is not, then, a claim that God's people 'get it' while everyone else is missing the point...our [Christian] leaders miss the point, we can (as a group) be further from God's kingdom than our non-Christian neighbors..." (120) to further an argument.

The first few chapters are not as engaging as the middle and end of the book, mainly because things start out slow and basic in order to build toward a more complex message. The author includes plenty of references to scripture, etymology, and history, the latter being particularly enjoyable. I especially liked the author's explanation of *koinonia*, which he defines as "[t]he grace-dependent and graciously hospitable understanding of fellowship" (113), although much of the argument, like much of the book, is dependent on the assumption of original sin, which has always been a concept I struggle to understand. I also liked the imagery of faith bringing people together like points on the circumference of a circle moving closer to each other as they move toward the center (115).

Gregory says

I respect what Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove is doing, and pray that more church leaders will follow his courageous and provocative example. Most church leaders stay secluded from the communities they live in, but Jonathan is busy getting his hands dirty in the real world. We're both engaged in similar work, in the same part of the country, so I would consider him an ally and a mentor. I share his vision, in general, though I suspect we would differ in some particulars. For instance, I'm not convinced that Christians should be pacifists, though I did find it interesting that the medieval church had rites of penitence and confession for returning soldiers (pg. 134). On other issues, such as women's ordination and homosexuality, I'm afraid I must remain theologically old-school and "intolerant". But, though I'm not a pacifist, I share Jonathan's critique of the American military-industrial complex. Just because our government decides to go to war, does not make it "just." Just because I believe homosexuality is sinful, does not mean I hate homosexuals. Rather, I believe we should welcome them into the church, as the only place to find true healing and healthy love.

On other issues, such as racial reconciliation and caring for the poor, Jonathan is putting us conservatives to shame. We sit comfortably in our pews, listening to yet another screed on the latest hot topic in the "culture wars," while we neglect the poor down the road and only hang out with others of the same race. The stories that Jonathan tells are inspiring and moving. They encourage, and should provoke many American Christians to return to the ancient practices of community, eating together, making promises, thinking about where we live, fasting, making peace, and proclaiming the Gospel. It's ironic that so many Christians can give a theologically-correct statement of the Gospel, yet it has so little effect on our lives. This book joins Davidd Platt's "Radical" and J.D. Greear's "Gospel" as essential reading for Christians looking to put feet on their faith.

May this little book speed the awakening of thousands more communities of genuine Hope!

Donald says

This is another book from Wilson-Hartgrove that builds on the ideas of what it means to live our God's mission in the world as people rooted in faith, place and community. I have a full review at <http://bubsblurbs.com/?p=1620> This is definitely a book worth reading and sharing once you have read it.

Adam Shields says

Book Review: The Awakening of Hope: Why We Practice a Common Faith by Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove - a modern narrative form of catechism teaching. This form is highly influenced by the new monastic movement and Wilson-Hartgrove's strong commitment to place. It feels more like theological reflections by Eugene Peterson or Wendell Berry more than a traditional catechism. And that is partially successful. I think it is worth reading for the ways in which he is trying to contextualize basic Christian education to his own context. But there are places where I think he goes too far and many places where I think he does not bring up essential parts of basic Christian theology. I hate complaining about what authors do not write, but it feels inevitable here.

Click through for a full review on my blog at <http://bookwi.se/awakening-hope-pract...>

Michael says

It was an interesting book - I'm glad I read it. He told stories in there that rang true to my ear. Some of them helped me see things a little different - or clarified things I want to struggle with in my life and ministry. I wished for a deeper book - one that reflected more than the surface level I thought he touched on. When he told stories I was moved, and could feel the emotion. When he moved to the philosophy or the scripture the book seemed to lose a little steam.

Robert says

A creative approach to some elements of catechism.

Michele Zuniga says

Underpinnings of Renewal

I liked learning more about the fundamental beliefs of the new monasticism, which are similar to the underpinnings of most Christian churches, although the communities JWH describes have a few different practices. I want to keep up with these folks as their thinking and practice evolve.

Pathway Midland says

"Awakening of Hope" explores the topic of hope from a kingdom perspective as it examines seven different common practices of the community of which the author is a part: Eating together, fasting, making promises, living together, living in a certain area, elevating the choice of our own death over our choice to kill, and sharing the gospel. Each practice is looked at in depth and examined in light of scripture and some of the historical movement/practices of the church. The author includes a lot of his own experiences which helps to bring together the teaching in a way in which the reader can easily relate. As Christians we are in the process of becoming and we look forward to when the God will reign supreme and his Kingdom will have fully arrived. Until that time we wait in hope, we speak in hope and we live in hope as we usher in his kingdom.

- Curtis

James says

I continue to be challenged and inspired by the New Monastic movement. I live in a sleepy suburb isolated from my Christian community, but the challenge of Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove and Shane Claiborne stirs me to delve deeper into intentional community and invest in a particular place. In *The Awakening of Hope: Why We Practice a Common Faith*, Johnathan Wilson-Hartgrove explores the habits which shape convictions and sustain God's people. The accompanying six-session DVD and discussion guide explores each of the themes in the book from a different angle. In the review below I will discuss the book first, then the DVD and the discussion guide.

Wilson-Hartgrove has culled together a set of Christian practices into a type of catechism intended to inspire hope, conversation and action. He shares inspirational stories and also delves into the reason behind each practice. He focuses on the convictions that 'undergird a way of life that makes witness possible (15).' This book discusses these practices:

Why We Eat Together
Why We Fast
Why We Make Promises
Why it Matters Where We Live
Why We Live Together
Why We Would Rather Die Than Kill
Why We Share the Good News

Wilson-Hartgrove shares personal examples (and those of friends) which illustrate the meaning of each practice. In his reflections he challenges us to greater community, radical hospitality and identification with Christ's suffering, a consistent Pro-Life ethic, and integrity in Christian witness. The chapters are short, easy reads, but they offer some significant challenges.

I really appreciate Wilson-Hartgrove's writing. I like how he thoughtfully draws together theological and biblical reflection, church history and lived experience. He is a thoughtful writer and has thought and lived deeply each of these practices. But he manages to share his deep insights into the Christian life and his experience without sounding arrogant or self aggrandizing. There is humility in his prose and while I am awed by his theological insights, street smarts and wholehearted commitment, I never feel like reading his books is like 'going to one of the experts.' He is a smart man, but there is humility and grace here too.

In the accompanying DVD Wilson-Hartgrove and his co-conspirator Shane Claiborne bring together material which complements (but does not reproduce the book). The six sessions discuss each of the practices in Wilson-Hartgrove's book (Eating together and Fasting, are discussed together). Each of the sessions has an example of what people are doing. There are several inspiring interviews. On the Eating/Fasting session, much of the video portion focuses on an interview of Chris Haw of Camden, NJ and what his community is doing with urban farming. In subsequent sessions there is an interview with Jean Vanier (Why We Make Promises), Civil Rights leader Ann Atwater (Why it Matters Where We Live), Ethan's Mom Dayna (Why We Would Rather Die Than Kill—this is a story worth hearing in its entirety) and Reverend William Barber (Why We Share Good News). In the section on 'Why We Live Together, Shane and Jonathan both share about their lives in their respective communities. Each of these voices adds color and depth to the topic.

In the discussion guide for the DVD (located at the back of the book) there are questions on the DVD presentation and chances to delve deeper into Scripture and tradition by examining Bible passages and quotations from church history. And of course, there are challenges you to live out the practice. Intentional communities and small groups will be able to use this book profitably to spur one another on in faithful living.

So get this book and accompanying DVD and kind a group to discuss it with. Yes, you could just get the book and read it yourself, but you will have done it all wrong. This is the sort of book that is meant to spark deeper conversation. It gets five stars from me. ★★★★★

Disclosure of Material Connection: I received this book free from the author and/or publisher through the Speakeasy blogging book review network. I was not required to write a positive review. The opinions I have expressed are my own. I am disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.

Laura says

Thought this book was well-written and thoughtful and thought-provoking. Love the questions that are asked and his answers. One of the best is Why we would rather die than go to war!

Curtis says

"Awakening of Hope" explores the topic of hope from a kingdom perspective as it examines seven different common practices of the community of which the author is a part: Eating together, fasting, making promises, living together, living in a certain area, elevating the choice of our own death over our choice to kill, and sharing the gospel. Each practice is looked at in depth and examined in light of scripture and some of the historical movement/practices of the church. The author includes a lot of his own experiences which helps to bring together the teaching in a way in which the reader can easily relate. As Christians we are in the process of becoming and we look forward to when the God will reign supreme and his Kingdom will have fully arrived. Until that time we wait in hope, we speak in hope and we live in hope as we usher in his kingdom.

Rob Yackley says

Sometimes even those of us who are embedded in the missional community movement can forget why we do what we do. Jonathan's latest book brilliantly reminds us why we live this life and why it is far more than a passing fad.
