



SERMON SERIES COMPANION



INTRODUCTION

Have you ever seen anything that changed... everything? Have you ever met anyone who changed the way you saw yourself? When the Apostle John met Jesus it turned his whole world upside down, so much so that he dedicated the entire rest of his life not only to following Jesus but telling the world about the things he'd seen. His firsthand experience turned him into a passionate witness. So often though we fall into the trap of believing that experiences like that are out of reach for us, or that to be a witness for Jesus means we have to be eloquent and have airtight theology. But what if we're wrong on both counts? What if we too can have a profound firsthand experience with Jesus, and what if we've misunderstood what it means to be a witness?

We hope you join us for our journey through John as we learn what it means to encounter Jesus up close and personal, and why everyone can be a witness to the transforming love and truth that is Jesus.

RESOURCE OVERVIEW

Here we provide space to take notes on the sermon and Scripture text and answer reflection questions that you can discuss with others. When considering the reflection questions, remember that the goal is not to have all the "right" answers—instead, let these questions serve as a starting point for curiosity in your conversation with God and others. See the Appendix of this guide for more resources and opportunities to engage with this study.

Please note this discussion guide is created before the series begins. Discussion questions are prepared before the sermons are written and based on the theme and text for the week. Thank you for your understanding that the topic and focus of the sermon as the pastor writes it may differ from what is written in the discussion questions.

APPENDIX (page 27)

Offers a deeper dive into the topic as well as resources for Bible study, leading small groups, and links for further support.

- Additional Resources
- Online Bibles
- Prayer Tools
- "Icebreaker" Questions
- Tips for Guiding Conversations
- General Resources for Individual Support

SERMON SCHEDULE & SCRIPTURE READING

**Subject to change at the discretion of the pastors.*

Sermon	Topic & Scripture Passage
Week 1	Word became flesh: John 1:1-18 & 20:30-31
Week 2	Come and see: Jesus calls his first disciples: John 1:35-51

Week 3	Wedding at Cana: John 2:1-12
Week 4	Nicodemus, born again: John 3:1-12
Week 5	God so loved the world: John 3:13-21
Week 6	Samaritan woman at the well: John 4:1-26
Week 7	Jesus heals on the Sabbath: John 5:1-18
Week 8	Jesus feeds the five thousand: John 6: 1-15
Week 9	Jesus is the bread of life: John 6:25-40

WEEKLY FORMAT

SERMON DISCUSSION

(PRE-WORK) REFLECT: Listen to the sermon, read weekly selections/view video links (if provided), read scripture passages, and answer reflection questions. (30-40 mins)

RELATE: Discuss reflection questions with your small group. (50 mins)

PRAY: Use the suggested prayer prompt to conclude your time (5-10 mins)

CONVERSATION COVENANT

We hope all small group discussions are lively and enriching, but sometimes tough topics will be discussed. The Conversation Covenant* is an agreement to hold respect and grace toward all participants within a small group, no matter the conversation. Please adhere to the Conversation Covenant or consider creating one that fits your context.

*Adapted from <https://conversational-leadership.net/conversation-covenant/>

I pledge:

To act in good faith, with curiosity. I will assume the best about my conversation partners when entering into our groups. I will give the benefit of the doubt, recognizing that they may know something I don't.

To show respect. I will show respect. I will be polite and give due regard to the feelings and traditions of others. I understand that I do not have to agree with someone to show them respect.

To speak the truth. I won't use rhetorical tricks to try to win an argument. I will speak what I genuinely believe is the nuanced truth.

To aim to discover the truth. I will not enter into a conversation with the purpose of changing the mind of anyone to my way of thinking.

To focus on what we can change. I will focus on what we can do differently in the future since we cannot change what we did in the past.

To take responsibility for the conversation. I will take responsibility for the quality of the conversation and the abidance of the rules both in principle and in spirit.

To follow the covenant even when others fail to do so. I will abide by the rules regardless of whether another person breaks them.

To respect the confidentiality of the group. I will not share the stories of group members verbally or in written form (including on social media and online outlets).

To lighten up and approach the conversation in good humor. I recognize that humor is a hallmark of a constructive, generative conversation and take the conversation in good humor.

PREPARE

The following questions are jumping-off points for personal reflection. Engage with them to awaken your awareness of themes in this sermon series. Pay attention to the questions that stand out to you and look back on them throughout the series to see how God might be speaking to you.

CONSIDER

- How has engaging with the Bible, particularly the Gospel of John, been part of your faith life? How has it shaped you and your relationship with God? List some of these things.
- What factors help you get the most out of reading and studying Scripture with others? Is there anything that makes it hard for you to read and study the Bible/the Gospels? Write down one or two of these reflections. What might enrich your experience with this sermon series on John's gospel?
- What questions do you have about the Gospels, the Gospel of John in particular, or the teachings of Jesus?
- Reflecting on these questions and other reflections you have, how might you begin to bring them to God – in prayer, worship, and your devotional life and practices? Is there something you feel nudged to bring up in the small group conversations for this series?

WEEK 1: Word Became Flesh

John 1:1–18 & 20:30–31

(PRE-WORK) REFLECT | Before your small group gathering, complete the following and reflect on the discussion questions. These will be the basis for your small group time.

- Listen to the Sermon on Highrock's [YouTube channel](#) and note any reactions you had – curiosities, concerns, or delights
- Read: John 1:1–18 & 20:30–31
- Take a look at the Spiritual Practice for this series (beneath the Scripture passage below), and consider whether your group will use it this week.

RELATE | Use these questions as a launching point for your small group conversation or personal reflection.

1. What from the sermon or reading has brought up new questions or interesting points you would like to discuss?
2. The Old Testament prophet Isaiah said, “O that you would tear open the heavens and come down . . . to make your name known!” (64:1–2). In light of these passages (from Isaiah and John) and the sermon message, what do you appreciate about God/the Word becoming flesh, a human like us?
3. John 1:1–18 is one of the richest passages in all of Scripture. What insights do you see in it about who God is, how God views us, or what’s at the heart of the gospel (the good news) that we believe?
4. The gift of the incarnation is life in relationship to Jesus. Where do you find yourself desiring more out of life right now? What would you like to reflect on as we begin this sermon series?
5. Is there an invitation you sense God making through your conversation or reflections this week? Is there a next step you could take in how you engage, act, or relate to others?

PRAY | Incarnate Word, you are the light that not even the darkness can put out. Let your light come to us, and to a world full of suffering, need, and possibility. Let it shine, more and more.

John 1:1-18

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 4 In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

6 There was a man sent from God whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. 8 He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

9 The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. 11 He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. 12 Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— 13 children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.

14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

15 (John testified concerning him. He cried out, saying, "This is the one I spoke about when I said, 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.'") 16 Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. 17 For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. 18 No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.

John 20:30-31

30 Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. 31 But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

SoulCare Spiritual Practice for Sermon Discussion Guide groups: *Lectio Divina*

Vision for Deepening | This year, during the season of Lent, we are inviting small groups that use the sermon discussion guide into a deepening of their experience with God and each other, by settling into a single practice. We hope that the practice may become familiar enough to continue practicing at home or even introduce to a friend or family member. You might choose to move through this practice slowly and allow it to be a centerpiece for your group or move through it more quickly as a way to open or close your group.

Introduction to Lectio Divina | Lectio Divina is an ancient way of reading Scripture created by the desert mothers and fathers to give God space to address them personally. In Lectio Divina, we read a short passage very slowly, multiple times. Each reading takes us deeper into the layers of meaning. When we read Scripture this way, it helps the Word to bypass the cognitive filters that often prevent us from really connecting with the Spirit of God. Lectio Divina is best practiced with a shorter passage, about 6-8 verses.

Listen | *Slowly read through your texts (John 1:1-18 & 20:30-31) aloud two times or invite different group members to read. Take your time to pronounce each word, leaving a pause between sentences. Read it like you would read a handwritten letter from a dear friend: savor every word and notice the emotion between the phrases. Invite group members to take the words into their hearts and notice if any word or phrase feels like it is meant just for them. Invite them to ponder that word or phrase without analyzing or judging it during a few moments of silence after the second reading. After the silence, go around the circle and invite participants to share their word or phrase without any extra discussion or commentary.*

Ask | *Read through the passages slowly again and invite your group to notice again if any word or phrase feels like it is meant just for them. Invite them to listen for the way in which this word might touch their life. This is a time for personal reflection. How might it speak into your life? Is there an invitation? Leave some silence for reflection. After the silence go around the circle and invite members to share briefly and succinctly how their life is touched.*

Answer | *This time invite group members to read through the passages again on their own. Pray the words and interact with the Spirit as you do. If a word or phrase felt like it was meant for you, talk to God about it. If you felt an invitation, offer that invitation back to God and wait for a response. If an image, relationship, struggle, or dark part of your life comes to the surface, do not hold them back. Be as honest as possible before the Lord, opening your heart to Love and a fresh word.*

Be | *Invite someone in your group to read through the passages slowly a final time. In this last reading, invite group members to linger in the loving presence of Jesus. The written words of Scripture are meant to connect us personally to Jesus, the Word of God. Allow the word that you have heard to draw you into God's embrace. Rest in God and in God's ability to bring about whatever invitation arose. Allow for silence again after the reading. Then invite people to share what the experience was like for them in groups of three and pray for each other.*

Adapted from Lectio Divina guides by Ruth Haley Barton, Adam McHugh, and Norvene Vest

WEEK 2: Come and see: Jesus calls his first disciples

John 1:35–51

(PRE-WORK) REFLECT | Before your small group gathering, complete the following and reflect on the discussion questions. These will be the basis for your small group time.

- Listen to the Sermon on Highrock's [YouTube channel](#) and note any reactions you had – curiosities, concerns, or delights
- Read John 1:35–51
- Take a look at the Spiritual Practice for this series (beneath the Scripture passage below) and consider whether your group will use it this week.

RELATE | Use these questions as a launching point for your small group conversation or personal reflection.

1. What from the sermon has brought up new questions or interesting points you would like to discuss?
2. Reflecting on the sermon, where do you see different examples of searching, finding, and discovering in this passage (John 1:35–51)? Which of these, if any, do you resonate with, and why?
3. What's something you'd say you're *looking for* or *curious about* in your spiritual life right now?
4. This passage involves people discovering Jesus through preaching (John), family relationships (Andrew and Simon Peter), and friendships (Philip and Nathaniel). Who is someone who has recently been a blessing to you or shown you more of what God's grace is like? Likewise, is there a relationship in your life where you can show a similar grace to someone this week?
5. What gives you hope that, amidst setbacks or challenges, God will continue to be faithful and present, to you and/or others?
6. What are one or two things for which you can intentionally thank God for this week?

PRAY | God, sometimes we know your presence in vivid ways. Other times, we feel uncertain or alone. Please make yourself known to us and our neighbors in need, amidst the many paths we will take this week. Surprise us with your presence.

John 1:35-51

35 The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. 36 When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!"

37 When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. 38 Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, "What do you want?"

They said, "Rabbi" (which means "Teacher"), "where are you staying?"

39 "Come," he replied, "and you will see." So they went and saw where he was staying, and they spent that day with him. It was about four in the afternoon.

40 Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. 41 The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). 42 And he brought him to Jesus.

Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which, when translated, is Peter).

43 The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, "Follow me."

44 Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. 45 Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

46 "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked.

"Come and see," said Philip.

47 When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, "Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit."

48 "How do you know me?" Nathanael asked.

Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you."

49 Then Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the king of Israel."

50 Jesus said, "You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You will see greater things than that." 51 He then added, "Very truly I tell you, you will see 'heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on' the Son of Man."

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Listen | *Slowly read through your text (John 1:35–51) aloud two times or invite different group members to read. Take your time to pronounce each word, leaving a pause between sentences. Read it like you would read a handwritten letter from a dear friend: savor every word and notice the emotion between the phrases. Invite group members to take the words into their hearts and notice if any word or phrase feels like it is meant just for them. Invite them to ponder that word or phrase without analyzing or judging it during a few moments of silence after the second reading. After the silence, go around the circle and invite participants to share their word or phrase without any extra discussion or commentary.*

Ask | *Read through the passage slowly again and invite your group to notice again if any word or phrase feels like it is meant just for them. Invite them to listen for the way in which this word might touch their life. This is a time for personal reflection. How might it speak into your life? Is there an invitation? Leave some silence for reflection. After the silence go around the circle and invite members to share briefly and succinctly how their life is touched.*

Answer | *This time invite group members to read through the passage again on their own. Pray the words and interact with the Spirit as you do.* If a word or phrase felt like it was meant for you, talk to God about it. If you felt an invitation, offer that invitation back to God and wait for a response. If an image, relationship, struggle, or dark part of your life comes to the surface, do not hold them back. Be as honest as possible before the Lord, opening your heart to Love and a fresh word.

Be | *Invite someone in your group to read through the passage slowly a final time. In this last reading, invite group members to linger in the loving presence of Jesus.* The written words of Scripture are meant to connect us personally to Jesus, the Word of God. Allow the word that you have heard to draw you into God's embrace. Rest in God and in God's ability to bring about whatever invitation arose. Allow for silence again after the reading. Then invite people to share what the experience was like for them in groups of three and pray for each other.

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WEEK 3: Wedding at Cana

John 2:1–12

(PRE-WORK) REFLECT | Before your small group gathering, complete the following and reflect on the discussion questions. These will be the basis for your small group time.

- Listen to the Sermon on Highrock's [YouTube channel](#) and note any reactions you had – curiosities, concerns, or delights
- Read: John 2:1–12
- Take a look at the Spiritual Practice for this series (beneath the Scripture passage below), and consider whether your group will use it this week.

RELATE | Use these questions as a launching point for your small group conversation or personal reflection.

1. What from the sermon or reading has brought up new questions or interesting points you would like to discuss?
2. Reflect on the initial interaction between Jesus and his mother, Mary, who prompts Jesus' public ministry. What do you make of Mary's faith and role in this passage? What's challenging and/or inspiring? (For other places in John's gospel where the word "woman" is used as an address by Jesus that might clarify this passage, or at least add helpful complexity, see John 4:21 and John 19:26).
3. What significance do you see in that Jesus's first miracle happens at a wedding/festival?
4. Consider these parts of the story. What stands out to you in them for understanding who Jesus is and how God relates to us?
 - a. Jesus provides for a family in a potentially embarrassing situation.
 - b. Jesus secretly ensures that the festival continues.
 - c. Jesus's first miracle is about *transforming* material things in mundane ways – water to wine ("fill the jars . . . take it to the headwaiter").
5. Where do you see ("witness") God's goodness, grace, or provision in this passage? Where do you see it in your own life?

PRAY | Thank you for being a God who celebrates and dines and accompanies us in the highs and lows of this life. Come to us today, come to this world in need, and give us more opportunities to see you and enjoy your good gifts.

John 2:1-12

1 On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, 2 and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. 3 When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine."

4 "Woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My hour has not yet come."

5 His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

6 Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons.

7 Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim.

8 Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet."

They did so, 9 and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside 10 and said, "Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now."

11 What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

12 After this he went down to Capernaum with his mother and brothers and his disciples. There they stayed for a few days.

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Listen | *Slowly read through your text (John 2:1-12) aloud two times or invite different group members to read. Take your time to pronounce each word, leaving a pause between sentences. Read it like you would read a handwritten letter from a dear friend: savor every word and notice the emotion between the phrases. Invite group members to take the words into their hearts and notice if any word or phrase feels like it is meant just for them. Invite them to ponder that word or phrase without analyzing or judging it during a few moments of silence after the second reading. After the silence, go around the circle and invite participants to share their word or phrase without any extra discussion or commentary.*

Ask | *Read through the passage slowly again and invite your group to notice again if any word or phrase feels like it is meant just for them. Invite them to listen for the way in which this word might touch their life. This is a time for personal reflection. How might it speak into your life? Is there an invitation? Leave some silence for reflection. After the silence go around the circle and invite members to share briefly and succinctly how their life is touched.*

Answer | *This time invite group members to read through the passage again on their own. Pray the words and interact with the Spirit as you do. If a word or phrase felt like it was meant for you, talk to God about it. If you felt an invitation, offer that invitation back to God and wait for a response. If an image, relationship, struggle, or dark part of your life comes to the surface, do not hold them back. Be as honest as possible before the Lord, opening your heart to Love and a fresh word.*

Be | *Invite someone in your group to read through the passage slowly a final time. In this last reading, invite group members to linger in the loving presence of Jesus. The written words of Scripture are meant to connect us personally to Jesus, the Word of God. Allow the word that you have heard to draw you into God's embrace. Rest in God and in God's ability to bring about whatever invitation arose. Allow for silence again after the reading. Then invite people to share what the experience was like for them in groups of three and pray for each other.*

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WEEK 4: Nicodemus, born again

John 3:1–12

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- Read John 3:1–12
- Take a look at the Spiritual Practice for this series (beneath the Scripture passage below), and consider whether your group will use it this week.

RELATE | Use these questions as a launching point for your small group conversation or personal reflection.

1. How do you handle change? What do you enjoy about it? What's hard?
2. Read the two verses leading up to the Scripture passage for this sermon: John 2:23–25. How do you see these two verses helping to set the stage for John 3:1–12?
3. Nicodemus seeks out Jesus “at night” (3:2). This is often seen as a sign of his fear or insecurity – and it might be – but are there other perspectives that might help us understand this passage (and, what it might teach us)?
4. “Born of water and spirit” (3:5) points to the essential work of *God* in our lives, baptism. What's one way that you can name the goodness and grace of God in your life in the past? How might you identify or see it in your life right now, and/or in the lives of those around you?
5. With prayer and wisdom, what's one thing in your life you'd like to look different a week, a month, or a year from now? What would it look like to trust the Spirit of God with this and take a practical step forward?

PRAY | God, we are unfinished people. We want the more authentic life that you can offer. Please increase our desire for this life, and come near to us to enable it. Make us people who reflect the ways of Jesus.

John 3:1–12

1 Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. 2 He came to Jesus at night and said, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him.”

3 Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.”

4 “How can someone be born when they are old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!”

5 Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. 6 Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. 7 You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’ 8 The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”

9 “How can this be?” Nicodemus asked.

10 "You are Israel's teacher," said Jesus, "and do you not understand these things? 11 Very truly I tell you, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. 12 I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things?"

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Ask | *Read through the passage slowly again and invite your group to notice again if any word or phrase feels like it is meant just for them. Invite them to listen for the way in which this word might touch their life. This is a time for personal reflection. How might it speak into your life? Is there an invitation? Leave some silence for reflection. After the silence go around the circle and invite members to share briefly and succinctly how their life is touched.*

Answer | *This time invite group members to read through the passage again on their own. Pray the words and interact with the Spirit as you do. If a word or phrase felt like it was meant for you, talk to God about it. If you felt an invitation, offer that invitation back to God and wait for a response. If an image, relationship, struggle, or dark part of your life comes to the surface, do not hold them back. Be as honest as possible before the Lord, opening your heart to Love and a fresh word.*

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WEEK 5: God so loved the world

John 3:13–21

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- Listen to the Sermon on Highrock's [YouTube channel](#) and note any reactions you had – curiosities, concerns, or delights
- Read John 3:13–21
- Take a look at the Spiritual Practice for this series (beneath the Scripture passage below), and consider whether your group will use it this week.

RELATE | Use these questions as a launching point for your small group conversation or personal reflection.

1. What from the sermon or reading has brought up new questions or interesting points you would like to discuss?
2. John 3:16 is a passage many of us are familiar with. Did this sermon help you understand or think about the meaning of this famous verse in your life in any new ways?
3. Reflect on the word “world” in the passage, “God so loved the world.” What does the reach, the vastness, of God’s love for this world mean to you? What thoughts, feelings, or desires does it bring up for you? What’s something (perhaps someone or a group of people) God loves that you might be called to love more?
4. What helps you see, understand, or feel God’s deep love for you? What helps you recognize God’s love for others?
5. Darkness and light are important themes in John’s gospel (see 3:20–21). Recall that Nicodemus comes to Jesus in the night, and we learn from John 19:39–42 that he must have continued coming to Jesus. How might we understand Jesus’s invitation to bring our lives into this “light”? What’s one way you might make an effort towards greater honesty and transparency with God, or finding healing from God, part of your faith practices this week?

PRAY | God, help me see myself honestly. Help me reckon with my sins and shortcomings, and help me see the incredible way you love us. God, help me know your transformative love for this world a little more this week.

John 3:13–21

13 No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man. 14 Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up 15 that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.”

16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. 18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son. 19 This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. 20 Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. 21 But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.

SoulCare Spiritual Practice for Sermon Discussion Guide groups: *Lectio Divina*

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Listen | *Slowly read through your text (John 3:13-21) aloud two times or invite different group members to read. Take your time to pronounce each word, leaving a pause between sentences. Read it like you would read a handwritten letter from a dear friend: savor every word and notice the emotion between the phrases. Invite group members to take the words into their hearts and notice if any word or phrase feels like it is meant just for them. Invite them to ponder that word or phrase without analyzing or judging it during a few moments of silence after the second reading. After the silence, go around the circle and invite participants to share their word or phrase without any extra discussion or commentary.*

Ask | *Read through the passage slowly again and invite your group to notice again if any word or phrase feels like it is meant just for them. Invite them to listen for the way in which this word might touch their life. This is a time for personal reflection. How might it speak into your life? Is there an invitation? Leave some silence for reflection. After the silence go around the circle and invite members to share briefly and succinctly how their life is touched.*

Answer | *This time invite group members to read through the passage again on their own. Pray the words and interact with the Spirit as you do. If a word or phrase felt like it was meant for you, talk to God about it. If you felt an invitation, offer that invitation back to God and wait for a response. If an image, relationship, struggle, or dark part of your life comes to the surface, do not hold them back. Be as honest as possible before the Lord, opening your heart to Love and a fresh word.*

Be | *Invite someone in your group to read through the passage slowly a final time. In this last reading, invite group members to linger in the loving presence of Jesus. The written words of Scripture are meant to connect us personally to Jesus, the Word of God. Allow the word that you have heard to draw you into God's embrace. Rest in God and in God's ability to bring about whatever invitation arose. Allow for silence again after the reading. Then invite people to share what the experience was like for them in groups of three and pray for each other.*

Adapted from Lectio Divina guides by Ruth Haley Barton, Adam McHugh, and Norvene Vest

WEEK 6: Samaritan Woman at the Well

John 4:1–26

(PRE-WORK) REFLECT | Before your small group gathering, complete the following and reflect on the discussion questions. These will be the basis for your small group time.

- Listen to the Sermon on Highrock's [YouTube channel](#) and note any reactions you had – curiosities, concerns, or delights
- Read John 4:1–26
- Take a look at the Spiritual Practice for this series (beneath the Scripture passage below), and consider whether your group will use it this week.

RELATE | Use these questions as a launching point for your small group conversation or personal reflection.

1. What from the sermon or reading has brought up new questions or interesting points you would like to discuss?
2. What from the message helped you better understand some references in this passage (e.g., “Jacob’s well,” Samaria/samaritans)?
3. Jesus engages the samaritan woman in a conversation about important things – truth, worship, family, and more. What stands out to you in this discussion, either in terms of the content or how it unfolds? What might Jesus’s interaction with the samaritan women teach us about what it means to relate to God?
4. How does this passage and the sermon help you understand what it means to love and worship God in both “Spirit and truth” (4:23–24)? (If helpful, discuss if/how the sermon message illuminated what these words, Spirit and truth, mean.)
5. Is there an invitation you sense God making through your conversation or reflections this week? Is there a next step you could take in how you engage, act, or relate to others?

PRAY | God, thank you for Jesus, the Word through which you speak to us. May your Spirit help us to respond, again and again, that we may learn to live in ongoing connection with you and to speak words that are both true and reflect your goodness towards us.

John 4:1–26

1 Now Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that he was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John— 2 although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples. 3 So he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee.

4 Now he had to go through Samaria. 5 So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. 6 Jacob’s well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon.

7 When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, “Will you give me a drink?” 8 (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

9 The Samaritan woman said to him, “You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?” (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)

10 Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.”

11 "Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? 12 Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?"

13 Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, 14 but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

15 The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water."

16 He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back."

17 "I have no husband," she replied.

Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. 18 The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true."

19 "Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. 20 Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem."

21 "Woman," Jesus replied, "believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. 22 You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. 23 Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. 24 God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth."

25 The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us."

26 Then Jesus declared, "I, the one speaking to you—I am he."

SoulCare Spiritual Practice for Sermon Discussion Guide groups: *Lectio Divina*

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Listen | *Slowly read through your text (John 4:1-26) aloud two times or invite different group members to read. Take your time to pronounce each word, leaving a pause between sentences. Read it like you would read a handwritten letter from a dear friend: savor every word and notice the emotion between the phrases. Invite group members to take the words into their hearts and notice if any word or phrase feels like it is meant just for them. Invite them to ponder that word or phrase without analyzing or judging it during a few moments of silence after the second reading. After the silence, go around the circle and invite participants to share their word or phrase without any extra discussion or commentary.*

Ask | *Read through the passage slowly again and invite your group to notice again if any word or phrase feels like it is meant just for them. Invite them to listen for the way in which this word might touch their life. This is a time for personal reflection. How might it speak into your life? Is there an invitation? Leave some silence for reflection. After the silence go around the circle and invite members to share briefly and succinctly how their life is touched.*

Answer | *This time invite group members to read through the passage again on their own. Pray the words and interact with the Spirit as you do. If a word or phrase felt like it was meant for you, talk to God about it. If you felt an invitation, offer that invitation back to God and wait for a response. If an image, relationship, struggle, or dark part of your life comes to the surface, do not hold them back. Be as honest as possible before the Lord, opening your heart to Love and a fresh word.*

Be | *Invite someone in your group to read through the passage slowly a final time. In this last reading, invite group members to linger in the loving presence of Jesus. The written words of Scripture are meant to connect us personally to Jesus, the Word of God. Allow the word that you have heard to draw you into God's embrace. Rest in God and in God's ability to bring about whatever invitation arose. Allow for silence again after the reading. Then invite people to share what the experience was like for them in groups of three and pray for each other.*

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WEEK 7: Jesus heals on the Sabbath

John 5:1–18

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- Listen to the Sermon on Highrock's [YouTube channel](#) and note any reactions you had – curiosities, concerns, or delights
- Read John 5:1–18
- Take a look at the Spiritual Practice for this series (beneath the Scripture passage below), and consider whether your group will use it this week.

RELATE | Use these questions as a launching point for your small group conversation or personal reflection.

1. What from the sermon or reading has brought up new questions or interesting points you would like to discuss?
2. What from the sermon helped you better understand the broader meaning of this passage (e.g., Jewish festivals, the Sheep Gate)?
3. Reflect on the way Jesus prioritizes the needs of this man. Is there a relationship or group of people in your life that God might be asking you to show greater love and concern for?
4. What do you think this passage is telling us about the person of Jesus? What are some ways that your understanding of Jesus impacts your life and the way you live, or that you'd like it to have more of an impact?
5. Is there an invitation you sense God making through your conversation or reflections this week? Is there a next step you could take in how you engage, act, or relate to others?

PRAY | Pray this sentence a few times over: God, help us see your face in the faces of those around us, so that we know how urgent and important the task of loving is.

John 5:1–18

1 Some time later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for one of the Jewish festivals. 2 Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades. 3 Here a great number of disabled people used to lie—the blind, the lame, the paralyzed. 5 One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. 6 When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, “Do you want to get well?”

7 “Sir,” the invalid replied, “I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me.”

8 Then Jesus said to him, “Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.” 9 At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked.

The day on which this took place was a Sabbath, 10 and so the Jewish leaders said to the man who had been healed, “It is the Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry your mat.”

11 But he replied, “The man who made me well said to me, ‘Pick up your mat and walk.’ ”

12 So they asked him, “Who is this fellow who told you to pick it up and walk?”

13 The man who was healed had no idea who it was, for Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there.

14 Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, "See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you."

15 The man went away and told the Jewish leaders that it was Jesus who had made him well.

16 So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jewish leaders began to persecute him. 17 In his defense Jesus said to them, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working." 18 For this reason they tried all the more to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

SoulCare Spiritual Practice for Sermon Discussion Guide groups: *Lectio Divina*

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Listen | *Slowly read through your text (John 5:1-18) aloud two times or invite different group members to read. Take your time to pronounce each word, leaving a pause between sentences. Read it like you would read a handwritten letter from a dear friend: savor every word and notice the emotion between the phrases. Invite group members to take the words into their hearts and notice if any word or phrase feels like it is meant just for them. Invite them to ponder that word or phrase without analyzing or judging it during a few moments of silence after the second reading. After the silence, go around the circle and invite participants to share their word or phrase without any extra discussion or commentary.*

Ask | *Read through the passage slowly again and invite your group to notice again if any word or phrase feels like it is meant just for them. Invite them to listen for the way in which this word might touch their life. This is a time for personal reflection. How might it speak into your life? Is there an invitation? Leave some silence for reflection. After the silence go around the circle and invite members to share briefly and succinctly how their life is touched.*

Answer | *This time invite group members to read through the passage again on their own. Pray the words and interact with the Spirit as you do. If a word or phrase felt like it was meant for you, talk to God about it. If you felt an invitation, offer that invitation back to God and wait for a response. If an image, relationship, struggle, or dark part of your life comes to the surface, do not hold them back. Be as honest as possible before the Lord, opening your heart to Love and a fresh word.*

Be | *Invite someone in your group to read through the passage slowly a final time. In this last reading, invite group members to linger in the loving presence of Jesus. The written words of Scripture are meant to connect us personally to Jesus, the Word of God. Allow the word that you have heard to draw you into God's embrace. Rest in God and in God's ability to bring about whatever invitation arose. Allow for silence again after the reading. Then invite people to share what the experience was like for them in groups of three and pray for each other.*

Adapted from Lectio Divina guides by Ruth Haley Barton, Adam McHugh, and Norvene Vest

WEEK 8: Jesus feeds the five thousand

John 6:1–15

(PRE-WORK) REFLECT | Before your small group gathering, complete the following and reflect on the discussion questions. These will be the basis for your small group time.

- Listen to the Sermon on Highrock's [YouTube channel](#) and note any reactions you had – curiosities, concerns, or delights
- Read John 6:1–15
- Take a look at the Spiritual Practice for this series (beneath the Scripture passage below), and consider whether your group will use it this week.

RELATE | Use these questions as a launching point for your small group conversation or personal reflection.

1. What from the sermon or reading has brought up new questions or interesting points you would like to discuss?
2. Where do you see evidence of grace, sharing, and abundance in this passage? Where do you see it in the lives of those around you?
3. “Knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, (Jesus) withdrew again to a mountain by himself” (6:15). What stands out to you in this passage? How has following Jesus meant learning a new, and potentially countercultural, way of living for you?
4. Is there someone (or a group of people) you know experiencing material need right now that you can help?
5. This meal reflects our communion ritual: from so little, great needs get met. What would you like to ask God's help for regarding something that feels challenging (big or small) right now?
6. Is there an invitation you sense God making through your conversation or reflections this week? Is there a next step you could take in how you engage, act, or relate to others?

PRAY | As you've graciously shared with us, of God, help us both receive from others with gratitude and pass along what we have with open hands.

John 6:1–15

1 Some time after this, Jesus crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee (that is, the Sea of Tiberias), 2 and a great crowd of people followed him because they saw the signs he had performed by healing the sick. 3 Then Jesus went up on a mountainside and sat down with his disciples. 4 The Jewish Passover Festival was near.

5 When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, “Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?” 6 He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do.

7 Philip answered him, “It would take more than half a year's wages to buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!”

8 Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up, 9 “Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?”

10 Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." There was plenty of grass in that place, and they sat down (about five thousand men were there). 11 Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish.

12 When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, "Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted." 13 So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten.

14 After the people saw the sign Jesus performed, they began to say, "Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world." 15 Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.

SoulCare Spiritual Practice for Sermon Discussion Guide groups: *Lectio Divina*

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Listen | *Slowly read through your text (John 6:1-15) aloud two times or invite different group members to read. Take your time to pronounce each word, leaving a pause between sentences. Read it like you would read a handwritten letter from a dear friend: savor every word and notice the emotion between the phrases. Invite group members to take the words into their hearts and notice if any word or phrase feels like it is meant just for them. Invite them to ponder that word or phrase without analyzing or judging it during a few moments of silence after the second reading. After the silence, go around the circle and invite participants to share their word or phrase without any extra discussion or commentary.*

Ask | *Read through the passage slowly again and invite your group to notice again if any word or phrase feels like it is meant just for them. Invite them to listen for the way in which this word might touch their life. This is a time for personal reflection. How might it speak into your life? Is there an invitation? Leave some silence for reflection. After the silence go around the circle and invite members to share briefly and succinctly how their life is touched.*

Answer | *This time invite group members to read through the passage again on their own. Pray the words and interact with the Spirit as you do. If a word or phrase felt like it was meant for you, talk to God about it. If you felt an invitation, offer that invitation back to God and wait for a response. If an image, relationship, struggle, or dark part of your life comes to the surface, do not hold them back. Be as honest as possible before the Lord, opening your heart to Love and a fresh word.*

Be | *Invite someone in your group to read through the passage slowly a final time. In this last reading, invite group members to linger in the loving presence of Jesus. The written words of Scripture are meant to connect us personally to Jesus, the Word of God. Allow the word that you have heard to draw you into God's embrace. Rest in God and in God's ability to bring about whatever invitation arose. Allow for silence again after the reading. Then invite people to share what the experience was like for them in groups of three and pray for each other.*

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WEEK 9: Jesus is the bread of life

John 6:25–40

(PRE-WORK) REFLECT | Before your small group gathering, complete the following and reflect on the discussion questions. These will be the basis for your small group time.

- Listen to the Sermon on Highrock's [YouTube channel](#) and note any reactions you had – curiosities, concerns, or delights
- Read John 6:25–40
- Take a look at the Spiritual Practice for this series (beneath the Scripture passage below), and consider whether your group will use it this week.

RELATE | Use these questions as a launching point for your small group conversation or personal reflection.

1. What from the sermon or reading has brought up new questions or interesting points you would like to discuss?
2. Jesus is asked, "What must we do to do the works God requires?" Share your initial thoughts and feelings about Jesus's answer: "*believe in the one (God) has sent*" (6:28–29).
3. Jesus raises the question of what is most worthwhile, what we should be "looking for" (6:26). In your experience, what would you say makes following Jesus worthwhile for you, something that you choose to do in your life?
4. Reflecting on our belief that God offers us real sustenance, healing, and life through Jesus, what would you want to ask God for this upcoming week?
5. Is there an invitation you sense God making through your conversation or reflections this week? Is there a next step you could take in how you engage, act, or relate to others?

PRAY | God, make us more wondrous and curious about the living presence of Jesus in our lives. Allow us to share in the wonderful feast that you are, and that you provide for us and others. All praise belongs to you God, always.

John 6:25–40

25 When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, "Rabbi, when did you get here?"

26 Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. 27 Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval."

28 Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?"

29 Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent."

30 So they asked him, "What sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? 31 Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written: 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'"

32 Jesus said to them, "Very truly I tell you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. 33 For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

34 "Sir," they said, "always give us this bread."

35 Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. 36 But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe. 37 All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. 38 For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. 39 And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all those he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. 40 For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day."

SoulCare Spiritual Practice for Sermon Discussion Guide groups: *Lectio Divina*

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Listen | *Slowly read through your text (John 6:25-40) aloud two times or invite different group members to read. Take your time to pronounce each word, leaving a pause between sentences. Read it like you would read a handwritten letter from a dear friend: savor every word and notice the emotion between the phrases. Invite group members to take the words into their hearts and notice if any word or phrase feels like it is meant just for them. Invite them to ponder that word or phrase without analyzing or judging it during a few moments of silence after the second reading. After the silence, go around the circle and invite participants to share their word or phrase without any extra discussion or commentary.*

Ask | *Read through the passage slowly again and invite your group to notice again if any word or phrase feels like it is meant just for them. Invite them to listen for the way in which this word might touch their life. This is a time for personal reflection. How might it speak into your life? Is there an invitation? Leave some silence for reflection. After the silence go around the circle and invite members to share briefly and succinctly how their life is touched.*

Answer | *This time invite group members to read through the passage again on their own. Pray the words and interact with the Spirit as you do. If a word or phrase felt like it was meant for you, talk to God about it. If you felt an invitation, offer that invitation back to God and wait for a response. If an image, relationship, struggle, or dark part of your life comes to the surface, do not hold them back. Be as honest as possible before the Lord, opening your heart to Love and a fresh word.*

Be | *Invite someone in your group to read through the passage slowly a final time. In this last reading, invite group members to linger in the loving presence of Jesus. The written words of Scripture are meant to connect us personally to Jesus, the Word of God. Allow the word that you have heard to draw you into God's embrace. Rest in God and in God's ability to bring about whatever invitation arose. Allow for silence again after the reading. Then invite people to share what the experience was like for them in groups of three and pray for each other.*

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APPENDIX

Below are resources to look into if you are interested in diving deeper into some of the topics covered in this series. If you need resources that more specifically address your own experience, demographic, or faith journey, please reach out to a Highrock pastor or to smallgroups@highrock.org and we will be happy to help!

ONLINE BIBLES

- [Blue Letter Bible](#)
- [Bible Gateway](#)

PRAYER TOOLS

- [The Prayer of Examen: Tracking Our Moods](#)
- [Breath Prayer/Prayer of the Heart](#)
- [Divine/Fixed Hour Prayer](#)
- [SoulCare guide to Imaginative Prayer Spiritual Practice](#)
- [Imaginative Prayer/Ignatian Contemplation](#)
- [SoulCare guide to Recall & Paraphrase Spiritual Practice](#)
- [Lament](#)
- [Laughter and Prayer](#)
- [Palms Up, Palms Down](#)
- [Pray a Psalm in a Nature Setting](#)
- [Praying with your Body](#)
- [Welcoming Prayer](#)

“ICEBREAKER” QUESTIONS

- What was a small win from your week?
- Share a High/Low from your day or week.
- On a scale of 1-10, how are you doing coming into this meeting?
- If you were to describe yourself as a weather forecast today, what would you be? Example: sunny, partly cloudy, rainy with a chance of snow, etc.
- What song would be the theme track for the day you had?

GENERAL RESOURCES FOR INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT

- [Spiritual Practices](#)
- [Mental Health Resources](#)
- [Parenting & Kids—Understanding each other through Milestones](#)

TIPS FOR GUIDING CONVERSATION

- Allow everyone space to share. It's ok to ask what people are thinking even if they don't volunteer to share right away. But always give people the option to decline to share. Example: "Hey, Fred, you've been a little quiet and I'm curious to know what you think. Would you like to share anything?"
- Remember there aren't necessarily "right" answers. Encourage participants to simply be curious about what came up for them or others without the pressure of feeling like they "should" have thought or felt anything in particular. Example: Instead of asking "What is this story supposed to be communicating?" ask "What did you notice?"
- Embrace the differences. Affirm that different people can come to different conclusions regarding the same thing. Example: "Interestingly, the text reminded Susie of ABC, while it reminded José of XYZ. Both can be present and true."

- Adapt to suit your group's needs. Sometimes conversation is free-flowing and sometimes it's easier to move through discussion questions one at a time. Do what feels suitable for your group, but don't feel pressured to answer/discuss every single question.
- Encourage curiosity by modeling curiosity. Asking someone "Tell me more about XYZ" can be a really simple but effective tool to go deeper in conversation.
- Don't be afraid of silence. It's natural to want to fill silences or pauses in a conversation. But don't be afraid to sit in silence with your group members. Sometimes thoughts just need time to percolate, so don't feel like you have to rush to another question if no one shares immediately.
- Refer back to the Conversation Covenant. This is the posture that we as Highrock hold as we gather in groups. When the conversation gets tough, you can always refer back to the Conversation Covenant to remind the group that everyone has agreed to abide by this covenant in small group meetings.