

SERIES COMPANION

Summer School



PRAYING WITH PURPOSE

 highrock

NOTE: This document is a work in progress with some info still in development

INTRODUCTION

Who's ready to go back to school?! Prayer- conversing with God- is one of the most central themes in the Biblical story, and a powerful component of the Christian life. And yet for many of us, it feels awkward. Or ineffective. Or isolated. Or confusing. What is really happening when we pray? How should we pray? What difference does prayer make in our lives or the lives of those around us? Those questions, and many more, have probably crossed our minds at least once. When Jesus' disciples were experiencing their own questions around prayer, they asked Jesus— teach us how to pray. And he did! So this summer, we are going back to school to learn how to pray from Jesus! We'll hear about how and why Jesus prayed- and learn from some of the prayers he prayed himself!

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.

Prayer is an act of courage. This series includes weekly prayers, blessings, and images to use as a part of your prayer practices.

WEEKLY FORMAT (and time estimates):

REFLECT: Listen to the sermon, read weekly selections and scripture passages, and answer questions. (30-40 min)

RELATE: Discuss reflection questions with your small group. (60 min)

PRAY: This series includes many ways to practice prayer together. It will be important that you do this! Try one that is suggested, or bring another regular rhythm to your group.

SELECTED READINGS

There will be selections of readings and reflections to accompany each week. If there is another reading, image, or piece that resonates with you on a given week, you are welcome to share that with your small group.

SERMON SCHEDULE*

*Sermon schedule is subject to change at the discretion of the pastors.

Sermon	Topic
Week 1	What is the Point of Prayer?
Week 2	Encountering God in our Temptations
Week 3	Praying for Life
Week 4	Many Words
Week 5	Are You IN or OUT?
Week 6	Prayer as Rest
Week 7	Revenge vs. Redemption
Week 8	One is More Than You Think

APPENDIX PREVIEW (PAGE 14)

Works Cited & Links

Bible Study Tools

“Icebreaker” Questions

Tips for Guiding Conversations

General Resources for Individual Support

CONVERSATION COVENANT

We hope that 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 think about 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 to the 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. Our series is about prayer- a relationship with God! Conversation with God invites us into a more trusting relationship with God, ourselves, and others.

CONSIDER

In your own words, what is the purpose or function of prayer as a part of the Christian life?

What were some of the earliest impressions you had of prayer? What questions or comforts did they offer?

How do you relate to prayer now?

What questions do you have about praying?

Have you experienced prayer as a way to connect with God?

WEEK 1

WHAT IS THE POINT OF PRAYER?

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](#).
- Read the Scripture passage.
- Pray the "Here I Am" Prayer listed below. Those in small groups will also practice this during your meeting.
- After listening to the sermon, note any reactions you had- curiosities, concerns, or delights.

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?
2. Have you considered prayer to be the sort of relationship Walt described? What do you like about that framework? What do you wrestle with about it?
3. Is there a next step you could take in how you engage, act, or relate to others? Perhaps it is practicing the "Here I Am" prayer, or another from the Appendix this week.

PRAY | Use Brian McLaren's ["Here I Am" Prayer](#)

- Resolve to be in prayer for at least five minutes. Do not answer the phone or allow yourself to be distracted from your goal.
- Be seated and say to yourself "Here I am seated, doing nothing. I will do nothing for five minutes," (or longer, depending on the time you set for yourself).
- Begin noticing your own bodily presence. How your body feels next to the chair. How your feet feel against the floor. Relax your body. Notice what you feel inside.
- Start offering yourself to God:
 - Here I am, Lord,
 - Where are you? Physically? Emotionally? Personally? Socially? Spiritually?
- Move into recognizing God
 - Here you are, Lord,
 - Describe your experience of or feelings about God at this moment. How would you name God today?
- Realize your connectedness to God
 - Here we are together.
 - How would you describe your togetherness with God?

SCRIPTURE | *John 16:33-17:5*

"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed:

"Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. 2 For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. 3 Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. 4 I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do. 5 And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.

WEEK 2

ENCOUNTERING GOD IN OUR TEMPTATIONS

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](#).
- Read the Scripture passage.
- After listening to the sermon, note any reactions you had- curiosities, concerns, or delights.

RELATE | Use these questions as a launching point for your small group conversation. Open with a check-in/getting-to-know-you question. Group opener options are available in the Appendix.

1. What from the sermon or reading has brought up new questions?
2. If you took time over the last week to try a prayer tool from the Appendix, or the "Here I Am" prayer, what was that like for you? What was life-giving? What was life-draining? If you encountered any barriers, what were they and how did you respond to them?
3. Coming to God with our temptations can be a scary thing. What does it mean that God is present with you in your temptations? How do you see God in the midst of those temptations?

PRAY | Part of seeing God in our temptations is realizing that our desires aren't wholly good or bad- perhaps they are just disordered. Doing an examination of our temptations can help us identify what need only God can meet we are trying to fill with temporary solutions. Use this modified Daily Examen to bring your desires to God.

THANKSGIVING

Today I'm especially grateful for...

temporary over something Divine?
Have I noticed God's presence in any of this?

PETITION

I am about to review my day; I ask for light to know God and to know myself as God sees me.

RESPONSE

In light of my review, what is my response to the God of my life?

REVIEW

Where have I felt true joy today?
Where have I felt the temptation to choose something

A LOOK AHEAD

As I look ahead, what comes to mind?
With what spirit do I want to enter tomorrow?

SCRIPTURE | *Luke 11:1-4*

One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples."

He said to them, "When you pray, say:

"Father, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come.
Give us each day our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins,
for we also forgive everyone who sins against us.
And lead us not into temptation."

WEEK 3

PRAYING FOR LIFE

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](#).
- Read the Scripture passage.
- After listening to the sermon, do the *Prayer of Examen* linked in the appendix, looking for places of light and life, as well as places of dark and death. Note any reactions you had- curiosities, concerns, or delights.

RELATE | Use these questions as a launching point for your small group conversation. Open with a check-in/getting-to-know-you question. Group opener options are available in the Appendix.

1. What from the sermon or reading has brought up new questions? Spend some time as a group sharing and discussing.
2. If you took time over the last week to pray an old prayer, or tried a prayer tool from the Appendix, what was that like for you: What was life-giving? What was life-draining? If you encountered any barriers, what were they and how did you respond to them?
3. Jesus prayed for life for the sake of others. How do you currently pray for others? Has this text encouraged you to pray anything new for others?
4. How might you pray for life in light of the discussion this week? Is there a next step you could take in how you engage, act, or relate to others?

PRAY | Use the [Daily Inventory](#) to look back over your day, or if you meet in the morning, over the day before. Consider where you saw the Light of Christ, and where you felt like you were in the Dark of Death. Share with the group, and consider how you might choose to live out of Light this week.

SCRIPTURE | *John 11:32-44*

When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. "Where have you laid him?" he asked. "Come and see, Lord," they replied. Jesus wept. Then the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"

Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. "Take away the stone," he said.

"But, Lord," said Martha, the sister of the dead man, "by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days."

Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?"

So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me."

When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face.

Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."

WEEK 4

MANY WORDS

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](#).
- Read the Scripture passage.
- After listening to the sermon, note any reactions you had- curiosities, concerns, or delights.

RELATE | Use these questions as a launching point for your small group conversation. Open with a check-in/getting-to-know-you question. Group opener options are available in the Appendix.

1. What from the sermon or reading has brought up new questions?
2. Pastor Dave mentioned one way to pray is to start connecting to God through Scripture, and then asking questions of the text, yourself, and of God. Do you find engaging with God in Scripture is prayerful, or does it evoke a different response?
3. Is there a particular passage of Scripture that has engaged you in a new conversation with God in the past year?

PRAY | Use Psalm 17:1-7 to pray using [Lectio Divina](#). Have group members suggest other texts to use for Lectio on the other days.

Hear me, Lord, my plea is just;
listen to my cry.

Hear my prayer—
it does not rise from deceitful lips.

Let my vindication come from you;
may your eyes see what is right.

Though you probe my heart,
though you examine me at night and test me,
you will find that I have planned no evil;
my mouth has not transgressed.

Though people tried to bribe me,
I have kept myself from the ways of the violent
through what your lips have commanded.

My steps have held to your paths;
my feet have not stumbled.

I call on you, my God, for you will answer me;
turn your ear to me and hear my prayer.

Show me the wonders of your great love,
you who save by your right hand
those who take refuge in you from their foes.

SCRIPTURE | *Matthew 6:7-8*

And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

WEEK 5

ARE YOU IN OR OUT?

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](#).
- Read the Scripture passage.
- After listening to the sermon, note any reactions you had- curiosities, concerns, or delights.

RELATE | Use these questions as a launching point for your small group conversation. Open with a check-in/getting-to-know-you question. Group opener options are available in the Appendix.

1. What from the sermon or reading has brought up new questions? Spend some time as a group sharing and discussing.
2. If you took time over the last week to try a prayer tool from the Appendix, what was that like for you: What was life-giving? What was life-draining? If you encountered any barriers, what were they and how did you respond to them?
3. How might you pray courageously in light of the discussion this week? Is there a next step you could take in how you engage, act, or relate to others?

PRAY | Pray about what came up in your conversation and for the week ahead.

SCRIPTURE | *Matthew 11:25-30*

At that time Jesus said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do.

"All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

WEEK 6

PRAYER AS REST

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](#).
- Read the Scripture passage.
- After listening to the sermon, note any reactions you had- curiosities, concerns, or delights.

RELATE | Use these questions as a launching point for your small group conversation. Open with a check-in/getting-to-know-you question. Group opener options are available in the Appendix.

1. What from the sermon or reading has brought up new questions? Spend some time as a group sharing and discussing.
2. If you took time over the last week to try a prayer tool from the Appendix, what was that like for you: What was life-giving? What was life-draining? If you encountered any barriers, what were they and how did you respond to them?
3. How might you pray courageously in light of the discussion this week? Is there a next step you could take in how you engage, act, or relate to others?

PRAY | Pray about what came up in your conversation and for the week ahead.

SCRIPTURE | *Passage*

WEEK 7

REVENGE VS. REDEMPTION

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](#).
- Read the Scripture passage.
- After listening to the sermon, note any reactions you had- curiosities, concerns, or delights.

RELATE | Use these questions as a launching point for your small group conversation. Open with a check-in/getting-to-know-you question. Group opener options are available in the Appendix.

1. What from the sermon or reading has brought up new questions? Spend some time as a group sharing and discussing.
2. If you took time over the last week to try a prayer tool from the Appendix, what was that like for you: What was life-giving? What was life-draining? If you encountered any barriers, what were they and how did you respond to them?
3. Is there something you want to ask the group to help you discern how to pray about?

PRAY | This week, try to pray at fixed hours as a group. You can [read more about this here](#), but basically it means morning, noon, and night, your group reads scripture, offers praise and confession, and prays the same prayers together, wherever you are. You could choose to get together on the phone or via video-conferencing for at least one of these prayers every day. [Click here](#) to access this digitally, or go to your favorite App Store to download The Daily Office App to your smart phone. The top left corner has a drop down to allow you to choose which time of day you'll be praying for ease of use. [This link from the appendix](#) offers other options for praying together through the day. Next week, you'll share about that experience.

SCRIPTURE | *Judges 16:23-31*

Now the rulers of the Philistines assembled to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god and to celebrate, saying, "Our god has delivered Samson, our enemy, into our hands."

When the people saw him, they praised their god, saying,

"Our god has delivered our enemy
into our hands,
the one who laid waste our land
and multiplied our slain."

While they were in high spirits, they shouted, "Bring out Samson to entertain us." So they called Samson out of the prison, and he performed for them.

When they stood him among the pillars, Samson said to the servant who held his hand, "Put me where I can feel the pillars that support the temple, so that I may lean against them." Now the temple was crowded with men and women; all the rulers of the Philistines were there, and on the roof were about three thousand men and women watching Samson perform. Then Samson prayed to the Lord, "Sovereign Lord, remember me. Please, God, strengthen me just once more, and let me with one blow get revenge on the Philistines for my two eyes." Then Samson reached toward the two central pillars on which the temple stood. Bracing himself against them, his right hand on the one and his left hand on the other, Samson said, "Let me die with the Philistines!" Then he pushed with all his might, and down came the temple on the rulers and all the people in it. Thus he killed many more when he died than while he lived.

Then his brothers and his father's whole family went down to get him. They brought him back and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the tomb of Manoah his father. He had led Israel twenty years.

WEEK 8

ONE IS MORE THAN YOU THINK

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](#).
- Read the Scripture passage.
- After listening to the sermon, read and respond to the .

RELATE | Use these questions as a launching point for your small group conversation. Open with a check-in/getting-to-know-you question. Group opener options are available in the Appendix.

1. What from the sermon or reading has brought up new questions? Spend some time as a group sharing and discussing.
2. Your group spent time praying in unity over the last week. What did you like about this practice? What was difficult about it?
3. What is encouraging about praying with Jesus for unity among Christians? Where do you see the Holy Spirit moving in your life toward this end?

PRAY | Pray about what came up in your conversation and for the week ahead. As your group meets for this last time, offer one another the following benediction and commissioning:

Go now in peace,

for Christ has called you to live in peace

among your brothers and sisters in Christ.

Go now in courage,

for Christ has called you from the places of your life

to be agents of redemption and partners in healing.

Go now in joy and thanksgiving,

for Christ is our light!

Go now as one body,

to love and serve God as you love and serve the world!

SCRIPTURE | *John 17:20b-26*

I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one— I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

"Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.

"Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them."

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!

PRAYER TOOLS

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

BIBLE STUDY TOOLS

- The Bible Project: [How to Read the Psalms](#) (5 min)
- The Bible Project: [Structure of the Psalms](#) (9 min)
- [Blue Letter Bible](#)
- [Bible Gateway](#)

“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: "It is really interesting that 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.