



# 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 25)

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 10	I am the light of the world: John 9:1-11
Week 11	I am the good shepherd: John 10:1-21
Week 12	I am the way, truth, and life: John 14:1-14

Week 13	I am the vine: John 15:1-17
Week 14	Jesus's prayer for unity: John 17:1-26
Week 15	Jesus's triumphal entry: losing life to gain it: John 12:12-26
Week 16	Resurrection: John 20:1-18

# 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? Do you have any specific questions about the final events of his life, his death and resurrection (or their meaning)?
- 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 10: I am the Light of the world

## John 9:1–7, 14–16, 24–25, 32–41

**(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 9:1–3, 5–7, 14–16, 24–25, 32–41
- 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. Consider Jesus's response to the question about sin and punishment in this passage. Does this challenge any common assumptions you've seen or any of your own views?
3. What stands out to you or seems significant about the way Jesus heals the man in this passage (consider looking at how Jesus uses mud or his human touch)?
4. The man born blind shares based on his experiences of what God has done for him. What's something you can name that God has done for you, and that might give you strength, hope, or greater resilience this week?
5. Jesus says he is the Light of the world (9:5). How might it be helpful for you to reflect on Christ as light in your life and/or the lives of others this week?

**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. May it increase, so we may see you, ourselves, and this world as it ought to be.

### John 9:1–3, 5–7, 14–16, 24–25, 32–41

1 As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. 2 His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

3 "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him.

5 While I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

6 After saying this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes. 7 "Go," he told him, "wash in the Pool of Siloam" (this word means "Sent"). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing.

14 Now the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man's eyes was a Sabbath. 15 Therefore the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. "He put mud on my eyes," the man replied, "and I washed, and now I see."

16 Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath." But others asked, "How can a sinner perform such signs?" So they were divided.

24 A second time they summoned the man who had been blind. "Give glory to God by telling the truth," they said. "We know this man is a sinner."

25 He replied, "Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!"

32 Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. 33 If this man were not from God, he could do nothing."

34 To this they replied, "You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!" And they threw him out.

35 Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"

36 "Who is he, sir?" the man asked. "Tell me so that I may believe in him."

37 Jesus said, "You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you."

38 Then the man said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him.

39 Jesus said, For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind."

40 Some Pharisees who were with him heard him say this and asked, "What? Are we blind too?"

41 Jesus said, "If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains.

## **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 text (John 9:1-3, 5-7, 14-16, 24-25, 32-41) 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 11: I am the good shepherd

## John 10:1–21

**(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 10:1–21.
- 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 has brought up new questions or interesting points you would like to discuss?
2. Discuss what it means for you to listen to God or to hear God speaking into your life. Is anything challenging about this for you? Does this help give you joy and direction?
3. Read John 10:10. Look at the contrasts in this passage. How does this passage help you discern God's voice in your life or the lives of others?
4. The religious leaders in this passage are led to ask, "Why listen to (Jesus)?" How would you answer this question? What's something that draws you to him, or makes you more curious about him?
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, sometimes we feel uncertain about the future, or weak, or unsure about what is the right thing to do. But you are a good shepherd. So show us what a next step, a faithful and courageous step, looks like in our lives right now, and give us enough trust to take it.

## John 10:1-21

1 "Very truly I tell you Pharisees, anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. 2 The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. 3 The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. 5 But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice." 6 Jesus used this figure of speech, but the Pharisees did not understand what he was telling them.

7 Therefore Jesus said again, "Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. 8 All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. 9 I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved.[a] They will come in and go out, and find pasture. 10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

11 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. 12 The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. 13 The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

14 “I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me— 15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. 16 I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. 17 The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. 18 No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.”

19 The Jews who heard these words were again divided. 20 Many of them said, “He is demon-possessed and raving mad. Why listen to him?”

21 But others said, “These are not the sayings of a man possessed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?”

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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 12: I am the way, truth, and life

## John 14:1-14

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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 14:1-14.
- 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. In John 14:6 Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." Did the sermon shed light on this claim? Share your thoughts and any questions or new insights that you might have.
3. Likewise, what does it mean for you to relate to Jesus in any of these specific ways: to look to Jesus for direction ("way"), meaning and to know what is ultimately real ("truth"), and fulfillment ("life")?
4. What can you imagine would be doing "even greater things" than Jesus did? Drawing from the sermon as helpful, what might it look like to be building towards something new in faith?
5. Do a little imaginative reflecting together: Have you seen God do "even greater things than these" before (14:12)? How might you imagine God doing something new and surprising? What could that look like?

**PRAY** | God, we might not expect great things today, or even know what to do or where to look to see them happen; but you can do more than we imagine, "even greater things." So help us pray boldly; ready our hands and hearts to serve you; work in us; surprise us. In Jesus's name we pray, Amen.

## John 14:1-14

1 "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. 2 My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. 4 You know the way to the place where I am going."

Jesus the Way to the Father

5 Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?"

6 Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. 7 If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him."

8 Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us."

9 Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? 10 Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. 11 Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves. 12 Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. 13 And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it

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**Listen** | *Slowly read through your text (John 14:1-14) 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.*

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# WEEK 13: I am the vine

## John 15:1–17

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- Read John 15:1–17.
- 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 first few verses of this week's passage (15:1–5). How do you understand what Jesus is saying about "being pruned," becoming "more fruitful," and already being clean?
3. Jesus says his command is "love each other as I have loved you." How might this command be both challenging and worthwhile, difficult but rewarding? Share any experiences you have.
4. What does friendship with Christ (or with God in Christ) mean to you (15:14–15)? Are there any obstacles that might get in the way of embracing this idea for you? As you're willing, share and process them with the group.
5. Drawing from the sermon and/or Scripture passage, what's one way you can try to abide or remain near to Christ this week? What might help you do this?

**PRAY** | God, why are you our friend? Why do you concern yourself with our joy? Why do you love so much, and call us to do the same? We might not know why – but you are our friend; you bring us joy; you love us deeply. And so we thank you, for you are good beyond measure. Let us freely offer ourselves to you.

## John 15:1–17

1 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. 2 He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. 3 You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. 4 Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. 6 If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. 7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

9 "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. 10 If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. 11 I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. 12 My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. 13 Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command. 15 I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.

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**Listen** | *Slowly read through your text (John 15:1-17) 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 14: Jesus's prayer for unity

## John 17:1–26

**(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 17:1–26.
- 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 Scripture has brought up new questions or interesting points you would like to discuss?
2. John's gospel gives us insights into the intimacy of Jesus's relationship with God. What stands out to you in this relationship, either in this passage/sermon or as you've reflected on Jesus recently? How does Jesus's relationship to God help you connect to God?
3. Jesus prays for both the disciples's unity and ours (17:20). How have you experienced the gift of unity with other believers? Where do you sense a need for more unity? What's challenging about that? What, if anything, gives you hope?
4. Building on the previous question, what would it look like for you to pursue greater unity with other Christians?
5. Conclude by having a group member re-read John 17:20–23, and then use the prayer below on Christian unity.

**PRAY** | God, we have experienced the gift of being connected to you through the gift of Jesus. We have known friendship with others through the gift of the Spirit. Yet there is more to be done, a greater need for communion. Show us where this need exists. Give us both conviction and hope. Inspire us to love others, to work towards unity and friendship, and thus to know, more fully, the love that exists between you, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

## John 17:1–26

1 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.

6 "I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. 7 Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. 8 For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. 9 I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. 10 All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them. 11 I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one. 12 While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled.

13 “I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. 14 I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. 15 My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. 16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. 17 Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. 18 As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. 19 For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.

20 “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, 21 that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. 22 I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one— 23 I in them and you in me—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.

24 “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.

25 “Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. 26 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.”

## **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.

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**Listen** | *Slowly read through your text (John 17:1–26) 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 15: Jesus's triumphal entry: losing life to gain it

## John 12:12–26

**(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 12:12–26.
- 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. Jesus says to the crowd, "your king is coming." Given what you know about Jesus, and what you're learning from this series, what kind of ruler (or king) is Jesus? Does this challenge or subvert other ideas of kingship or guiding others? How does your view of Jesus shape what it means to be a disciple of Jesus today?
3. Use these as reflection questions as you prepare and participate in Holy Week:

What's something God has given you for which you can give thanks today?

What has been spiritually significant for you during lent (the past five to six weeks)? What are you learning from that experience?

What do you feel called to give back to God this week (e.g., in prayer, in service, a change in routine and behavior, taking a step to get behind a cause)?

Reflect on the final week of Christ's life, from his triumphal entry to the cross and, eventually, resurrection. Consider one event from this week to intentionally reflect on in the days ahead, remembering it and letting it guide your imagination in prayer.

4. 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, you share your life, you offer it up, that we may live. Help us reflect on this important truth. Help us to understand you, to know your will and power, as we journey with Christ together through Holy Week.

## John 12:12–26

12 The next day the great crowd that had come for the festival heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. 13 They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting,

"Hosanna!"

"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"

"Blessed is the king of Israel!"

14 Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, as it is written:

15 "Do not be afraid, Daughter Zion;  
see, your king is coming,  
seated on a donkey's colt."

16 At first his disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realize that these things had been written about him and that these things had been done to him.

17 Now the crowd that was with him when he called Lazarus from the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to spread the word.

18 Many people, because they had heard that he had performed this sign, went out to meet him. 19 So the Pharisees said to one another, "See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!"

20 Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the festival. 21 They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. "Sir," they said, "we would like to see Jesus." 22 Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus.

23 Jesus replied, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. 24 Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. 25 Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. 26 Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.

## 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.

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**Listen** | *Slowly read through your text (John 12:12–26) 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 16: Resurrection

## John 20:1–18

**(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 20:1–18.
- 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's something you've been reflecting on, something you've been working to change, over the past few weeks or months in your spiritual life? Share an update on that. What's going well? What's still challenging?
3. Where do you see instances of both the miraculous and the mundane in the resurrection story? Discuss whether you might try to see God more in typical ways and places, or, alternatively, whether you might expect more from God – for God to show up more explicitly in your life? What would either of these look like for you? What does wisdom look like?
4. Drawing from this sermon, how does the resurrection story of Jesus give you hope for new possibilities, change, or growth? What's a step you can take to live into that hope this week (and the weeks ahead)?
5. Mary encounters Jesus and responds. What's something God might be saying to you or nudging you to do right now?

**PRAY** | God, you overcome sin and the evils of the world in unexpected ways. In a world where there is suffering and pain – around us, in us, and far away from us – may the power of Jesus's resurrection bring hope and transformation, and help us to be part of your healing work. Christ has risen (response: Christ has risen, indeed!).

## John 20:1–18

1 Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. 2 So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"

3 So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. 4 Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. 5 He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. 6 Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, 7 as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus' head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen. 8 Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. 9 (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) 10 Then the disciples went back to where they were staying.

11 Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb 12 and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

13 They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?"



"They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." 14 At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

15 He asked her, "Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?"

Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him."

16 Jesus said to her, "Mary."

She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher").

17 Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

18 Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her.

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**Listen** | *Slowly read through your text (John 20:1-18) 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.*

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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](mailto: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.