



INTRODUCTION

Have you ever wondered what heaven looks like? Or why is it that God allows chronic illnesses? How about if we truly have free will? Does God ever change His mind? We put out a call for Highrockers to share some of their curiosities about God, faith, or the Bible and we got a lot of really good questions! We hope you join us for this sermon series where we'll be responding to the questions that you asked. Together we'll search the scriptures and explore what the Bible has to teach us about a range of challenging and important subjects that many of us wonder about but often don't know where or how to ask.

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 15)

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 1/2	Does God have a plan for my life?*
Week 1/2	Why don't we see miracles today like in the Bible?*
Week 3/4	Why does God allow disabilities/chronic illnesses?*
Week 3/4	Does God change his mind?*

Week 5	What does "fear of the Lord" mean?
Week 6/7	TBD*
Week 6/7	Is violence ever permissible for Christians?*
Week 8	What is the justification for women being allowed to preach?

*For weeks 1 and 2, weeks 3 and 4 and weeks 6 and 7 use the passage/Question covered in the sermon from your Highrock congregation on Sunday. The other passage/Question will be covered the following week.

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

This sermon series invites us into the practice of asking questions. Reflect on your own journey with this:

- When have you found yourself asking deep questions about your faith? What were they, and what prompted them?
- What kinds of faith questions are you wrestling with now—or would like to explore?
- How have others responded to your questions (or those of others), both helpfully and unhelpfully? What have you learned about creating a healthy space for questioning?

Consider how questioning relates to faith:

- Does asking questions feel natural or challenging in your faith journey?
- How do you see questioning reflected in Scripture? Who asks, who answers, and how? (For example, look at Genesis 3:1–10 and Mark 10:46–52.)

As you reflect:

- How might you bring your questions to God—in prayer, worship or daily practices?
- Is there a particular question or insight you feel nudged to share in small group conversations during this series?

WEEK 1/2: Does God have a plan for my life?

* For whether to use this week's discussion guide (Heaven) or the next one (Miracles), consult which Scripture passage/Question was covered in the sermon at your Highrock congregation this past Sunday. The other passage/Question will be covered the following week.

(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
- ☐ Reference the Bible passages used in the sermon.

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

1. What role have questions played in your faith journey? How do you see asking questions as part of following Jesus, or might it be?
2. How do you relate to the question of this sermon – Does God have a plan for me life? Do you lean more towards God orchestrating and planning what goes on in your life and the world or more towards leaving things to chance?
3. How did this sermon nuance the affirmation that God speaks to us? Share your responses and reflections on this, including the ways God speaks to us.
4. Reflect on this line from this sermon: "What is God's will and how can my life be used to help accomplish it?" How is this different from the question, What is God's plan for my life? What do you think makes this distinction important?
5. Share with your group one simple way you can be intentional about following God's will this week. What would that look like for you?

PRAY | God of infinite beauty and goodness, we trust you with our lives. Help us in knowing and continually discerning your will. In the ways it has been made clear to us, trusting in your grace, give us the strength we need to follow it wholeheartedly.

WEEK 1/2: Why don't we see miracles today like in the Bible?*

* For whether to use this week's discussion guide (Miracles) or the previous one (Heaven), consult which Scripture passage/Question was covered in the sermon at your Highrock congregation this past Sunday. The other passage/Question will be covered the following week.

(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.
- ☐ Reference the Bible passages used in the sermon.

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

1. What from the sermon sparked new questions or insights for you?
2. Why do you think miracles interest people? What shapes your own view of them?

Consider these follow-up questions. Use them (or pass on them) based on your group's interests:

- Are there things that make it difficult for you to believe in miracles? What, if anything, would make you more open to the occurrence of miracles?
 - Presuppositions are the things we assume and bring into conversations with others. Consider what presuppositions you might have. How do you think they shape how we view the possibilities of miracles?
3. How can the idea of miracles move from being just theoretical to practical in your faith? How do you think it could impact your prayer life or relationship to God and others—what you expect God to do in your life?
 4. How has this conversation stirred a personal invitation or next step in your faith or relationships?

PRAY | God, above all, help us place our trust in you and your power. You can do more than we know or imagine. Meet us where we are, in our current expectations. But as you meet us where we are, also move us closer to you. In ways both subtle and profound, increase our faith. Help us be open to what you want to do in our lives and in this world.

WEEK 3/4: Why does God allow disabilities/chronic illnesses?*

* For whether to use this week's discussion guide (God & chronic illness) or the next one (does God change God's mind?), consult which Scripture passage/Question was covered in the sermon at your Highrock congregation this past Sunday. The other passage/Question will be covered the following week.

(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.
- ☐ Reference the Bible passages used in the sermon.

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

1. What from the sermon sparked new questions or insights for you?
2. Of the topics mentioned in the sermon (such as suffering, illness or disability), which one resonated with you the most? Can you share with the group why it resonated and what questions it brings up for you?
3. Did the sermon or references to Scripture passages change or impact how you view or relate to these topics?
4. What do you think it means to see and relate to God amidst suffering? What's hard about that for you? What's helpful? What offers hope?
5. How has this conversation stirred a personal invitation or next step in your faith or relationships?

PRAY | God, we acknowledge that the world is not the way it should be. We do not have perfect insights into this—into how everything should and should not be. But we trust that you do. We trust that you love us. And so we ask that you guide us, empower us and show us what it means to be a people who live for how the world ought to be and one day will be, from eternity to eternity. Amen.

WEEK 3/4: Does God change his mind?*

* For whether to use this week's discussion guide (does God change God's mind?) or the previous one (God & chronic illness), consult which Scripture passage/Question was covered in the sermon at your Highrock congregation this past Sunday. The other passage/Question will be covered the following week.

(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.
- ☐ Reference the Bible passages used in the sermon.

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. Have you thought about God in the way Pastor Taylor described, actively relating with us? How does it compare with how you've thought about God at various points in your life? What, if anything, was new for you?
3. How do you think God's grace works alongside our will and ability to choose (our freedom)? What does this say about God? What does it say about us?
4. Drawing on the sermon and your discussion, how could understanding God in a more dynamic way impact your image of God, your spiritual life and/or what it means to participate in Christian community?
5. Perhaps drawing on question 4., how has this conversation stirred a personal invitation or next step in your faith or relationships?

PRAY | God, you are powerful enough to create this world and humble enough to become one of us. Help us appreciate you, your goodness and beauty, from the wonderful things you have done and continue to do in our midst. Help us accept your invitations into new life. Along the way, give us willing hearts to share in your life-giving work. Until your kingdom comes, Amen.

WEEK 5: What does “fear of the Lord” mean?

(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.
- ☐ Reference the Bible passages used in the sermon.

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

1. Was there anything from the sermon or the Scripture that really stood out to you—maybe something that raised questions or sparked curiosity?
2. When you hear the phrase “fear the Lord,” what comes to mind? Have you come across it before, and if so, where? How do you think your early experiences shaped the way you understand it, both then and now?
3. How did Pastor John address the topic of fearing God? What issues or misunderstandings was he addressing? Did anything he said help you see this concept in a new light?
4. If you were to describe a biblical, life-giving way to understand “fear of the Lord,” what would that look like for you personally? How might that affect your spiritual life or how you connect with God?
5. How has this conversation stirred a personal invitation or next step in your faith or relationships?

PRAY | God, help us to fear you rightly; that is to say, help us to understand what fearing God means in light of your justice and truth, and above all, in light of your love. Your humble power is what makes you awesome – because of that, we worship you.

WEEK 6/7: TBD*

* For whether to use this week's discussion guide (TBD) or the next one (violence), consult which Scripture passage/Question was covered in the sermon at your Highrock congregation this past Sunday. The other passage/Question will be covered the following week.

(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.
- ☐ Reference the Bible passages used in the sermon.

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

1. TBD
2. TBD
3. TBD
4. TBD
5. TBD

PRAY | God, please help Scott develop these sermon discussion questions.

WEEK 6/7: Is Violence Ever Permissible for Christians?*

* For whether to use this week's discussion guide (violence) or the previous one (TBD), consult which Scripture passage/Question was covered in the sermon at your Highrock congregation this past Sunday. The other passage/Question will be covered the following week.

(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.
- ☐ Reference the Bible passages used in the sermon.

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

1. This week's topic is a sensitive one. As we begin, what thoughts or feelings are you bringing into the conversation? Do you think it would help to set a few group guidelines to keep the discussion respectful and open?
2. Was there anything from the sermon or reading that sparked a new question or made you think in a fresh way?
3. Before hearing the sermon, how would you have described your thoughts—or even just your gut feeling—about the question, "Is violence ever okay for Christians?" What do you think has shaped those views over time?
4. Are there any passages or themes from the Bible that have influenced how you think about the topic of violence, peacemaking and/or faith? Did the sermon offer any new insights or challenges to your thinking?
5. Whether from personal experience or observation, what makes this conversation hard for us as Christians—and what might help different perspectives stay in dialogue? Is there any shared ground we can build on, or common goals that you see?
6. Is there an invitation you sense God making through your conversation or reflections this week?

PRAY | God, help us discern what your will is for our lives, individually and together as followers of Jesus. Help us discern your will, especially on the hard questions we face. Amidst our differences, help us move closer to becoming a united people with a vision for the kind of peace you give to us and that Jesus calls us to in this world. Where there is violence and strife around us, bring peace. May your justice flow like a river and your righteousness a never-ending stream.

WEEK 8: What is the justification for women being allowed to preach?

(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.
- ☐ Reference the Bible passages used in the sermon.

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

1. Was there anything in the sermon or reading that sparked a new question or insight for you?
2. If you grew up in the church, what kinds of roles did you see women take on—or not? What kinds of roles were afforded to them—or not?
3. Were there any scriptures or themes in the sermon that stood out to you? Did it/they shift or deepen any of your views?
4. How have you received wisdom, encouragement, or spiritual insight from women serving in ministry? Share what that was like with the group.
5. What's one thing you could do to help younger generations in the church grow up seeing women in preaching and leadership roles as normal life-giving examples of faithfulness?

PRAY | God, you have made all people in your image. We thank you in particular today for the gifts of women that have shaped our traditions and our church communities. Help us respond faithfully to your calling on our lives, and to be a supportive community where all of your people can flourish. Amen.

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.