



# Practicing the Way

SERIES COMPANION



# INTRODUCTION

Have you ever heard lofty proclamations in church about how following Jesus will transform your life, and then felt yourself wondering, well... how exactly? You're not alone. We all long to see change in our lives, we want to live like Jesus, but how do we move from theory to practice? The answer is simple: practice! We hope you join us for this eight-week sermon series, where we explore the Biblical practices that we can incorporate into our lives to bring about transformational change as we apprentice to become more like Jesus. We'll be learning together how practices like sabbath, generosity, solitude, and service can lead to a fulfilling life that Jesus has created us to live.

## 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 14)

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	Topics
Week 1	Sabbath
Week 2	Prayer
Week 3	Fasting
Week 4	Solitude
Week 5	Generosity

Week 6	Scripture
Week 7	Community
Week 8	Service

## WEEKLY FORMAT

### SERMON DISCUSSION

**(PRE-WORK) REFLECT:** Listen to the sermon, read weekly selections/view video links (if provided), read scripture passages (used in the sermon), 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 (questions drawn from Practicing the Way Workbook materials)

- What, if anything, are your first impressions about the word discipleship? Or what about the words: being a follower of Jesus? Have these been part of your upbringing or spiritual formation? What are some of the meanings you associate with them?
- What's your experience with spiritual disciplines? What practices have you engaged in during your spiritual journey? What practices are you interested in exploring more?
- This series will involve some concrete practices to try out. What do you hope to get out of this series spiritually? What's going on in your life that might impact, negatively or positively, how you approach this series?

Consider writing down some notes below or journaling about your reflections. Bring these reflections to God in prayer as we begin this series.

# WEEK 1: Sabbath

Reference the Scripture used in the sermon

**(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/read the Scripture 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. Do you practice any kind of Sabbath or day of rest? Or is this a new discipline for you?
3. What would it look like for you to begin Sabbath with a ritual, like lighting a candle or something else? What could help direct your thoughts and feelings to enter into a day of rest?
4. Relatedly, what is or could be restful for you (alongside your community, family, or others you spend time with)? What practices can help you give thanks to God and worship God during a set time of rest?
5. How might you look at Sabbath more as a gift than an obligation (in the beautiful words of Rabbi Heschel, as “a palace in time”)?
6. What do you see as the main obstacles to setting aside time for rest, worship, and renewal? How might you start to address these obstacles? Likewise, what’s one step you feel called to take to enter into more sabbath rest?

**PRAY** | God, thank you for the gift of rest. Sabbath is grace. Help us enjoy the gift of rest, be renewed and learn to love you more through this practice. Amen.

**Reference Scripture from the sermon**

# WEEK 2: Prayer

## Reference Scripture used in the sermon

**(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 the Scripture that was 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 has brought up new questions or interesting points about prayer you would like to discuss?  
  
The following questions will help you think about developing or growing in your practices (rhythms) of prayer. They are meant to help you whether prayer is already an integral part of your spiritual life or if you're just beginning:
2. *Where* do you pray? Or, where would be a helpful place for you to pray? How might praying in one place help you navigate other spaces in your life?
3. *When* do you find yourself praying? Do you see any times in your day where it would be helpful to pray? What does that look like for you?
4. What could it look like to find 'quiet' when you pray? How might you find places of quiet where there is both stillness but also in the midst of life's activities?
5. Drawing from the sermon and the scriptures in today's sermon as helpful, what could it look like for you to open yourself up to God in prayer? Consider this in terms of some or all of the following: *routines or different practices* to help open yourself to God; specific *needs* or pressing matters in your life and in this world that you want to bring to God; *people* to pray with and/or for you.

**PRAY** | God, we were made for communion with you. By your Spirit teach us to pray, what to say, who and what to pray for. In prayer, we worship you. In prayer, we bring our requests to you. In prayer, we are learning to trust you, more and more. May this be so. Amen.

## Reference Scripture used in the sermon

# WEEK 3: Fasting

## Reference Scripture used in the sermon

**(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 the Scripture 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. If you've had experience with fasting before, what has that been like for you? Are there any specific challenges, curiosities, or personal cautions that you think would be helpful to highlight with your group?
3. How did this sermon help clarify the connection between spiritual life and our bodies? What other aspects of fasting were informative (for example, perhaps fasting vs. abstaining from something)?
4. Here are some of the reasons or motivations listed for fasting in the Practicing the Way course. Which, if any, of these do you resonate with? Which would you like to explore?
  - to offer ourselves to God,
  - to amplify prayer, to grow in holiness,
  - to stand with the poor.

Focusing on the last of these reasons, how do you think fasting in order to stand in solidarity with the poor might also help move us to action or a change in posture?

5. What do you think about Mark John Comer's saying, we are not commanded to fast, but Jesus did, and we are invited to follow him? In other words, fasting isn't something we have to do, but get to do.
6. In just a few words, what would you hope to get out of fasting? What would you hope to give to God through it?

**PRAY** | God, as we consider the practice of fasting, make us the kind of people who hunger for you and the things that you desire for us to desire, like solidarity with the poor and vulnerable, and living lives of worship and prayer. Help us by the power of your Spirit and Jesus Christ, our daily bread.

## Reference Scripture used in the sermon



# WEEK 4: Solitude

## Reference Scripture used in the sermon

**(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 the Scripture referenced 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. Is solitude a practice in your life right now? What do you value about solitude? What do you hope to gain from a practice like solitude?
3. What do you think about this quote from John Mark Comer? "What if the greatest threat to the Christian faith today isn't secularism but distraction?" Reflect and discuss.
4. What do you think we can learn from Jesus' practice of going to and from "quiet place/s" during his ministry? What could a "quiet place" where you make space for God look like?
5. How do you understand the distinction between solitude and loneliness, or the idea that solitude isn't loneliness but being with ourselves and God?
6. What's a step you can take to practice solitude this week? Who is someone you can share your experience in practicing solitude with?

**PRAY** | God, you have made all things for yourself, all that is good and beautiful and true. Help us step back and, like Jesus, enter into quiet places to experience our lives differently. Make silence and solitude ways for us to be present to you as you are already present with us. Speak to us, refresh us – allow us to simply be with you, and trust whatever comes. Your grace is enough for us. Amen.

## Reference the Scripture used in the sermon

# WEEK 5: Generosity

## Reference Scripture used in the sermon

**(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 the Scripture 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. What Jesus taught about generosity seems to be confirmed by recent studies on joy and happiness: it is better to give than receive. Whether you were the giver or recipient, share about a time when you experienced the joy of generosity.
3. What fears or desires keep you from being generous?
4. How do you think your life might be different (how would you want it to be different) if you were freer from the fear of not having enough?
5. What is one act of generosity you can do this week that would counter the fear you may carry? How can you incorporate this practice into your spiritual life (prayer, reflections, fellowship with others)?

**PRAY** | God, you own the cattle on a thousand hills (Psalm 50). All things belong to you. Help us trust that you can and will provide for us. Help us entrust more of our lives to that truth. But also help us reflect your generosity to others, to this world. As you have provided for us, help us also share in joyful giving to others. Help us experience more of the promise, "it is better to give than to receive," both in our own sacrificial giving and in the joy of seeing your radical generosity in the sacrifices of others, which may be how you continue to provide for us. Amen.

## Reference Scripture used in the sermon

# WEEK 6: Scripture

## Reference Scripture used in the sermon

**(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 the Scripture 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. What is your primary feeling about Scripture? Are there ways you can share with the group how Scripture has helped develop your relationship with Jesus?
3. What do you anticipate being a challenge for incorporating Scripture more into your spiritual life and practice of discipleship?
4. What would it mean for you to see the Bible through the eyes of Jesus, with Jesus as the center of Scripture? What do you think Practicing the Way's proposal that we trust the effectiveness of the Bible because we trust in Jesus (not the other way around)?
5. Look at one of the following 2 questions, whichever interests you most: 1) Do you resonate more with reading Scripture for information or formation? Why? 2) Would you consider yourself more of a left-brained or a right-brained person? How do you think that impacts your reading of the Bible?
6. What's one way you can intentionally practice Scripture reading as part of following Jesus this week? This can be something new, something different or something you've done before but with a new focus.

**PRAY** | God, thank you for the gift of Scripture. Help us be listeners and readers of the Bible who both seek to understand what it says to both give content and direction to our faith to help us become formed into more Christ-like people. Amen.

## Reference Scripture used in the Sermon

# WEEK 7: Community

## Reference Scripture used in the sermon

**(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 the Scripture 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. What's your primary feeling about living more deeply in community? Excitement? Hesitance? Fear?
3. What are the most common barriers you personally face to living more deeply in community?
4. Consider the definition of the practice of community in Practicing the Way: "The intentional discipline of actively building highly relational, joyfully-connected kinship groups that eat and laugh and pray and worship and follow Jesus together as a family." What stands out to you in this definition?
5. Using this definition (from question 4) as a soundboard, what aspect of community would you like to grow in? What's one step you can take in moving toward building community?
6. Building on a key theme across the New Testament, Practicing the Way suggests meeting with a group of people once a week to eat together. As a foundation for community, eating together accomplishes a lot. Is this something you'd consider? What might it look like?

**PRAY** | God, you created us in your image, to reflect the community you are as the three-in-one God. In Jesus, you invite us into a new form of family. Help us experience community in ways that can be healing, joyful and life-giving. With those around us, with friends of shared faith, help us find support for our needs and offer support to others. Give us wisdom to recognize where community already exists around us, and to be grateful for this, and where there is a need for new or deeper kinds of community in our lives. Lord, graciously provide for us. Amen.

## Reference Scripture used in the sermon

# WEEK 8: Service

## Reference Scripture used in the sermon

**(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 the Scripture 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. What motivates you to serve? What are some challenges or obstacles that prevent you from serving?
3. Did this sermon help you see how some of the spiritual practices we've focused on in this series are connected to acts of service? If it did, how so? What connections do you see or what connections would you like to explore more?
4. What do you think helps our service stay grounded in the love of God?
5. What are your highlights from this sermon series? Try to come up with two or three ways that your spiritual practices might look different going forward. What tangible steps can you take to help implement these changes?

**PRAY** | God, our goal over the past few weeks has been to learn more about spiritual practices and to be transformed as we begin to practice them more in our lives. We acknowledge that the goal is not just our transformation but that we might live differently as a people of God, that we might learn to love like Christ. We trust you have been preparing us, and you will continue to do so. We open our hands, our hearts, our minds to you so that we might do the work you're calling us to. Speak, oh God, for we your servants are listening. Amen. .

## Reference Scripture used in the sermon

# 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.