



**SPIRITUAL
POWER
TO MAKE A
DIFFERENCE**

EXPONENTIAL

SERIES COMPANION / HIGHROCK 2026

INTRODUCTION

The phrase “the weight of the world” can feel like more than just a saying these days. There is so much brokenness, apathy, and suffering. We long for more, for better, yet we often feel powerless to even make a dent in the scale of all that’s wrong. The first Christians faced a similar weight, and yet, instead of paralysis or retreat, they followed the leading of the Holy Spirit and got to witness a profound, world-altering movement take off as more and more followed the way of Jesus. The Kingdom of God grew exponentially! You’re invited to join us for our summer series journeying through the Book of Acts. It’s so much more than just a history lesson; it’s a reminder that what was possible then is possible now. We, too, have the spiritual power to make a difference in our world today.

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 (located at the end of the discussion guide)

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	Ascension, Acts 1:1-11
Week 2	Pentecost: Acts 2:1-4, 13-16, 22,32-33, 36-41
Week 3	Peter and John Heal the Crippled Man: Acts 3:1-21
Week 4	Sanhedrein/Exclusive Claim: Acts 4:1-23

Week 5	Ananias and Sapphira: Acts 5:1-11
Week 6	Hellenist Widows: Acts 6:1-7
Week 7	Stoning of Stephen: Acts 6:8-15, 7:1-2a, 51-57, 60, 8:1
Week 8	Ethiopian Eunuch: Acts 8:26-40
Week 9	Saul/Paul: Acts 9:1-22
Week 10	Peter/Cornelius: Acts 10:1-48
Week 11	Jerusalem Council: Acts 15:1-29
Week 12	Paul at the Acropolis: Acts 17:16-32
Weeks 13	Ephesian Riot: Acts 19:23-41
Week 14	Labor Day - Faith & Work

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

- This sermon series is about the book of Acts and what it means to make a difference in our world today, just as the early followers of Jesus sought to love God and their neighbors through the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit. What excites you about this vision? How might it be challenging?
- Consider praying over these initial thoughts and feelings that come up. Ask God to prepare your heart to learn what God has in store for you during this series, and perhaps also pray that God brings joy to you and others through learning to love one another better through community.
- Do a brief spiritual inventory. Where are you coming into this sermon series? What could you use as a refresher in your relationship with the church community, with your involvement in social action, and with your spirit at this time? Bring these to God in prayer.

WEEK 1: Wait

Acts 1:1-11 (esp 3-8)

(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 Acts 1:1-11 (especially 3-8)

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. Scripture questions: Looking at this passage, what do you see in Jesus's presence with the disciples that makes his invitation/commands significant? What seems important about the places that Jesus asks the disciples to go? What else do you see in this passage (for example: other details, the structure of the passage, the different voices or perspectives of people in the passage)?
3. Did this sermon make you remember something you've felt called to do for God in the past? What thoughts or reflections came up for you?
4. This sermon has a lot to do with our *intentions* (the reason or why we do something). Recognizing our intentions are often mixed, how did this sermon help you reflect on our intentions? What might it look like to intend to do something well for God?
5. How were the disciples in the passage we looked at called to wait? What do you think this experience was like for them? Do you think it was challenging or perhaps even helpful (freeing) for them in some way?
6. Is there something specific that you feel called to wait on in your life right now? What could that waiting look like? What might an *active waiting* on God look like for you? Consider ways you can remind and encourage one another about what you feel called to wait on right now. .
7. 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 |

Faithful God, we have listened for your Word, aware of how much we need You. So often we rely on our own wisdom, our own strength, and our own understanding. Give us ears to hear Your Spirit, hearts that are willing to trust You, and courage to follow where You lead. May we learn to depend on Your power rather than our own. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Scripture: Acts 1:1-11

¹In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach ²until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. ³After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. ⁴On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. ⁵For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

⁶Then they gathered around him and asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"

⁷He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

⁹After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

¹⁰They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. ¹¹"Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."

WEEK 2: Pentecost

Acts 2:1-4, 13-16, 22, 33-33, 36-41

(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 Acts 2:1-4, 13-16, 22,32-33, 36-41

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. How do you do with waiting? Do you resonate with any of the stories P. John shared about feeling alone? Have you ever known that God was present in your life, but struggled to experience that? What was it like?
3. P. John made the case that the disciples were at the temple while waiting for Jesus (examples: it was Pentecost, a temple celebration; the temple was a "house" where people would stay, the time of day mentioned in Acts, how specific connections to the Old Testament and the giving of the law, like God's presence in wind and fire and the number of people who are baptized). Share about any connections here (or others) that interest and the meaning of them for how you understand Scripture, God, or how God works.
4. During Jesus's trial and death, many of the disciples scattered and left him behind? What then does Jesus's call to wait during Pentecost mean for how God might have been forming the disciples? What connections do you see?

Building on this last question, what are some things you find yourself waiting on in life? What would it look like to be open to God working in you (and others) through waiting? Try to come up with at least one example.

Perhaps read this line for P. John's sermon: "By making them wait, I believe Jesus was teaching them, and us, to know that God is with us, even when we're tempted to believe we're most alone." Do you find any sense of hope or encouragement from this?

5. Look at the way God becomes present to God's people in the temple and now, even more broadly, through the Spirit in our hearts (1 Corinthians 3:16). What seems significant to you about this in Scripture? What does this tell you about how God works and relates to us?
6. Another theme from the sermon was how God can meet us when we face our fears, like, for P. John, the fear of being alone (FOMO). What fear or concern makes you feel like you're alone, that God isn't with you? Is there a way you'd like to take a step in addressing this, asking for help from God in this?

PRAY |

Holy Spirit, when fear speaks loudly, help us to hear Your voice more clearly. As we have listened for Your Word, remind us that You are with us, even when we cannot see You and even when we do not feel Your presence. Open our hearts to receive Your truth, strengthen our faith, and teach us to trust You more deeply. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Scripture | Acts 2:1-4, 13-16, 22,32-33, 36-41

¹ When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. ² Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. ⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

¹³ Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine."

¹⁴ Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. ¹⁵ These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! ¹⁶ No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel...

²² "Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know.

³² God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it. ³³ Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear.

³⁶ "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah."

³⁷ When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"

³⁸ Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call."

⁴⁰ With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." ⁴¹ Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

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.