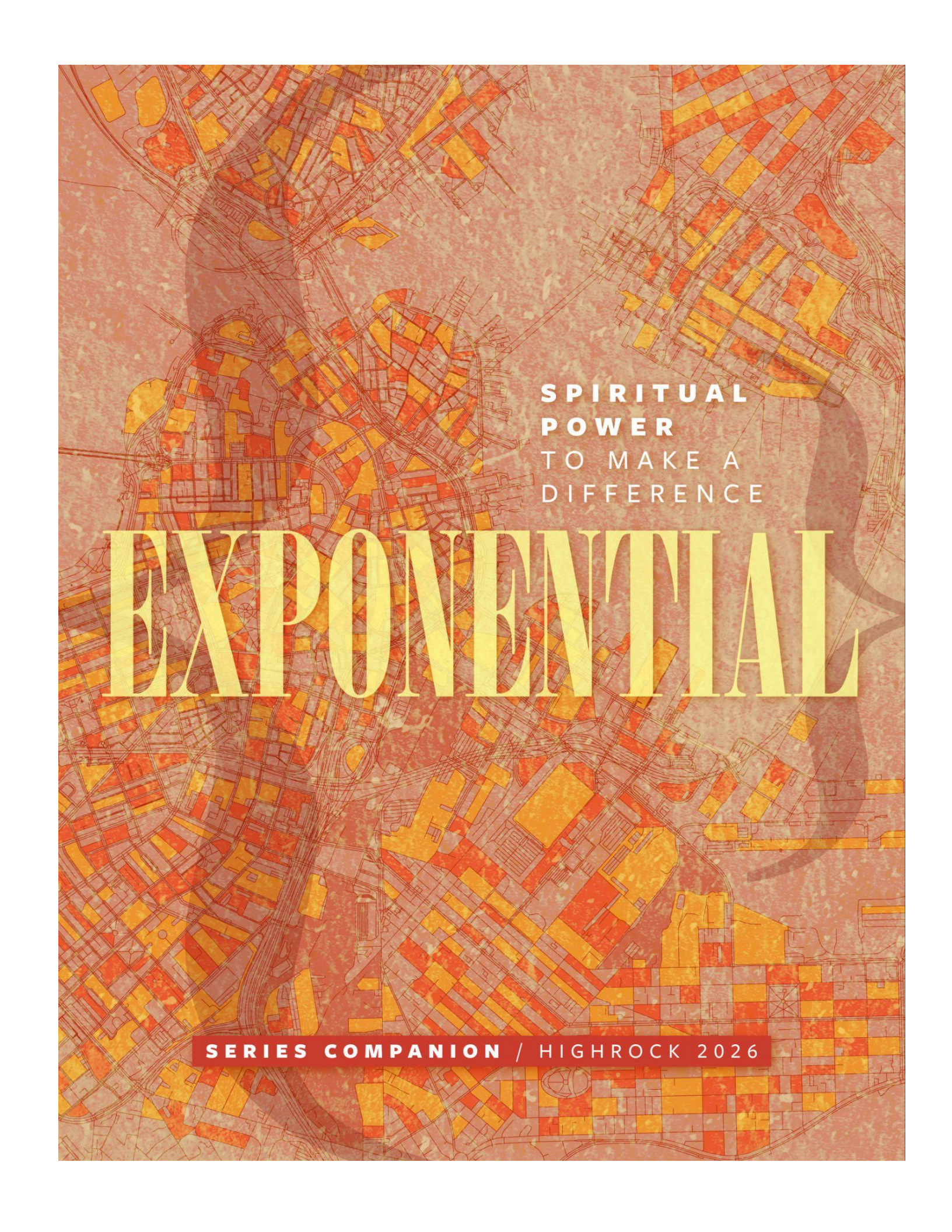




**SPIRITUAL
POWER
TO MAKE A
DIFFERENCE**

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	Credible Witness: Acts 3:1-26
Week 4	Sanhedrein/Exclusive Claim: Acts 4:1-23

Week 5	Ananias and Sapphira (The Story Nobody Wants to Preach): Acts 5:1-11
Week 6	Hellenist Widows (Are You 'Good Looking?'): 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 (Not Sure What To Say?): Acts 8:26-40
Week 9	Saul/Paul: Acts 9:1-22
Week 10	Peter/Cornelius: Acts 10:1-48 (condensed version: Acts 10: 1-6, 9-15, 24, 28, 34-36)
Week 11	Jerusalem Council: Acts 15:1-2, 4-23, 25, 27-29
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?"

⁷ He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸ But 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."

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

¹⁰ They 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.

WEEK 3: Credible Witness

Acts 3:1-26

(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 Acts 3:1-26

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 question: Look at Peter's sermon. What are some challenging lines for you from Peter's sermon in Acts 3. Pastor Taylor highlighted a couple, such as "I can only give you what I have." Discuss them with your group. Does your discussion or anything P. Taylor shared help you make sense of these passages?
3. P. Taylor rephrased a Scripture passage from Acts 3, saying "I cannot give what I do not have." What is the key idea in this line? Is there some way that it speaks to you in your faith life or relationship with God at the moment?
4. How did this sermon help add important context to the statement, "You killed the author of life" (3:15), that's important for us as Christians to be aware of?
5. P. Taylor said that Peter and John are uniquely credible because of the Spirit's presence. How does that help you better understand this biblical passage? Believing that this same Spirit is in us, what could it look like to be more open (to offering) an aspect of your life to God's power in the Spirit that is available to us?
6. P. Taylor talked about how repentance helps us become authentic and credible. What do you think he meant by this? Does it speak to you personally?
7. The marker of (uniquely credible) witness is love, loving and being loved by those around us. How does that challenge you in a helpful way? How might it encourage you to share this (God's) love with others, and/or acknowledge it being shared to you in some specific, tangible way this week?

PRAY |

Gracious God, as we have listened for your Word, quiet the voices that compete for our attention. Help us to hear your voice clearly, to recognize your presence among us, and to respond with faith and obedience. Lead us beyond mere knowledge, into a deeper relationship with you, so that our lives might reflect your love, grace and truth. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, amen.

Scripture | Acts 3:1-26

¹ Peter and John went to the Temple one afternoon to take part in the three o'clock prayer service. ² As they approached the Temple, a man lame from birth was being carried in. Each day he was put beside the Temple gate, the one called the Beautiful Gate, so he could beg from the people going into the Temple. ³ When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for some money.

⁴ Peter and John looked at him intently, and Peter said, "Look at us!" ⁵ The lame man looked at them eagerly, expecting some money. ⁶ But Peter said, "I don't have any silver or gold for you. But I'll give you what I have. In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, get up and walk!"

⁷ Then Peter took the lame man by the right hand and helped him up. And as he did, the man's feet and ankles were instantly healed and strengthened. ⁸ He jumped up, stood on his feet, and began to walk! Then, walking, leaping, and praising God, he went into the Temple with them.

⁹ All the people saw him walking and heard him praising God. ¹⁰ When they realized he was the lame beggar they had seen so often at the Beautiful Gate, they were absolutely astounded! ¹¹ They all rushed out in amazement to Solomon's Colonnade, where the man was holding tightly to Peter and John.

¹² Peter saw his opportunity and addressed the crowd. "People of Israel," he said, "what is so surprising about this? And why stare at us as though we had made this man walk by our own power or godliness? ¹³ For it is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—the God of all our ancestors—who has brought glory to his servant Jesus by doing this. This is the same Jesus whom you handed over and rejected before Pilate, despite Pilate's decision to release him. ¹⁴ You rejected this holy, righteous one and instead demanded the release of a murderer. ¹⁵ You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. And we are witnesses of this fact!

¹⁶ "Through faith in the name of Jesus, this man was healed—and you know how crippled he was before. Faith in Jesus' name has healed him before your very eyes.

¹⁷ "Friends, I realize that what you and your leaders did to Jesus was done in ignorance. ¹⁸ But God was fulfilling what all the prophets had foretold about the Messiah—that he must suffer these things. ¹⁹ Now repent of your sins and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped away. ²⁰ Then times of refreshment will come from the presence of the Lord, and he will again send you Jesus, your appointed Messiah. ²¹ For he must remain in heaven until the time for the final restoration of all things, as God promised long ago through his holy prophets. ²² Moses said, 'The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from among your own people. Listen carefully to everything he tells you.' ²³ Then Moses said, 'Anyone who will not listen to that Prophet will be completely cut off from God's people.'

²⁴ "Starting with Samuel, every prophet spoke about what is happening today. ²⁵ You are the children of those prophets, and you are included in the covenant God promised to your ancestors. For God said to Abraham, 'Through your descendants all the families on earth will be blessed.' ²⁶ When God raised up his servant, Jesus, he sent him first to you people of Israel, to bless you by turning each of you back from your sinful ways."

WEEK 4: Only Way?

Acts 4:1-14

(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 4:1-14

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. This sermon deals with challenging topics around salvation, exclusivity and inclusivity, and how God relates to all people, those who confess faith in Jesus and those who don't. Is this a topic you've given some thought to before? What challenges, tensions or hopes do you see in it?
3. As an example of the previous question, P. Dave brought up biblical passages that reference salvation through Jesus alone (John 14:6) and ones that highlight how God wills to save everyone (1 Timothy 3:2-5; Isaiah 56:7). Again, are there challenges, tensions or helpful connections you see here?
4. Our theological questions almost always have very personal side to them, if we look for them. Have you experienced the personal importance or weight of questions about salvation before? Or perhaps about connecting God's love and justice? What was that like? Sharing these with your group can help us see the practical importance of these topics.
5. Drawing from the sermon, and perhaps scriptural stories in it like Peter and the centurion Cornelius (Acts 10), what motivations do you see and experience in your life for sharing your faith with others? What might help this concern come from a place of love and humility for you?
6. Consider both of these: First, how might the message of God's love and work in Christ be speaking to you right now? Is there something it's calling you to do, whether placing trust in Christ or a specific action? Second, is there someone in your life with which you'd like to either talk more explicitly about faith or at least move in that direction? You're welcome to share this with your group, but don't feel pressure to do so..
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, as we have listened for Your Word, give us humble hearts and open minds. Where we are confused, give us understanding. Where we are uncertain, give us faith. And where Your truth and our experience challenge us, give us courage to trust Your goodness. Help us to see more clearly the depth of Your love, the beauty of Your grace, and the hope we have in Jesus Christ. Amen..

Scripture | Acts 4:1-14

¹ While Peter and John were speaking to the people, they were confronted by the priests, the captain of the Temple guard, and some of the Sadducees. ² These leaders were very disturbed that Peter and John were teaching the people that through Jesus there is a resurrection of the dead. ³ They arrested them and, since it was already evening, put them in jail until morning. ⁴ But many of the people who heard their message believed it, so the number of men who believed now totaled about 5,000.

⁵The next day the council of all the rulers and elders and teachers of religious law met in Jerusalem. ⁶Annas the high priest was there, along with Caiaphas, John, Alexander, and other relatives of the high priest. ⁷They brought in the two disciples and demanded, "By what power, or in whose name, have you done this?"

⁸Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers and elders of our people, ⁹are we being questioned today because we've done a good deed for a crippled man? Do you want to know how he was healed? ¹⁰Let me clearly state to all of you and to all the people of Israel that he was healed by the powerful name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, the man you crucified but whom God raised from the dead. ¹¹For Jesus is the one referred to in the Scriptures, where it says,

'The stone that you builders rejected
has now become the cornerstone.'

¹²There is salvation in no one else! God has given no other name under heaven by which we must be saved."

¹³The members of the council were amazed when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, for they could see that they were ordinary men with no special training in the Scriptures. They also recognized them as men who had been with Jesus. ¹⁴But since they could see the man who had been healed standing right there among them, there was nothing the council could say.

WEEK 5: The Story Nobody Wants to Preach

Acts 5:1-11

(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 5:1-11

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 Scripture passage. Are there parts about the passage that are either challenging (take a look at the sermon title) or mysterious or that pique your curiosity and you'd like to explore in the discussion?
3. Impostor syndrome: a persistent feeling or sense of being inadequate, a fraud, or that your success is unearned. Have you experienced this? What was it like for you?
4. Consider the comparison with the story of Achan from Joshua 7 that Pastor George brings up about half way through the sermon. How does this comparison help us understand the meaning of the Ananias and Sapphira story? Does it answer any questions you have about the Acts 5 passage?
5. This sermon focused on what it means to relate to God and others as yourself, or authenticity. "God has never wanted your facade, God has only wanted you." Reflect on this idea together. Could God be inviting you into greater authenticity in your relationship with God and the community of God's people? What could that look like?
6. Paraphrasing Walter Brueggemann, P. George said, "lying within the community is an act of violence against the community." Consider this quote. What makes truth telling so important in our lives and community? Can you think of a way where there's a need for healthy and wise truth-telling to be more present in your life?
7. Talk about some of P. George's practical tips for practicing authenticity. How can you apply them? 1) Name a facade in your life. 2) Bring it to other people (with discernment, share about this with someone else or others). 3) Receive it, don't rush it, when others bring a vulnerability to you.
8. 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, as we have listened for Your Word today, give us humble hearts and attentive minds to know You more deeply. By Your Spirit, help us not only to hear Your Word, but to respond with trust and obedience. Teach us to live with integrity, to walk in humility, and to rest in the grace You freely give. Amen.

Scripture | Acts 5:1-11

¹ But there was a certain man named Ananias who, with his wife, Sapphira, sold some property. ² He brought part of the money to the apostles, claiming it was the full amount. With his wife's consent, he kept the rest.

³ Then Peter said, "Ananias, why have you let Satan fill your heart? You lied to the Holy Spirit, and you kept some of the money for yourself.

⁴ The property was yours to sell or not sell, as you wished. And after selling it, the money was also yours to give away. How could you do a thing like this? You weren't lying to us but to God!"

⁵ As soon as Ananias heard these words, he fell to the floor and died. Everyone who heard about it was terrified. ⁶ Then some young men got up, wrapped him in a sheet, and took him out and buried him.

⁷ About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. ⁸ Peter asked her, "Was this the price you and your husband received for your land?"

"Yes," she replied, "that was the price."

⁹ And Peter said, "How could the two of you even think of conspiring to test the Spirit of the Lord like this? The young men who buried your husband are just outside the door, and they will carry you out, too."

¹⁰ Instantly, she fell to the floor and died. When the young men came in and saw that she was dead, they carried her out and buried her beside her husband. ¹¹ Great fear gripped the entire church and everyone else who heard what had happened.

WEEK 6: Are You ‘Good Looking’?

Acts 6:1-7

(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 6:1-7

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 today's Scripture. What are some of the tensions that the believers in this passage are having to deal with? What personal and theological questions would likely have arisen for them? What is the significance you see in the fact that Greek speaking Christians became key decision makers in the church?
3. Receiving criticism, as Pastor Jon mentioned, is difficult. Which of the three common responses P. Jon mentioned do you resonate with most? Defensiveness/internalization, avoidance, or anger?

Likewise, how do you respond when you hear about larger challenges or problems in our world (P. Jon mentioned the example of shortages in foster care support in Massachusetts)? Does this reveal something about how you respond to challenges?

4. The ideologies of Jesus are put to the test by this question: "Who will care for our vulnerable and most weak?" What did P. Jon mean by this? How do you think this idea/question can help keep us as individuals faithful and our communities close to God's will? Where do we do this well, and where or how might we do it better?
5. Consider the basic steps P. Jon mentioned for good looking (seeing the world around us well): *observe*, *listen* (for the Spirit), then *do*. What (or where) could you be intentionally looking or caring for others this week in order to take these steps and learn to see others like Jesus does (like Jesus sees you)? Consider checking in and sharing what you saw next week.
6. 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, prepare our hearts to receive Your Word today and in the days ahead. Open our minds to understand Your truth, our lives to respond with faith, and by Your Spirit, help us to see others as You see them, and to follow wherever You lead. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen..

Scripture | Acts 6:1-7

¹In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenistic Jews^[a] among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. ²So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. ³Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them ⁴and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word."

⁵This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. ⁶They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

⁷So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.

WEEK 7: The Stoning of Stephen

Acts 6:8-15, 7:1-2a, 51-57, 60, 8:1

(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 6:8-15, 7:1-2a, 51-57, 60, 8:1

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

7. What from the sermon or reading has brought up new questions or interesting points you would like to discuss?
8. Scripture questions: Where do you see similarities between Stephen and other figures in the Bible? What stands out to you in Stephen's speech, his prayer to Jesus, and/or what Stephen sees in this passage?
9. Pastor Richard drew attention to how challenging it can be to respond well when our beliefs, values and other things we care about are challenged. Did anything P. Richard shared stand out to you? Have you experienced something like this in the recent past, and if so, would you be willing to share about it with your group?
10. Discuss what Pastor Richard meant by having an eternal perspective? Where does this show up in the passage about Stephen or other Scriptures he mentioned? This question connects to the next one.
11. What does having an eternal perspective mean to you, or what might it mean? How do you think it could make a difference in any of the ways you either relate to other people, especially those with differences from you?
12. Also consider where this is most challenging. Is there a spiritual practice, a way of praying, that you might consider doing this week to ask for God's help or even an awareness of where you might practice this?
13. 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 |

Gracious God, we have joined in conversation, listening for your voice and trusting you have spoken in some way. Continue to open our minds to understand Your truth, our hearts to embrace Your grace, and our lives to respond with faith. Where we are anxious, grant us peace. Where we are discouraged, renew our hope. By Your Spirit, teach us to remain faithful, whatever may come. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Scripture: Acts 6:8-15, 7:1-2a, 51-57, 60, 8:1

6:8-15:

8 Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, performed amazing miracles and signs among the people.⁹ But one day some men from the Synagogue of Freed Slaves, as it was called, started to debate with him. They were Jews from Cyrene, Alexandria, Cilicia, and the province of Asia.¹⁰ None of them could stand against the wisdom and the Spirit with which Stephen spoke.

¹¹ So they persuaded some men to lie about Stephen, saying, "We heard him blaspheme Moses, and even God." ¹² This roused the people, the elders, and the teachers of religious law. So they arrested Stephen and brought him before the high council.^[a]

¹³ The lying witnesses said, "This man is always speaking against the holy Temple and against the law of Moses. ¹⁴ We have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth^[a] will destroy the Temple and change the customs Moses handed down to us."

¹⁵ At this point everyone in the high council stared at Stephen, because his face became as bright as an angel's.

7:1-2a:

¹ Then the high priest asked Stephen, "Are these accusations true?"

² This was Stephen's reply: "Brothers and fathers, listen to me."

7:51-57:

⁵¹ "You stubborn people! You are heathen at heart and deaf to the truth. Must you forever resist the Holy Spirit? That's what your ancestors did, and so do you! ⁵² Name one prophet your ancestors didn't persecute! They even killed the ones who predicted the coming of the Righteous One—the Messiah whom you betrayed and murdered. ⁵³ You deliberately disobeyed God's law, even though you received it from the hands of angels."

⁵⁴ The Jewish leaders were infuriated by Stephen's accusation, and they shook their fists at him in rage.¹ ⁵⁵ But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed steadily into heaven and saw the glory of God, and he saw Jesus standing in the place of honor at God's right hand. ⁵⁶ And he told them, "Look, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing in the place of honor at God's right hand!"

⁵⁷ Then they put their hands over their ears and began shouting. They rushed at him...

7:60-8:1

⁶⁰ He fell to his knees, shouting, "Lord, don't charge them with this sin!" And with that, he died. ¹ Saul was one of the witnesses, and he agreed completely with the killing of Stephen.

WEEK 8: Not Sure What To Say?

Acts 8: 26-40

(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 8:26-40

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

1. Using the example from the sermon, have you ever seen someone preaching on a street corner before, “shouting about sin and salvation”? How do you usually process something like that?

The sermon focuses on listening. After this scripture question, the other questions look at different practices and steps that Pastor Dave offered. Perhaps look over each of them and discuss two or three:

2. Looking at the Scripture passage, how did Phillip take *an active approach to listening* to the Spirit and the Eunuch?
3. Do you know someone who shows you that they *want to be present with you* by the way they listen? What makes them good at it? What would you want to learn from them?
4. Pastor Dave shared that Spirit-led conversations begin with listening, not having all the right answers. Share your thoughts on this. How might it be helpful in relationships in your life?
5. Do you believe the Holy Spirit is already having a conversation with other people? What difference could this make for you in your life and relationships with others?
6. Another practice is asking questions. Like the previous question, is there someone in your life you know that's good at asking questions? How might you try to ask questions that could lead to spiritual conversations in a way that feels genuine and respectful?
7. Likewise, how might you help others ask new questions themselves? (Keep in mind here the earlier point on the importance of listening, especially to where the Spirit might already be connecting with that person.)
8. If someone asked you to share one thing – just one thing, not necessarily the most important thing –, about the good news of Christian faith, what might you say?
9. Is there a conversation, a friendship or connection with another person, you might be called to in your life, beginning with active listening and prayer?

PRAY |

Holy Spirit, open our hearts to continue to receive Your Word. Where we are distracted, draw us back to You. Open our minds to understand Your truth, our hearts to embrace the grace You freely offer through Christ, and our lives to respond with faith.

Help us to recognize Your voice, to trust Your leading this week, to reflect the love of Christ, and to join the work You are already doing. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Scripture | Acts 8:26-30

²⁶ As for Philip, an angel of the Lord said to him, "Go south down the desert road that runs from Jerusalem to Gaza." ²⁷ So he started out, and he met the treasurer of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under the Kandake, the queen of Ethiopia. The eunuch had gone to Jerusalem to worship, ²⁸ and he was now returning. Seated in his carriage, he was reading aloud from the book of the prophet Isaiah.

²⁹ The Holy Spirit said to Philip, "Go over and walk along beside the carriage."

³⁰ Philip ran over and heard the man reading from the prophet Isaiah. Philip asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?"

³¹ The man replied, "How can I, unless someone instructs me?" And he urged Philip to come up into the carriage and sit with him.

³² The passage of Scripture he had been reading was this:

"He was led like a sheep to the slaughter.
And as a lamb is silent before the shearers,
he did not open his mouth.

³³ He was humiliated and received no justice.
Who can speak of his descendants?
For his life was taken from the earth."

³⁴ The eunuch asked Philip, "Tell me, was the prophet talking about himself or someone else?" ³⁵ So beginning with this same Scripture, Philip told him the Good News about Jesus.

³⁶ As they rode along, they came to some water, and the eunuch said, "Look! There's some water! Why can't I be baptized?" ³⁸ He ordered the carriage to stop, and they went down into the water, and Philip baptized him.

³⁹ When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away. The eunuch never saw him again but went on his way rejoicing. ⁴⁰ Meanwhile, Philip found himself farther north at the town of Azotus. He preached the Good News there and in every town along the way until he came to Caesarea.

WEEK 9: Saul Becomes Paul

Acts 9:1-16

(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 9:1-16

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. Does your name, or the name of someone close to you, hold significance?
3. Looking at the Bible passage for this sermon, and other scriptures mentioned in the message that you recall, what do you see in the transformation of Saul (who becomes Paul) in his encounter with Jesus? How does his identity begin to change?
4. What do you think it was like for Saul when Jesus showed him he had been wrong to persecute Christians? When is a time when you felt strongly about something but later realized you were mistaken or wrong? As you're willing, share about this with the group: What did it feel like? What, if anything, did you learn from this experience?
5. Pastor John observed that the patience and love of God ("you matter to God, and you matter to me") helps us see ourselves differently, not despite but even in light of our faults and shortcomings. How might this understanding impact your spiritual and personal growth right now? How might it speak to something you've been experiencing or wrestling with lately?
6. How can you help someone else experience or know that they matter to God this week? Is there a specific step you can take to do this?

PRAY |

Faithful God, Your ways are higher than our ways, and Your thoughts higher than our thoughts. Quiet every distraction within us, and open our eyes to see You more clearly. Open our minds to understand and to continue to pursue Your truth, our hearts to receive Your grace, and our lives to respond with faith. May Your Word shape us into people who are becoming more and more like Christ. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Scripture | Acts 9:1-16

¹ Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest ² and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. ³ As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. ⁴ He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"

⁵ "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked.

"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. ⁶ "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

⁷ The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. ⁸ Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. ⁹ For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.

¹⁰ In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, "Ananias!"

"Yes, Lord," he answered.

¹¹ The Lord told him, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. ¹² In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight."

¹³ "Lord," Ananias answered, "I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your holy people in Jerusalem. ¹⁴ And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name."

¹⁵ But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. ¹⁶ I will show him how much he must suffer for my name."

WEEK 10: Who is *Your* Cornelius?

Acts 10:1-6, 9-15, 24, 28, 34-36

(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 10:1-6, 9-15, 24, 28, 34-36 Jerusalem Council: Acts 15:1-2, 4-23, 25, 27-29

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

*There are more questions than normal this week. Use them selectively, and be sure to look at question 8.

1. What from the sermon or reading has brought up new questions or interesting points you would like to discuss?
2. Scripture question: How did God work to help change Peter's mind? Can you see how God worked quickly to do this? Are there ways God works slowly as well?
3. Scripture question: Perhaps look at a single figure in this story that you haven't thought a lot about before. As you look at that person, what do you see about the ways that God desires to create community and bridge differences?
4. Have you ever felt strongly or certain about something, and realized you were mistaken? What was that like? Did you learn anything from it?
5. This message focuses on what it looks like to become followers of Jesus who are always 'ready to grow,' more open to what God might be saying to us and/or helping us relate to better others. What, if anything, helps you enter into this kind of posture? What might you ask God to help you with in order to see where God wants you to grow?
6. What's hard about the call to love those that we might oppose the most (or whose ideas and actions we might strongly oppose)? Is there something that helps you see the importance of this?
7. What do you think it means to love a difficult person for you, someone with views or who does things you oppose? (This is admittedly a leading question, but) How can this be different from merely accepting their views or what they do?
8. This can be a sensitive question, so please consider whether it's best to use just for personal reflection: As Pastor Dave asked us to ask ourselves: Who is your Cornelius (a person you are called to love)?
9. Pastor Dave offered some practical suggestions this week: Listen to the Spirit; pay attention to your emotions; use and pray [the Examen](#). Consider how you can incorporate these into your week.

PRAY |

LORD, You have spoken through Your Word in every generation. As we have listened for your Word today in reading and discussing this message, quiet every distraction, and give us ears to hear Your voice. Break down every wall that divides us, and help us discover the deeper unity You have already given us through the Gospel. Through Christ our LORD. Amen.

Scripture | Acts 10:1-6, 9-15, 24, 28, 34-36

¹ In Caesarea there lived a Roman army officer named Cornelius, who was a captain of the Italian Regiment. ² He was a devout, God-fearing man, as was everyone in his household. He gave generously to the poor and prayed regularly to God. ³ One afternoon about three o'clock, he had a vision in which he saw an angel of God coming toward him. "Cornelius!" the angel said.

⁴ Cornelius stared at him in terror. "What is it, sir?" he asked the angel.

And the angel replied, "Your prayers and gifts to the poor have been received by God as an offering! ⁵ Now send some men to Joppa, and summon a man named Simon Peter. ⁶ He is staying with Simon, a tanner who lives near the seashore."

⁹ The next day as Cornelius's messengers were nearing the town, Peter went up on the flat roof to pray. It was about noon, ¹⁰ and he was hungry. But while a meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. ¹¹ He saw the sky open, and something like a large sheet was let down by its four corners. ¹² In the sheet were all sorts of animals, reptiles, and birds. ¹³ Then a voice said to him, "Get up, Peter; kill and eat them."

¹⁴ "No, Lord," Peter declared. "I have never eaten anything that our Jewish laws have declared impure and unclean."

¹⁵ But the voice spoke again: "Do not call something unclean if God has made it clean."

²⁴ They arrived in Caesarea the following day. Cornelius was waiting for them and had called together his relatives and close friends.

²⁸ Peter told them, "You know it is against our laws for a Jewish man to enter a Gentile home like this or to associate with you. But God has shown me that I should no longer think of anyone as impure or unclean.

³⁴ Then Peter replied, "I see very clearly that God shows no favoritism. ³⁵ In every nation he accepts those who fear him and do what is right. ³⁶ This is the message of Good News for the people of Israel—that there is peace with God through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.

WEEK 11: The Jerusalem Council

Acts 15:1-2, 4-23, 25, 27-29

(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 15:1-2, 4-23, 25, 27-29

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

*There are more questions than normal this week. Use them selectively, and be sure to look at question 8.

1. What from the sermon or reading has brought up new questions or interesting points you would like to discuss?
2. Scripture question: This is an important inflection point in the book of Acts and the early church. Looking at the passage, why do you think it's so important? We'll come back to this question, but what do you see in the different ways that key figures and parties involved in the council interact with one another that reflect Christ, the movement of the Spirit, and our need for God's wisdom?
3. Did the example of the missionary to China, Mateo Ricci, and Pope Clement XI grab your attention? Are there some simple truths that it conveys to us about the relationship between faith and culture?
4. A (the?) key idea of this sermon is learning to discern *what is of the Gospel and what is of culture* (while being careful not to dismiss culture, for as Pastor Taylor said, it has to do with "who we are"). Drawing from the sermon and your own insights, what do you think we can learn about discerning the difference between the two with godly wisdom? (Question 7 returns to how we might continue to explore this question.)
5. Pastor Taylor shared a framework for the connection between reading the Bible, our culture, and using reason. The slide from the sermon is below. Does this help you better understand how the Bible, culture and reason connect? Share any insights you have with the group, especially practical takeaways.

How do we discern how the Gospel interacts with culture?

1. Scripture

- *Know our own culture*
- *Read in a diverse community*

2. Holy Spirit

- *Look for the fruit*

3. Reason

- *Minimum necessary burden*

6. As pastor Taylor asked, What cultural preferences do you have that you might be elevating to the place of God's will? How does this message (and/or your group's discussion) help you consider an aspect of your culture differently?
7. What's a current or ongoing question you have about how your faith relates to your life and culture? What would it look like to bring that into prayer this week, as well as what others are considering?

PRAY |

LORD, You speak through Your Word in every generation. As we come before Your Word today, quiet every distraction, and give us ears to hear Your voice. Break down every wall that divides us, and help us discover the deeper unity You have already given us through the Gospel. Through Christ our LORD. Amen.

Scripture | Acts 15:1-2, 4-23, 25, 27-29

¹ Then certain individuals came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.” ² And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to discuss this question with the apostles and the elders.

⁴ When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them. ⁵ But some believers who belonged to the sect of the Pharisees stood up and said, “It is necessary for them to be circumcised and ordered to keep the law of Moses.”

⁶ The apostles and the elders met together to consider this matter. ⁷ After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, “My brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that I should be the one through whom the gentiles would hear the message of the good news and become believers. ⁸ And God, who knows the human heart, testified to them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to us, ⁹ and in cleansing their hearts by faith he has made no distinction between them and us. ¹⁰ Now, therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing on the neck of the disciples a yoke that neither our ancestors nor we have been able to bear? ¹¹ On the contrary, we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will.”

¹² The whole assembly kept silence and listened to Barnabas and Paul as they told of all the signs and wonders that God had done through them among the gentiles. ¹³ After they finished speaking, James replied, “My brothers, listen to me. ¹⁴ Simeon has related how God first looked favorably on the gentiles, to take from among them a people for his name. ¹⁵ This agrees with the words of the prophets, as it is written,

¹⁶ ‘After this I will return,
and I will rebuild the dwelling of David, which has fallen;
from its ruins I will rebuild it,
and I will set it up,

¹⁷ so that all other peoples may seek the Lord—
even all the gentiles over whom my name has been called.
Thus says the Lord, who has been making these things

¹⁸ known from long ago.’

¹⁹ “Therefore I have reached the decision that we should not trouble those gentiles who are turning to God, ²⁰ but we should write to them to abstain only from things polluted by idols and from sexual immorality and from whatever has been strangled and from blood. ²¹ For in every city, for generations past, Moses has had those who proclaim him, for he has been read aloud every Sabbath in the synagogues.”

²² Then the apostles and the elders, with the consent of the whole church, decided to choose men from among them and to send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They sent Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leaders among the brothers, ²³ with the following letter: “The brothers, both the apostles and the elders, to the brothers and sisters of gentile origin in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, greetings.

²⁵ ...we have decided unanimously to choose men and send them to you, along with our beloved Barnabas and Paul... ²⁷ We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will tell you the same things by word of mouth. ²⁸ For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to impose on you no further burden than these essentials: ²⁹ that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.”

WEEK 12: Paul at the Acropolis

Acts 17:16-32

(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 17:16-32

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 question: Paul is intentional about connecting with the audience in Athens. Looking at the passage, how does he make these connections? Where does he listen? What does he notice? When does he speak? What might we learn from his example?
3. What experiences have most shaped how you understand what it means to share (or witness to) your faith? Where have you seen this done either poorly or in less than ideal ways? Where have you seen it done well?
4. As mentioned in an earlier sermon from this series (the story of Cornelius from Acts 10), sharing what we believe with others often begins with a humble willingness to listen. If we can show the love of God to others, beginning with listening to them, what do you think are some important things to listen for? What might this look like practically for you in one of your friendships or relationships right now?
5. Pastor Prasahan shared about three Christian witnesses from Sri Lanka. What impressions did these stories leave on you? Reflect together on them as a group.
6. We prioritize different things in our lives. How has this sermon helped you reflect on the place of connecting with others and sharing about your faith in different ways? Going back to question 3, are there ways where you think we (and if you're open to it, answer for yourself) can improve on how we share our faith?
7. Is there an invitation you sense God making through your conversation or reflections this week about sharing our faith? Is there a next step you could take in how you engage, act, or relate to others?

PRAY |

Heavenly Father, we have listened for Your Word in this message and in our conversation. Remind us of the grace that has found us, forgiven us, and continues to transform us. Open our minds to understand Your love, our hearts to embrace Your truth, and our lives to respond with faith. Help us listen to others, and act in love and courage in how we become more open about our faith. By Your Spirit, give us wisdom to follow wherever You lead and to reflect the love of Christ in all we do. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Scripture | Acts 17:16-32

¹⁶ While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols. ¹⁷ So he reasoned in the synagogue with both Jews and God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there. ¹⁸ A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to debate with him. Some of them asked, "What is this babbling trying to say?" Others remarked, "He seems to be advocating foreign gods." They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection. ¹⁹ Then they took him and brought him to a meeting of the Areopagus, where they said to him, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting?" ²⁰ You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears, and we would like to know what they mean." ²¹ (All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.)

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²² Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: "People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. ²³ For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship—and this is what I am going to proclaim to you.

²⁴ "The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands.

²⁵ And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else.

²⁶ From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. ²⁷ God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. ²⁸ 'For in him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.'

²⁹ "Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by human design and skill. ³⁰ In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. ³¹ For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead."

³² When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, but others said, "We want to hear you again on this subject."

WEEK 13: The Ephesian Riot

Acts 19:21-41

(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 19:21-41

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. Scripture question: As you look at this passage, what challenges or insecurities did the actions and message of Paul and his companions raise in Ephesus? How are these spiritual matters?
3. How does this Scripture passage and/or the sermon bring attention to ways that our spiritual lives and our relationship with money are intertwined? How does that speak to you?
4. How did this sermon help you understand what an idol is in practical ways? Why do we turn to them? What could be a temptation that brings comfort, control or predictability that takes the form of an idol in your life?
5. "We cannot break a spiritual stronghold with sheer personal resolve." Have you experienced the challenge of setbacks by trying to change something through willpower alone? Drawing from this sermon and your experiences, what can alternative approaches to spiritual discipline look like?
6. Review question: This sermon series is about the spiritual power to make a difference. How have you experienced God, or where do you sense God might be working, in your life over the past couple months? How might the Spirit of God be asking you to make a change or difference, perhaps both in yourself and in the world around you?

PRAY |

Holy Spirit, as we have mediated on Your Word, quiet every distraction within us and prepare our hearts to continue to listen to Your voice. By Your power, open our eyes to see where we need You, and our minds to understand Your truth. Challenge us where we need to change, and strengthen the places in our lives where we have grown weak. Give us wisdom to discern, courage to trust Your leading, and faith to believe that You are still at work in us and in the world. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Scripture | Acts 19:21-41

²¹Now after these things had been accomplished, Paul resolved in the Spirit to go through Macedonia and Achaia and then to go on to Jerusalem. He said, "After I have gone there, I must also see Rome." ²²So he sent two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, to Macedonia, while he himself stayed for some time longer in Asia.

²³About that time no little disturbance broke out concerning the Way. ²⁴A man named Demetrius, a silversmith who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought no little business to the artisans. ²⁵These he gathered together, with the workers of the same trade, and said, "Men, you know that we get our wealth from this business. ²⁶You also see and hear that not only in Ephesus but in almost the whole of Asia this Paul has persuaded and drawn away a considerable number of people by saying that gods made with hands are not gods. ²⁷And there is

danger not only that this trade of ours may come into disrepute but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be scorned, and she will be deprived of her majesty that brought all Asia and the world to worship her."

²⁸ When they heard this, they were enraged and shouted, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" ²⁹ The city was filled with the confusion, and people rushed together to the theater, dragging with them Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians who were Paul's travel companions. ³⁰ Paul wished to go into the crowd, but the disciples would not let him; ³¹ even some officials of the province of Asia who were friendly to him sent him a message urging him not to venture into the theater. ³² Meanwhile, some were shouting one thing, some another, for the assembly was in confusion, and most of them did not know why they had come together. ³³ Some of the crowd gave instructions to Alexander, whom the Jews had pushed forward. And Alexander motioned for silence and tried to make a defense before the people. ³⁴ But when they recognized that he was a Jew, for about two hours all of them shouted in unison, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" ³⁵ But when the town clerk had quieted the crowd, he said, "Citizens of Ephesus, who is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is the temple keeper of the great Artemis and of the statue that fell from heaven? ³⁶ Since these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet and do nothing rash. ³⁷ You have brought these men here who are neither temple robbers nor blasphemers of our goddess. ³⁸ If therefore Demetrius and the artisans with him have a complaint against anyone, the courts are open, and there are proconsuls; let them bring charges there against one another. ³⁹ If there is anything further you want to know, it must be settled in the regular assembly. ⁴⁰ For we are in danger of being charged with rioting today, since there is no cause that we can give to justify this commotion." ⁴¹ When he had said this, he dismissed the assembly.

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.