



SECRET SAUCE



**THE VALUES THAT GIVE
HIGHROCK ITS UNIQUE FLAVOR:**

CURIOSITY

COURAGE

COMPASSION

Series Companion

 **highrock**

INTRODUCTION

What gives Highrock its unique flavor? While most secret sauces are closely guarded, kept under lock and key, we want to share the recipe that shapes who we are with everyone! This fall, join us as we dive into our core values of curiosity, courage, and compassion. They're the key ingredients that make Highrock feel like Highrock, and the Biblical values that lead to a full life in Christ.

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 / 2*	Courage: Acts 14:1-13
Week 1 / 2*	Curiosity: Exodus 3:1-5
Week 3	Compassion: John 8:1-11

*The sermon on courage will be preached at Arlington and the sermon on curiosity will be preached at MetroWest during week 1. They will switch for week 2.

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

- Have you ever wondered what made your church community unique? What do you think contributes to a healthy and vibrant church culture?
- Highrock's values are curiosity, courage and compassion. Where do you see these at Highrock? Preparing for this series, spend time in prayer and reflection on being open to these values, learning more about they can form you (us) to be a faithful community, and how we might grow in them in God-honoring ways.

WEEK 1/2*: Curiosity

Exodus 3:1-5

*This sermon will be preached at MetroWest during week 1 and Arlington during week 2.

(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 Exodus 3:1-5

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. Looking at the Scripture passage and drawing on the sermon, what role does curiosity play in the story and life of Moses that makes a difference in his faith? What might we learn from this? What could Moses have missed out on if it wasn't for curiosity?
3. Curiosity "leads" us places. What do you think is the difference between healthy versus unhealthy curiosity (how can our curiosity get 'hooked' in undesired ways), and what can help us discern the difference? Consider the passage John mentioned in the sermon, Philippians 4:8.
4. What is the connection between curiosity and another value at Highrock, courage? What could it look like to pair these values together in your spiritual life? Perhaps reflect on the prayer of David, "search me, oh God."
5. How about curiosity and compassion? What could a more compassionate or love-based sense of curiosity mean for you? Here's a simple action: What's a question you can ask someone else this week?
6. Consider Jesus's curiosity. How does Jesus show what faithful curiosity entails? Consider his questions, how he relates to people, and his prayer life. What stands out to you?
7. So, how can you take a step toward faithful curiosity in your life this week? How can you help our church community live into this value?

PRAY |

Holy God, as we have listened for Your Word, please now quiet the distractions within us and give us humble, teachable hearts. By Your Spirit, continue to open our minds to Your truth. Reveal what we need to see, and show us what we need to reconsider, so that we may have faith to follow You this week. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Scripture: Exodus 3:1-5

¹ Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. ² There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. ³ So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up."

⁴ When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, "Moses! Moses!"

And Moses said, "Here I am."

⁵ "Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground."

WEEK 1/2*: Courage

Acts 4:1-13

*This sermon will be preached at MetroWest during week 1 and Arlington during week 2.

(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 4:1-13

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. Looking at the Scripture passage and drawing on the sermon, where do you see courage in this passage? Are there any potentially surprising ways that courage might be present here?
3. Pastor Dave shared about some of his early experiences with courage, both where he was courageous and wasn't (daring acts versus dealing with emotions and failures). What, if anything, stands out to you in what he shared?
4. Physical, social, emotional and intellectual courage. Which of these come natural to you? Which of these are more difficult for you to act on?
5. Pastor Dave emphasized the importance of moral courage. How is moral courage different from acting on something despite our fear?
6. Joy and/or the gracious gift of hope can inspire us to moral courage. Trusting that God is gracious to us, what's one thing you might remember or hold onto that might inspire you or sustain you to be just a little more courageous in something this week?
7. So, how can you take a step toward faithful courage in your life this week? How can you help our church community live into this value?

PRAY |

Heavenly Father, prepare our hearts to continue to love your Word. Quiet every distraction within us and help us to hear Your voice. Give us courage to see ourselves honestly, humility to receive what You reveal, and faith to follow where You lead. By Your Spirit, open our hearts to Your truth and teach us to trust You, whatever following You may require. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Scripture | Acts 4:1-13

1 The priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to Peter and John while they were speaking to the people. ²They were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people, proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. ³They seized Peter and John and, because it was evening, they put them in jail until the next day. ⁴But many who heard the message believed; so the number of men who believed grew to about five thousand.

⁵The next day the rulers, the elders and the teachers of the law met in Jerusalem. ⁶Annas the high priest was there, and so were Caiaphas, John, Alexander and others of the high priest's family. ⁷They had Peter and John brought before them and began to question them: "By what power or what name did you do this?"

⁸Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: "Rulers and elders of the people! ⁹If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a man who was lame and are being asked how he was healed, ¹⁰then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. ¹¹Jesus is

"the stone you builders rejected,
which has become the cornerstone."

¹²Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved."

¹³When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.

WEEK 3: Compassion

John 8:1-11

*This sermon will be preached at MetroWest during week 1 and Arlington during week 2.

(PRE-WORK) REFLECT | Before your small group gathering, complete the following and reflect on the discussion questions. These will be the basis for your small group time.

- ☐ Listen to the Sermon on Highrock's [YouTube channel](#) and note any reactions you had – curiosities, concerns, or delights
- ☐ Read John 8:1-11

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. In the Scripture passage, Pastor Taylor points out that although the religious leaders's actions towards the woman caught in adultery were unjust and misguided, they themselves couldn't see this (they believed they were doing what was right). Reflect on this. How does it help you think about your own judgments and decisions with humility or need for greater self-awareness?
3. Drawing from the sermon as helpful, what do you see in Jesus's response that helps you better understand what carefully compassionate responses might look like? Perhaps compare Jesus's actions to possible responses that he doesn't undertake.
4. Pastor Taylor described Jesus's compassion and response in terms of *self-differentiation*, the ability to remain connected to others "while not being controlled by their anxiety or reactivity." Discuss this concept. What's hard about it? Is it compelling to you? Is it something you'd like to see more of in your life and your faith?
5. Pastor Taylor defines compassion as "the courage to stay soft hearted towards an image bearer (any human being), especially when our biology screams at us to defend ourselves, our in-group, or to throw a stone." Reflect on this definition together. What might it look like to remain soft hearted?
6. Use some of Pastor Taylor's questions to reflect on where you might show compassion this week.
 - Would people closest to you describe you as compassionate?
 - What about those outside your circle?
 - Are there people whose pain doesn't count as much as others for you?
7. What's an action step you'd like to take around compassion this week, and how can it be part of your prayer life? Remember that we only take these steps by the help of God's grace.
8. **Reflecting on this sermon series:** Compassion, curiosity, and courage. These are the values Highrock strives to embody as we recognize God's love for us and try to reflect in our lives and our community. A) How has this series helped you better understand what kind of church we strive to be? B) As we grow together, how might you prayerfully seek to embody one or more of these values?

PRAY (from the confession & assurance portion of service) |

Holy God, we confess that we have often separated truth from love. At times, we have used truth to judge and condemn. We excuse our own failures while holding tightly to the failures of others. We forget too easily that every person before us bears Your image and is worthy of dignity and love. Forgive us, Lord.

Softening our hearts. Help us to drop the stones we are so ready to throw. O LORD, give us wisdom to speak truth with love, courage to show compassion, and humility to recognize the ways our own hearts still need to change. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Scripture | John 8:1-11

¹ But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.

² At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. ³ The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group ⁴ and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. ⁵ In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" ⁶ They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him.

But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. ⁷ When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." ⁸ Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.

⁹ At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. ¹⁰ Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?"

¹¹ "No one, sir," she said.

"Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin."

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.