



SERIES: "What Child is This"

"Jesus"

Pastor Dave Swaim

December 8, 2019

[Series Sermon Recordings](#)

SUGGESTED SUPPLIES

Note cards (or paper) and pens.

[Discipleship Resources](#)

QUESTIONS? Email Abby: abby@highrock.org

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

HOW TO USE: The three sections below (connection questions, sermon questions, and application) represent the three connections we emphasize at Highrock: connecting to **God's People**, connecting to **God Personally**, and connecting to **God's Purposes**. Select at least one question from each section or create questions that are more specific to your group.

CONNECTION QUESTIONS

Choose ONE of these that fits your group, or modify it so that it will fit your group better. These can make great **opening questions** or **ending questions**. If you have had a really in-depth conversation, ending on a light note can help transition to concluding your time together on a less intense question.

1. Weekly Check in: Use a few minutes at the beginning of your time to follow up on any action items shared from last week. Was there a next step or application challenge that they took on this past week? What did they learn about themselves and following Jesus?
2. Set a time for one minute per person. Then go around and share your highs and lows for the week.
 - a. Or: What stands out as a place, time, or person where you noticed God in your week?
3. What stood out to you from the sermon this week?

SERMON QUESTIONS

Use a **couple of the questions** below or make up your own. You can always begin with: "Do you have any questions about what you heard in the sermon this week?" Or, "What stood out to you from the Pastor's sermon?"

1. **Sermon Reference:** "And I share this today because I think this is the essential problem that people have had with God throughout history. God is so different from us, or from anything we've ever seen before, that it's almost impossible to understand what God may be like. The Bible agrees that God is beyond our comprehension. **Job (37:5)** declares: "God does great things beyond our understanding."

psalm 145 (vs 3) agrees: “great is the lord; his greatness no one can fathom.” On the day of his greatest triumph, the completion of a temple for God, solomon recognized its utter inadequacy (**1 kings 8:27**) “But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I’ve built!”

- a. What are the questions you have about who God is?
- b. What are some of the ways that God feels so different from you?
- c. Do these things that are hard to understand about God have an impact on how you relate to God? (ex. Might mystery lead to awe or does it lead to distance?)

2. **Sermon Reference:** “Beyond that, (**rom 1:19-20**) Paul acknowledges we can know other things about God simply by looking at nature, because “what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made.” Paul’s saying that by looking at what God created, we can deduce a few things about the creator. For example, obviously God is very powerful, and loves beauty. It’s imprecise, but it’s a start.”

- a. Where do you see God?
- b. What are places, people, or experiences which have helped you understand a little bit more about who God might be?
- c. What have those things showed you about who God is?
- d. How does scripture and being in a community of believers help you in understanding God? Have there been times when those things have made it harder? Why might that be?

3. **Sermon Reference:** “God is too much bigger than we are, and too different for us to understand accurately - it would be like a mosquito trying to comprehend how the world economy works. So despite all the ways God revealed himself through creation, the prophets and interventions in human history, over and over people kept jumping to false conclusions. It’s not just that they couldn’t understand God fully, which no one could ever do, it’s that they understood God falsely.”

- a. What might be some ways which God has not been correctly understood historically?
- b. If you were to think critically, what might be some ways we may be interpreting God falsely?
- c. When you try to assess who God is, what are some key foundational truths about God as given in the Bible which can be your guideposts?

4. **Sermon Reference:** “Of course I made these same mistakes when I first tried figuring out God. As a new Christian late in high school and college, my initial understanding of God was based on my parents. Growing up in an affluent, educated, intact, white, american family I assumed that God was kind and generous, but also strict - so don’t make him mad! I assumed that God cared a lot about my happiness, performance, success and behavior, but not so much about social justice issues, just because that wasn’t a big topic in my home growing up. So I started there, but as I began reading the Bible, things

got more complicated. Sometimes God seemed like a distant king, and other times like a close friend or a doting mother. For example, I found the angry God we read about recently in **Exodus 32 (9-10a)** hard to reconcile with the patient and compassionate God of **Exodus 34 (6-7a)**. Which was God - furious or forgiving? I couldn't figure it out. Maybe you've struggled with this too."

- a. On a sheet of paper, write down characteristics that make up your picture of God. Thinking about how you relate to God can help bring these to mind (is it easy to draw near? Can you be vulnerable with God? Are you always trying to earn God's love?) Why might you relate this way?
- b. What or who do you think shaped some of your earliest ideas of who God is to you? As you think of them now, do you think this is the picture of God that you want to hold onto?

5. **Sermon Reference:** *"John (1:1) Writes that "in the beginning was the word" - this greek word "logos" means more than a "word", it means "the truth", "the whole story". In the beginning was the word ... and the word was God." It was God, but we couldn't quite understand it. We kept distorting it and getting it wrong. So after trying so many other ways to communicate with us, finally.... (John 1:14 nlt) "the word became human and made his home among us." Jesus was God in a form we could understand more easily. (Col 1:15 nlt) Speaking of Jesus Paul writes that "Christ is the visible image of the invisible God." Jesus is God in a form we see, touch and talk with...the name Jesus is the english form of Iesu, which is the greek form of the hebrew name "Yeshua", or Joshua. It means, literally, God saves. Jesus was God coming to save, so in one sense that's the most perfect name in the world...so he (Jesus) came to the ancient Israel as a normal looking man with olive skin and dark hair, just like everyone else [in that region]...Jesus is God saving us, which is what his name means, but in order to do that, he had to truly become one of us."*

- a. What does it tell you about God that God would come in the form of a person to walk, live, and teach among us so that we can better understand God?
- b. When you take a look at the fact that God became human to dwell among us, is that a surprising and unexpected thing for God to do? Why might that be?
- c. Consider the questions and mysteries you have about God. When you think of examples and teachings of Jesus, are there possibly things which are made a little bit clearer? Why or why not?
- d. Imagine having a conversation with Jesus in the flesh. What might you ask about God?

APPLICATION

1. Sermon Reference: *"(John 1:14) What we learned most of all when God came as Jesus is that he is full of grace and truth. Most of our distortions of God come when we choose one of those over the other... God is mysterious, full of surprises and impossible to ever fully comprehend. As soon I think I've got God all figured out, it's a sure sign that I understand less than ever. But through Jesus we can know enough about God to love him, her, them, very deeply...Jesus is the centerpiece. **He is the grace and truth** of God in the flesh...Brothers and sisters, truth matters. And grace does too. We cannot*

compromise on either of these in order to advance our political, economic, or any other agendas! At an individual level, often we think that pointing people to Jesus requires pretending to be perfect - somehow better than others are. But this is the opposite of what Jesus did. Taking the name Jesus emphasized how similar he was so that he would be relatable. If we want to become bridges to God like Jesus was, we're better off being honest - admitting that we struggle just as much as they do. That's how we tell the true story that God saves sinners and strugglers like all of us are. grace and truth."

- a. Do you tend to emphasize God's grace or God's truth when you relate with others or consider your own shortcomings?
 - i. How about in your parenting or marriages? how about in your approach to political debates?
- b. How could you follow Jesus by more fully embracing both of these virtues?
- c. Jesus came that first Christmas to be the bird (*story provided below*), to build a bridge between God and the people God loves. If you follow Jesus, how are you being a bridge between God and the people God loves?
- d. How are you living out God's grace and truth in a way others can see, relate to and respond to?

CLOSING

Summarize the key points of your discussion and encourage people to **share one action step** they could take during the next week based on what they have shared. **Take time to pray together.** Write those down and start next week by checking in with how it went, or better yet, check in during the week!

RESOURCES

SERMON SCRIPTURE REFERENCE

Matt 1:18-24

This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us"). When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife.

BIRD AND FARMER ILLUSTRATION- Taken from the sermon

Some of you know the old story about a farmer who was washing his hands one December day when he looked out the kitchen window and saw a bird sitting on a tree branch outside. Mind you all the leaves had fallen, and it was cold. The bird should have flown south with her friends months ago, now there's no way she can survive the winter.

The farmer realizes the only way to rescue the little bird is to bring her inside the house. So he opens the window and whistles and waves in the friendliest way possible to invite the bird in. The bird's freezing outside, but the farmer is so big and different that she's terrified of him, so there's no way she's flying in there.

The farmer reasons that maybe she'd feel safer with a bigger opening, so he opens the front door all the way, but the bird still refuses to fly in because she's still terrified. So the farmer gets bread crumbs, and scatters them under the tree, and then makes a path up the steps and into his warm foyer.

The hungry bird flies down to eat the breadcrumbs, but when she gets too close to the house, her fear overtakes her hunger, and she returns to shivering in the tree.

The farmer throws out more breadcrumbs, but each time, the bird flies away before coming inside.

"If only I could become a bird", the farmer thinks. "I could fly out and sit next to that bird to show that I'm safe, and that I care about her suffering. And then I could fly into the house and show her that it's safe and warm in here. If only I could become a bird, then she'd understand my heart and follow me inside so that I could save her.

...and I tell you this story because this is what God did at Christmas."

SCRIPTURE STUDY: 5Cs

If you are interested in studying the scripture more deeply, one method is to use the 5 Cs. Read through the passage and move through each C. The goal is not to move through them quickly, but to really consider each section. If you wanted to study the passage together, you, as the leader should take some time beforehand to complete the Cs and it can be helpful to have group members come prepared with the first 3 already considered. Then, as a group, you can briefly talk over some of the points and have a longer conversation about curiosities and conclusions. This study tool will be posted within all of the discussion questions.

- **Context:** What is the literary context of the passage? What comes before? After? Context within whole book? Relation to main idea of section, book, testament, whole Bible?
- **Christ:** How is Jesus revealed here? If in OT, prefiguration, typology, prophecy, implications for Christ's person and work? How is he needed, anticipated, fulfilled?
- **Crux:** What is the main idea? Try and find a section of the text that states it and have reasons for why that is the main idea? How do the other points support it?
- **Curiosities:** What is surprising about this text? Controversial? Mysterious? Shocking?

- **Conclusions:** What are the implications for our lives? Application? How do we think, feel, and act in light of this text?

READING THE BIBLE

[Pastor Dave has provided a few suggestions](#) for Bible reading plans, daily devotionals, and Bible commentaries to help you understand God's Word as you familiarize yourself with it.