

SERIES: “Devoted”

“Fellowship”

Pastor Dave Swaim

January 5, 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.*

Questions may repeat themes to help facilitate coming at a similar topic or idea, but from a different angle. The questions are meant to be a jumping off point for discussion and can be adapted to suit 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. **Pastor Dave brought up a number of important topics that will stand out differently depending on the person. Begin by discussing what stood out to you personally in the following questions (a. through e.). Then, you can move on to the more topic-specific questions below.**
 - a. What was life-giving to hear? Share about why that is.
 - b. Was there anything surprising... new... challenging...?
 - c. What do you have questions about?
 - d. What were the connections between the Biblical narrative and our lives today?
 - e. What might God be inviting you to do/pray/consider after hearing this sermon?

2. **Sermon Questions:** *“We find so many ways to distinguish ourselves from each other - ethnically, economically. politically. And we often use those distinctions to disparage each other. southerners are stupid, northerners are rude. Rich people are greedy, poor people are lazy...on social media we curate our friends and follow lists so that we mostly interact with people who think just like we do. Or we keep a “friend” we disagree with mostly because we enjoy the moral superiority of being able to judge them for being so backward. Stop for a second - and consider, whom do you like to look down on? nobody! I know. you love everyone. So let’s start with the defenders of Donald Trump or Elizabeth Warren. Those idiots! Can’t they read a transcript? They’re going to ruin our nation! What about the **super wealthy**, or those on welfare? They’re abusing the system and robbing from the rest of us! What about those people who are **constantly posting pictures** of themselves working out that are obviously photoshopped? We all find someone to look down on - it’s just what humans do. It’s what we’ve always done. And sure, it’s unfortunate and immature... but it’s kind of benign... until it isn’t.”*
 - a. Where do you see the narratives of harsh line drawing in the places where you are. How about the online spaces you are a part of?
 - b. What are the narratives of division or harsh sweeping characterization of people groups.
 - c. Pastor Dave asked the challenging question, Who do you look down to? How would you respond to that?
 - d. How do the internal beliefs or narratives about other people/ groups affect our ability to love others? What does the move from benign to harmful look like?

3. **Sermon Reference:** *“Let’s read about what happened: (acts 2:42, 44, 46-47) “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.” mmm. Not a disaster at all! Why not? It’s right in the first sentence: (Acts 2:42) “they devoted themselves... to fellowship.” The root of the word translated here as “devoted” points to exerting strenuous effort. Other times this same word is translated persevere, endure, exercise patience. My point is simply that it wasn’t any easier for them than it is for us, but it was a priority because Jesus had made it clear that this is what it means to follow him. It’s not an extra, it’s an*

essential. (John 13:34-35) "A new command I give you: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

- a. What comes to mind when you think about community at church? What are your expectations for other people and for your relationships? Do you expect them to be easy, difficult, like-minded?
- b. What does the passage about devoted fellowship mean to you?
- c. Given that we live more isolated and busy lives, what does this call to fellowship look like in our modern day? What priorities does it challenge in our culture? What does it challenge in the way you have structured your life and your values?
- d. Imagine yourself being on the receiving end of this sort of devoted loving fellowship, what would that be like?
- e. Who might be someone that God is prompting you to love even though it is difficult or challenging?
- f. Discuss what this devoted fellowship looks like at a communal level. How does this love become an example of God's love?

4. **Sermon Reference:** *"Similarly, Paul, once a violent sectarian, wrote to the early churches that (**gal 3:26-28**) "In Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith.... there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Do you see that he's undermining the sinful hierarchies between ethnicities, social classes and genders? Those old divisions no longer define us because we've been made into one family through Jesus. (**col 3:12-14**) therefore, he insists "as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity." Paul doesn't paper over the amount of effort it will take to build relationships across the familiar barriers, but he doesn't think it's optional either. It's an essential part of following Jesus."*

- a. Where does Jesus' teaching rub against the hierarchies and divisions which are a part of your life?
- b. Where might you benefit from those structures (have privilege)? Where might those hierarchies create barriers?
- c. How does Jesus teaching show you a new way of relating to those around you. Where might you want to resist this invitation to following Jesus' example here?

5. **Sermon Reference:** *"We don't all have to be the same to be parts of the same family, the same body of Christ. Truly we are better together. So what could it look like in your own life to be devoted to fellowship? The core challenge for all of us is to build bridges to others rather than insisting that everyone be like me, or immediately understand me. Relationships at church are not supposed to be easier - they're often harder because we're choosing to embrace people who are different. But we*

experience the kingdom of Christ when we move beyond our comfort zones to make new relationships with people who are different.”

- a. So what could it look like in your own life to be devoted to fellowship?
 - b. What could it look like for you to intentionally follow Jesus across a boundary?
6. **Sermon Reference:** *“But we do need to repent for the ways that we have, as well as for ways we’ve excluded or judged others on the basis of differences they didn’t have a choice in. And those of us with power on account of race, wealth, gender or opportunity often need to repent of ways we’ve used those privileges to preserve our advantages rather than to serve those in need, and turned a blind eye to sinful systems that don’t happen to harm us. And many of us need to repent for the way our loyalties to political parties and platforms, or even to our own comfort, have sinfully superseded our allegiance to Jesus and our devotion to fellowship. (phil 3:20) Christians’ primary citizenship is in Heaven, which has to govern any other allegiance or affection. Jesus calls us to cross the boundaries that our culture too easily accepts. Who might you connect with that’s easier not to? Maybe it’s someone of a different age group, ethnic group, economic, educational level or political persuasion. Is there someone at your workplace or school, or maybe here at church, that you wouldn’t normally talk to whom you could invite to coffee or lunch with no other agenda than listening to them, learning from them and enjoying them? Maybe you could make that one of your new year’s resolutions.”*
- a. Pastor Dave talks about the need for repentance in the excerpt above. Where does this resonate with you? Can you bring it before God?
 - b. After repenting in prayer, what does it look like to live out that repentance through your actions and attitudes and relationships?

APPLICATION

1. **Sermon Reference:** *“So I decided to curate my media outlets more carefully to get a better balance. then, **using this chart**, I also decided to block any of the “news” sources that tend toward falsehoods in service of an agenda. I also blocked friends on social media on both sides of the spectrum who regularly promote stories that are biased, demeaning or untrue. Finally, I’ve taken multiple opportunities to sit down with groups that are a different age, gender or ethnicity than I am to learn from their perspectives.”*
 - a. Take a look at the charts in the Resource section below. What are the perspectives reflected in your online, TV, news, podcasts etc.?
 - b. Does it all tend to agree with the way you think? This week, how can you intentionally expand the views you are exposing yourself to?
2. **Sermon Reference:** *“Being devoted to fellowship like the early church was is going to be hard work for us- just like it was for them! But it’s worth doing - because they experienced more of God’s blessings through each other, and by their extraordinary love - the world recognized that these people were*

Jesus' disciples, (acts 2:47b) and the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. may it be so for us."

- a. Where do you sense God inviting you into the hard work of fellowship?
- b. Do the people in your circles all share the same views? Where might you be able to start building relationships with people who think differently?
- c. Do you sense any part of you wanting to resist it or push back? Why might that be?
- d.

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

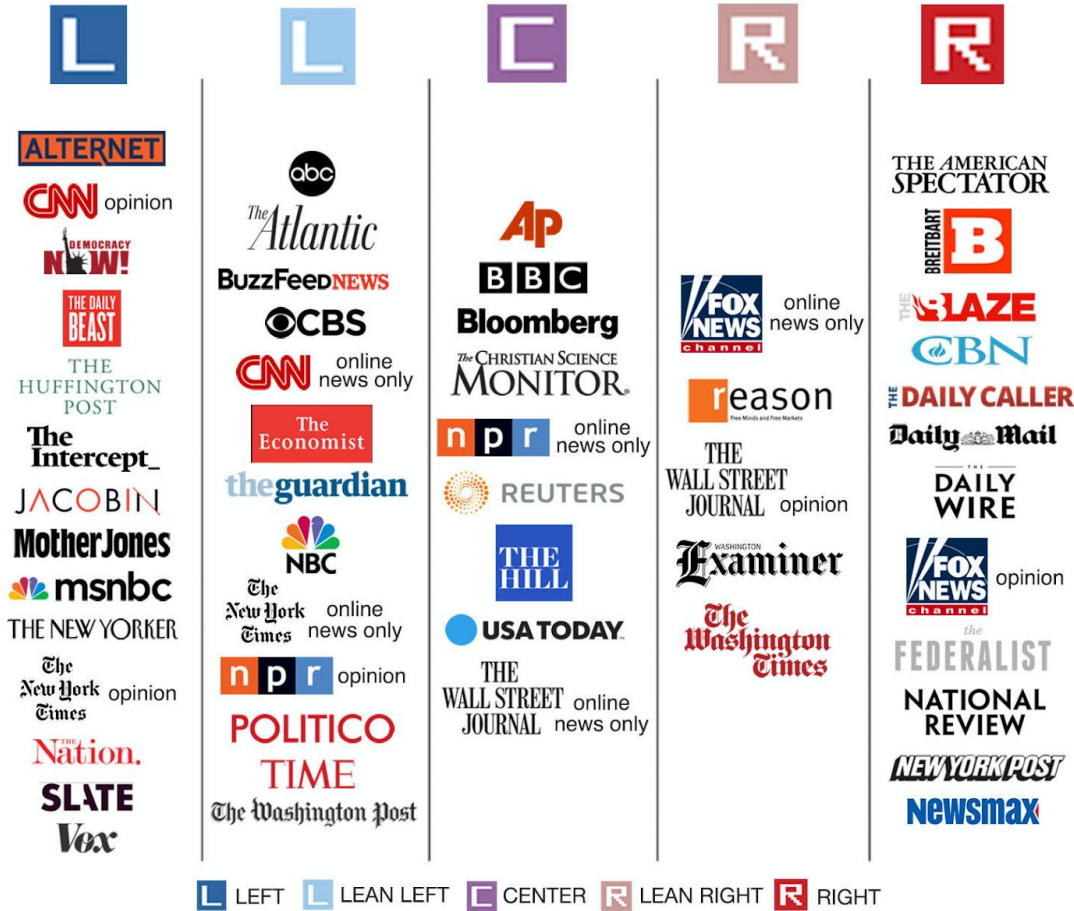
SERMON SCRIPTURE REFERENCE

MEDIA BIAS CHARTS

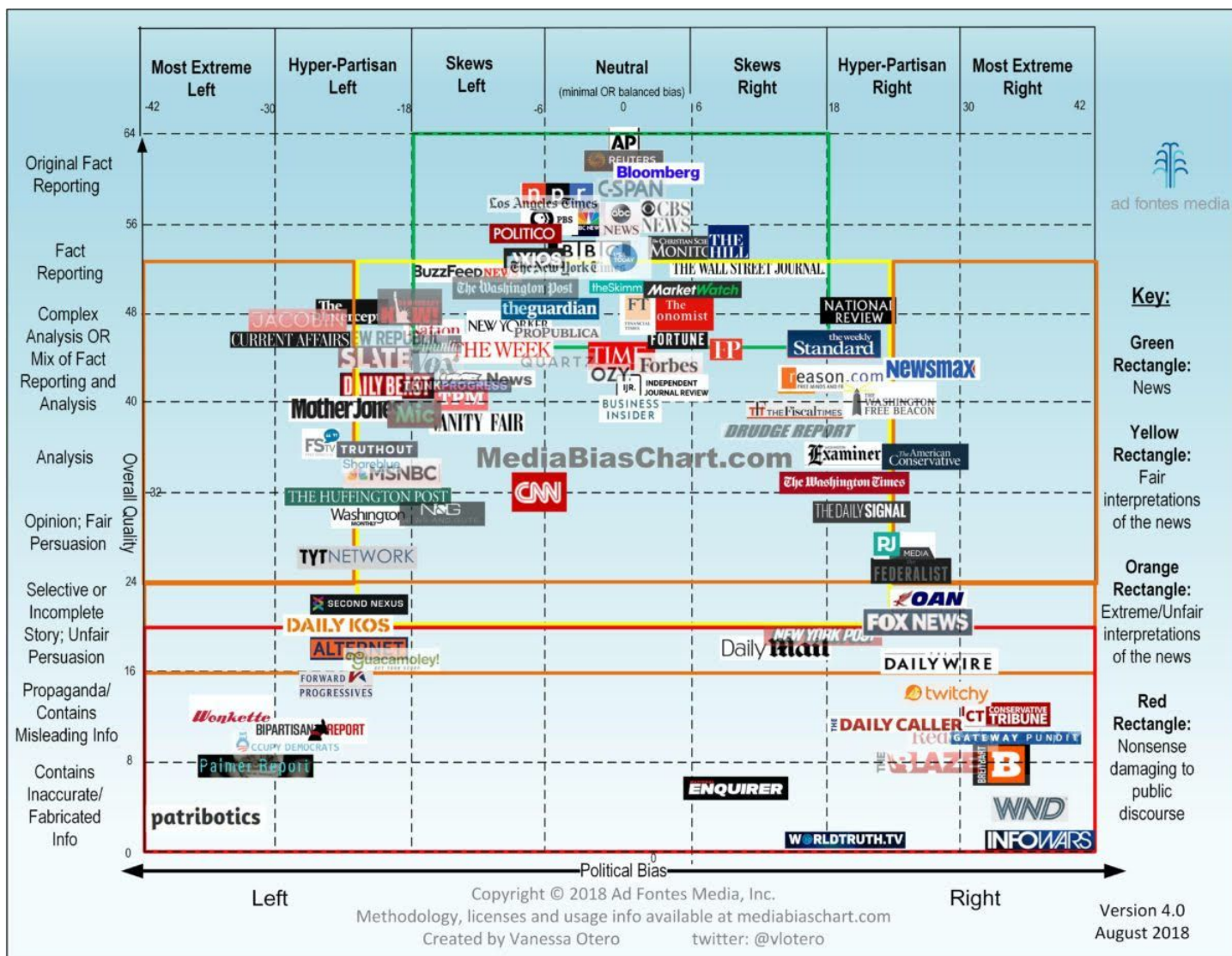


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SCRIPTURE STUDY: 5Cs

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.