



## SERIES OVERVIEW

*"BLESS"*

Preacher: Pastor Dave Swaim

*"Exiles"*

April 8, 2018

[Series Sermon Recordings](#)

[Discipleship Resources](#)

## SUGGESTED SUPPLIES

Note cards (or paper) and pens.

## QUESTIONS?

Email Abby

[Abby@highrock.org](mailto:Abby@highrock.org)

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## LEADER NOTE: UPDATES & REMINDERS

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### BLESS Series Resources

[CLICK HERE](#) to read more about this series.

### BLESS ACRONYM

Begin with Prayer

Listen

Eat together

Serve Sacrificially

Share your stories.

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## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

HOW TO USE: *The three sections below (opening, sermon content 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.*

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### 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?

### 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. Before we get started, what is it like for you as a Christian living in Boston? Do you relate to the reference below?
  - a. **Sermon Reference:** *"You know the passage we just read from Jeremiah 29 sounds upbeat, but it was written to a group of people who were pretty upset! They felt out of place and unsure of what to do. And some of us can relate to that feeling, because these days Christians in Boston can feel a bit out of place."*

### 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. Choose one or two of these questions to discuss: How does privilege impact your relationships with God and others? In your context do you feel like Christians no longer hold positions of power? How does having a Christian identity afford you power or privilege? How might it not?
  - a. **Sermon Reference:** *"Almost overnight the Christians changed from being a persecuted minority to the people in charge! Roman and European governments spent lavishly to build huge Cathedrals, and Cardinals had the power to appoint kings. Christians were able to shape culture and force people to do things our way."*
2. Do you know Christians who have been persecuted for their beliefs? Have you been persecuted in any way. Consider that just because you aren't thrown to the lions doesn't mean you haven't been persecuted.
  - a. **Sermon Reference:** *"What attracted people to devote their lives to Christ when it could be so costly? It was the love and lives of the Christians, who followed Jesus by sacrificially serving their neighbors. They shared generously with those in need, cared for the sick, forgave those who sinned against them and rescued babies that had been left to die to raise as their own. Despite all this kindness and growth, the church remained actively persecuted and oppressed."*
3. Which response do see most in your life and circle of friends: resistance or assimilation? How does it show up?
  - a. **Sermon Reference:** *"A second common response is assimilation – you know, go along to get along. Don't make such a big deal about all this. And besides, the materialism, self-indulgence*

*and self centeredness currently favored in our society is actually kind of pleasant, so... why rock the boat?"*

4. What is your response to preaching that makes you feel uncomfortable or confronts you with challenges that require sacrifice?
  - a. Do you agree with pastor Dave that we don't want someone to tell us what we want to hear? Do you find yourself wanting someone who will agree with you or someone whose truth might challenge or disagree with you? What might it take to be open to hearing truth that conflicts with what you want to hear?
  - b. Has there been a time when someone told you something challenging that was not what you wanted to hear? How did you receive it? Did it take time to really hear the wisdom in what they were saying?
5. Discuss together the interplay between God's promise of "shalom" and Jesus' command to "love your enemies." How are they connected? Why might it seem counter-intuitive?
  - a. **Sermon Reference:** *"The Hebrew word that my NIV bible translates as "peace and prosperity" is the word "Shalom" and it means so much more than just "lack of war". No, it means seek the "wellbeing", "wholeness", "harmony" of the city. Make it flourish!"*

## APPLICATION/S

1. What does it look like, practically, to bless and not fix? Are there any areas in the BLESS acronym you find you are already doing? Which might you find more challenging?
  - a. **Sermon Reference:** *"So over the next 5 weeks we want to remind you how to form authentic spiritual friendships that allow us to love people who don't know Jesus instead of trying to fix them - using an acronym that will remind us of each step. **Begin with Prayer, Listen, Eat together, Serve Sacrificially, Share your stories.** We want to learn to love without needing to be in power, which, we'll discover, can be very powerful."*
2. How might you answer the questions which pastor Dave asks below? Who in your life might God be starting to invite you to care for and care about in a new way? What would it look like to begin that shift this week?
  - a. **Sermon Questions:** *"So friends, I want to challenge you to ask the question: How am I BLESSing the people around me? How am I making a difference wherever God has placed me? The company I'm in. The family I'm in. The school I'm in. The neighborhood I'm in. The nation I'm in. The world I'm in. That's what we want to explore over the next 5 weeks, and we can begin today by asking God to speak to each of us about how we could make a difference by being different. How can I engage my neighbors in ways that are transformational rather than just transactional?"*

## 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

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## SERMON SCRIPTURE REFERENCE

### Jeremiah 29: 4- 7

This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon:

“Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.”

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## SCRIPTURE STUDY: 5Cs

If you are interested in studying the scripture more deeply, one way to study scripture is through using 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 then 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, prophesy, implications for Christ's person and work? How is he needed, anticipated, fulfilled?
- **Cru:** 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?