



SERIES OVERVIEW: Connectings

"Connecting to God Personally"

Preacher: Pastor Dave Swaim

September 8, 2019

[Series Sermon Recordings](#)

[Discipleship Resources](#)

SUGGESTED SUPPLIES

Note cards (or paper) and pens.

QUESTIONS?

Email Abby

abby@highrock.org

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.*

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. Set a time for one minute per person. Then go around and share your highs and lows for the week.
2. Or/ And share: What stands out as a place, time, or person where you noticed God in your 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. What for you, has been your experience with something like this? What is something which you thought would bring safety or comfort but actually made you feel isolated or was unfulfilling?

- a. **Sermon Reference:** *But I'm not sure it is true. Because I know lots of people who've been blessed with plenty of money, safety, comfort and pleasure, and yet rather than feeling fulfilled, they feel empty, lonely, and bored.*
2. Is this statement below reflective of the culture you grew up in? What were the dominant values which you were brought up in? OR, what might be some of the values you have in your own family now?
 - a. **Sermon Reference:** *But those criteria caught my eye, because the implicit assumption is that what makes for the happiest life are: money, safety, comfort and pleasure; or more simply: minimize suffering and maximize selfishness. That assumption was never defended – it didn't need to be, because in America, everyone already knows that's true.*
 3. What are some of your big questions about yourself and God? Do you resonate with your lead question you wrestle with being "Who am I? Does my life matter?"
 - a. How might this internal question steer your life, your decisions, your relationships etc. (With others and with God)?
 - i. **Sermon Reference:** *In the past 20 years since we planted Highrock, a lot has changed. Back then, and for the previous 300 years since the enlightenment, the primary question people asked was "Who is God". And for 3 Centuries the Church **honed our answers** in the form of apologetics. We learned how to explain things like the relationship between faith and science, and why bad things happen if God is both all powerful and all loving. We've perfected those answers, but they're not much help anymore, because today people are asking different questions. Instead of asking "Who is God", they're asking "Who am I? Does my life matter?" Maybe you are asking those questions too.*
 4. Imagine yourself in this scene as one of the disciples. Can you relate to Peter's reaction? Why might Peter react this way? What Assumptions was he making about safety or what it meant to follow Jesus?
 - a. **Sermon Reference: (Matt 16:21)** *But right after the disciples finally come to this realization, Jesus calls in his team of 12 in for a huddle and "began to explain that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life." Huh? Excuse me? No, Jesus, that's not the way this works! You're a star – you're successful. You don't have to suffer like that, and certainly not die – you're going to have the life! Fame, fortune, you can live in a mansion with servants and do or have whatever you want! And We'll be there too! It's going to be Amazing! Partly Peter is probably looking out for himself, but Peter also loves Jesus. He doesn't want Jesus to suffer like that, or die. He wants Jesus to have the best life possible, and like us, Peter assumed that suffering is bad and comfort and safety are essential. (Matt 16:22) So "Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!" Now you may think that's a little... bold of Peter, you know, rebuking the person he just acknowledged to be the son of God.*

5. Have someone read this statement aloud twice. How do you notice you react to this statement? Do you let it sink in, do you believe it? If you were to take hold of this truth in your head and heart, what might that shift for you?
- a. How do you feel about God taking JOY in your joy?
 - i. **Sermon Reference:** *The truth is that you were created by God for a purpose. God had a plan in mind when making you. (Eph 2:10) Paul writes “we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” God wants you to experience fulfillment, love, peace and joy. (John 10:10b) Jesus insisted that He came to lead us to life, and life to the full! (John 15:11) Elsewhere He declared “I’ve told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.”*
6. How do you see this statement below played out in our culture? If you are to examine your own life, habits, and rhythms, do you see it affecting you as well? Share about how.
- a. **Sermon Reference:** *But many of us, maybe most of us are going to miss that purpose because we, like Peter, have believed our culture’s lie that the way to find joy and fulfillment is to avoid sacrifice whenever possible. Seek comfort, security, affluence and fun – that’s where the payoff is. And yet many of us are finding this to be a ponzi scheme that leaves us feeling empty.*
7. What do you notice about Jesus' purpose and focus in this story? How did his understanding of this purpose affect his decisions?
- a. **Sermon Reference:** *But Jesus knew that while He could become famous doing those things, he couldn’t be faithful that way. Jesus had come for a purpose – to die for sin and defeat death forever. That couldn’t be accomplished by just becoming popular while staying safe on the sidelines. (Mark 10:45) because He “didn’t come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Just imagine if Jesus had listened to Satan speaking through Peter? Jesus could have avoided confrontation with the Romans or religious leaders, and set up a great teaching and healing ministry. He could have sold many books and filled stadiums with people eager to listen to his divine wisdom.*
8. What are the discomforts you find yourself working to avoid? What are internal comforts you work hard to maintain (independence, perfection, maintaining your reputation...) or external (financial security, appearances, your house/home image).
- a. What comforts might you have come to feel you are entitled to? What might be indicators for you that you could be holding on too tightly to something?
 - b. What might Jesus be inviting you to take hold of?
 - i. **Sermon Reference:** *Jesus is saying you were made for more than dodging discomfort, enjoying your friends and using the gifts God gave you mostly to serve yourself. So if you try to play it safe by listening to the culture telling you to avoid any sacrifices in exchange for comfort, money, security and pleasure, you’re going to miss what life is all about! What your life could be. But if you follow Jesus as he sacrifices to serve others; if*

you give up your life the way the world understands it, then you'll finally find the life you long for – the one God made you for in the first place!

9. As you have discussed this sermon, what might you say to Pastor Dave's question? How might you serve God sacrificially or in a way which is focused outside of your own comforts? How do you understand "loose your life to find it?"
 - a. **Sermon Reference:** *(Matt 16:24) Instead, I want you to listen to how God may call you to follow Jesus into sacrificing for others. Ask how your money, your time, your words and your life are being used to help other people flourish? How am I discovering who I really am, not through selfishness, but through service! (Matt 16:25) Because Jesus promises that "whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it."*
10. Knowing and naming what we feel limited by and what is pulling for our attention is important part of evaluating our priorities and pressures we feel. What are the things which pull at you and need your attention. What, if any can you re-prioritize to create margin?
 - a. If you are unsure, how might you begin to pray over these things and invite Jesus to help you see where you can invest your time and commitments.
 - i. **Sermon Reference:** *I know this can be a hard message to hear, especially at this time of year, because you already feel pulled in so many directions and burdened by so many demands. Your work wants more effort. Your school is piling on more homework, or your kid's school wants you to join the pta. Your family needs more attention. Everyone wants more money, so the last thing you need is one more person asking you for something.*

APPLICATION/S

1. In what areas can you identify longing for more? What could it mean for the joy and contentment you long for be found in Jesus? Where did Jesus find contentment in his life?
 - a. **Sermon Reference:** *God wants you to experience fulfillment, love, peace and joy. (John 10:10b) Jesus insisted that he came to lead us to life, and life to the full! (John 15:11) Elsewhere he declared "I've told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete." God doesn't want you to miss out on the best life, He wants to lead you to your best life in which you have purpose and passion that lead to joy and fulfillment!*
2. Pastor Dave shared his desire for your life and how it could be shaped by loving others in the way that Jesus loved. Do you have this desire as well? What does it look like to invite God to help you live this out and show you the next steps for this season?
 - a. **Sermon Reference:** *Instead, I want you to live your whole life in a way that walks with Jesus and matters for ever. I want you to follow Jesus by loving others so much that you'd make sacrifices that might blow up your life plan, your retirement plan, or infuriate your family. How are you following Jesus toward discomfort rather than staying safe on the sidelines? I want you to give*

up your life so that you can find the true life through following Jesus that you'll never be able to get any other way.

3. Imagine what your families, your church, your community might look like if you were released from the fear of losing their grip on middle class?
 - a. **Sermon Reference:** *How are you following Jesus toward discomfort rather than staying safe on the sidelines? I want you to give up your life so that you can find the true life through following Jesus that you'll never be able to get any other way. (Rom 12:1-2) "Therefore" Paul concludes "I urge you brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you'll be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will." That's what we all want, so this year let's encourage each other to take risks to follow Jesus. This year I'm excited to make sacrifices Together. building the kind of church God has given us a dream for, the kind that will engage our neighbors and care for those in need, that will require sacrifices. But it can bring blessings that we won't experience any other way.*

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

Matthew 16:21-25

"From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!" Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns." Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it.

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.

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?