

Radiant and Unfading

Take-Home • Session 1: God Did Not Make Death

What We Found

We opened the last book of the Old Testament to be written, composed in Greek, likely in Alexandria in Egypt, in the generations just before Christ. It speaks in the voice of Solomon as a literary tribute to Israel's wisdom tradition, and the Church teaches that it is inspired Scripture. It was written for believers living in a brilliant, skeptical, pleasure-rich city, which is to say, for people like us.

Chapter 1 handed us the thesis of the whole book. Wisdom is spoken of as a kindly spirit, someone who can be welcomed or grieved, not a mere skill. The Spirit of the Lord fills the world, just as on the Bible's first page (Genesis 1:2). And then the thunderclap: God did not make death, and he does not delight in the death of the living (1:13). We hunted through Ezekiel 18 and found God saying the same thing about himself: "I have no pleasure in the death of any one... so turn, and live" (Ezekiel 18:23, 32). Creation is wholesome, righteousness is immortal, and yet the ungodly court death like a friend and make a covenant with him (1:16). Chapter 1 ends with that covenant party about to speak. That is where we pick up next time.

Voices of the Church

St. Athanasius • *On the Incarnation*, 4-5 (4th century)

God created man for incorruption, to share his own life, and death entered the world through the devil's envy when man turned away. St. Athanasius quotes the Book of Wisdom as Scripture to make this very case.

St. Augustine • *The City of God*, Book 13 (5th century)

Death is not natural to man as God created him, but the penalty of sin. Yet for the faithful, God turns death itself into the doorway of life. The intruder does not get the last word.

St. Clement of Rome • *Letter to the Corinthians*, ch. 3 (c. AD 96)

Within living memory of the Apostles, the fourth pope lamented that through envy death entered the world, drawing on this book's teaching as common Christian currency.

My Guess

MY GUESS • SEAL IT AND DO NOT CHANGE IT

Throughout this book we will keep meeting a mysterious figure called Wisdom, a kindly spirit who can be welcomed or grieved. Who or what do you think Wisdom is? Write your guess below, then fold this sheet and do not change your answer. We will open our guesses together later in the study.

Live It This Week

- **Read ahead, slowly.** Read Wisdom 1 and 2 once this week, unhurried, with a pencil. Mark every line where death or life appears.
- **Pray with one verse.** Once this week, sit with Ezekiel 18:32 for five quiet minutes: “so turn, and live.” Let God say the second half to you personally.
- **Choose life once, concretely.** Make one deliberate move onto the side of life: reconcile with someone, encourage someone, visit someone lonely, or finally drop a habit’s smallest link.
- **Check your shelf.** Find any Bibles in your home or on your phone and check the table of contents: is the Book of Wisdom there? Bring your findings next week. No conclusions yet, just evidence.

Memory Verse

“God did not make death, and he does not delight in the death of the living.” (**Wisdom 1:13**)

Before next session: read Wisdom 2.

Catechism references: CCC 413, CCC 1008.

Radiant and Unfading

Take-Home • Session 2: The Plot Against the Righteous Man

What We Found

The ungodly of chapter 1, the ones who had made their covenant with death, finally spoke, and the author let them make their case at full strength. Their logic unfolded in four moves: despair (life is short, death is final, we are here by chance), then pleasure (crown ourselves with rosebuds before they wither), then power (let our might be our law of right), and finally persecution (the righteous man is inconvenient to us; his very life is a judgment on ours). Despair becomes hedonism, hedonism becomes power, and power always ends by hating goodness.

Then came the discovery none of us will forget. The plotters say: if the righteous man is God's son, God will help him and deliver him; let us test him with insult and torture; let us condemn him to a shameful death (2:18-20). We went hunting and found the echo at the foot of the cross: he trusts in God, let God deliver him now, if he desires him; for he said, I am the Son of God (Matthew 27:43). Well before Calvary, this book scripted the taunt. The Fathers, from St. Cyprian to St. Augustine, read this chapter as a prophecy of the Passion. And the chapter closed by answering Session 1's open question: God created man for incorruption, in the image of his own eternity, but through the devil's envy death entered the world (2:23-24).

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Cyprian of Carthage • *To Quirinus (Testimonies), Book 2 (3rd century)*

In his handbook of prophecies of Christ for new believers, St. Cyprian places the plot speech of Wisdom 2 among the Scriptures foretelling the Passion, alongside Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Augustine • *The City of God, Book 17 (5th century)*

St. Augustine reads the wicked men's speech, let us condemn him to a shameful death, as the Passion of Christ openly foretold, words Scripture placed centuries in advance in the mouths of the very enemies who would one day carry them out.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Gregory of Nyssa • *On the Making of Man and his broader anthropology (4th century)*

Man was created in the image of God and destined for divine life; mortality is not our original clothing but a garment added after the fall, and what was added can be removed. The image endures, and grace restores it.

Live It This Week

- **Read ahead, slowly.** Read Wisdom 3:1-9 this week with a pencil. Mark every promise made to people the world counts as losers.
- **Pray the two texts together.** Once this week, read Wisdom 2:12-20 and then Matthew 27:39-43, slowly, as one prayer. End at the foot of the cross and stay there a minute.
- **Stand with someone inconvenient.** Find one concrete way to stand beside a person it costs something to defend: a mocked coworker, an ignored relative, someone whose goodness makes others uncomfortable.
- **Run the diagnostic.** Catch yourself once this week reasoning like the speech, life is short, so I might as well, and name the premise underneath it out loud.

Memory Verse

| “God created man for incorruption, and made him in the image of his own eternity.” (**Wisdom 2:23**)

Before next session: read Wisdom 3:1-9.

Catechism references: CCC 601, CCC 413.

Radiant and Unfading

Take-Home • Session 3: The Souls of the Righteous

What We Found

Nine verses, and the Church reads them beside open graves. But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and no torment will ever touch them. We found where that hand appears elsewhere in Scripture: into your hand I commit my spirit (Psalm 31:5), prayed by Jesus as his dying words (Luke 23:46). In the eyes of the foolish, the foolish whose outlook was voiced in chapter 2, the righteous seemed to have died; the author answers every worldly verdict with one small word: but. But they are at peace. Their hope is full of immortality.

Then the furnace. Like gold in the furnace he tried them, and like a sacrificial burnt offering he accepted them (3:6). Fire does not destroy gold; it burns away everything that is not gold. We discovered St. Peter using the identical image for suffering Christians: the genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold which though perishable is tested by fire (1 Peter 1:6-7). God's love does not merely acquit; it purifies, because his goal is a soul made worthy of himself. That principle is what makes the Church's teaching on purification, in this life and after it, intelligible: fire, in the hands of this God, is love finishing its work. And the passage ends where heaven ends: the faithful will abide with him in love.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Ignatius of Antioch • *Letter to the Romans* (c. AD 107)

On the road to his execution: I am God's wheat, to be ground by the teeth of the wild beasts, that I may become the pure bread of Christ. Wisdom 3:6 lived out loud, a death understood as an offering God would accept.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Gregory the Great • *Dialogues, Book 4* (6th century)

For certain lesser faults there is a purifying fire before the judgment, since the Lord speaks of a sin not forgiven either in this age or in the age to come. The Catechism quotes this passage in its teaching on purgatory (CCC 1031). Purification is not a second chance for the condemned; it is the finishing of the saved.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. John Chrysostom • *Homilies on First Corinthians* (4th century)

Do not hesitate to help the departed and to offer prayers for them. The Catechism cites his words in teaching that our prayer can help the dead (CCC 1032). If their souls are in the hand of God, loving them across death's border is family business.

Live It This Week

- **Read ahead, slowly.** Read Wisdom 3:10 through 4:20 with a pencil. Mark every person the world would call unlucky, and what God calls them instead.
- **Pray for your dead by name.** Each day this week, name your beloved dead before God, one by one. Consider having a Mass offered for one of them; the parish office can arrange it in two minutes.
- **Memorize the verse.** Commit Wisdom 3:1 to heart. Someday you will stand beside someone at a graveside, and it may be a deeply fitting word to pray, entrusting the one you have lost to the God who holds the righteous in his hand.
- **Visit if you can.** If a cemetery holds someone you love, visit this week. Stand at the grave and pray the memory verse there, entrusting them to God in hope.

Memory Verse

“But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and no torment will ever touch them.” (**Wisdom 3:1**)

Before next session: read Wisdom 3:10 through 4:20.

Catechism references: CCC 1012, CCC 1030-1032.

Radiant and Unfading

Take-Home • Session 4: A Life Measured by Virtue

What We Found

The author walked straight at the three scorecards his world treated as absolute, children, long life, and legacy, and recalibrated every one against a single standard: virtue, friendship with God. Blessed is the barren woman who is undefiled; blessed the eunuch whose hands have done no lawless deed (3:13-14). We hunted down the ground under that shocking blessing and found it in Isaiah 56:3-5, where God promises the faithful eunuch a monument and a name better than sons and daughters. Old age, we learned, is not measured by number of years: understanding is gray hair for man, and a blameless life is ripe old age (4:8-9).

Then we met a man described but not named: he pleased God, was loved by him, and was taken up while living among sinners, lest evil change his understanding. We found him in Genesis 5: Enoch, who walked with God, and he was not, for God took him. In a chapter where everyone else merely dies, Enoch is taken, and Wisdom reads his short life as tenderness: being perfected in a short time, he fulfilled long years. When the righteous die young, this book's instinct is not that God forgot them, but that God took them quickly in mercy, lest wickedness change their understanding. The passage closed with the courtroom doors creaking open: the righteous man who has died will condemn the ungodly who are living (4:16). Next session, the verdict.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Ambrose • *De Virginibus, Book I, and Letter 63 (4th century)*

Virginity offered to Christ is not useless or isolated but spiritually fruitful for others: the virgin's life becomes an offering to God and a benefit to the whole Church. Marriage is honored precisely so that celibacy can be seen as a free gift rather than an escape.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. John Paul II • *Theology of the Body audiences (1982)*

Celibacy for the kingdom does not devalue marriage but anticipates the resurrection, when they neither marry nor are given in marriage. The celibate person is a living sign that our deepest longing is for God himself. Both vocations spring from the same nuptial meaning of the body and honor each other.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Thérèse of Lisieux • *Story of a Soul and last conversations (d. 1897, age 24)*

Dying at twenty-four, hidden, childless, and unknown, she confided that her mission was about to begin: to make God loved as she loved him, to spend her heaven doing good on earth. The world's metrics gave her nothing; the Church counts her a Doctor of the Church.

Live It This Week

- **Read ahead, slowly.** Read Wisdom 5 with a pencil. It is a courtroom scene; mark who is speaking, and notice what tense they speak in.
- **Rewrite one metric.** Take the scorecard with the deepest hooks in you and write a single sentence stating God's measure in its place. Put it where you will see it daily.
- **Honor a hidden life.** Write, call, or visit one person whose quiet faithfulness the world does not count, and tell them specifically what you see.
- **Pray for vocations, all of them.** Once this week, pray for someone discerning religious life or priesthood, for a married couple you know, and for a single or childless person carrying that quietly, by name if you can.

Memory Verse

"Being perfected in a short time, he fulfilled long years; for his soul was pleasing to the Lord."

(Wisdom 4:13-14)

Before next session: read Wisdom 5.

Catechism references: CCC 1618-1620, CCC 2379.

Radiant and Unfading

Take-Home • Session 5: The Verdict Reversed

What We Found

The courtroom of Part I reached its verdict. The men who plotted in chapter 2 returned for a second speech, and everything had changed: the righteous man they condemned stood before them with great confidence, and they spoke in past tense and anguish: this is the man whom we once held in derision, we fools; why has he been numbered among the sons of God? The sonship they mocked was real. Their self-indictment followed: our lives passed like a shadow, a ship's closed wake, a vanished arrow, chaff on the wind; we had no sign of virtue to show. Real recognition, arriving too late, written to move us while the tense is still future: now is the acceptable time (2 Corinthians 6:2).

Then the two crescendos. The righteous live for ever, and they receive a glorious crown from the hand of the Lord, the same hand that held their souls at 3:1; the hand that kept them now crowns them. And the Lord went to war in full armor: righteousness as a breastplate, impartial justice as a helmet, holiness as a shield, wrath for a sword. We found where that armor reappears: Ephesians 6:10-17, the whole armor of God. And the twist was better than the parallel: in Wisdom, God wears the armor; in Ephesians, God hands it to us. Grace means being dressed in God's own battle gear.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Polycarp of Smyrna • *as recorded in the Martyrdom of Polycarp, ch. 11 (c. AD 155)*

Threatened with burning unless he cursed Christ, the aged disciple of St. John answered that the fire his judges threatened burns for an hour, but they knew nothing of the fire of the coming judgment. Eighty-six years he had served Christ, who had never done him wrong. He knew which verdict was temporary.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Basil the Great • *Homily on the rich fool, I Will Tear Down My Barns (4th century)*

The bread you are holding back belongs to the hungry, the coat in your closet to the naked. That is Basil. The application is ours: hoarded wealth vanishes like a shadow at the judgment, and only what was given away crosses over.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Thomas More • *At his trial and on the scaffold, 1535*

Condemned by the king's court for refusing to swear against his conscience, he told the lords who sentenced him that he trusted they would yet meet merrily together in heaven (as William Roper records), and on the scaffold he died, as reported, the king's good servant, but God's first. A man who lost the earthly verdict on purpose, because he had read to the end of the book.

Live It This Week

- **Read ahead, slowly.** Read Wisdom 6 with a pencil. The author is about to turn and speak directly to the powerful; mark every verse that feels like it is speaking directly to you.
- **Suit up daily.** Each morning this week, pray Ephesians 6:10-17 slowly, naming each piece of armor as you put it on. It takes ninety seconds and changes the day.
- **Leave one trace of virtue.** Do one hidden act of love this week that will never be seen or repaid, a wake that does not close.
- **Choose your disclosure day.** Everything will be laid bare eventually; Confession is choosing mercy as the venue. If it has been a while, go this month.

Memory Verse

“*But the righteous live for ever, and their reward is with the Lord.*” **(Wisdom 5:15)**

Before next session: read Wisdom 6.

Catechism references: CCC 1039, CCC 1040.

Radiant and Unfading

Take-Home • Session 6: Kings, Seek Wisdom

What We Found

Part II opened in a classroom, and the first lesson was an audit. Your dominion was given you from the Lord, who will search out your works (6:3). We found Jesus saying it to power's face: you would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above (John 19:11), and stating the audit's terms as a proverb: every one to whom much is given, of him will much be required (Luke 12:48). All authority is a loan, the lowliest may be pardoned in mercy, the mighty will be mightily tested, and God is the one judge unimpressed by greatness, which is terrible news for status and wonderful news for justice.

Then, at verse 12, sunrise, and the words this study is named for: Wisdom is radiant and unfading, and she is easily discerned by those who love her, and is found by those who seek her. Easily. The early riser finds her already sitting at his gates; she goes about seeking those worthy of her and meets them in every thought. The seeker turns out to be the sought: God calls man first, and our first step is always a response (CCC 2567). Finally we climbed the staircase of 6:17-20, from sincere desire, to love, to love's obedience, to immortality, to nearness to God, to a kingdom. The entrance requirement for everything this book promises is the bottom rung: wanting it.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Bernard of Clairvaux • *On Consideration, to Pope Eugene III, I.3-6; III.1-3; IV.6 (12th century)*

Writing blunt counsel to his former monk, now pope: do not let administration and litigation consume the interior life a shepherd owes his people. Authority exists for the good of those entrusted to it, not for domination, and its holder will render an account. If the highest office in Christendom is held on such terms, so is every lesser one.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Augustine • *Confessions, Book 10 (5th century)*

Late have I loved you, beauty ever ancient, ever new. You were within me, but I was outside, and there I searched for you. All the years he thought he was seeking, he was being sought; the road home has someone already on it, coming the other way.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Anselm of Canterbury • *Proslogion, chapter 1 (11th century)*

Lord, teach me to seek you, and show yourself to the seeker, for I cannot seek you unless you teach me how. Even the desire to seek God is already God's gift moving in us; desire and trust stand on the bottom rung, exactly where Wisdom 6:17 puts them.

Live It This Week

- **Read ahead, slowly.** Read Wisdom 7:1-21 with a pencil. A king is about to tell you where he actually came from; mark everything that surprises you.
- **Rise early once.** One morning this week, give God the first fifteen minutes of the day, before the phone. She is found sitting at the gates of the one who rises to seek her (6:14).
- **Run the steward audit.** List your kingdoms, the places you actually hold authority, then write one concrete act of right ruling for each: an apology owed, a standard raised, a person served instead of used.
- **Pray for someone in power.** Once this week, pray by name for an authority over you, a boss, a bishop, a governor, especially one you would not have chosen. Much has been given them; ask mercy on the audit.

Memory Verse

“Wisdom is radiant and unfading, and she is easily discerned by those who love her, and is found by those who seek her.” (**Wisdom 6:12**)

Before next session: read Wisdom 7:1-21.

Catechism references: CCC 1899, CCC 2567.

Radiant and Unfading

Take-Home • Session 7: I Preferred Her to Thrones

What We Found

The royal teacher kept his promise to hide nothing, and he started in the delivery room: I also am mortal, like all men; my first sound was a cry, like that of all; there is for all mankind one entrance into life, and a common departure (7:1-6). Ancient royal autobiography usually opened with omens, divine ancestry, and portents; this king opens with a newborn's cry and swaddling cloths, and the humility was strategic: if the wisest man alive came through the common door, then wisdom is available to everyone who did. And how did he get it?

Therefore I prayed, and understanding was given me (7:7). We found the night behind that verse: Gibeon, 1 Kings 3, where God said ask what I shall give you, and the young king asked for an understanding mind, and God, pleased, gave wisdom and added riches and honor unasked.

Then the preference ladder: wisdom over scepters and thrones, gold as a little sand, silver as clay, above health and beauty, even above light, because her radiance never ceases. And the ladder's surprise ending: all good things came to me along with her (7:11). We found Jesus stating the same economy in one sentence: seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well (Matthew 6:33). Those who get wisdom, the chapter says, obtain friendship with God, and the closing hymn handed us the syllabus of creation, stars, seasons, animals, plants, all taught by wisdom, the fashioner of all things. Faith and honest science have one Author and cannot finally conflict (CCC 159).

Voices of the Church

St. Francis of Assisi • *The renunciation before the bishop of Assisi (c. 1206), as told by Thomas of Celano and St. Bonaventure*

Sued by his father, the young Francis stripped off the fine clothes his father's wealth had bought and laid them at his feet, saying that until now he had called Pietro Bernardone his father, but that from now on he would say, Our Father, who art in heaven. Wisdom 7:8 performed in public: the better portion chosen in front of witnesses.

St. Thomas Aquinas • *The early biographical tradition; the "straw" episode reported by Reginald of Piperno (1273)*

The greatest theological mind of the Middle Ages began every session of study with prayer, understanding received rather than achieved. Near the end of his life, after a profound experience in prayer, he stopped writing, saying that compared with what he had seen, all he had written seemed like straw.

St. Albert the Great • *Doctor of the Church, patron of the natural sciences (13th century)*

Aquinas's teacher wrote pioneering studies of plants, animals, minerals, and stars, and the Church named him patron of the natural sciences. We read his life's work as Wisdom 7:17-21 in a Dominican habit: in the study of creatures we seek the wisdom of the Creator, the syllabus of creation received as gift and studied as praise.

Live It This Week

- **Read ahead, slowly.** Read Wisdom 7:22 through 8:1 with a pencil, the passage we open next session. Read it twice. Mark every word that describes what wisdom is like.
- **Pray Gibeon nightly.** Each night this week, pray one sentence before sleep: Lord, give your servant an understanding mind. Thirty seconds; see what a week of it does.
- **Reprice one good.** Fast once this week from the thing you are gripping hardest, a day without the comfort, the app, the mirror, the metric, as a practical act of preference.
- **BRING TAKE-HOME 1 NEXT WEEK.** Find your Take-Home sheet from Session 1 with your sealed guess and bring it to the next session. Do not open or revise it. If you have lost it, write your original guess from memory on a card this week, before next session, and bring that instead.

Memory Verse

"Therefore I prayed, and understanding was given me; I called upon God, and the spirit of wisdom came to me." (Wisdom 7:7)

Before next session: read Wisdom 7:22 through 8:1, and bring your sealed Take-Home 1 guess.

Catechism references: CCC 159, CCC 283.

Radiant and Unfading

Take-Home • Session 8: Radiance of Eternal Light

What We Found

The envelopes opened tonight. First the text gave us its portrait at full height: twenty-one attributes, which most commentators take as a deliberate literary design, seven, the number of perfection, multiplied by three, the number of divine fullness, and then five images straining language to the edge: a breath of the power of God, a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty, a reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror, an image of his goodness. Every image names something distinct from its source yet inseparable from it: no sunbeam is younger than the sun.

Then we read our sealed guesses aloud, and went hunting. We found the vocabulary transferred, word for word, to one person: he reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature, upholding the universe by his word of power (Hebrews 1:3). The Greek word for reflection there, *apaugasma*, appears exactly once in the New Testament and exactly once in the Greek Old Testament, Wisdom 7:26. One word, two verses, one face. Colossians calls him the image of the invisible God in whom all things hold together; John says all things were made through the Word; and Paul gives the name: Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:24). The answer the Church has carried from the Fathers through the liturgy honors every guess: the portrait was painted before dawn, and what Christian tradition has learned to see dawning in it is the Trinity. Its lines are fulfilled above all in the Son, whom the Church sings Wisdom 8:1 to every Advent, O Wisdom, come; and its glow is the Spirit, whom St. Irenaeus named the Wisdom of God. Whoever guessed Jesus stood with St. Paul and the Creed; whoever guessed the Holy Spirit stood with St. Irenaeus; whoever guessed God's mind or an attribute saw truly, not yet fully. Nobody lost. Everyone was seeking, and she was meeting us in every thought.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Athanasius • *Discourses Against the Arians* (4th century)

The Son is to the Father what radiance is to light: was there ever a moment when the sun existed without its brightness? Then never was the Father without the Son. The vocabulary of Wisdom 7:26 and Hebrews 1:3 became the Church's weapon at Nicaea and its echo is in the Creed: Light from Light.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Irenaeus of Lyons • *Against Heresies* IV.20 (2nd century)

The Father created all things through his two hands, the Son and the Spirit, whom Irenaeus names the Word and Wisdom. The earliest tradition heard trinitarian harmonies in these texts, not a single note.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Louis-Marie de Montfort • *The Love of Eternal Wisdom* (18th century)

He wrote an entire book proposing Jesus Christ as Eternal Wisdom, incarnate to be loved, built on Wisdom 7 and 8: to know Jesus Christ, eternal Wisdom, is to know enough, and she is acquired the way this book said, by desiring, asking, and preferring her to everything.

Live It This Week

- **Read ahead, slowly.** Read Wisdom 8:2 through 9:18 with a pencil. It ends in a prayer; read the prayer twice.
- **Pray the O Antiphon daily.** Once each day: O Wisdom, who orders all things mightily and sweetly, come and teach me the way of prudence.
- **Write the after.** On the back of your Take-Home 1, under your original guess, write a short paragraph: what I know now. Keep the sheet; it is the record of a real discovery you made.
- **Hear the Creed with new ears.** At Mass this Sunday, listen: God from God, Light from Light, through him all things were made. You now know one of the pages that grammar came from.

Memory Verse

“For she is a reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working of God, and an image of his goodness.” (Wisdom 7:26)

Before next session: read Wisdom 8:2 through 9:18.

Catechism references: CCC 2500, CCC 241-242.

Radiant and Unfading

Take-Home • Session 9: Give Me the Wisdom That Sits by Thy Throne

What We Found

After the summit, intimacy. The author courted Wisdom like a bride: I loved her and sought her from my youth, and I desired to take her for my bride, and I became enamored of her beauty (8:2). Wisdom is not a subject to master but a person to love, and the pursuit runs on desire, fidelity, and time together. Then the verse every Catholic has been quoting since catechism class without knowing it: she teaches self-control and prudence, justice and courage (8:7), the four cardinal virtues, named as a set, in Scripture; when the Catechism teaches them, it quotes this verse (CCC 1805). And they are called her labors: wisdom's works in a soul, hinges hung by grace, not a willpower program.

The author then made the smartest move intelligence can make: he discovered its poverty. I perceived that I would not possess wisdom unless God gave her to me, and it was a mark of insight to know whose gift she was (8:21). So he prayed, and we prayed his prayer with him: give me the wisdom that sits by thy throne, the royal speaker, traditionally read in Solomon's voice, praying as a beggar, weak, short-lived, of little understanding, which the Catechism calls the foundation of all prayer (CCC 2559). His opening parallel, all things made by thy word, by thy wisdom formed man (9:1-2), we chased to John 1, where the Word is the person through whom all things were made. John does not use the word wisdom; Paul supplies it, naming that same person the wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:24), which is why the Church has always read the two lines as converging on one person. And the prayer's last line opened the door to next week: men were saved by wisdom (9:18).

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Ambrose • *Exposition of the Gospel of Luke V.62 (4th century)*

Commenting on the Beatitudes, Ambrose gives what appears to be the earliest surviving Christian use of the term cardinal, from *cardo*, hinge, for prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance: the four hinges the whole moral door swings on, practiced by the patriarchs long before the philosophers cataloged them.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. John of the Cross • *The Spiritual Canticle, Stanza 1 and its commentary (16th century)*

The Church's mystical Doctor wrote in tonight's key: the poem opens with the soul as bride searching for the Beloved who seems hidden, where have you hidden, Beloved?, and for St. John the courtship language of Scripture is precision, not decoration, because the end of the spiritual life is a union so close that only marriage can describe it. Our takeaway from him: a person who pursues God as information will plateau, and a person who pursues him as the Bridegroom will be pursued back.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Catherine of Siena • *The Dialogue, and Raymond of Capua's Life of Catherine (14th century)*

Her biographer records the word she said she received: I am he who is; you are she who is not. Her Dialogue unfolds it, teaching that self-knowledge and the knowledge of God grow together, the posture of Wisdom 9:5-6. Catherine counseled popes, and prayed from that nothing.

Live It This Week

- **Pray the chapter.** Once each day, pray Wisdom 9:1-6 and 9:10 aloud, slowly, in your own name. Let the inspired words train yours.
- **Oil one hinge.** Pick your weakest cardinal virtue and choose one small, repeatable practice for it this week: one act of prudence before a decision, one act of justice owed, one brave conversation, one appetite told to wait.
- **Lectio with James.** Sit with James 3:13-18 once. Ask which mark of the wisdom from above, pure, peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy, is most missing from your speech, online and off.
- **Warm up your Genesis.** Before next session, skim Genesis 1-12, 19, 27-28, and 37-41, and Exodus 14-15. You will be glad you did. That is all we will say.

Memory Verse

“Give me the wisdom that sits by thy throne, and do not reject me from among thy servants.” (**Wisdom 9:4**)

Before next session: read Wisdom 10, with Genesis close at hand.

Catechism references: CCC 1805, CCC 2559.

Radiant and Unfading

Take-Home • Session 10: The Unnamed Heroes

What We Found

Chapter 9 claimed that men were saved by wisdom; chapter 10 proved it with the strangest chapter in the Old Testament: salvation history from Eden to the Red Sea with every name removed. We put them back: Adam, the first-formed father whom Wisdom delivered even from his own transgression, the hope the Church preaches every Holy Saturday as Christ takes Adam by the hand: Awake, O sleeper. Cain, who refused the rescue at his own door. Noah, steered through the flood by a paltry piece of wood, and we found St. Peter reading that scene as ours: eight persons saved through water, and Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you (1 Peter 3:20-21). Abraham, kept strong at Moriah, where the Father who stopped his knife would not spare his own Son (Romans 8:32). Lot, pulled from the fire, while his wife looked back and became the pillar of salt that Wisdom 10:7 calls a monument to an unbelieving soul: a body led out of the city with a heart still inside it. Jacob the fugitive, shown the kingdom at Bethel on the ladder Jesus later claims as himself (John 1:51). Joseph, sold, sunk, raised, and feeding the nations with bread. And Israel at the sea, whose crossing St. Paul calls our Baptism, and whose first act as a free people was singing.

Then the question under the hunt: why remove the names? Because the subject of nearly every sentence is Wisdom: she protected, delivered, steered, rescued, guided, saved. History has one hero, and it is not any of us. And an unnamed list is an open list: there was one whom Wisdom rescued, the next verse could say, and it would be about you. Your name qualifies for this chapter precisely by not appearing in it.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

An Ancient Homily for Holy Saturday • *Author unknown, 4th century; read yearly in the Office of Readings*

Christ descends to the dead, finds Adam, and takes him by the hand: Awake, O sleeper; I am your God, who for your sake have become your son; rise, let us leave this place. The Catechism quotes it (CCC 635). What Wisdom 10:1 dared to say first, the Church has preached over the tomb ever since.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Justin Martyr • *Dialogue with Trypho, ch. 138 (2nd century)*

In Noah, saved with his family by water, and faith, and wood, Justin saw the mystery of the cross and of Baptism sketched in advance: the wood-and-water pattern by which Christians are brought through judgment into a new world.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Ephrem the Syrian and the Syriac tradition • *Ephrem's hymns; compare Aphrahat, Demonstrations (4th century)*

Ephrem's poetry is filled with the types and symbols of Christ, and the Syriac tradition he anchors reads Joseph naturally within that method: the beloved son rejected, sold, brought low, later exalted, and made the means by which the nations are kept alive. To read Genesis without seeing Christ, we might say, is to read the road signs and never guess there is a city.

Live It This Week

- **Read ahead, slowly.** Read Wisdom 11 and 12 with a pencil. Mark every verse about how God treats his enemies; you may be surprised who gets mercy.
- **Write your unnamed verse.** Third person, no name, Wisdom as subject: There was one whom Wisdom rescued when... Keep it in your Bible at chapter 10.
- **Collect a family rescue.** Ask a parent, grandparent, or elder in faith for one story of a rescue in their life, and receive it the way you received this chapter.
- **Pray for someone mid-rescue.** Someone you know is between the pit and the scepter right now. Pray for them daily this week, by name.

Memory Verse

| “Wisdom rescued from troubles those who served her.” (**Wisdom 10:9**)

Before next session: read Wisdom 11 and 12.

Catechism references: CCC 1094, CCC 635.

Radiant and Unfading

Take-Home • Session 11: Thou Lovest All Things That Exist

What We Found

Part III opened with its physics: by the things through which their enemies were punished, they themselves received benefit (11:5), the Nile turned to blood while the rock poured water, and one is punished by the very things by which he sins (11:16), Egypt scourged by the animals she worshiped. Then the widest sky in the book: thou art merciful to all, FOR thou canst do all things. Mercy is grounded in omnipotence. Cruelty is so often the reflex of power that feels threatened; God's power is threatened by nothing, and Wisdom draws the conclusion itself: his sovereignty over all is what causes him to spare all, and he judges with mildness because he can act whenever he chooses (12:16-18). Thou lovest all the things that exist... how would anything have endured if thou hadst not willed it? Existence itself is God's ongoing opinion: the least lovable person you can name is, at this instant, being loved into their next moment, or they would not be there.

Then the hardest room in the Old Testament, entered with the lights on. The sage says God judged Canaan little by little, giving place for repentance, and we found his sources: Genesis 15:16, where God delays the entire judgment four hundred years because the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete, and Exodus 23:28-30, the conquest designed little by little, hornets sent ahead. Rahab's open door led into the Messiah's own genealogy. Israel was warned the land would judge her by the same standard. What darkness remains is permitted to wait under the same patience that waited four centuries; meanwhile the moral of the whole chapter is ours to keep: thou hast taught thy people that the righteous man must be kind (12:19).

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Faustina Kowalska • *Diary of Divine Mercy* (20th century)

Recording the words of Jesus in her Diary, she wrote that mercy is the greatest attribute of God, and that he longs for the most hardened sinners to be the first to appeal to it. Her witness meets the Church's own prayer, that God shows his almighty power above all by sparing and having mercy, both landing on Wisdom 11:23: merciful to all, because he can do all things.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

Julian of Norwich • *Revelations of Divine Love*, Long Text ch. 5; her 'all shall be well' is quoted in the Catechism at CCC 313

Shown all creation as a hazelnut in the palm of a hand, she marveled that it endured, so small and frail, and received the answer: it lasts, and ever shall, because God loves it. Later comes the line the Catechism takes up at CCC 313: all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Gregory of Nazianzus • *Fifth Theological Oration* (4th century)

God leads his people by gradual additions and ascents, giving light in portions the eyes can bear, the way dawn does not blind. Gregory traces the stages: the Old Testament proclaimed the Father openly and the Son more dimly, the New manifested the Son and intimated the Spirit, and the Spirit now dwells among us in clearer light. The Old Testament's shadows belong to a pedagogy in motion, and the ascent does not stop until the whole Trinity stands in the daylight.

Live It This Week

- **Read ahead, slowly.** Read Wisdom 13, 14, and 15 with a pencil. Mark every reason people give for worshiping what they worship.
- **Pray for your Nineveh.** Daily, pray by name for the person or group you find hardest to want mercy for: Lord, you love all that exists; teach me your opinion of them.
- **Gentle one use of power.** Pick one place you hold leverage and deliberately answer with mildness where you had the right to come down hard.
- **Use the open door.** Thou givest repentance for sins (12:19). If the invitation to Confession is still pending, this is the week; go as someone the Lord waited for on purpose.

Memory Verse

| “Thou sparest all things, for they are thine, O Lord who lovest the living.” (**Wisdom 11:26**)

Before next session: read Wisdom 13, 14, and 15.

Catechism references: CCC 122, CCC 313.

Radiant and Unfading

Take-Home • Session 12: The Folly of Idols

What We Found

From the greatness and beauty of created things comes a corresponding perception of their Creator (13:5): beauty is a signpost, and idolatry is the tragedy of stopping at the sign. The author was gentle with the seekers, perhaps they go astray while seeking God, and firm at the stopping point: not even they are to be excused. Then the satire: the carpenter praying to the leftover log he nailed to the wall so it would not fall, the potter with a heart of ashes, and Psalm 115's warning underneath the comedy: those who make them are like them. You become what you worship. Nobody in our room carves wood; everybody is catechized daily by screens, brands, bodies, and portfolios.

In the middle stood the ship: thy providence, O Father, pilots it, and the verse planted three weeks ago resolved: blessed is the wood by which righteousness comes (14:7), the ark's timber in the letter, and in the Church's ear, the Wood she unveils on Good Friday: behold the wood of the cross. Salvation keeps arriving on humble timber. Then the last great discovery of our study: Romans 1:19-25, where St. Paul's most famous argument, God knowable from creation, idolaters without excuse, glory exchanged for images, the exchange collapsing into the moral catalog that runs on through Romans 1:26-32, tracks Wisdom 13-14 point by point. And the statues question was answered by one object's biography: the bronze serpent, commanded by God (Numbers 21), destroyed by God's king when Israel began worshiping it (2 Kings 18:4). The line runs through the heart's direction, not the statue's existence: the honor paid to an image passes to the person it portrays (CCC 2132). To know thee is complete righteousness (15:3).

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. John Damascene • *On the Divine Images* (8th century)

Defending the sacred images against the emperors who smashed them, he drew the line with perfect clarity, in words here condensed: I do not worship matter; I worship the Creator of matter, who became matter for my sake, who deigned to dwell in matter, who worked out my salvation through matter. The Incarnation changed imaging forever: the invisible God has shown his face.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Bonaventure • *The Journey of the Mind to God* (13th century)

The Seraphic Doctor teaches that the visible world is a ladder for ascending to God: creatures are vestiges, footprints, of the Creator, and the invisible things of God are understood through the things that are made. Elsewhere he calls creation itself a book in which the Trinity shines forth. Bonaventure is Wisdom 13:5 turned into a method of prayer: read the beauty, then climb it. Our takeaway: the idolater's error is not reading the book but worshiping the paper.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. John Henry Newman • *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* (19th century)

Recalling his boyhood certainty, Newman wrote of resting in the thought of two and two only absolute and luminously self-evident beings, myself and my Creator. His testimony shows how immediate the knowledge of God can become, though not everyone arrives at that awareness with the same clarity.

Live It This Week

- **Read ahead, slowly.** Read Wisdom 16 with a pencil. Mark everything that has to do with food, and everything that has to do with morning.
- **Run the attention audit.** List where your last seven days of attention actually went. Ask of the top three: signpost or shrine? Retire one shrine for the rest of the week.
- **Climb one beauty.** When beauty ambushes you this week, finish the trip: name the Craftsman out loud and thank him. Practice not stopping at the sign.
- **Pray before an image, correctly.** Five minutes before a crucifix or icon: eyes on the image, honor passing through it to the Person. You will never confuse veneration and worship again once you have caught yourself doing the first on purpose.

Memory Verse

“For from the greatness and beauty of created things comes a corresponding perception of their Creator.” (Wisdom 13:5)

Before next session: read Wisdom 16.

Catechism references: CCC 31-32, CCC 2113, CCC 2132.

Radiant and Unfading

Take-Home • Session 13: Bread from Heaven

What We Found

The bronze serpent returned with a precision Numbers never states: he who turned toward it was saved, not by what he saw, but by thee, the Savior of all (16:7), sacred signs are conduits, never sources, and Jesus claimed the scene for the cross: as Moses lifted up the serpent, so must the Son of man be lifted up (John 3:14). Then the manna, slowly: the food of angels, bread from heaven suited to every taste, ministering to the desire of the one who took it, the phrase the Church still sings as *panis angelicus*. Its curriculum was dependence: not the production of crops, but thy word preserves those who trust in thee (16:26), the same lesson Deuteronomy 8:3 states and Jesus quoted in the desert. And it melted at sunrise, so a whole nation was catechized by breakfast: one must rise before the sun to give thee thanks (16:28), a daily school of eucharistia, thanksgiving, fourteen centuries before the word became the Church's name for her morning gathering around the Bread.

Then Capernaum. The crowd invoked the manna, and Jesus outbid it: your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died... I am the living bread which came down from heaven... and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh (John 6:49-51). His listeners understood him literally; many left; and he corrected nothing, asking the Twelve only, do you also wish to go away? St. Paul warns that the unworthy communicant profanes the body and blood of the Lord; St. Ignatius, within one lifetime of the Last Supper, defined heretics as those who deny the Eucharist is the flesh of our Savior; St. Cyril taught the newly baptized: do not regard the bread and wine as simply that. The manna in the desert prefigured the Eucharist, the true bread from heaven (CCC 1094), in which the whole Christ is truly, really, and substantially contained (CCC 1374). The nearest tabernacle holds the food of angels; the question is attendance.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Ignatius of Antioch • *Letter to the Smyrnaeans* (c. AD 107)

His test for the docetist heretics was the Eucharist: they abstain from the Eucharist because they do not confess that the Eucharist is the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ, which suffered for our sins and which the Father raised. The Real Presence as the dividing line of orthodoxy, within one lifetime of the Last Supper.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Cyril of Jerusalem • *Mystagogical Catecheses* (4th century)

To the newly baptized: do not regard the bread and wine as simply that, for they are, according to the Master's own declaration, the body and blood of Christ; even though the senses suggest otherwise, let faith make you firm.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Thomas Aquinas • *Panis Angelicus and Lauda Sion* (13th century)

Composing the liturgy for Corpus Christi, he reached for this chapter's vocabulary: panis angelicus fit panis hominum, the bread of angels becomes the bread of men. What was signified in the manna is given in truth. The Church has been singing this session's thesis for seven hundred and fifty years.

Live It This Week

- **Read ahead, slowly.** Read Wisdom 17, 18, and 19, the final chapters, with a pencil. Mark every appearance of light, darkness, and the word.
- **Gather at dawn once.** One morning this week, rise before your screens and give the first ten minutes to thanksgiving, the manna's own discipline. A daily Mass is the full version.
- **Make one visit.** Sit near a tabernacle lamp for ten minutes this week. Bring John 6. Read verses 48 to 58 there, once, slowly, and let the location weigh in.
- **Bring everything next week.** Next session is the finale: the Exodus finished, and the question we sealed in Session 1 answered in full. Bring your stack of Take-Homes, your week-one shelf-check memory, and anyone who has asked you hard questions along the way.

Memory Verse

"...thou didst give thy people food of angels, and without their toil thou didst supply them from heaven with bread ready to eat." (Wisdom 16:20)

Before next session: read Wisdom 17, 18, and 19, and bring your full stack of Take-Homes.

Catechism references: CCC 1094, CCC 1374.

Radiant and Unfading

Take-Home • Session 14: The Exodus Rewoven and the Missing Book • The Final Sheet

What We Found

The Exodus finished: Egypt's darkness was self-haunted, each conscience its own warden, for fear is nothing but surrender of the helps that come from reason (17:12), while for the holy ones there was very great light. At midnight the all-powerful Word leaped from heaven, from the royal throne, into the midst of the land that was doomed (18:14-15), Passover judgment in the letter, and in the Church's Christmas liturgy, the other midnight leap: the Word became flesh. We found the warrior Word once more at the Bible's end, riding from an opened heaven, his name the Word of God (Revelation 19:13). Aaron stood between the dead and the living with prayer and incense, the icon of every intercessor since. And creation, refashioned and complying, carried the people through: in everything, O Lord,... thou hast not neglected to help them, at all times and in all places (19:22).

Then we kept the promise of Session 1. We gave the objection its full strength: the Hebrew canon, Josephus's count, Jerome's doubts, Athanasius's own list, no formula quotation, Trent's timing. And we answered with fourteen weeks of receipts: the apostles' Greek Bible; the plot speech at the cross; apaugasma in Hebrews 1; the panoplia of Ephesians 6; gold through fire in 1 Peter; Romans 1 running on Wisdom 13-14; a first-century pope breathing this book; the local councils of Rome, Hippo, and Carthage, whose lists the Latin Church received as one canon for both Testaments, the same lists that gave everyone their New Testament; Jerome's doubts submitted; Trent confirming Carthage, not inventing; and beneath it all, the argument that decides it: no book contains its own inspired table of contents. The canon is a judgment, and the only question is whose. The Church discerned the list by apostolic Tradition, forty-six and twenty-seven (CCC 120, 138), and this book is in it by name. We said in week one: read it, and let it prove itself. It did.

Voices of the Church

St. Augustine • *On Christian Doctrine* II.8; *Against the Letter of Mani* 5.6 (5th century)

His canon list in *On Christian Doctrine* includes Wisdom among the books received by the churches, and his rule is the foundation: follow the judgment of the weightier, apostolic churches. And in *Against the Letter of Mani* he pressed it home: I would not believe the Gospel itself, unless the authority of the Catholic Church moved me.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Jerome • *Prefaces and letters* (4th-5th century)

The honest hostile witness: he preferred the Hebrew canon and distinguished these books, yet he also translated Tobit and Judith himself, cited Wisdom and Sirach in his own arguments, and acknowledged the Church's use of them. His reservations were real, but held inside the Church's use, not against it; a scholar's private doubt is not the Church's verdict.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Francis de Sales • *The Catholic Controversy (16th-17th century)*

By what rule do we know which books are Scripture? By the testimony of the apostolic Church, the same witness by which we receive the Gospels themselves. To put it in a modern image: whoever accepts the New Testament from the Church's hands has already trusted the librarian, and it is late in the day to dispute her about the shelf.

Live It: The Sending

- **Finish the book, alone, once.** Sometime this month, read Wisdom straight through in one or two sittings. You will be amazed what fourteen weeks of keys do to the locks.
- **Answer the friend.** Write, in one page, your own answer to the Session 1 challenge, with your three strongest pieces of evidence from this study. Someday, in a break room or a dorm hallway, you will be asked, and you will be ready.
- **Give it away.** Choose your person and invite them into this book: hand them a copy, share your Take-Homes, or walk them through your three favorite discoveries. A multitude of wise men is the salvation of the world (6:24).
- **Keep the dawn.** Of all this study's practices, keep this one: rise before the noise, once a day, and give thanks at the dawning of the light (16:28). She is radiant and unfading, and she is still sitting at your gates.

Memory Verse

"While gentle silence enveloped all things, and night in its swift course was now half gone, thy all-powerful word leaped from heaven, from the royal throne." (Wisdom 18:14-15)

The threads, tied: The Face of Wisdom, sealed in week one, revealed in week eight: Christ the radiance, the Spirit the glow. The Righteous Man, plotted against in week two, vindicated in week five: the shape of Easter. Death's Genealogy, opened at 1:13, closed at 5:15: God did not make death, and God has outlived it. The wood, planted at 10:4, blessed at 14:7, unveiled on Good Friday. The Missing Book, questioned in week one, answered in week fourteen: on the shelf, by the Church's own hand, where it proved it belonged.

Where to go next: Sirach, Wisdom's older cousin; the Gospel of John with this study's eyes; or hand this study to someone and lead it yourself. Thank you for fourteen weeks. Go, and make friends of God.