

A Light to the Nations

Isaiah 46-50 • Leader Preparation Guide

SESSION OVERVIEW

DISCOVERY AIM

Participants weigh two kinds of gods: the ones you carry and the One who carries you (46). They hear the Servant speak in the first person for the first time (49): called from the womb, named Israel, and yet sent to Israel, the puzzle at maximum tension, and they discover Simeon and Paul both claiming the Servant's light-to-the-nations line. They receive the most maternal verse in Scripture (49:15-16), and then watch the Servant's story darken: in the third Song (50:4-9) he is beaten, spat upon, and sets his face like flint. The session ends on the edge of a cliff, one week before the sealed guesses open.

CATHOLIC TOUCHSTONE

The maternal tenderness of God (CCC 239) and the Church's share in the Servant's mission: when Paul and Barnabas quote 49:6 as *their* commission, the light to the nations becomes the baptized Church's job description, shared according to each vocation. Tonight is also the session that teaches young adults what vocation feels like from the inside: called from the womb, tempted to say *I have labored in vain*, and answered with a bigger assignment.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Chapter 46 opens with a scene the exiles could watch from their windows: Babylon's high gods, Bel and Nebo, loaded onto ox-carts in procession, "*these things you carry are loaded as burdens on weary beasts*" (46:1). The satire has a hinge: "*Hearken to me... who have been borne by me from your birth, carried from the womb; even to your old age I am He, and to gray hairs I will carry you*" (46:3-4). Two religions, permanently distinguished: gods you must carry, and the God who carries you. Every idol eventually rides on its worshiper's back; the LORD puts his worshipers on his. Chapter 47 sings Babylon's funeral in advance, and chapter 48 closes the Cyrus cycle with God's bracing honesty about why he saves: "*For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it... My glory I will not give to another*" (48:11), and with a command that turns the exile inside out: "*Go forth from Babylon... declare this... The LORD has redeemed his servant Jacob!*" (48:20). One oddity worth a light touch: in 48:16 the speaker says "*And now the Lord GOD has sent me and his Spirit.*" Sender, sent one, and Spirit in a single verse; Christian readers have long heard a whisper there of what Pentecost would make audible. Offer it as a whisper, hedged, not a proof.

Then the second Servant Song, 49:1-7, and the voice changes: the Servant himself speaks. Inventory his testimony carefully, because every clause matters for what is coming. Called from the womb, named while still inside his mother (49:1), a vocation older than his choices. Made a polished arrow, hidden in God's quiver (49:2), a weapon prepared and held in reserve. Named directly: "*You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified*" (49:3), the corporate title, explicitly, on this individual voice. Then the Servant's astonishing honesty: "*I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nothing*" (49:4), ministry discouragement, in the Messiah's own mouth, resolved not by denial but by deposit: "*yet surely*

my right is with the LORD.” And then the verse that breaks the puzzle open: his mission is “*to bring Jacob back to him... to raise up the tribes of Jacob*” (49:5-6). The one named Israel is sent to restore Israel. A thing cannot be simply identical to what it is sent to rescue. And before the logic can settle, God enlarges the assignment: “*It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob... I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth*” (49:6). Restoring Israel, the greatest hope the exiles owned, is called *too light a thing*. God's answer to the Servant's discouragement is a bigger mission.

The chapter then turns to Zion's own discouragement: “*The LORD has forsaken me, my Lord has forgotten me*” (49:14), and God reaches for the deepest human image available: “*Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you. Behold, I have graven you on the palms of my hands*” (49:15-16). The Catechism cites this verse when it teaches that God's parental tenderness can be expressed by the image of motherhood (CCC 239). Christian devotion has long lingered on the engraved palms with the crucifixion in view; offer that as the devotional reading it is, a meditation the wounds invite, while the verse's own image is a name tattooed where the owner cannot avoid seeing it.

The third Servant Song, 50:4-9, darkens the trajectory on schedule. The Servant has “*the tongue of those who are taught*” and a wakened ear, morning by morning, the portrait of perfect docility, and that docility now costs: “*I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard; I hid not my face from shame and spitting*” (50:6). Note the voice: *I gave*. Not *they took*. The violence is real and it is voluntary, endured with a confidence set like stone: “*I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame*” (50:7). The Servant's arc across the songs is now visible and ominous: presented (42), commissioned and discouraged (49), beaten (50), and the fourth song waits across next session's threshold. End the night there, deliberately, with the guesses coming out of drawers at home. Logistics matter this week: the Take-Home carries the reminder in print, and you should say it aloud twice: bring your sealed guess to the next session.

OLD TESTAMENT ROOTS AND FULFILLMENT

Roots. Called from the womb is Jeremiah's call (Jeremiah 1:5) and behind it every miracle-child of the promise. The polished arrow hidden in the quiver recalls the anointed David, kept in Jesse's fields until his hour. The mother who cannot forget stands on the Exodus confession of the God “*merciful and gracious*” (Exodus 34:6), whose Hebrew vocabulary of compassion grows from the womb-root, *r-ch-m*. The smitten back and plucked beard were the standard degradations of ancient justice (compare 2 Samuel 10:4-5): the Servant absorbs the treatment of the guilty and shamed.

Fulfillment. Simeon, holding the forty-day-old Jesus in the temple, answers tonight's commission: “*a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to thy people Israel*” (Luke 2:32; CCC 529), an Isaian composite: the nations' light of 49:6 joined to Israel's glory in one breath. Paul and Barnabas at Pisidian Antioch quote 49:6 as *their own* marching orders: “*So the Lord has commanded us, saying, 'I have set you to be a light for the Gentiles'*” (Acts 13:47), the Servant's mission extending through his people. Luke 9:51 echoes the flint: “*he set his face to go to Jerusalem.*” And the details of 50:6, the struck back, the spitting, the uncovered face, return in the Passion narratives: struck, scourged, spat upon (Matthew 26:67; 27:26, 30); the beard given to the pluckers and the face not hidden are details Isaiah alone records.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Bede the Venerable • *Commentary on Luke*

Expounding Simeon's canticle, St. Bede marvels at the economy of the old man's arms: he holds one small child and names him with Isaiah's widest words, light for the revelation of the Gentiles and the glory of Israel. What the prophet promised to the ends of the earth, Bede observes, faith recognizing, as Bede's tradition never tired of noting, the light of the nations in an infant; and the Church sings Simeon's canticle every night at Compline, so that no day ends without the nations' light being named.

St. Catherine of Siena • *The Dialogue*

God speaks to St. Catherine as the verse speaks to Zion: with a love that cannot un-know its own. She hears God name himself mad with love for creatures who forget him daily, pursuing the forgetful with a mother's unreasoning fidelity. Catherine's whole doctrine is 49:15 lived forward: our amnesia does not amend his memory; we are held in a love that has our names where it cannot lose them.

St. Ignatius of Antioch • *Letter to the Romans*

Marched under guard to execution around AD 107, St. Ignatius begged the Roman church not to rescue him: let me be ground as wheat, he wrote, that I may be found pure bread of Christ. His face was set, to our eyes, like the Servant's flint: not stoic hardness, but certainty of vindication. The disciple had learned the third Song's arithmetic: shame endured with God as your justifier is not shame at all.

CATECHISM CONNECTION

- **CCC 239.** God's parental tenderness can also be expressed by the image of motherhood, which emphasizes God's immanence and the intimacy between Creator and creature. The Catechism's own footnote territory is Isaiah 49:14-15.
- **CCC 529.** At the Presentation, Jesus is recognized as the long-expected Messiah, the *light to the nations*: Simeon's arms, tonight's verse.
- **CCC 64.** Through the prophets God forms his people in the hope of a salvation destined for all nations, kept alive by the poor and humble of the Lord. The remnant thread and the light thread, braided in one article.
- **CCC 900.** By Baptism and Confirmation the laity are entrusted with the apostolate, with the right and the duty to work so that the message of salvation is known and accepted everywhere. Acts 13:47 in the Church's mouth: the Servant's light carried outward by every baptized person, each according to his or her vocation and state of life.

THREAD WATCH

THREADS TONIGHT

Light to the nations: the fourth station. 2:5, 9:2, 42:6, and now 49:6, with Simeon and Acts 13 attached. One station remains, a sunrise, in Session 13. Do not preview it.

The Servant: maximum tension. Named Israel (49:3), sent to Israel (49:5), enlarged to the

nations (49:6), and now suffering voluntarily (50:6). Run tonight's steelman on the identity question honestly, and end the session on the cliff edge. Next week the guesses open; say so aloud, twice, and confirm the Take-Home reminder.

The arm. 51:5 and 51:9 sit just across next session's border; tonight it does not recur prominently. Let it rest.

Carried from the womb (46:3-4) quietly answers the idols carried on carts; it will braid with 49:15's mother. God's constancy has a body-shaped vocabulary: womb, arms, palms.

SESSION GOALS

1. Contrast the carried gods and the carrying God (46:1-4), with the idol inventory of Session 9 extended.
2. Inventory the Servant's first-person testimony in 49:1-6, and set the identity tension at maximum honestly.
3. Run the servant-identity steelman, the corporate Israel reading, at full strength and answer it from 49:5-6's own logic.
4. Discover Luke 2:32 and Acts 13:47: the light claimed by Simeon over Christ and by Paul over the Church.
5. Let 49:15-16 be heard as the maternal heart of God (CCC 239), pastorally, by name.
6. Read the third Song's darkening (50:4-9), mark the voluntary voice and the flint face, and set next session's logistics: sealed guesses come back.

TIME NOTE (90 MINUTES)

SUGGESTED CLOCK

Gather and opening prayer, 5 min. Win, 10 min. Build, 55 min. Send, 10 min. Live It, memory verse, Take-Home, closing prayer, 10 min.

Pre-chosen cuts if running long: cut Question 2 (chapter 48) first; compress Question 1 (the carried gods) second. Never cut the second Song inventory, the steelman, the Luke 2 and Acts 13 discovery, 49:15-16, or the third Song.

A Light to the Nations

Isaiah 46-50 • Discussion Guide

Opening Prayer

Father, you have carried us from the womb, and you will carry us to gray hairs; our names are graven where you cannot lose them.

Tonight your Servant speaks for himself. Let us listen the way Simeon held: expecting light. And where his road darkens, do not let us look away; we are close now to the heart of everything.

Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

WIN • OPENING QUESTIONS

1. What is the heaviest thing you are carrying right now that, honestly, you chose to pick up? (No fixing each other's answers; just name the cargo.)
2. Was there ever a season you worked hard at something good and concluded, *I have labored in vain*? What did you do with that feeling?

BUILD • INDUCTIVE STUDY

Gods You Carry, God Who Carries (Isaiah 46:1-4)

1. Read Isaiah 46:1-4. Verses 1-2 describe a scene from Babylon's streets; verses 3-4 answer it. What are Bel and Nebo doing, who is doing the work, and what four times over does the LORD say he does instead?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Bel and Nebo, Babylon's chief gods, are being hauled on ox-carts in procession, “*loaded as burdens on weary beasts*”: the worshipers and their animals do all the carrying, and in the end the gods “*themselves go into captivity*”, luggage in their own city's fall. Against the freight scene, the LORD: “*who have been borne by me from your birth, carried from the womb; even to your old age I am He, and to gray hairs I will carry you. I have made, and I will bear; I will carry and will save.*” Two religions, permanently distinguished: gods you carry, and the God who carries you. Extend last week's arithmetic: every idol, the career, the image, the account, ends up riding on its worshiper's back, and you can usually identify your idols by your exhaustion. The LORD's cargo policy runs womb to gray hair: you were never the porter; you are the carried.

2. (Optional, first cut for time.) Read Isaiah 48:10-11 and 48:20, and glance at the oddity in 48:16. Why does God say he saves, what is the command of verse 20, and what three parties stand in the last line of verse 16?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

“*For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it... My glory I will not give to another*” (48:11): salvation is anchored in God's own faithfulness to his name, which is the best possible news, because his name

outlasts our deserving; refined “in the furnace of affliction” (48:10), Israel is saved because of who God is. The command: “Go forth from Babylon... declare this with a shout of joy... The LORD has redeemed his servant Jacob!” Redemption comes with a megaphone attached; saved people are sent people, which is this study’s title working. And 48:16’s last line: “And now the Lord GOD has sent me and his Spirit.” Sender, sent one, and Spirit in one breath. Christian readers have long heard a whisper here of what Pentecost would say aloud; take it as a whisper, hedged and lovely, and keep reading.

The Servant Speaks (Isaiah 49:1-6)

3. Read Isaiah 49:1-4 aloud; for the first time, the Servant himself is talking. Inventory verses 1-3: when was he called, what was he made, where is he kept, and what is he named? Then sit in verse 4: what does the Servant confess, and what does he do with it?

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

Called “from the womb,” named “from the body of my mother”: a vocation older than any résumé, Jeremiah’s call (Jeremiah 1:5) spoken over a greater prophet, and, note well, a verse that quietly dignifies every life from the womb onward: God names people before the world meets them. Made “a polished arrow” and hidden “in his quiver”: prepared with care and held in reserve for a chosen hour; if your life feels like the quiver right now, hiddenness is not shelving, it is aiming. And named, explicitly: “You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified.” The corporate title, placed on this single first-person voice. Keep that on the table; it is tonight’s whole question.

Verse 4, the confession no one expects in a Messiah’s mouth: “I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity.” Ministry discouragement, canonized. And his move with it: “yet surely my right is with the LORD, and my recompense with my God.” Not denial, deposit: he files the discouragement with the only Judge whose verdict matters. Anyone at this table who has poured strength into people who did not change has prayed verse 4 without knowing it was Scripture; now you know what the Servant does next.

4. Read Isaiah 49:5-6 slowly. Verse 5 states the Servant’s mission; verse 6 enlarges it. What is the mission, why does it strain against verse 3, and what does God dare to call the restoration of Israel?

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

The mission: “to bring Jacob back to him... to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel.” The one named *Israel* in verse 3 is sent to Israel in verse 5. Hold the strain; do not release it yet. Then the enlargement, one of the most breathtaking sentences in Scripture: “It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob... I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.” The greatest hope the exiles possessed, national restoration, is called *too light a thing* for this Servant. And notice the shape of God’s pastoral care: the Servant just said *I have labored in vain*, and God’s answer to his discouragement is a *bigger assignment*. Sometimes the cure for weariness in a vocation is not a smaller field but a truer horizon. The light thread reaches its fourth station here: 2:5, 9:2, 42:6, 49:6, and it is now aimed at *the end of the earth*.

STEELMAN • BUILD IT AT FULL STRENGTH

Now the identity question deserves its strongest non-Christian answer, and it is the mainstream Jewish reading, held in good faith for centuries. Build it with respect and full force:

The Servant is Israel. The text says so, and keeps saying so. *You are my servant, Israel* (49:3), and a dozen times around the songs: 41:8, 44:1, 44:21, 45:4, 48:20. The songs are poetry, and poetry personifies: the nation speaks as one voice, called from the womb (Israel's election), a light to the nations (Israel's vocation among the peoples), suffering and despised (Israel's actual history in exile, and since). Reading a single future individual into corporate poetry is Christian retrojection: the Church needed Jesus in Isaiah, so the Church found him there. On this reading, the songs are Israel's mission statement and Israel's lament, and they need no messiah to make sense. A refined version sharpens it further: the servant is the faithful remnant within Israel, servant-Israel distilled and sent to the rest, and on that reading even a mission to Israel fits a corporate subject.

Give it its full dignity; Session 1's guardrail still governs: the gifts and call of God to Israel are irrevocable. Then work the next question from inside the second Song itself.

5. Answer from the evidence, beginning with 49:5-6 itself: (a) can the Servant be simply identical with Israel, given his stated mission; (b) how does the concept of corporate personality, think of David and Goliath, hold the both/and together; (c) what happens to the Servant's profile across the four songs that strains the corporate reading further; (d) what do Luke 2:32 and Acts 13:47 add about who finally shares this identity?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

(a) Start where the steelman is strongest, verse 3, and read two verses further: the Servant's mission is *to bring Jacob back, to raise up the tribes of Jacob*. A rescuer is not simply identical with the rescued; whatever is sent to restore Israel cannot be, without remainder, the Israel being restored. The corporate reading is not wrong about verse 3; it is incomplete by verse 5, and the incompleteness is Isaiah's own construction, not a Christian import.

(b) The Old Testament already owns the category that holds both truths: corporate personality, one figure who *is* the people in concentrated form. When David faces Goliath, Israel fights in him; his victory is legally and really theirs. The king embodies the nation; the nation lives in the king. Read the songs that way and every text fits: the Servant is Israel, Israel-in-person, one true Israelite in whom the nation's whole vocation, elect from the womb, light to the nations, is gathered up and finally performed, and performed *for* the nation that could not perform it exiled and bruised. Verse 3 and verse 5 stop fighting: he is Israel embodied, sent to Israel scattered.

(c) And watch the songs individuate as they advance, because the strain on the purely corporate reading grows with each one: a mother's womb and a personal naming (49:1); a single back given to smiters, one face, one beard, one man's spitting-shamed cheeks (50:6); and next session, a figure with a grave, an appearance, a silence before accusers, buried in a specific tomb, arrested from prison and judgment, cut off from the land of the living "*for the transgression of my people*", distinguished, in the song's own words, from the *my people* he dies for. Nations are not buried in a rich man's tomb. Say only that much tonight; the text itself is next week.

(d) Then the New Testament's double claim, which is subtler than the steelman allows: Simeon holds one child and names him the light for the Gentiles and the glory of *Israel* (Luke 2:32), the individual reading; and Paul and Barnabas quote the same verse 6 as *their own* commission, "*the Lord has commanded us*" (Acts 13:47), the corporate reading, reborn. The Church's answer to

individual or nation? has never been *individual instead of nation*; it is *one Israelite, and in him, a people*: the Servant's identity flows outward to everyone baptized into him, Jew and Gentile grafted together (Romans 11 again), so that Israel's vocation is not revoked but fulfilled and flung wide. That is why this session's title is also your job description, each according to his or her vocation and state of life (CCC 900); hold that thought for the Send.

Graven on His Palms (Isaiah 49:14-16)

6. Read Isaiah 49:14-16 aloud. What does Zion say, what comparison does God reach for, what is the astonishing concession in the middle of it, and where does he say your name is written?

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

Zion's lament, and it is the lament of half the people you know: *"The LORD has forsaken me, my Lord has forgotten me."* God's answer goes to the deepest human bond available: *"Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb?"* The Hebrew verb for compassion here comes from the root that also gives the word for womb: womb-love, the love that cannot help itself. Then the concession that makes the verse immortal: *"Even these may forget."* God does not sentimentalize mothers; he grants the unthinkable exception and out-promises it: *"yet I will not forget you."* His fidelity exceeds the strongest love the creature knows. The Catechism stands exactly here when it teaches that God's tenderness can be spoken in the image of motherhood (CCC 239), and St. Catherine of Siena heard God name himself mad with love for creatures who forget him daily: our amnesia does not amend his memory.

And the location of the writing: *"Behold, I have graven you on the palms of my hands."* Not on a ledger, on himself, engraved, permanent, and on the palms, where the owner cannot avoid seeing it, where everything he does is done with your name under it. Christian eyes have long read *graven on the palms* in the light of the nails; take that as the devotional meditation it is, the wounds have made the metaphor literal in a way Isaiah's exiles could not foresee, and it is no strain on the text: the question was always *how far will this love go to keep from forgetting you?* The answer had hands.

LIVE DISCOVERY

Two people in the New Testament take up tonight's verse 6, the light to the nations, and they aim it at two different targets. One is an old man in the temple holding a baby; the other is a pair of missionaries getting thrown out of a synagogue. Find both: Luke 2, in Simeon's canticle, and Acts 13, near the end of the chapter. Pairs, split the targets. 4 minutes.

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

Luke 2:29-32: Simeon, promised he would not die before seeing the Lord's Christ, takes the forty-day-old Jesus in his arms and sings the substance of 49:6 over eight pounds of infant, joining the nations' light to Israel's glory: *"a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to thy people Israel"* (CCC 529). St. Bede marveled at the economy: what the prophet promised to the ends of the earth, faith recognized in forty days of flesh, and the Church has sung Simeon's discovery at night prayer ever since; no day of the Church ends without the nations' light being named. The Servant of the song is, first, him.

Acts 13:46-47: Paul and Barnabas, rejected in the synagogue at Pisidian Antioch, turn to the Gentiles and justify it from tonight's verse, and look at the pronoun: "*So the Lord has commanded us, saying, 'I have set you to be a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the uttermost parts of the earth.'*" Commanded us. The Servant's commission, quoted as the missionaries' own orders. Both citations are right, and together they are the whole Catholic answer to tonight's steelman in two texts: the light is Christ, and in Christ the light is us. Which means 49:6 is not only tonight's title; it is, each according to vocation, your job description too, and the study's title, *Here am I, send me*, has been heading here since Session 2.

The Face Like Flint (Isaiah 50:4-9)

7. Read the third Servant Song, Isaiah 50:4-9. Verses 4-5: what has the Servant been given, and on what schedule? Verse 6: read it slowly and note the grammar of the violence: who is the subject of the verbs? Verses 7-9: where does his composure come from?

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

Given: "*the tongue of those who are taught, that I may know how to sustain with a word him that is weary,*" and an ear wakened "*morning by morning*": the portrait of perfect docility, a life that listens before it speaks, daily. If your group wants a rule of life from Isaiah, it is 50:4: ear first, then tongue, then the weary.

Verse 6, and the grammar is the theology: "*I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard; I hid not my face from shame and spitting.*" I gave. I hid not. The Servant is the *subject* of the sentence, not merely the object of the abuse: the violence is entirely real and entirely voluntary; his obedience walks into it with open eyes. The docile ear of verse 5 and the given back of verse 6 are one movement: "*I was not rebellious, I turned not backward.*" Readers of the Passion narratives will meet these details again: Jesus is struck, spat upon, and scourged (Matthew 26:67; 27:26, 30). Matthew does not narrate the plucked beard or the face deliberately not hidden; those stay Isaiah's own. Note it and hold it.

Verses 7-9: "*For the Lord GOD helps me... therefore I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame.*" Flint is not stoicism; it is certainty of vindication: "*he who vindicates me is near.*" Luke reaches for the image at the hinge of his Gospel: Jesus "*set his face to go to Jerusalem*" (Luke 9:51). And St. Ignatius of Antioch, marched to the lions, had learned the third Song's arithmetic: shame endured with God as your justifier is not shame at all. Now step back and see the Servant's arc across three songs: presented in glory (42), commissioned and discouraged (49), beaten and spat upon, by his own consent (50). The trajectory is bending somewhere, and next session we follow it all the way down. Two logistics sentences, say them now and again at the close: next session, bring your sealed guess from Take-Home 1. We open them together before we read.

SEND • TAKING IT OUT

1. Acts 13 puts the Servant's light-to-the-nations commission in the Church's mouth: *the Lord has commanded us*. Name your Pisidian Antioch: the actual room, group chat, workplace, or family table where you are the only light currently installed. What would one deliberate act of light look like there before we meet again?

2. *Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you.* Who in your life is living in 49:14, certain they have been forgotten, by God, by everyone? You cannot engrave them on your palms, but you can put them in your calendar. What is the concrete act of remembering, and when?

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

- Pray with Isaiah 49:15-16 once this week, hands open, palms up, and let God say the verse to you before you say anything to him.
- Adopt the Servant's schedule for seven mornings: ear first. Five minutes of listening prayer before your phone, that you may have a word to sustain the weary you will meet by noon.
- Find your sealed guess from Take-Home 1 and put it with your keys or your Bible tonight, unopened. Next session we read it together. Do not rewrite it; the whole point is what you thought then.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

“Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you. Behold, I have graven you on the palms of my hands.”

Isaiah 49:15-16 (RSV2CE)

Closing Prayer

Father, you carried us from the womb and you will carry us to gray hairs; our names are cut into your palms, and you have never once forgotten.

Your Servant has set his face like flint, and the road ahead of him is darkening. Give us the courage not to look away next week, and the honesty to bring our old guesses with us.

Make us light where you have placed us, to the end of our own small earths. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Before next session: read Isaiah 52:13 through 53:12, once, alone, slowly. And BRING YOUR SEALED GUESS from Take-Home 1. We open them together.

Leader Reference Card

Every passage used tonight, in order

Primary Text

- Isaiah 46:1-4 (Bel and Nebo on carts; carried from the womb to gray hairs)
- Isaiah 48:10-11, 16, 20 (for my own sake; the threefold whisper; go forth and declare; optional)
- Isaiah 49:1-4 (the Servant speaks: womb, arrow, quiver, named Israel; labored in vain)
- Isaiah 49:5-6 (sent to Israel; too light a thing; light to the nations)
- Isaiah 49:14-16 (can a woman forget; graven on the palms)
- Isaiah 50:4-9 (the third Song: the wakened ear; I gave my back; the flint face)

Live Discovery Targets

- Luke 2:29-32 (Simeon: light for the Gentiles, glory for Israel)
- Acts 13:46-47 (Paul and Barnabas: the Lord has commanded us)

Supporting Passages

- Jeremiah 1:5 (called from the womb; roots)
- Isaiah 41:8; 44:1, 21; 45:4; 48:20 (Israel named servant; steelman texts)
- Romans 11:17-18, 29 (grafting and the irrevocable call; the standing guardrail)
- Matthew 26:67; 27:26, 30 (the third Song's details in the Passion)
- Luke 9:51 (he set his face to go to Jerusalem)
- Exodus 34:6 (the womb-root r-ch-m; roots of 49:15)

Catechism

- CCC 239 (God's tenderness in the image of motherhood)
- CCC 529 (the Presentation: light to the nations recognized)
- CCC 64 (hope of salvation for all nations through the prophets)
- CCC 900 (the baptized share the apostolate; the light carried by each vocation)

Session Logistics

- Say twice, and confirm the Take-Home carries it: BRING YOUR SEALED GUESS to Session 11.

Memory Verse

- Isaiah 49:15-16 (RSV2CE)