

SESSION 9

A New Covenant I Will Make

Hosea's Marriage, the Exile, and the Promise of a Heart Made New

LEADER PREPARATION GUIDE

SESSION OVERVIEW

Discovery Aim. Participants hear the covenant formula spoken in reverse ("you are not my people and I am not your God") and discover that even God's divorce language carries a wedding inside it; they find the only Old Testament passage that says "new covenant" and learn its terms: law written on hearts, everyone knowing the LORD, and sins remembered no more.

Catholic Touchstone. Through the prophets, God forms his people in the hope of salvation, in the expectation of a new and everlasting covenant intended for all, and written on their hearts (CCC 64). The New Law is the grace of the Holy Spirit, the covenant Jeremiah announced (CCC 1965).

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

The prophets are covenant lawyers. When Israel and Judah rot from within, God does not send philosophers; he files suit. The prophetic *rib*, the covenant lawsuit, summons heaven and earth as witnesses (Isaiah 1:2, Micah 6:1 to 2, the very witnesses of Deuteronomy 30:19) and reads the indictment: idolatry, injustice, blood. Exile, when it falls, is not divine abandonment but the covenant's own sanctions executed, the curses of Deuteronomy 28 arriving on schedule. This matters pastorally: Israel in Babylon is not a people whose God lost, but a son under the discipline the covenant itself specified, and, as Session 8 showed, discipline was never abandonment.

Hosea is the covenant lawsuit made flesh. God commands the prophet to marry Gomer, a woman who will break his heart, so that Hosea's marriage becomes a living parable of God's marriage to Israel. The children's names are the verdict, and the third is the most terrible sentence in the prophets: *Lo-ammi*, "for you are not my people and I am not your God" (Hosea 1:9). Hear what that is: the covenant formula, the sentence this study is named for, spoken in reverse. The vow of Genesis 17 and Exodus 6 is turned inside out; this is judgment language as shattering as a divorce decree, communion ruptured. Yet even this sentence is not an annulment: the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable (Romans 11:29). And then Hosea 2 does what only God does: the aggrieved husband plans not an execution but an elopement, "I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her... and there she shall answer as in the days of her youth" (2:14 to 15), a second exodus, a second honeymoon, "you will call me My husband" (2:16), and the formula resurrected: "I will say to Not my people, You are my people; and he shall say, You are my God" (2:23). Even God's divorce papers have a wedding invitation hidden inside them.

Jeremiah watches the sanctions fall: 587 BC, the temple burned, the covenant institutions, king, priesthood, sacrifice, land, all rubble. And it is exactly there, in the book's darkest stretch, that the Old Testament says something it says nowhere else: "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers... my covenant which they broke" (Jeremiah 31:31 to 32). This is the only occurrence of the phrase new covenant in the entire Old Testament; when anyone, ever, says those words, they are quoting this passage. Its terms answer every failure the study has catalogued: "I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts" (the tutor's external law internalized at last); "I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (the formula, restored and made permanent); "they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest" (immediacy, not only mediation); "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (the

one thing no bull or goat ever accomplished). Notice what Jeremiah does not say: how. The promise has no mechanism, no price tag, no visible means. It is a check written against a deposit no one can see. Yet.

Ezekiel, prophet among the exiles, adds the surgical detail Deuteronomy 30:6 promised: "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean... A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you" (Ezekiel 36:25 to 27), and the formula again, "you shall be my people, and I will be your God" (36:28). Water, heart, Spirit: the group that discovered 1 Peter 3:21 in Session 3 will feel the shape of this without prompting. And Ezekiel 37's dry bones make the same promise at national scale: a people dead in exile raised by the *ruach*, the breath that hovered over creation's waters (Genesis 1:2) and blew over the flood (Genesis 8:1).

One more prophetic thread must be secured tonight because the steelman depends on it: the prophets universalize. Isaiah sees "the mountain of the house of the LORD... raised above the hills, and all the nations shall flow to it" (Isaiah 2:2 to 3); the Servant is given as "a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth" (49:6); foreigners who hold the covenant will be brought to the holy mountain, "for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples" (56:6 to 7). The exile scattered Israel among the nations, and the prophets, astonishingly, begin to read the scattering as seed. The third promise of Genesis 12 is stirring.

OLD TESTAMENT ROOTS AND FULFILLMENT

The New Testament claims this material by name and quotes it at length. Hebrews 8:8 to 12 cites Jeremiah 31:31 to 34 in full, the longest Old Testament quotation in the New Testament, and Hebrews 10:16 to 17 returns to it, treating "I will remember their sin no more" as the charter of Christian forgiveness. Paul and Peter both seize Hosea's reversal for the Gentiles: "Those who were not my people I will call my people... and in the very place where it was said to them, You are not my people, they will be called sons of the living God" (Romans 9:25 to 26, quoting Hosea), and "Once you were no people but now you are God's people" (1 Peter 2:10). The apostles read *Lo-ammi* as the world's condition, and its reversal as the world's invitation.

Where and how the new covenant is enacted, by whom, at what price, through what words, is the single question this session must leave unanswered. Jeremiah wrote the check; next session the group watches it cashed, and they must arrive with the promise ringing in their ears and no spoilers in them. The leader's discipline this week is total: no Last Supper references, no "new covenant in my blood," nothing. Next session also opens the sealed guesses; remind everyone, as the last word of the night, to bring Take-Home 1.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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St. Jerome *Prologue to the Commentary on Isaiah*

St. Jerome, who gave his life to the Hebrew Scriptures in his cave at Bethlehem, taught that ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ (Prologue to the Commentary on Isaiah), and across his commentaries on the prophets he read them as men standing on the ridgeline of history: one foot in the ruin of their own day, one foot in the daybreak they could see but not date. Their sorrow was for the present covenant broken; their joy was for the covenant coming, which they served without living to see.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Augustine *On the Spirit and the Letter*

St. Augustine built his whole account of grace on Jeremiah 31. The difference between the old covenant and the new, he taught, is the difference between the law written on stone, standing outside a man and accusing him, and the law written on the heart by the Holy Spirit, moving a man from within so that he loves what God

commands. The letter demands; the Spirit gives what the letter demands. That, for Augustine, is the entire gospel in one prophetic sentence.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Irenaeus of Lyons *Against Heresies, Book 4*

St. Irenaeus insisted that the same God gave both covenants, the old adapted to a people in training, the new bestowing the Spirit and liberty, and that the prophets themselves announced the change: the God of Israel was not replaced but was keeping, in the new covenant, the very promises the old covenant carried in figure. Novelty without discontinuity: the heir is new, the estate is ancient.

CATECHISM CONNECTION

CCC 218 to 219. Israel came to know that God's love was the reason for its election and deliverance, a love stronger than a mother's for her children or a bridegroom's for his bride; God loves his people more than a bridegroom his beloved, a love which will be victorious over even the worst infidelities.

CCC 64. Through the prophets, God forms his people in the hope of salvation, in the expectation of a new and everlasting covenant intended for all, to be written on their hearts. The prophets proclaim a radical redemption of the People of God, purification from all their infidelities, a salvation which will include all the nations.

CCC 1611. Seeing God's covenant with Israel in the image of exclusive and faithful married love, the prophets prepared the Chosen People's conscience for a deepened understanding of the unity and indissolubility of marriage; the books of Ruth and Tobit and above all the Song of Songs bear witness to this, and the tradition has read them in the light of the covenant.

CCC 1965. The New Law or the Law of the Gospel is the perfection here on earth of the divine law. It is the work of Christ and is expressed particularly in the Sermon on the Mount; it is also the work of the Holy Spirit, the interior law "written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts," the covenant announced by Jeremiah.

THREAD WATCH

Leader only. Do not reveal. These threads are planted and developed quietly; participants discover them.

- The formula thread reaches its crisis tonight: Hosea 1:9 speaks it in reverse (not my people, not your God), and Hosea 2:23, Jeremiah 31:33, and Ezekiel 36:28 resurrect it. Let the group feel the near death; the formula's final utterance (Revelation 21:3) is three sessions of silence away.
- The heart surgery thread (Deuteronomy 30:6, Session 7) is harvested tonight: Jeremiah writes the law on the heart, Ezekiel transplants it. Name the connection back to Session 7 explicitly; the group planted it and deserves the harvest.
- Thread B, blood and oath: conspicuously ABSENT from Jeremiah 31, and that absence is the session's cliffhanger. The new covenant promises total forgiveness and names no sacrifice, no blood, no mechanism. Point at the hole; do not fill it. Session 10 fills it.
- Thread C, the mountain: Isaiah 2:2 to 3, the mountain of the LORD raised above all hills with all nations streaming to it. Sixth summit, and the first one every nation climbs.

- **CRITICAL SPOILER DISCIPLINE:** no Last Supper, no Matthew 26:28, no Luke 22:20, no Upper Room references of any kind tonight. The entire architecture of Session 10 depends on the group meeting those words fresh with Jeremiah 31 and Exodus 24:8 already in their ears.
- Last word of the night, non negotiable: everyone brings Take-Home 1, sealed guess intact, next session. Send a reminder midweek.

SESSION GOALS

1. Participants understand exile as covenant lawsuit and executed sanctions, discipline within the covenant rather than abandonment of it.
2. Participants have heard the covenant formula spoken in reverse at Hosea 1:9 and watched it resurrected at Hosea 2:23.
3. Participants have located the Old Testament's only "new covenant" passage and can list its four terms from Jeremiah 31:33 to 34.
4. Participants have connected Ezekiel 36:25 to 28 (water, heart, Spirit) back to Deuteronomy 30:6 and forward, on their own, to the shape of baptism.
5. Participants have seen the prophets universalize the promise (Isaiah 2, 49, 56) and can answer the "Israel and Judah only" objection from the prophets themselves.
6. Participants leave with the cliffhanger intact: the new covenant names no price and no mechanism, and they are bringing Take-Home 1 next week.

TIME NOTE (90 MINUTES)

Ninety minutes. Opening prayer and Win, 15 minutes. Build, 55 minutes: Hosea deserves 18 (the reversed formula must land emotionally, not just intellectually), Jeremiah 31 gets 18 (read it twice, list the terms, find the hole), Ezekiel and the universal texts share 12, steelman 7. Send, Live It, memory verse, closing prayer, and the Take-Home 1 reminder, 20 minutes.

- If running long: Compress the covenant lawsuit background (Q1) into three minutes of leader framing.
- If running long: Assign the Dig Deeper box on the dry bones for home reading.

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DISCUSSION GUIDE

Opening Prayer

Father, when we broke the covenant, you filed suit, and when the verdict came, you served the sentence with us, into exile, into the wilderness, still speaking tenderly. Tonight let us hear the worst sentence in Scripture and the wedding hidden inside it, and make our hearts ache for the new covenant you promised, written not on stone but on us. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

WIN | OPENING QUESTIONS

W1. Has anyone ever kept loving you through something that should have ended the relationship? What did their refusal to quit do to you, over time?

W2. What is the difference between a rule you follow because it is posted and one you follow because it has become who you are? How does something make that journey from outside to inside?

BUILD | INTO THE WORD

1. The prophets open like lawyers, not poets. Read Micah 6:1 to 2 and Isaiah 1:2. Who is summoned as witnesses, and where has this study seen those witnesses before? What does that tell us about what exile actually is when it falls?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Heaven and earth, the mountains, the foundations: the exact witnesses Moses invoked when the covenant was sworn (Deuteronomy 30:19, "I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day"). The prophets are recalling the witnesses to testify at a covenant lawsuit, the *rib*. Which means exile, when the verdict falls, is not God losing or leaving; it is the covenant's own sanctions (Deuteronomy 28) being executed, discipline the document itself specified. Israel in Babylon is under discipline, not abandonment, the very logic God declared over David's son: "I will chasten him with the rod of men... but I will not take my steadfast love from him" (2 Samuel 7:14 to 15). What God promised the royal house, the exile of that house now enacts for the nation: chastened, never orphaned.

2. Now Hosea, where the lawsuit becomes a marriage. God commands the prophet to marry a woman who will be unfaithful, and to name the children as verdicts. Read Hosea 1:2 to 9 and stop hard at verse 9. You have been hunting a sentence through this entire study. What has just happened to it?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

"Call his name Not my people (*Lo-ammi*), for you are not my people and I am not your God." The covenant formula, the vow of Genesis 17:7 and Exodus 6:7, the sentence this study is named for, has been spoken in reverse. This is language as terrible as a divorce decree, the wedding vow of Sinai turned into a verdict; know as leader that the covenant God cannot finally revoke his own gifts (Romans 11:29). Let the room feel it before moving on: after nine sessions of watching God say I will be your God, God has just said I am not. Some silence is appropriate here.

3. Read Hosea 2:14 to 16 and 2:23. The wronged husband announces his response to the adultery. What does he plan, where does he take her, what era does he deliberately recreate, and what happens to the dead formula in verse 23?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

He plans an allurement, not an execution: "I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her." The wilderness is deliberate: the honeymoon terrain of the exodus, "as in the days of her youth, as at the time when she came out of the land of Egypt." God's answer to the broken marriage is a second exodus and a second courtship: "you will call me My husband." And verse 23 resurrects the formula from the dead: "I will say to Not my people, You are my people; and he shall say, You are my God." Even God's divorce papers have a wedding invitation folded inside them. The covenant lawsuit ends in renewed vows, because the plaintiff cannot stop loving the defendant.

LIVE DISCOVERY *(let the group find it)*

4. Now the night's summit. Somewhere in Jeremiah 31:31 to 34 the Old Testament says something it says in no other place, two words together, for the only time. Find the phrase, then read the whole passage aloud, slowly, and list the terms of what God promises, item by item.

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

"Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a NEW COVENANT," the only occurrence of that phrase in the entire Old Testament; whoever says those two words, ever, anywhere, is quoting this text. The terms: (1) "I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts," the tutor's external law finally internalized, Session 7's ache answered; (2) "I will be their God, and they shall be my people," the formula, restored and permanent; (3) "they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest," immediate knowledge of God for every member; (4) "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more," full and final forgiveness, the thing no morning lamb ever achieved. Have the group write the four terms down next to their three promises from Session 4. This is now the most important unfulfilled promise in their Bibles.

5. Read the passage once more and now hunt for what is NOT there. The new covenant promises the complete forgiveness of sins. Everything this study has taught about covenants, from the corridor of blood to behold the blood of the covenant, says forgiveness and covenant making have a price. What price does Jeremiah name? What mechanism? What sacrifice?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

None. Search it: no blood, no altar, no lamb, no priest, no mechanism of any kind. Jeremiah writes a check for the largest sum in the Old Testament, sins remembered no more, against a deposit nobody can see. The covenant story has run in blood since the garments of skins: Noah's altar, the corridor of Genesis 15, Moriah, the doorposts of Egypt, the basins of Sinai. This covenant is announced with the price line blank. That blank is the cliffhanger of the entire Old Testament. Do not resolve it. Tell the group plainly: the answer to how exists, it is one sentence long, and they will find it themselves next session. Tonight we sit with the promissory note.

LIVE DISCOVERY *(let the group find it)*

6. Ezekiel, prophet among the exiles, supplies the surgical details. Read Ezekiel 36:24 to 28 and gather three things God says he will use or give, in order, and then check verse 28 for a sentence you know. And one

memory test: which promise from Session 7 is being kept here, and who did we say would have to hold the scalpel?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Water ("I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean"), a heart ("a new heart I will give you... I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh"), and the Spirit ("I will put my spirit within you"). Verse 28: "you shall be my people, and I will be your God," the formula again. And this is Deuteronomy 30:6 being kept: the LORD your God will circumcise your heart, God holding the scalpel himself, exactly as the group discovered two sessions ago, because the patient cannot operate on her own heart. Water, heart, Spirit: if anyone in the room quietly thinks of a font, let them think it; confirm nothing and keep moving.

Build, Then Press | "The New Covenant Was Promised to Israel and Judah, Not to the Church"

Read Jeremiah 31:31 again and give this objection its full force, because it stands on the plain text: "I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah." Not with Gentiles, not with a future international Church: with the two named houses of the divided kingdom. On this reading, held seriously by dispensationalist interpreters, the Church's claim on Jeremiah 31 is a case of reading someone else's mail; the new covenant belongs to ethnic Israel, and Christians who claim its forgiveness clause are quoting a contract they never signed.

7. The addressees are real; do not erase them. But press the prophets themselves, because the objection quotes one verse of men who wrote whole books. What do the exile prophets say the nations will do at the mountain of the LORD (Isaiah 2:2 to 3)? What scope does God assign the Servant's work in Isaiah 49:6, and is he satisfied with Israel alone? Who may bind themselves to the covenant in Isaiah 56:6 to 7? And the sharpest witness: when Hosea's formula reversal is picked up inside the New Testament (Romans 9:24 to 26, 1 Peter 2:10), to whom do the apostles apply "not my people... now my people"?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

The prophets universalized their own promise. All nations stream to the raised mountain; God tells the Servant it is "too light a thing" to restore Jacob only, "I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth"; foreigners who join themselves to the LORD are brought to the holy mountain, "for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples." And the apostles, reading Hosea, apply the reversal to the Gentiles explicitly: those who were not my people, called my people, sons of the living God. The resolution is not that the Church replaces Israel and reads her mail; it is that the covenant made with Israel and Judah was always, per Abraham's third promise, held in trust for all the families of the earth, and the nations are grafted into Israel's own olive tree (Romans 11:17 to 24), wild branches drawing life from the patriarchal root, not a new tree planted beside it. The letter was addressed to Israel; the letter itself says it was written for the world. And note the Catechism's own reverence here: Israel remains the people of the elder brethren in the faith of Abraham (CCC 63), the root that carries us, never a discarded first draft; as Paul says in the same breath as the olive tree, "the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable" (Romans 11:29).

DIG DEEPER The Valley of Dry Bones

Ezekiel 37: a valley of bones, "very dry," and the question, "Son of man, can these bones live?" Then prophecy, a rattling, sinews and flesh, and the *ruach*, breath, wind, Spirit, the same word that hovered over creation's waters and moved over the flood, entering the slain so that they stand, "an exceedingly great host." The vision's own interpretation (37:11 to 14) is national: exiled Israel, dead and buried in Babylon, raised and brought home. But the promise underneath it, "I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live," refuses to stay national. A God who resurrects a nation from a graveyard of bones has told you something about what he can do with

graves. File it.

8. Put the prophetic hope together as one picture. As the Old Testament closes, list what Israel is waiting for, from tonight and from the whole study: gather at least six items on the whiteboard.

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Let the group build it: a prophet like Moses (Deuteronomy 18); a son of David for the empty throne, the shoot from the stump (Isaiah 11); a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek (Psalm 110:4); the heart surgery, law written within (Deuteronomy 30:6, Jeremiah 31, Ezekiel 36); the new covenant with sins remembered no more, price unnamed; the second exodus and renewed wedding (Hosea 2); all nations streaming to the mountain (Isaiah 2); the lamb God will provide himself, still outstanding since Moriah (Genesis 22:8, 14); and the formula spoken again, this time never to be reversed. One more waiting item they may not name, so you name it last: their own sealed guesses, written ten weeks ago, about how God would bless all the families of the earth through this family. Bring Take-Home 1 next week. All of this converges next session; end the night exactly there.

SEND | TAKING IT OUT

S1. Hosea's God responds to betrayal by alluring, not by annihilating: wilderness, tenderness, renewed vows. Is there a relationship in your life, with God or with a person, where you have been writing a verdict when you are being invited to write an invitation?

S2. The new covenant's deepest term is interiority: the law written on the heart rather than posted on the wall. Where is your faith still mostly posted, external compliance, and what would you ask the Spirit to write inside you instead?

Live It This Week

- Pray Ezekiel 36:26 every day this week, slowly. First read God's promise as written: "A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone." Then turn it into your own petition: a new heart give me, O God; a new spirit put within me; take the stone out of my chest.
- Go to Confession this week if you are able, and on the way, read Jeremiah 31:34: "I will remember their sin no more." Walk in carrying the promise; walk out having received it: sins truly forgiven, really absolved, and a pledge of the final communion when every promise is complete.
- FIND YOUR TAKE-HOME 1. The sealed guess you wrote in week one comes with you next session, unopened. Do not reread it yet. Also read, before next session, nothing new: instead reread Exodus 12:1 to 14 and Exodus 24:3 to 11, and come hungry.

Closing Prayer

Father, you spoke the unspeakable sentence, not my people, and even then you could not make it final; you hid a wedding inside the divorce and a honeymoon inside the wilderness. Write your law where you promised to write it. Give us the heart of flesh. And as the promises converge, gather us next week to the table where every waiting thing is answered. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Scripture Memory Verse

"I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be

my people."

Jeremiah 31:33 (RSV2CE)

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LEADER REFERENCE CARD

Every passage used in this session, in order of use. Mark these in your Bible before the group arrives.

Core Passages (in order of use)

- Micah 6:1 to 2 and Isaiah 1:2 with Deuteronomy 30:19, the covenant lawsuit and its witnesses
- Hosea 1:2 to 9, the formula reversed: Lo-ammi (stop hard at verse 9)
- Hosea 2:14 to 16 and 2:23, the wilderness courtship; the formula resurrected
- Jeremiah 31:31 to 34, the only "new covenant" in the Old Testament; the four terms (live discovery)
- Jeremiah 31:31 to 34 again, the hunt for the missing price (nothing named; the cliffhanger)
- Ezekiel 36:24 to 28, water, heart, Spirit; the formula in verse 28 (live discovery)
- Isaiah 2:2 to 3, 49:6, 56:6 to 7, the nations stream to the mountain (steelman)
- Romans 9:24 to 26 and 1 Peter 2:10, Hosea applied to the Gentiles (steelman)
- Romans 11:17 to 24, grafted into Israel's olive tree (steelman resolution)

Supporting Passages

- Deuteronomy 28, the covenant sanctions (background for exile as executed curses)
- 2 Samuel 7:14 to 15, the rod of men over David's son, discipline not abandonment (Session 8 callback; Davidic logic extended to the exiled nation)
- Deuteronomy 30:6, the surgeon change (Session 7 harvest)
- Ezekiel 37:1 to 14, the dry bones and the ruach (Dig Deeper)
- Hebrews 8:8 to 12 and 10:16 to 17, Jeremiah 31 quoted in full: LEADER ONLY, do not preview
- Matthew 26:28 and Luke 22:20: ABSOLUTE SPOILER EMBARGO until next session