

The LORD Is There

Exile, Glory, and the God Who Comes Back: A Study of Ezekiel

Session 5. Whitewash and Idols of the Heart

Reading: Ezekiel 12-14

Part One

Leader Preparation Guide

Session Overview

Discovery Aim

The group discovers that the deadliest lies are the comfortable religious ones, and that idolatry has moved indoors, into the heart, before God ever names it in the temple.

Catholic Touchstone

The first commandment reaches the interior life: idolatry remains a constant temptation that relocates into the heart, and the Church's answer is interior conversion, not a fresh coat of religious paint.

Tonight covers three chapters that escalate in one direction: inward. Chapter 12 shows a people who can watch a prophet dig through his own wall and still shrug. Chapter 13 exposes the prophets who made that shrug possible by selling peace when there was no peace, whitewashing a wall nobody built properly. Chapter 14 lands the blow the whole session is built for: elders come to consult God, looking perfectly devout, and God says they have taken their idols into their hearts. In chapter 8 the idols were in the temple. By chapter 14 the temple of the idol is the man. Keep the room warm; this session names things people carry, and the aim is honest self-knowledge that leads toward repentance and the sacraments, never shame for its own sake.

What You Need to Know

Where we stand: the last years before the fall

Ezekiel's call came in 593 BC; Jerusalem will fall in 587/586. Chapters 12-14 sit inside that narrow window. The city is still standing, which is exactly the problem: its survival so far is being read as proof that the warnings are empty. The escape-baggage sign in 12:1-16 targets 'the prince in Jerusalem', King Zedekiah. The oracle says he will cover his face, be brought to Babylon, and yet not see it (12:12-13). The fulfillment is recorded in 2 Kings 25:7 and Jeremiah 52:11: Zedekiah was captured fleeing the city, blinded at Riblah, and then taken to Babylon in chains. He arrived in the land he never saw. Do not hand this to the group early; it lands harder if you hold it for the answer to question 1.

Jeremiah is preaching the same sermon

While Ezekiel confronts false prophets among the exiles, Jeremiah had preached against them inside Jerusalem in closely related terms: they heal the wound of the people lightly, crying peace when there is no peace (Jeremiah 6:14; 8:11). Jeremiah 28 gives the false prophecy problem a face: Hananiah publicly contradicts Jeremiah, promises the exile will end within two years, breaks the wooden yoke off Jeremiah's neck as a sign, and is dead within the year. Two true prophets, hundreds of miles apart, giving one diagnosis, is strong evidence that the message came from somewhere other than either man's own spirit. The group will find the Jeremiah link themselves in the discovery; your job is to know the background.

Sign acts continue

Session 3 established that God makes Ezekiel's body the sermon. Chapter 12 continues the pattern: the packed baggage, the wall dug through at dusk, trembling while eating (12:17-20). A rebellious house has learned to filter speeches; it has not yet learned to filter a man carrying refugee luggage out of a hole in his own wall. Do not re-teach session 3's discovery as if new; just let the group notice the pattern holding.

Gillulim: Ezekiel's word for idols

Ezekiel has a favourite word for idols, *gillulim*, used dozens of times in the book and rare outside it. Many scholars suggest it is a deliberately coarse term, formed to sound like a word for dung; on that reading Ezekiel is refusing the idols even the dignity of a neutral noun. Treat the etymology as a common scholarly suggestion, not a certainty, but the contempt in the book's rhetoric is not in doubt.

Noah, Daniel, Job, and an honest question

In 14:14 and 14:20 God names three proverbially righteous men who could deliver only their own lives. Noah and Job are clear. 'Daniel' is genuinely debated: he may be Ezekiel's famous contemporary in the Babylonian court, or he may be an ancient sage of wider Near Eastern memory (a righteous Danel appears in texts from Ugarit, and the Hebrew spelling here differs slightly from the book of Daniel's). The Church has not ruled on this, and the passage's point is identical either way: three famous examples of righteousness, and even they could not cover this generation. Say so honestly if asked; manufactured certainty helps no one.

The hard verse: 14:9

Someone may catch 14:9, where God says that if a prophet is deceived, God himself has deceived that prophet. Do not dodge it and do not improvise; the objection bench below gives you the Church's frame. In short: Scripture often speaks of God's judgment in the idiom of God doing what he permits as a consequence of chosen sin, the same idiom as 'God gave them up' in Romans 1:24. God, who can neither deceive nor be deceived, is not the author of the lie; he is the judge who lets a chosen lie ripen.

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

Standing in the breach

The charge in 13:5, that the prophets never went up into the breaches, reaches back to Moses. Psalm 106:23 says God would have destroyed Israel after the golden calf 'had not Moses, his chosen one, stood in the breach before him' (see Exodus 32:11-14, 30-32, where Moses offers his own self for the people). That is what a true prophet does with a breach: he stands in it and takes the danger personally. Later in this book God will say he looked for a man to stand in the breach and found none (22:30). The line runs forward to Christ, the one intercessor who stands in the breach fully and forever (Hebrews 7:25). Hold this for the leader; the group gets the Moses connection through question 4.

From whitewashed walls to whitewashed tombs

The group's first discovery sends them to Matthew 23:27-28, which uses a strikingly related image, whitewashed tombs rather than a whitewashed wall, beautiful outside, full of death within, aimed at religious professionals. The image's survival across six centuries tells you the problem it names is not Babylonian; it is human.

Idolatry moves indoors, and stays there

Ezekiel 14:3 is the Old Testament's clearest statement that the first commandment is an interior commandment. The second discovery finds the apostles reading it exactly that way: Paul calls covetousness idolatry (Colossians 3:5), and Jesus locates the source of defilement in the heart (Mark 7:20-23). Leader-only forward pointer: the heart that has become a shrine is the heart God will promise to replace in 36:26. That belongs to session 12; tonight you are only deepening the problem the transplant answers.

The righteousness that saves others

There is a deliberate ache in 14:12-20. In their own stories, the righteousness of these men overflowed onto others: Noah's household entered the ark with him (Genesis 7:1), and Job's prayer covered his friends (Job 42:8-10). God says that ceiling has now been reached: even they would deliver only themselves. The Old Testament cannot resolve the ache it creates here; it is left waiting for the one man whose obedience makes the many righteous (Romans 5:19). Let the group feel the ache without rushing to resolve it; the canon will.

Voices of the Church

Read these aloud where they land. Each is either a direct citation or an honest summary, labelled as such.

St. Cyprian of Carthage, d. 258

Writing after the Decian persecution, St. Cyprian confronted clergy who rushed lapsed Christians back to communion without repentance. His teaching, in substance: this easy peace was no mercy at all. It soothed the wound at the surface while the infection spread beneath, and it was crueler than the persecution itself, because the persecution attacked bodies while a counterfeit peace destroys souls. A wound must be opened and treated deeply before it can honestly close.

On the Lapsed (*De Lapsis*). Summary of his teaching, not a direct quotation.

For the group. For anyone who has been handed cheap comfort in the middle of real damage, and for anyone tempted to hand it out.

St. Teresa of Avila, d. 1582

St. Teresa pictures the soul as a castle of many rooms with the King dwelling at the very centre. Her teaching, in substance: many souls never enter their own castle at all. They live in the outer courtyard among the reptiles and vermin that creep in from outside, unaware of the treasure at their own centre, and a soul in serious sin is like that castle plunged into darkness even though the King has not moved. The beginning of prayer is self-knowledge: actually walking inward and seeing what has been living in the rooms.

The Interior Castle, First Mansions. Summary of her teaching, not a direct quotation.

For the group. Prayer as walking inward and finding out who has been given the inner rooms.

St. John of the Cross, d. 1591

St. John teaches, in a famous image, that it makes little difference whether a bird is held by a heavy chain or by a single slender thread: either way it cannot fly until the cord is broken. His teaching, in substance: a small attachment willfully held binds the heart as effectively as a great one, because the question is never the size of the thing we cling to but the fact that the heart is not free. The idol does not need to be impressive; it only needs to be kept.

The Ascent of Mount Carmel, Book 1. Summary of his teaching, not a direct quotation.

For the group. For the person whose idol is small enough to seem harmless.

Catechism Connection

The Catechism says

CCC 2113. Idolatry is not limited to pagan statue-worship; it remains a constant temptation to faith, and it consists in divinizing what is not God: power, pleasure, money, ancestry, the state. Man commits idolatry whenever he honours a creature in place of God.

CCC 2114. Human life finds its unity in the adoration of the one God. Idolatry is a perversion of our innate religious sense; the idolater transfers his indestructible notion of God onto something other than God.

CCC 2116. All forms of divination are to be rejected, including horoscopes, omens, and mediums; they contradict the honour and loving trust we owe to God alone. This grounds the treatment of the diviners in 13:17-23.

CCC 2563. The heart is our hidden centre, beyond the grasp of reason and of others; the place of decision, of truth, of encounter, and of covenant. This is exactly the territory Ezekiel 14:3 says the idols have claimed.

CCC 1431. Interior repentance is a radical reorientation of the whole life, a return to God with all one's heart, an end of sin and a turning away from evil. This is what 14:6 is asking for, and what the sacrament of Penance enacts.

Thread Watch

Thread Watch

The heart of stone (develop). Planted in session 4 with 11:19. Tonight 14:3 shows why a transplant is the only answer: the heart itself has become the shrine. Draw the line back to 11:19 explicitly when debriefing question 8, but do not resolve; the resolution belongs to session 12.

Follow the glory (develop). The glory does not appear in chapters 12-14, and that absence is the point. The temple still stands in Jerusalem, but we watched the glory leave it in session 4. Notice quietly with the group, if it comes up, that the elders in chapter 14 seek God in Babylon and God answers there, confirming 11:16 without fanfare.

Son of man (develop). God addresses Ezekiel as son of man throughout all three chapters. Keep the tally alive with a light touch; no teaching needed tonight.

The opened mouth (develop). Ezekiel still speaks only what God gives him, in pointed contrast to the prophets of chapter 13 who speak from their own spirit. One sentence of contrast during question 3 keeps this thread warm for its payoff in session 9.

Sealed guess (develop). Tonight quietly feeds the sealed question: God refuses the temple-presumption of Jerusalem yet makes himself available to hearts in Babylon that turn to him. Do not connect these dots aloud; just let the material sit.

Objection Bench

Leader only. Do not raise these unless someone in the room does.

Ezekiel 14:9 says that if a prophet is deceived, the LORD has deceived him. Doesn't that make God the author of the lie?

Scripture regularly describes God's judgment in the idiom of God doing what he permits as the ripening consequence of chosen sin; Romans 1:24 uses the same grammar, 'God gave them up.' On that reading, God's judgment is to let a

lie already chosen run its course and carry its penalty. The verse does not say the prophet had already chosen deception, and the Church has not defined the question; offer it as the common Catholic reading rather than as the text's statement. The Church holds firmly that God can neither deceive nor be deceived (CCC 156, quoting the First Vatican Council), so this verse is read as judicial permission, not divine authorship of falsehood. Compare 1 Kings 22:19-23, where the same idiom appears in a vision explicitly framed as God's judgment on a king who has surrounded himself with flatterers.

Chapter 13:17-23 condemns women prophets. Is the Bible targeting women's spiritual leadership?

No. The men are condemned first and at greater length (13:1-16) for the identical crime: speaking from their own spirit in God's name. The women of 13:17-23 are condemned for divination for hire, sewing magic bands and hunting souls for handfuls of barley. The issue is fraudulent claims of divine speech and occult practice, by anyone; the Church's rejection of divination (CCC 2116) applies to every sex and every century, horoscopes included.

Who gets to decide which prophet is false? Ezekiel says 'thus says the LORD' and so did Hananiah. Isn't the whole category unfalsifiable?

Israel was given tests, not vibes: a word that does not come to pass was not from the LORD (Deuteronomy 18:21-22), and a prophet who contradicts what God has already revealed is disqualified regardless of his success rate (Deuteronomy 13:1-3). Within five years of these chapters, everyone in Babylon knew which prophet had spoken truly. For us the discernment is ecclesial: claims of private revelation are weighed by the Church against the deposit of faith, which is exactly the Deuteronomy principle carried forward.

Session Goals

1. Trace the escalation across the three chapters: ignored signs, then sold comfort, then idolatry discovered inside the heart.
2. Lead the group to articulate in their own words why a comfortable religious lie is deadlier than open hostility.
3. Let the group find the Jeremiah parallel and Jesus' whitewashed-tombs saying themselves, and Paul's relocation of idolatry to the heart.
4. Land 14:3 personally but pastorally: honest naming of heart-idols that points toward repentance and confession, never toward shame.
5. Develop the heart of stone thread by connecting 14:3 back to 11:19 without resolving it.

Time Note

Planned for 75 to 90 minutes

Win 10 minutes, reading blocks 12 minutes spread through the evening, Build 50 to 55 minutes with the two discoveries and the steelman as the spine, Send and Live It This Week 10 minutes, prayer at both ends. Questions 5, 6, 7, and 8 are the non-negotiable core.

If you are running long, cut in this order.

1. Cut question 2 (the two proverbs) first, summarizing it in one sentence while introducing chapter 13.

2. Drop both Dig Deeper boxes.
3. Compress question 10: summarize 14:12-20 yourself in two sentences and keep only the hunt for the verb in 14:6.
4. If still pressed, fold question 4 into question 6 by asking about the breach while walking the whitewash parable.

Part Two

Discussion Guide

Opening Prayer

Pray together

Father, you are not deceived by paint. You see the wall behind the whitewash and the heart behind the words, and still you call us to yourself. Give us tonight what you demanded of Israel: eyes that actually see and ears that actually hear. Where we have grown comfortable with lies because they are religious lies, unsettle us gently. Where something else has taken the inner room, show it to us without crushing us, for you take no pleasure in anyone's death but desire that we turn and live. Speak, Lord; your servants are listening. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Win

Open questions. No wrong answers. Let everyone speak before you move on.

W1. Tell us about a time someone told you a hard truth kindly. How did it land in the moment, and how do you see it now?

W2. What is a comforting phrase people say that you have quietly stopped trusting?

Both questions preview tonight's theme without naming it; do not connect the dots yet, just let the stories breathe.

Read

Read aloud

Three chapters are too long to read whole. Read in four assigned blocks as you reach them: 12:1-16 with two readers (narrator and the voice of the LORD), then 12:21-28, then 13:1-16, then 14:1-11. For question 10, have the group skim 14:12-23 silently for one minute rather than reading it aloud.

Build

Numbered inductive questions. Ask, wait, let the group work the text. The ANSWER boxes are for you to share after the discussion, not before it.

The sign and the shrug (Ezekiel 12)

1. In 12:1-7 God has Ezekiel pack refugee baggage, dig through the wall in their sight, and carry the pack out at dusk with his face covered, all in front of the neighbours, before any explanation is given. Why does God keep giving Ezekiel actions instead of speeches? Read 12:2 again: what does it tell us about the audience?

Take it as far as the room wants

Ground. Why dusk? Why the covered face? The prophet performs the humiliation of the king before the king performs it himself.

Depth. Compare Jesus' use of Ezekiel's 'eyes that see not' language when he explains why he teaches in parables (Mark 4:10-12, with Matthew 13:10-15; the same idiom echoes at Mark 8:18 in a different setting). Signs and parables both bypass the filter of the confident.

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Verse 2 is the diagnosis: they have eyes to see but see not, ears to hear but hear not, because they are a rebellious house. A rebellious house has learned to filter sermons; it has not yet learned to filter a man hauling exile luggage out of a hole in his own wall. This continues what we saw in session 3: God makes the prophet's body the message so that the message gets past the defenses. And notice whom the sign targets: 'the prince in Jerusalem' (12:10). This is King Zedekiah, and 12:13 makes a strange double claim: he will be brought to Babylon, yet he will not see it. History records the fulfillment with terrible precision: Zedekiah was captured fleeing the city, blinded at Riblah, and taken to Babylon in chains (2 Kings 25:7). He arrived in the land he never saw.

2. In 12:21-28 the people have two proverbs. First: the days grow long, and every vision comes to nothing (12:22). Second, about Ezekiel: he prophesies of times far off (12:27). What is each proverb actually doing for the people who repeat it? Which is more dangerous, and do we have modern versions?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Both proverbs convert delay into denial, but differently. The first is open disbelief: nothing has happened, so nothing will. The second is subtler and more religious: it affirms the word while neutralizing it. Yes, it is from God; no, it does not concern me; someone else, some other generation, will need to repent. That second move is the more dangerous one, because it lets a person feel orthodox while living unchanged. God's answer closes the loophole: none of my words will be delayed any longer (12:28). Modern versions are easy to find: 'God is merciful, it will all work out,' said not as trust but as a reason to change nothing. The tradition calls that presumption.

Whitewash (Ezekiel 13)

3. Read the charge sheet against the prophets in 13:2-7 slowly. What exactly is their crime? Look at where their message comes from and what they claim for it.

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

The crime is sourcing. They are prophets who follow their own spirit and have seen nothing (13:3), yet they say 'Says the LORD' when the LORD has not sent them (13:6-7). Their sin is not having opinions; it is baptizing their own voice as God's voice. And notice verse 6 suggests they may be partly sincere: they expect God to confirm the word they invented. Self-deception is included in the indictment. The contrast with Ezekiel is total: since chapter 3 his mouth has been under God's control, opened only for God's words. The false prophet's mouth is always open, and only his own spirit comes out.

4. Verse 13:5 uses a strange image: they have not gone up into the breaches or built up a wall for the house of Israel to stand in battle in the day of the LORD. What is a breach, and what would going up into one have looked like for a prophet?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

A breach is the gap in a city wall where the attack pours through, and the one who stands in it takes the danger personally. Israel's memory had a face for this: Psalm 106:23 says God would have destroyed Israel after the golden calf had not Moses, his chosen one, stood in the breach before him. Moses stood in the gap by interceding, at his own risk, and by telling the people the truth about their sin. The false prophets did neither. They chose the crowd's

comfort over the crowd's survival, which means that for all their soothing words they never actually loved the crowd.

Dig Deeper

Later in this book God says he looked for a man to stand in the breach and found none (22:30). Sit with where that search finally ends in the New Testament: one who always lives to make intercession (Hebrews 7:25).

Live discovery

Split the room in two. Each group reads its passage aloud among themselves, then reports its findings to the whole room.

Let them find it. Jeremiah 6:13-14; Matthew 23:27-28

5. Two search parties. Group one, find Jeremiah 6:13-14. Group two, find Matthew 23:27-28. Read your passage together, then report back: what did you find, and what does it have to do with Ezekiel 13?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Group one finds Jeremiah, preaching inside Jerusalem in closely related terms, making nearly the same charge: they heal the wound of my people lightly, saying 'Peace, peace,' when there is no peace. Two true prophets, hundreds of miles apart, one diagnosis. Do not claim they could not have communicated; Jeremiah 29 is a letter from Jerusalem to these very exiles. The convergence is worth noticing on its own terms. Group two finds Jesus reaching for Ezekiel's image six centuries later and sharpening it: not whitewashed walls now but whitewashed tombs, beautiful outside, full of the dead within, and aimed squarely at religious professionals. The whitewash problem did not end with the exile. It is not a Babylonian problem; it is a human one.

6. Walk through the little parable in 13:10-16. Who builds the wall? Who whitewashes it? What does God send against it, and why? Then the real question: what is the wall, and what is the whitewash, in the life of someone in this room?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

The people build a flimsy wall: their self-made securities, political alliances, and above all the presumption that God would never let his own temple city fall. The prophets do not build and do not repair; they paint, making the unfinished look finished, which stops anyone from asking the questions that lead to repair. Then God sends the storm, and the storm is not vandalism; it is inspection. He tears the painted wall down before his people are standing behind it in battle, which is a severe mercy. In our lives the wall is whatever we are actually trusting instead of God, and the whitewash is religious language applied over an unrepaired life: 'I'm blessed, it's fine, God has a plan,' painted over an addiction, a dying marriage, a grudge. Like painting over rot on a porch railing: it looks like maintenance, but its real function is to stop the questions.

Dig Deeper

Verses 13:17-23 extend the indictment to diviners who sell magic bands and hunt souls for handfuls of barley. The Church's rejection of all divination, horoscopes included, stands in this exact line: it trades the honour and trust owed to God for a purchasable counterfeit (see CCC 2116).

7. Before we condemn the peace prophets, let's give them the best defence we can. Someone make this case as convincingly as possible, then let's answer it from the text.

Build then press

The strongest form of the objection. The peace prophets were pastors to a traumatized people. Their hearers were deportees and refugees, families torn between Babylon and Jerusalem, people who had lost everything. Along comes Ezekiel with street theatre about siege and death, and these other men say: God loves this city, God dwells in that temple, this will pass, take heart. Isn't that simply what good pastoral care sounds like? No grief counselor on earth leads with doom. On what grounds is comfort the crime here and relentless bad news the virtue? Surely the real test of a message is whether it helps suffering people cope.

Answering from the text. The test in the text is never tone; it is truth and source. The peace prophets 'have seen nothing': their comfort was fiction, and fiction about a wall you are about to stand behind in battle does not help you cope, it gets you killed. Notice too that Ezekiel is not the anti-hope prophet. He is the one carrying the actual promises, as we found in session 4: God himself a sanctuary to the exiles, a new heart coming. After the city falls, this same Ezekiel will become the great consoler of the book. The difference between him and them is sequence, not temperament: true hope stands on the far side of the truth, while false hope replaces the truth. A doctor who tells you the tumour is benign when it is not has not been kinder than the one who schedules the surgery. And Israel had been given a test that requires no guesswork (Deuteronomy 18:21-22): within five years of these chapters, everyone in Babylon knew which prophet God had sent.

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Comfort was not the crime; counterfeit was. The false prophets sold peace they had not been given about a danger they refused to see, and their soothing words functioned as whitewash on a wall about to fall on the people they claimed to love. Ezekiel's hard words were the loving ones, because they were true, and because true hope, which he also carried, only works on the far side of the truth.

Idols move indoors (Ezekiel 14)

8. In 14:1-5 elders of Israel come and sit before Ezekiel to inquire of the LORD. On the surface this is perfectly devout behaviour. What does God say he sees, and why does he refuse to give them a normal prophetic answer? Compare where the idols were in chapter 8 with where they are now.

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

God sees past the posture: these men have taken their idols into their hearts and set the stumbling block of their iniquity before their faces (14:3). In chapter 8 the idols were in the temple, behind a hole in the wall. In chapter 14 the temple of the idol is the man. This is the book's most important interior move: idolatry has gone indoors, and a person can sit in the prayer meeting with the shrine fully intact inside. God refuses to be consulted like one advisor among the idols, one voice on the committee; instead he says he will answer such a man himself, dealing with the heart directly, because what he wants is not clients but covenant: that they may be my people and I may be their God (14:11). Connect this back to what we found in session 4: God has already promised a heart of flesh for a heart of

stone (11:19). Tonight we see exactly why nothing less than a transplant will do. Where that promise goes, the book will show us; not yet.

Live discovery

Everyone finds both passages; first person to find each reads it aloud.

Let them find it. Colossians 3:5; Mark 7:20-23

9. One more find, and it is short. Find Colossians 3:5, then Mark 7:20-23. What word does Paul attach to greed, and where does Jesus locate the source of what defiles a person?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Paul names covetousness and calls it idolatry, flatly. Jesus says that what defiles comes from within, out of the heart. The apostles read Ezekiel's move as permanent: idolatry did not die when the statues fell out of fashion; it changed address. The Catechism draws the modern map of that same territory: idolatry remains a constant temptation, and we commit it whenever we divinize and serve what is not God, whether power, pleasure, money, or anything else enthroned where only God belongs (CCC 2113). The first commandment is not exhausted by statues; the visible idol is the outward form of a deeper disorder, worship given to a creature in God's place.

10. Skim 14:12-23. God names Noah, Daniel, and Job, three famously righteous men, and says even they would deliver only their own lives. Why these three, and what is the sobering point? Then go back to 14:6 and find the verb God actually wants from Israel.

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Each of the three is proverbial for righteousness, and in each of their own stories that righteousness overflowed onto others: Noah's household entered the ark with him, and Job's prayer covered his friends. God's point is that Judah's rot has passed the stage where anyone can shelter under someone else's holiness: not your parents' faith, not your nation's temple, not proximity to holy people. Each heart must do what 14:6 commands: repent, and turn away from your idols. Notice the ache this creates and refuses to resolve: is there anyone, anywhere, whose righteousness could save others? Ezekiel leaves the question open. Hold onto it; the book is not finished, and neither is the Bible.

Dig Deeper

The 'Daniel' of 14:14 may be Ezekiel's celebrated contemporary, or an ancient sage of wider Near Eastern memory whose name is spelled slightly differently in the Hebrew here; scholars genuinely debate it and the Church has not ruled. The verse's point is identical either way, which is a good example of how a text's meaning can be secure while a detail stays honestly open.

Send

Open questions. Let these land in silence if they need to.

S1. If God named the thing that has been sitting closest to the throne of your heart lately, what do you suspect he would name?

S2. Who in your life needs a true word from you rather than a comfortable one, and what makes that hard to give?

Live It This Week

Practices

1. Run a one-question examen each night: 'What did I turn to first today for comfort, escape, or security?' Write one word per night. No self-punishment, just naming; by Friday you will have a map of the inner rooms.
2. Refuse one coat of whitewash. Catch yourself once this week about to smooth something over with a religious phrase, and say something true and present instead: 'I don't know why this is happening, but I'm not going anywhere.'
3. Pray Psalm 139 slowly once this week, and let its last two verses be your own words: ask God to search you, know your heart, and lead you.
4. Ezekiel 14:6 has a concrete address in the Catholic life: the sacrament of Reconciliation. If your nightly one-word list surprises you, take it there. That is what the sacrament is for.

Scripture Memory

Ezekiel 14:6 (excerpt)

"... Thus says the Lord GOD: Repent and turn away from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations."

Ezekiel 14:6 (excerpt)

Closing Prayer

Pray together

Lord, search us and know our hearts; test us and know our thoughts; see if there is any hurtful way in us, and lead us in the way everlasting. You have shown us tonight that you are not fooled by whitewash and will not share the inner room. So we hand you the paintbrush and the key. Give us the honesty to name what we have enthroned, the courage to turn, and the mercy of a true word spoken kindly, both received and given. You take no pleasure in the death of anyone; you desire that we turn and live. We choose to turn. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Part Three

Leader Reference Card

Every passage used in this session, in order. Print this page and keep it in front of you.

Primary text

- **Ezekiel 12:1-16** the exile's baggage; the prince who will not see Babylon
- **Ezekiel 12:21-28** the two proverbs of delay
- **Ezekiel 13:1-16** prophets of their own spirit; the whitewashed wall
- **Ezekiel 13:17-23** diviners for hire (Dig Deeper)
- **Ezekiel 14:1-11** idols taken into the heart
- **Ezekiel 14:12-23** Noah, Daniel, Job

Discovery passages

- **Jeremiah 6:13-14** peace, peace, when there is no peace
- **Matthew 23:27-28** whitewashed tombs
- **Colossians 3:5** covetousness, which is idolatry
- **Mark 7:20-23** out of the heart

Supporting passages

- **2 Kings 25:7** Zedekiah blinded; fulfils 12:13
- **Psalms 106:23** Moses stood in the breach
- **Deuteronomy 18:21-22** the test of a prophet
- **Romans 1:24** the idiom of judicial handing over, for 14:9
- **1 Kings 22:19-23** objection bench, the lying spirit
- **Psalms 139:23-24** closing prayer and Live It
- **Romans 5:19** leader only: the righteousness that saves others

Terms

- ***gillulim*** Ezekiel's characteristic contempt-word for idols; many scholars hear a deliberately coarse formation, refusing the idols a neutral noun
- ***shalom*** peace, wholeness; the word the false prophets sold without the substance

Catechism

- **CCC 2113.** idolatry a constant temptation; divinizing power, pleasure, money
- **CCC 2114.** idolatry perverts our innate religious sense
- **CCC 2116.** all divination rejected
- **CCC 2563.** the heart, our hidden centre, place of covenant
- **CCC 1431.** interior repentance, a radical reorientation
- **CCC 156.** God can neither deceive nor be deceived (for 14:9)