

# The LORD Is There

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

Session 6. The Foundling Bride

Reading: Ezekiel 16

## Part One

# Leader Preparation Guide

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## Session Overview

### Discovery Aim

The group discovers that the covenant is a marriage, that sin is adultery against a rescuer, and that the chapter ends not in divorce but in God's own promise, yet I will remember my covenant (16:60).

### Catholic Touchstone

The nuptial shape of the covenant: God binds himself to his people as a bridegroom to a bride, which the Church reads as fulfilled in Christ and his Church, sealed in baptism and the everlasting covenant.

Ezekiel 16 is the longest chapter in the book and the most emotionally raw. God tells Jerusalem her own history as a parable: an abandoned newborn rescued, raised, married, and lavished with gifts, who then uses every gift to betray her husband. This session has two jobs. First, let the group feel the shape of the story: everything the bride has is gift, so her sin is not rule-breaking but adultery against a rescuer. Second, walk them honestly through the hard middle of the chapter and land them on the ending, where after fifty-nine verses of failure, God alone speaks and binds himself again. This session builds directly on session 5: the idols of the heart named in chapters 12 to 14 are now shown for what they are, unfaithfulness inside a marriage. Read the pastoral notes below before the session; this chapter needs a careful leader more than most.

## What You Need to Know

### The parable and its history

The chapter is an allegory of Jerusalem's actual history, told as the biography of one woman. Verse 3 names her mixed pagan origins, your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite: Jerusalem was a Canaanite city long before David took it. The exposed infant is Israel's helpless beginnings; the rescue and marriage correspond to the exodus and Sinai; the royal splendor of verses 9 to 14 is the Davidic and Solomonic golden age; the adulteries are idolatry and the foreign alliances with Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon (verses 26 to 29); the stripping and mob violence of verses 35 to 41 are a figurative description of the siege and destruction of 587 BC, which at the moment Ezekiel speaks is still a few years away. Knowing the referents keeps the imagery in its intended register: this is judgment history in figurative dress.

### The wedding in verse 8

Verse 8 stacks up the legal language of ancient marriage: spreading the garment over the woman (the same gesture Ruth asks of Boaz in Ruth 3:9), pledging troth, entering covenant, and the formula, and you became mine. Ezekiel is saying plainly what Hosea, Jeremiah, and Isaiah also say: Ezekiel portrays Sinai in nuptial terms, alongside rather than instead of its covenantal and legal form: not only a treaty between a king and vassals but an espousal. The Hebrew word behind God's covenant fidelity is *hesed*,

steadfast covenant love, love that keeps its vows. This is why the prophets call idolatry adultery rather than breach of contract: a contract exchanges goods, a marriage exchanges persons.

### **The children in verses 20 to 21**

The darkest gift-betrayal in the chapter is real history, not rhetoric. Child sacrifice was practiced in Judah at the high place of Topheth in the valley of Hinnom; Scripture itself attests it (Jeremiah 7:31; 2 Kings 23:10, where Josiah defiles the site). Ezekiel's point lands hard: even the children were gifts of the marriage, my children, God says, and she handed them to idols. Do not linger on this in the room, but do not skip it either; it explains the ferocity of God's grief.

### **Reading the hard imagery in a mixed room**

Verses 35 to 43 use graphic, shaming, violent imagery, and someone in your room may be a survivor of sexual or domestic abuse. Prepare for this. Three anchors: first, the woman is a city, and her real-world referent is Jerusalem's ruling establishment, largely powerful men, who were meant to hear this and feel exposed themselves; the text never licenses violence against women, it indicts the hearers. Second, the punishments transparently describe the coming Babylonian siege, exile's despoiling and the invading army, not a pattern for any marriage. Third, the chapter's stated destination is restoration, not disposal: God ends by binding himself to her forever. Say some version of this out loud before reading the middle section, and give explicit permission for anyone to step out or stay silent. The steelman question tonight takes this difficulty head-on rather than pretending it is not there; do not cut that question, cut elsewhere.

### **The grammar of the ending**

Verses 59 to 63 turn entirely on who acts. Her covenant is broken and stays broken (verse 59). What survives is his remembering, and in biblical idiom God remembering is not nostalgia but covenant action, as when God remembered Noah and the waters receded. Verse 59 says plainly that she broke the covenant, and verse 61 says the gift that follows is not on account of that former covenant; the restoration is grace. And verse 63 ends on a paradox worth slowing down for: shame arrives after forgiveness, not before it, the silenced mouth of a person who has been loved past all self-justification. Question 10 works this seam; it is one of the most pastorally fruitful moments in the whole study.

## **Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment**

### **The prophets' shared grammar**

Ezekiel did not invent the marriage picture. Hosea lived it, commanded to marry and to keep loving an unfaithful wife, and heard God say, I will betroth you to me for ever (Hosea 2:19). Jeremiah remembers the wilderness years as honeymoon, your love as a bride (Jeremiah 2:2). Isaiah says it flatly: your Maker is your husband (Isaiah 54:5). The group will find these themselves in the discovery moment; your job is to know that Ezekiel 16 is the longest and darkest movement of a song the whole prophetic tradition sings.

### **Fulfillment in the Bridegroom**

The New Testament takes up the picture without apology. Jesus calls himself the bridegroom (Mark 2:19-20), and the Baptist calls himself the bridegroom's friend (John 3:29). Ephesians 5:25-27 reads like a deliberate echo of Ezekiel 16:9-14: Christ loved the Church, gave himself up for her, cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, and presents her in splendor. The washing of the foundling bride is fulfilled in baptism; the everlasting covenant of 16:60 is sealed in the words of institution, the new

covenant in my blood (Luke 22:20). And Revelation 19:7-8 completes the arc: the Lamb's bride is granted her fine linen. The bride's beauty is still, at the end of the Bible, entirely gift.

### The stripping reversed

One more thread for you rather than for the handout: in Ezekiel 16 the unfaithful bride is stripped and publicly shamed. In the Gospels the faithful Bridegroom is stripped and publicly shamed in her place. Christians have long read the Passion this way: the punishment the bride earned falls on the Husband. If the hard middle of the chapter has left the room heavy, this is where to point.

## Voices of the Church

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

### St. Augustine, d. 430

*Late have I loved you, O Beauty so ancient and so new: late have I loved you.*

Confessions X.27.

**For the group.** Augustine is the foundling grown up: everything was gift, and he spent years spending the gifts on lesser loves before turning to the Giver. Most people in the room have lived some version of verse 15.

### St. Bernard of Clairvaux, d. 1153

*St. Bernard teaches that of all the movements of the soul, love alone allows the creature to answer its Creator in kind: God does not need our fear or our service, but when God loves, he wants nothing other than to be loved in return. The soul that loves God is not merely a servant or a debtor; she is a bride.*

Sermons on the Song of Songs (the theme is concentrated in Sermon 83). Summary of his teaching, not a direct quotation.

**For the group.** This is why Ezekiel 16 is a marriage and not a contract. God did not rescue the foundling to acquire a servant; he wanted a heart.

### St. John Paul II, d. 2005

*St. John Paul II teaches that the Old Testament's deepest word for God's mercy, hesed, names a love that stays faithful to the covenant even after the human partner has broken it. When Israel betrays the covenant, God's fidelity does not collapse, because in the end God is being faithful to himself, to his own love and his own promises. Mercy, on this reading, is covenant love that refuses to quit.*

Dives in Misericordia, in its treatment of the Old Testament's language for mercy. Summary of his teaching, not a direct quotation.

**For the group.** This is Ezekiel 16:59-63 in a single word. Her covenant is broken; his *hesed* holds. It is also what every penitent leans on in the confessional.

## Catechism Connection

### The Catechism says

**CCC 219.** God's love for Israel is compared to a father's love and is stronger than a mother's; he loves his people more than a bridegroom his beloved, and this love will be victorious over even the worst infidelities. The paragraph's own scriptural anchors include Ezekiel 16.

**CCC 1611.** The prophets saw God's covenant with Israel in the image of exclusive and faithful married love, and by doing so prepared the People of God to understand the unity and indissolubility of marriage.

**CCC 1612.** The nuptial covenant between God and Israel prepared the way for the new and everlasting covenant, in which the Son of God unites to himself the Church as his bride.

**CCC 796.** The unity of Christ and the Church is expressed as bridegroom and bride; Christ loved the Church and gave himself for her to make her his glorious spouse.

## Thread Watch

### Thread Watch

**The heart of stone** (develop). Chapter 16 shows what the sick heart actually does: verse 30 diagnoses a sick heart, and verses 15 to 34 are the case history of its disordered loves. Name the diagnosis tonight but do not prescribe the cure; the transplant comes in session 12. If someone asks how the bride could ever be different, say that is exactly the right question and the book will answer it.

**The everlasting covenant** (plant). Plant this tonight from 16:60. The phrase will resurface in chapter 34 and chapter 37, and it is the bridge from this chapter's ending to the Eucharist. Do not connect it forward yet; just make sure the group notices and holds the phrase.

**The LORD is there** (develop). Lightly. A marriage means dwelling together; a God who re-establishes the marriage forever is a God who intends to live with his bride. One sentence at most, no more, or you will spoil the ending of the book.

**Son of man** (develop). Verse 2 opens with the familiar address: Son of man, make known to Jerusalem her abominations. The mortal man is again made the mouth of God's grief. Touch it in passing.

**Follow the glory** (rest). The glory thread rests tonight; chapter 16 has no throne vision. Do not force it. It returns with power later in the study.

**Sealed guess** (develop). Tonight's ending, an everlasting covenant established by God alone, is quiet evidence for where the book is heading. If someone says their sealed guess just got interesting, smile and move on. Nothing gets opened until session 12.

## Objection Bench

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

If God's covenant love holds no matter what, why does he punish at all? Verses 35 to 43 look like the opposite of unconditional love.

The chapter never presents judgment and love as alternatives. The judgment is the historical fall of Jerusalem. The bride's alliances and idolatries were disastrous in themselves, and Ezekiel says plainly that God judged her through the nations she courted; the text frames even that as belonging to a love story that ends in restoration (16:53-63).

Love that cannot grieve betrayal, and will not let betrayal stand, is not love but indifference. What is unconditional is not the absence of consequences; it is the survival of the covenant on God's side.

Is the chapter saying the people of Jerusalem were literally worse sinners than the people of Sodom?

It is saying something more uncomfortable: judgment is measured against light received. Jerusalem had the covenant, the law, the temple, and the prophets, so her infidelity is graver than the sins of cities that had none of these (16:47-52). Jesus applies the identical logic to towns that saw his miracles and did not repent (Matthew 11:23-24). It is a warning aimed at religious insiders, which means at us.

## Session Goals

1. The group lists God's actions in 16:1-14 and concludes for themselves that everything the bride has is gift.
2. The group identifies verse 8 as wedding language and, through the discovery moment, finds that marriage is the prophets' shared picture of the Sinai covenant.
3. The group traces how every instrument of the bride's infidelity in 16:15-34 is a misused gift, and reframes sin as adultery against a rescuer rather than rule-breaking.
4. The group faces the hard imagery of 16:35-43 honestly through the steelman, and can articulate why the chapter is neither abusive propaganda nor safely ignorable.
5. The group lands on 16:59-63 and sees that the ending belongs entirely to God: a broken covenant answered by an everlasting one, and the strange humble shame of the forgiven.

## Time Note

### Planned for 75 to 90 minutes

Roughly: Win 10 minutes, framed reading of the chapter 15 minutes (use the reading plan; do not read all 63 verses straight through), Build 45 to 50 minutes with the steelman given full room, Send, Live It, and closing prayer 10 to 12 minutes. The chapter is emotionally heavy; protect a beat of silence after verse 63 before you start the ending questions.

If you are running long, cut in this order.

1. Cut the Dig Deeper boxes first (questions 3 and 7).
2. Then fold question 5 into question 4: ask question 4 and simply mention the strange economics of verses 33 to 34 in your answer summary.
3. Then shorten the second discovery (question 9) to Ephesians 5:25-27 only, dropping the Revelation search.
4. If still pressed, compress question 7 to a single reading of verse 49 with a one-line observation. Never cut the steelman (question 6) or the ending questions (8 and 10).

## Part Two

# Discussion Guide

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## Opening Prayer

### Pray together

Father, you found us when we could not lift our own heads, and everything we have, our life, our breath, our baptism, our place at this table tonight, is your gift. Give us honest hearts as we read a hard and beautiful chapter. Where it exposes us, give us courage; where it wounds, be near; and let us hear underneath every verse the voice of a Love that keeps its vows. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

## Win

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

**W1.** Tell us about a gift someone gave you that, looking back, you took for granted at the time.

**W2.** What is the best rescue story you know, from a book, a film, history, or your own life? What makes a rescue story satisfying?

*Both questions are seeding tonight's parable; do not explain that. Just let people talk.*

## Read

### Read aloud

Do not read all 63 verses aloud straight through. Before reading anything, tell the room: this chapter uses graphic and painful imagery to describe the fall of a city, and anyone is free to step out or sit quietly at any point. Then read in four framed movements. Reader one: 16:1-14, the rescue and the wedding. Reader two: 16:15-22 and 16:30-34, the betrayal. The leader alone summarizes 16:35-43 in his or her own words, naming it as a figurative description of the coming siege of Jerusalem, and reads only verse 42 aloud. Reader three: 16:44-52, the three sisters. Then the whole group reads 16:59-63 together, slowly. Leave a few seconds of silence before the first Build question.

## 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 rescue: verses 1 to 14

**1.** Walk back through verses 1 to 14 and list out loud every verb where God is the subject. Then answer this: what does the foundling contribute to her own story?

### ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

The list is long: he passed by, said Live to a newborn left to die, made her grow, spread his garment over her, pledged troth, entered covenant, washed her, anointed her, clothed her, shod her, adorned her with jewelry, crowned her, fed her the finest food, and made her a queen whose fame reached the nations. She contributes nothing but her need. Even her famous beauty is not her own: verse 14 says it was perfect through the splendor which I had bestowed upon you. Before there is any law, any obedience, any performance, there is rescue. The covenant begins in sheer

mercy, and everything the bride will later call hers is actually his.

2. Verse 8 is a wedding: the spread garment, the pledge, the covenant, and the formula, and you became mine. God could have pictured Sinai as a treaty between a great king and his subjects, and other parts of the Old Testament do. Why choose marriage? What does marriage say that a contract cannot?

**ANSWER** *(share after the discussion)*

A contract exchanges goods and services; a marriage exchanges persons. Marriage adds everything a treaty lacks: love, exclusivity, intimacy, fidelity, fruitfulness, a shared home. It also raises the stakes of failure. You breach a contract; you betray a spouse. By choosing marriage, God is telling Israel that what he wants from the covenant is not compliance but a heart, and that what idolatry does to him is not administrative but personal. This one verse quietly reframes every commandment in the Bible: the law is not a fee schedule, it is wedding vows.

### Live discovery

Split into three pairs or groups. First group, look up Hosea 2:19-20. Second group, Jeremiah 2:2. Third group, Isaiah 54:5. Each group reports back: how does your prophet describe the covenant between God and Israel?

**Let them find it.** Hosea 2:19-20; Jeremiah 2:2; Isaiah 54:5

3. Is Ezekiel inventing this marriage picture, or did the prophets already talk this way? Let's find out.

**ANSWER** *(share after the discussion)*

All three speak the same language. Hosea hears God say, I will betroth you to me for ever, with betrothal gifts of righteousness, justice, steadfast love, and mercy. Jeremiah remembers the exodus generation as a honeymoon: the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride. Isaiah says it without any figure at all: your Maker is your husband. Marriage is not Ezekiel's private metaphor; it is the shared grammar of the whole prophetic tradition, and the Church reads it the same way (CCC 1611). Ezekiel 16 is simply the longest and most unflinching telling of the marriage story.

### Dig Deeper

The gesture of verse 8, spreading a garment over the woman, appears one other famous place: Ruth 3:9, where Ruth asks Boaz, her kinsman-redeemer, to spread his skirt over her. A redeemer who covers the vulnerable one and marries her: Boaz is a small portrait of what God does in Ezekiel 16, and of what Christ does for the Church.

## The betrayal: verses 15 to 34

4. Verse 15 pivots the whole chapter: But you trusted in your beauty. Trace verses 16 to 21. What does the bride do with each gift, and where do the materials for her idolatry come from?

**ANSWER** *(share after the discussion)*

Every single instrument of her infidelity is a gift from her husband. The garments become shrines, the gold and silver jewelry become idols, the fine food becomes offerings set before images, and, most terribly, the children of the

marriage are sacrificed to the idols (verses 20 to 21, and this was literal history in the valley of Hinnom). Sin never creates its own materials; it can only take what God gave and aim it away from him. That is the anatomy of every idolatry, ancient or modern: gift turned against Giver. And the root is named in verse 15: she trusted in her beauty, treating what was bestowed as though it were a possession, forgetting verse 14, where the splendor was his.

5. Verses 33 to 34 say something strange: Jerusalem is unlike any prostitute, because she pays her lovers rather than being paid. What is Ezekiel exposing about how sin actually works?

**ANSWER** *(share after the discussion)*

Sin is not even good business. Historically the verses describe Judah paying tribute to Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon, buying protection God had given her freely. But the insight generalizes: the idolater always ends up paying. Sin promises payment and then presents a bill; it costs peace, integrity, relationships, and freedom, and delivers none of what it advertised. Verse 30 diagnoses the engine underneath, a lovesick, wayward heart, a heart whose loves have come loose from their object. The problem of this book is not behavior; it is the heart, and the group has now watched that diagnosis develop for two sessions running.

### The hard verses: 35 to 43

6. We summarized rather than read verses 35 to 43, and I want to face honestly why. Here is the strongest form of an objection many serious readers, including Christian scholars, raise against this chapter.

#### Build then press

**The strongest form of the objection.** This chapter takes a female figure and subjects her to degrading, sexually violent imagery: stripping, public exposure, mob violence, all narrated with apparent approval and placed in the mouth of God. Whatever the author intended, a text like this can shape how its readers imagine God, marriage, and women, and it has sometimes been used to excuse real abuse. A number of scholars conclude that it should not be read in worship at all. Isn't the honest response to admit that Ezekiel 16 belongs to its violent age, and is beneath the God whom Jesus revealed?

**Answering from the text.** Take the objection seriously; it is raised in good faith and the discomfort it names is real. But look at what the text itself is doing. First, the woman is a city, and her real-world referent is Jerusalem's ruling establishment, kings, priests, and elders, mostly powerful men. The original audience was not being handed a weapon against women; they were being told, you are her. The rhetoric is designed to strip the hearers of their self-image, not to strip anyone else. Second, the punishments of verses 35 to 41 are a transparent, figurative description of the siege of 587 BC: the stripping is exile's despoiling, the mob is the Babylonian army, the burned houses are burned houses. This is judgment history in parable form, not a domestic instruction, and no honest reading of the chapter yields permission for any human being to harm another. Third, and decisively, read where the chapter goes: the wronged husband's final word is not disposal but restoration. Verses 60 to 63 bind God to this bride forever. A text written to legitimate abuse does not end with the offended party swearing everlasting covenant faithfulness at his own expense. Having said all that, we should not pretend the imagery becomes comfortable. It stays shocking because Ezekiel chose shock: chapters 12 to 14 showed us a people sedated by comfortable religious lies, and polite rhetoric had already failed. And the canon gives the last word: in the Passion, the Bridegroom himself is the one stripped and publicly shamed, taking the bride's disgrace onto his own body. The chapter is hard. It is not beneath the God of Jesus Christ; read whole, it is on the way to him.

**ANSWER** *(share after the discussion)*

Three anchors for the room. The woman is a city, and her referent is Jerusalem's largely male ruling class, who were meant to feel exposed themselves; the text indicts its hearers rather than licensing anyone's violence. The punishments are the coming siege of 587 BC in figurative dress, not a pattern for human relationships. And the chapter's destination is verses 60 to 63, restoration and everlasting covenant, which no abuse narrative ever reaches. The imagery remains deliberately painful, because polite words had failed; and the gospel completes it, where the faithful Bridegroom is stripped and shamed in the unfaithful bride's place. Honesty requires both halves: we do not sand the chapter down, and we do not read it apart from where it, and the whole Bible, is going.

**The three sisters: verses 44 to 58**

7. God gives Jerusalem two sisters, Samaria and Sodom, and says she has made them look righteous by comparison. Read verse 49 again carefully. According to God himself, what was the guilt of Sodom? Is it what you expected?

**ANSWER** *(share after the discussion)*

Verse 49 names pride, surfeit of food, and prosperous ease, and a refusal to aid the poor and needy. Most readers expect the text to lead with the sin of Genesis 19, and verse 50 does gesture at abominations, but God's opening indictment of Sodom is complacent, comfortable prosperity that ignored the poor. That should land on comfortable religious people, which is Ezekiel's aim: Jerusalem had covenant, temple, and prophets, so her infidelity is measured against far greater light. Judgment scales with what you were given. This is session 5's lesson sharpened: the deadliest sins are the respectable ones.

**Dig Deeper**

Jesus uses exactly this logic in Matthew 11:23-24, telling Capernaum, a town that saw his own miracles, that it will be more tolerable for Sodom on the day of judgment. The measure is light received. Nobody in the Bible hears that warning except religious insiders.

**The ending: verses 59 to 63**

8. We read verses 59 to 63 together. Read verse 60 once more, slowly. After fifty-nine verses of failure, who does every verb belong to? What, exactly, survives the judgment?

**ANSWER** *(share after the discussion)*

Every verb is God's: yet I will remember my covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish with you an everlasting covenant. Verse 59 has just said her covenant is broken and treated as she treated it. So what survives is nothing on her side at all. What survives is his remembering, and when God remembers in Scripture, he acts. Verse 61 makes the grace explicit: the restoration is not on account of her covenant. The marriage survives not because the bride was faithful but because the Husband is; his faithfulness to her is finally his faithfulness to himself and his own love. And notice the upgrade: what was broken was the covenant of her youth; what he will establish is an everlasting covenant. Hold onto that phrase. This book is not done with it.

**Live discovery**

Split the room in half. First half, look up Ephesians 5:25-27 and answer: what does Christ do for his bride, and in what order? Second half, look up Revelation 19:7-8 and answer: where does the bride's wedding garment come from?

**Let them find it.** Ephesians 5:25-27; Revelation 19:7-8

**9.** A bridegroom who washes his bride, clothes her, and makes her beautiful at his own expense: does the New Testament ever pick this picture up?

**ANSWER** *(share after the discussion)*

Ephesians strongly echoes the same sequence: Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, then cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, then presents her to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle. The washing of the foundling in Ezekiel 16:9 is fulfilled in baptism; the splendor is his gift, just as in verse 14. And in Revelation, the Lamb's bride does not buy or weave her own gown: it was granted her to be clothed in fine linen, and the same verse says what the linen is, the righteous deeds of the saints. Hold both halves: the garment is grace given, and grace really does produce a life. From the first page of this story to the last, the bride's beauty begins as gift. The everlasting covenant promised in 16:60 has a name in the New Testament too: at the Last Supper the Bridegroom calls the cup the new covenant in my blood (Luke 22:20). The marriage is re-established at his expense, and the Church calls that expense the cross.

**10.** Verse 63 is one of the strangest verses in the Bible: the bride is silenced by shame when, of all moments, she is forgiven. What kind of shame is this? How is it different from the shame that keeps people away from God?

**ANSWER** *(share after the discussion)*

There are two shames, and they run in opposite directions. The destructive kind says: you are too far gone to come home, so hide. It locks the door from the inside, and it is not from God; the whole chapter refutes it, because the foundling was rescued at her filthiest and re-wed after her worst. The shame of verse 63 arrives after mercy, not instead of it: I forgive you all that you have done, and she has nothing left to say. It is the silence of a person whose self-justifications have been made ridiculous by a love that paid for everything. That shame does not crush the self; it kills the defense attorney inside the self. Anyone who has walked out of a really honest confession knows the feeling: not humiliated, but humbled and quiet and clean. That silence is where next week's chapter will find us.

## Send

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

**S1.** Where in your own life are you most tempted to trust in your beauty, that is, to treat something God gave you as though you had produced it yourself?

**S2.** What would change in your week if you thought of your faith as a marriage rather than as a set of rules, in how you pray, how you fail, and how you come back?

## Live It This Week

### Practices

1. Each evening this week, before you plan anything or scroll anything, name one good thing from your day out loud and say where it actually came from. One sentence is enough. You are practicing verse 14: the splendor was bestowed.
2. Make a concrete plan, day and time, to get to confession within the next two weeks. Bring Ezekiel 16:63 with you and let the absolution be the moment the verse describes: when I forgive you all that you have done.
3. Once this week, read Ezekiel 16:59-63 slowly, alone, and pray one sentence back to God in your own words. If nothing comes, pray verse 60 back to him as it stands.

## Scripture Memory

### Ezekiel 16:60

"yet I will remember my covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish with you an everlasting covenant."

Ezekiel 16:60

## Closing Prayer

### Pray together

Lord God, faithful Husband of an unfaithful people, you found us, you said Live to us, and you have never once stopped keeping vows we have broken. Where we have trusted in our own beauty, forgive us. Where shame has locked us in, unlock us with your mercy. Remember your covenant with us, and bring us at last to the wedding feast of the Lamb, where the bride wears what she is given. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

## Part Three

# Leader Reference Card

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

### Primary text

- **Ezekiel 16:1-14** the rescue and the wedding
- **Ezekiel 16:15-34** the betrayal; leader summarizes 35-43
- **Ezekiel 16:44-52** the three sisters; verse 49 on Sodom
- **Ezekiel 16:59-63** read together; the everlasting covenant

### Discovery passages

- **Hosea 2:19-20** I will betroth you to me for ever
- **Jeremiah 2:2** your love as a bride
- **Isaiah 54:5** your Maker is your husband
- **Ephesians 5:25-27** washed, sanctified, presented in splendor
- **Revelation 19:7-8** the bride's linen is granted her

### Supporting texts

- **Ruth 3:9** the spread garment; Dig Deeper
- **Matthew 11:23-24** Capernaum and Sodom; Dig Deeper
- **Luke 22:20** the new covenant in my blood
- **Jeremiah 7:31 and 2 Kings 23:10** leader background: child sacrifice at Topheth

### Terms

- **\*\*hesed.\*\*** steadfast covenant love; love that keeps its vows
- **\*\*berith.\*\*** covenant; Ezekiel pictures this covenant with nuptial imagery

### Catechism

- **CCC 219.** God loves his people more than a bridegroom his beloved; victorious over infidelity
- **CCC 1611.** the prophets saw the covenant as exclusive, faithful married love
- **CCC 1612.** the nuptial covenant prepared the new and everlasting covenant in Christ
- **CCC 796.** Christ and the Church as bridegroom and bride