

Session 4: A Memorial Forever

Exodus 12:24-27; 13:3-10; Deuteronomy 5:1-4; 1 Corinthians 10:14-22; 11:23-26

Part One: Leader Preparation Guide

Session Overview

Discovery Aim. The group discovers what memorial (*zikaron*) works in the Bible: not recalling a distant event, but each generation, at God's command, speaking and eating as those the event happened to; the Church names this the biblical sense of memorial (CCC 1363). When Jesus commands, do this in remembrance of me, he commands inside that world.

Catholic Touchstone. In the liturgy the memorial is not merely the recollection of past events; the sacrifice Christ offered once for all remains ever present, and the Eucharist makes it present without repeating it (CCC 1363-1367).

What You Need to Know

Last week the group fixed a fact and left it unresolved: God commanded the Passover as a memorial forever. Tonight we resolve it, because the meaning of the word memorial decides almost everything downstream. In modern English a memorial looks backward: a plaque, a statue, a moment of silence. In the Bible, memorial works in the opposite direction. As the Catechism puts it, in the sense of Sacred Scripture the memorial is not merely the recollection of past events (CCC 1363); the commanded feast places each generation, in covenant, inside the story.

Two texts carry the discovery. In Exodus 13:8, every Israelite father is commanded to tell his son that the feast is because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt, words the Law puts in the mouths of men born centuries after the exodus. And in Deuteronomy 5, Moses, on the plains of Moab, tells an Israel now largely made up of the children of those who stood at the mountain that the Lord made the covenant not with our fathers, but with us, who are all of us here alive this day. Later Jewish tradition crystallized this instinct in a line still recited at Passover: in every generation a person must regard himself as though he personally came out of Egypt. That formulation comes from rabbinic sources written down after the New Testament, so we hold it as tradition rather than as first century proof; but it is faithfully drawing out what Exodus 13:8 already says.

With that in hand, the words of institution come into focus. When Jesus says, do this in remembrance of me, the Greek word is *anamnesis*, remembrance; the word is ordinary, and it is the context, a Passover memorial commanded for repetition, that fills it. And St. Paul, our earliest written witness, treats the Supper accordingly: a participation in the body and blood of Christ, a proclaiming of the Lord's death until he comes. Be careful tonight to keep the Catholic balance: the Mass does not repeat Calvary or add to it. The one sacrifice, offered once for all, is made present. Hebrews is not our opponent here; it is our guardrail.

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

Exodus 12:24-27. The rite is commanded forever, and the children's question is built into it: what do you mean by this service? Passover is designed to be asked about, generation after generation.

Exodus 13:3-10. The feast is kept because of what the Lord did for me. The Law scripts first person speech for people who were not in Egypt. The memorial closes the distance.

Deuteronomy 5:1-4. Not with our fathers did the Lord make this covenant, but with us. Moses says this to an assembly largely born since Sinai (he, Joshua, and Caleb stood at the mountain themselves). Covenant time does not work like calendar time.

Fulfillment. Jesus institutes his memorial inside the Passover, using its logic: do this in remembrance of me (Luke 22:19; 1 Corinthians 11:24-25). The Church, keeping that command, stands where Israel stood at its feast:

not looking at the saving event from far away, but present to it, because the Lord of the event makes it present to us.

Voices of the Church

St. Cyprian of Carthage (d. 258)

In summary of his teaching in *Letter 63*, written to correct abuses in celebrating the Eucharist: Cyprian insisted that in the sacrifice we offer, we do what the Lord did, and that the passion of the Lord is the sacrifice we offer. For a bishop of the mid third century, the Supper was not a mere reminder of the Cross; it was the Church's participation in it.

St. Leo the Great (d. 461)

Preaching on the Ascension, Leo gave the Church a sentence she still uses to explain the sacraments: what was visible in our Redeemer has passed over into his mysteries (*Sermon 74*; cited at CCC 1115). Christ's saving deeds are not locked in the past; they now reach us through the sacraments he left.

St. John Paul II (1920-2005)

In summary of his final encyclical, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (n. 11): when the Church celebrates the Eucharist, the memorial of her Lord's death and resurrection, the central event of salvation becomes really present. The sacrifice of the Cross is not repeated and nothing is added to it; rather, it is made present across time. That every generation, like Israel at its feast, thus stands within the night of its deliverance is this study's application of his point.

Catechism Connection

- CCC 1363: in the sense of Sacred Scripture the memorial is not merely the recollection of past events; in the liturgical celebration these events become in a certain way present and real, as Israel understood its Passover.
- CCC 1364-1367: when the Church celebrates the Eucharist, the memorial of Christ's Passover, the sacrifice on the cross remains ever present; it re-presents and applies the one sacrifice, and does not repeat it.
- CCC 1104-1105: the liturgy does not only recall the events that saved us but actualizes them, makes them present.

THREAD WATCH

The command to eat. Tonight's addition: St. Paul's cup of blessing and bread that we break, a participation in the blood and body of Christ (1 Corinthians 10:16). The list now runs from Egypt to Corinth.

Hands off. 1 Corinthians 10 mentions the altar and eating the sacrifices. Do not develop the altar-food logic beyond what the questions ask; a whole session downstream depends on the group discovering the priestly bread themselves.

Sealed guesses. Confirm you now hold everyone's sealed sheet, including latecomers. They open at Session 10.

Session Goals

1. Define biblical memorial from Exodus 13:8 and Deuteronomy 5:1-4, not from modern usage.
2. Distinguish rabbinic tradition (later, held lightly) from the biblical texts it summarizes.
3. Connect do this in remembrance of me to the Passover logic of memorial.
4. Answer the bare-memorial steelman while guarding once for all with the Church.
5. Add 1 Corinthians 10:16 to the command-to-eat thread.

A note on time. If you must cut, cut the second Win question and the Dig Deeper. Do not cut Deuteronomy 5:1-4; it is the hinge of the discovery.

Part Two: Discussion Guide

Opening Prayer

Leader: Father, you are not the God of the dead but of the living, and your mighty works do not fade behind us. Bring us tonight inside the night of deliverance, as you brought every generation of your people, and teach us what your Son meant when he said: do this in remembrance of me. Amen.

Win: Opening the Conversation

1. Is there an object, meal, or yearly ritual in your family that makes someone who has died feel present again? What happens inside you when you keep it?
2. What is the difference between remembering an event and reliving it?

Build: Into the Text

Leader: Last week we saw that Passover was commanded as a memorial forever. Tonight we let the Bible define its own word.

3. Read Exodus 12:24-27. The rite comes with a built-in question from the children. What is the commanded answer, and what tense is it in?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

When your children ask, what do you mean by this service, the father answers: it is the sacrifice of the LORD's Passover, for he passed over the houses of the sons of Israel. The answer retells the night itself. Passover is designed to provoke the question and hand on the event, forever, by doing it.

4. Read Exodus 13:3-10 and slow down at verse 8. Who is commanded to say these words, and what is strange about the phrase, what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Every father in every generation, including men born centuries after the exodus, must say the feast is kept because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt. The Law scripts first person testimony for people who were never in Egypt. Biblical memorial does not commemorate at a distance; it places the celebrating generation inside the saving event.

You may add, clearly labeled: later Jewish tradition, in the rabbinic literature written down after the New Testament, made this explicit in a line still recited at the seder: in every generation a person must regard himself as though he personally came out of Egypt. We hold that as tradition, not as first century evidence, but it is a faithful reading of verse 8.

5. Read Deuteronomy 5:1-4. Moses is speaking on the plains of Moab, forty years later, to an Israel largely made up of the exodus generation's children. What does he claim in verses 2 and 3, and how can it possibly be true?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

He says the Lord made the covenant at Horeb not with our fathers, but with us, who are all of us here alive this day. Taken flatly, it is false; their fathers stood at the mountain. Taken covenantally, it is the whole point: God's covenant is not a past event the young inherit secondhand. Covenantally, each generation stands at the mountain; and Israel's commanded remembrances, the Passover above all, are how that standing was kept alive. The Church makes this reading her own at CCC 1363.

6. Now read 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, St. Paul's account of the Last Supper, the earliest one written down. What does Jesus command, and what does Paul say the Church is doing whenever she obeys it? The Greek word

behind remembrance is *anamnesis*, remembrance, spoken inside the Passover whose memorial logic we have just learned.

ANSWER (*share after the discussion*)

Do this in remembrance of me, over the bread and over the cup which is the new covenant in his blood. Paul concludes: as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. The Supper is a memorial in the Passover sense, commanded, repeated, and effective in the present tense, until the Lord returns.

Notice how much of our study meets in these four verses: covenant (Session 2), the command to eat, and now memorial. Jesus is building with Israel's materials.

7. Read 1 Corinthians 10:14-22. Paul is warning against idol feasts. What does he say the cup of blessing and the bread actually are for those who receive them, and what does his warning assume about sacred meals?

ANSWER (*share after the discussion*)

A participation in the blood of Christ and a participation in the body of Christ. His whole warning only works if eating a sacrifice unites you to the one sacrificed to: those who eat the sacrifices are partners in the altar, and you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. For Paul, the Lord's table is not a symbol dinner; it is real communion, real participation, with real stakes.

The Other Side of the Table

Leader: Read the objection at full strength.

The bare-memorial reading. Do this in remembrance of me means exactly what it says: remember. A memorial keeps a memory alive; it does not repeat the event. No Israelite thought the original deliverance happened again each year at their table (new lambs were indeed slain, but Egypt was left once). And Hebrews could not be clearer: Christ offered himself once for all, and where sins are forgiven there is no longer any offering. Calling the Mass a sacrifice made present either repeats what cannot be repeated or adds to what needs no addition.

8. Strengthen it first: what is the best case that remembrance means simple recollection?

ANSWER (*share after the discussion*)

Good additions: the burden of proof lies on the stronger reading; Jesus spoke at a farewell meal, where remember me is natural; and the once for all of Hebrews (7:27; 9:26; 10:12-18) is the New Testament's own emphasis.

9. Now answer from the texts we read tonight. What does memorial mean in the Bible's own usage, and does the Catholic teaching repeat Calvary?

ANSWER (*share after the discussion*)

First, the word. The objection defines memorial from modern English; tonight we defined it from Exodus 13:8 and Deuteronomy 5:3. In Scripture, a commanded memorial feast places each generation inside the event. Jesus, instituting his memorial inside that very feast, chose a word already full of that meaning.

Second, the objection is right about what it denies, and the Church denies it too. The exodus did not happen again at Israel's tables, and Christ does not die again at ours. The Catholic claim is not repetition but presence: the one sacrifice, offered once for all, is made present and its fruit applied (CCC 1366-1367). Once for all is the reason the Mass is possible: an event of infinite worth need never be repeated, and by God's power it need never recede into the past.

Third, Paul rules out a Supper that does nothing. A bare reminder cannot be a participation in the body and blood of Christ, cannot make partners of those who eat, and cannot be dangerous to receive unworthily, as

Paul warns later in the same letter (1 Corinthians 11:27-32). Proclaiming the Lord's death until he comes is an act with power in the present, not a moment of silence. (The full Catholic account of how the sacrament effects what it signifies rests on more than this one text; but Paul closes the door on less.)

DIG DEEPER: When God Remembers

Biblical remembrance runs in both directions. Read Exodus 2:24 and Leviticus 26:42: when God remembers his covenant, he acts to save. Then read Luke 23:42, the thief's prayer: Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom. He is not asking to be thought about.

Ask: if God's remembering, in texts like Exodus 2:24-25, moves straight into saving action, what is the Church asking God to do every time she keeps the memorial his Son commanded?

Send: Taking It With You

10. Not with our fathers, but with us. Do you approach your faith as an heirloom from previous generations, or as a covenant God is making with you, alive this day? What would change if you approached this Sunday's Mass as the second?

11. Paul says receiving the cup is participation, partnership, communion. Is there any table of demons in your life, anything you commune with, that cannot sit alongside the table of the Lord?

Live It This Week

- Once this week, pray the thief's prayer slowly: Jesus, remember me. Let the biblical meaning carry it.
- At Mass, when the priest says, do this in memory of me, silently add: place me inside this night, as you placed Israel inside theirs.
- Ask a parent or grandparent what the Mass meant to the generation before them, and listen for the covenant being handed to you.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. 1 Corinthians 11:26

Closing Prayer

Together: Lord, you commanded a memorial and gave it power. When we keep it, close the distance: stand us with every generation of your people inside the night of our deliverance, and remember us, until you come. Amen.

Part Three: Leader Reference Card

Passage	Used For
Exodus 12:24-27	The children's question built into the rite; live discovery
Exodus 13:3-10	What the Lord did for me; first person memorial; discovery aim text
Deuteronomy 5:1-4	Not with our fathers but with us; hinge of the session
1 Corinthians 11:23-26	Institution; anamnesis; proclaiming until he comes
1 Corinthians 10:14-22	Participation in body and blood; partners in the altar
Hebrews 7:27; 9:26; 10:12-18	Steelman support: once for all
Exodus 2:24; Leviticus 26:42; Luke 23:42	Dig Deeper: when God remembers, he acts
Luke 22:19	Do this in remembrance of me
1 Corinthians 11:26	Memory verse