

THE WAY, SESSION 10

It Has Seemed Good to the Holy Spirit and to Us

The Acts of the Apostles 14:1-15:41, Presbyters in Every Church, and the Council of Jerusalem

Part 1: Leader Preparation Guide

Session Overview

Discovery Aim. Participants watch the Church face her first doctrinal crisis, a dispute over the necessity of circumcision in which both sides could quote Scripture, and discover how it was actually settled: not by dueling proof texts and not by private judgment, but by a council of the apostles and presbyters, opened decisively by Peter, confirmed from Scripture by James, and issued as a decree binding on churches the council members had never visited, in words no merely human assembly would dare: "it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us." Tonight the Peter First thread, counted silently since Session 1, is finally resolved, and a question left open on the Mount of Olives in Session 1 receives its answer from the prophet Amos.

Catholic Touchstone. The living Magisterium. Acts 15 is the charter scene of everything the Church means by teaching authority: a question Scripture alone had not settled, brought to the apostles and presbyters gathered in council; debate; Peter's word ending the debate; a decision promulgated to all the churches and received as the Spirit's own judgment (CCC 85-87, 890-891). The delivery receipt is in the next chapter: Paul and Timothy delivered "the decisions (dogmata) which had been reached by the apostles and elders," and the churches were strengthened and grew (16:4-5). A secondary touchstone arrives quietly in 14:23: the missionaries "appointed elders (presbyterous) in every church, with prayer and fasting," the office from which the English word priest descends, installed as standard equipment in every new community. The succession discovered in Session 1 is now shipping with every church plant.

What You Need to Know

Chapter 14 carries the first journey to its finish, and its center is Lystra. Watch the whiplash: Paul heals a man crippled from birth (deliberately echoing Peter's Beautiful Gate miracle, Luke pairing his two heroes again), the pagan crowd decides Barnabas is Zeus and Paul is Hermes and drags out oxen and garlands for sacrifice, the apostles tear their garments in horror, and shortly afterward the same crowd, turned by agitators, stones Paul and drags him out of the city, supposing him dead (14:19). Deified by the crowd, stoned by the crowd. And do not miss who is doing the being-stoned: the man who guarded the coats at Stephen's stoning now receives Stephen's death and survives it, rising and walking straight back into the city. If your group remembers Session 5's assignment, the moment will land with weight. Paul's summary on the return leg becomes the study's realism verse: "through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God" (14:22).

Then 14:23, one verse your group must not blink past: in every church, elders appointed, with prayer and fasting, the same solemn conferral as Acts 6 and 13. The word is *presbyteroi*, and the anglicized descent runs *presbyteros* to *prester* to *priest*. Whatever else a first missionary journey planted, it planted solemnly conferred office, with prayer and fasting, in every single congregation before moving on. The Church has never known a churchmanship without it.

Chapter 15 is the summit of the book's ecclesiology, and you should teach it as such. Get the crisis precise: men from Judea are teaching, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved" (15:1). This is not a squabble over customs; it is a rival gospel with excellent proof texts, and question 5's steelman will arm the Judaizers properly, because honesty requires it: Genesis 17 calls circumcision an *everlasting* covenant, and the Gentile God-fearers in the Old Testament were expected to be circumcised to eat the Passover (Exodus 12:48). The Judaizers were not villains twirling mustaches; they were Bible readers with the stronger-looking verses. That is precisely what makes the council's method the lesson.

Walk the council's anatomy with care (15:6-29): the apostles and the elders gather; there is *much debate*, the Church does not fear argument; then Peter rises, recalls that God chose "that by my mouth" the Gentiles should first hear (the Cornelius keys of Session 8, cashed at full value), declares that hearts are cleansed by faith and

that no unbearable yoke may be laid on the disciples, "and all the assembly kept silence" (15:12). Peter's word stills the assembly (15:12); what follows, Barnabas and Paul's testimony and James's confirming judgment, builds on it rather than reopening it. James, the local bishop of Jerusalem, seconds from Scripture, citing Amos 9:11-12, and proposes the pastoral provisions; the whole church concurs; and the letter goes out with the sentence that gives this session its name. Note the letter's reach: addressed to churches in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia, communities most council members had never seen, and delivered as binding (16:4). A local meeting does not bind strangers; a council of the apostolic Church does.

The Amos citation is this session's buried treasure and the payoff of the study's very first night. James quotes the promise that God will rebuild "the dwelling (tent) of David, which has fallen," *so that the rest of men may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by my name*. In Session 1, the disciples asked, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?", and we noticed Jesus corrected the timetable, not the hope. Here is the answer, ten chapters later, from the council floor: the kingdom is being restored, the fallen tent of David is being rebuilt, and the proof is Gentiles streaming in to seek the Lord, exactly as Amos said the rebuilt Davidic kingdom would draw them. The Church of the apostles is the restored kingdom of David, and the Gentile mission is not a detour from Israel's hope but its cash value. An honesty note for your preparation: James quotes Amos in its Greek (Septuagint) form, whose wording ("the rest of men may seek") differs from the Hebrew ("they may possess the remnant of Edom"); the apostles freely cited the Greek Old Testament as Scripture, a small window into how the written word lives inside the believing community.

Finally, do not sanitize 15:36-41: Paul and Barnabas, fresh from saving the Church's unity, fall into a contention so sharp over John Mark that they separate. The Dig Deeper handles it honestly, and the epilogue is grace itself: two mission teams sail instead of one, Mark is restored (Paul himself will one day write, "he is very useful in serving me," 2 Timothy 4:11), and the deserter of Perga becomes, by the Church's constant tradition, the Evangelist Mark. God writes straight with crooked saints.

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

Genesis 17:9-14. Circumcision commanded to Abraham as "an everlasting covenant," with the uncircumcised man cut off from his people. The Judaizers' charter text, and it must be given its full weight for the council's resolution to mean anything.

Exodus 12:48. The sojourner who would keep the Passover must be circumcised first: the Old Testament's own on-ramp for Gentiles ran through circumcision. The Judaizers were arguing precedent.

Amos 9:11-12. The fallen tent of David rebuilt, that the rest of men and all the Gentiles called by God's name may seek the Lord. James's clincher: the in-gathering of uncircumcised Gentiles is not an anomaly to be regularized but the promised sign that David's kingdom is being restored in the Messiah. Session 1's kingdom question finds its answer here.

Leviticus 17-18. On an influential reading, the background of the council's four abstentions (idol offerings, blood, things strangled, unchastity): the holiness laws that Israel's own Torah applied to the *stranger who sojourns among you*. On that reading the council did not invent a compromise; it reached for Torah's own category for Gentiles dwelling amid Israel, making shared tables possible between Jewish and Gentile believers. The Dig Deeper unpacks it.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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St. John Chrysostom, Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles (4th century)

Chrysostom lingers on the order of the council: there was much questioning, for the Church does not fear

debate, and then Peter rose first, as ever, and after he had spoken from what God wrought through him, all the multitude kept silence. James, says Chrysostom, held the rule of the church at Jerusalem and so speaks last and frames the decree; each office kept its place, and the Spirit spoke through their harmony.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies*, Book III (2nd century)

St. Irenaeus, arguing that the true faith is found where the apostles' teaching is preserved, recalls the council at Jerusalem and its letter, and points to the apostles' own decision not to burden the Gentiles with the law as evidence that the apostles preached one Gospel with one voice. For Irenaeus the council stands as proof that Christ's Church can discern the truth together and declare it, which is why he can appeal to it against those who claim the apostles taught something other than what the churches hold.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Vincent of Lérins, *Commonitorium*, 23 (5th century)

St. Vincent taught that the Church's understanding of doctrine truly grows, but as a body grows, the same in every part though larger and stronger, always in the same sense and the same meaning. The council of Jerusalem fits his principle like a glove: nothing of the Gospel was changed when the Gentiles were freed from circumcision; rather the Church, guided by the Spirit, came to see what the Gospel had contained from the beginning, and declared it so that the faithful might hold it with certainty.

Catechism Connection

CCC 85-87. The task of authentically interpreting the Word of God has been entrusted to the living teaching office of the Church alone, exercised in the name of Jesus Christ: the Magisterium, which is not superior to the Word but serves it, teaching only what has been handed on.

CCC 890-891. The pastors of the Church enjoy, in service of the faithful, the charism of infallibility in matters of faith and morals under defined conditions; the supreme exercise belongs to the Pope and to ecumenical councils united with him. Acts 15 is not yet an ecumenical council in the Catechism's technical sense, but the Church has always seen in it the seed: Peter and the gathered apostolic college deciding with the Holy Spirit.

CCC 1536 and 1554, in passing. The ordained priesthood: the word presbyter, planted in every church in Acts 14:23, remains the name of the second degree of Holy Orders, and the office travels wherever the Church does.

Thread Watch

THREAD WATCH

Thread 3, Peter First: RESOLUTION TONIGHT. Since Session 1 you have kept a silent tally. Tonight, after question 6, spend it all at once. Walk the group back through it: who stood up to fill Judas's office (1:15), who preached Pentecost (2:14), who worked the first miracle (3:6), who answered the Sanhedrin (4:8), who exercised the first discipline (5:3), whose shadow healed (5:15), who opened Samaria with John (8:14), who raised Tabitha (9:40), who opened the Gentile door (10), who carried its ratification (11), and who now rises at the council so that the whole assembly falls silent (15:7-12). Then name what the tally is: not a claim asserted but a pattern displayed. Luke never argues for Petrine primacy; he simply reports the Church, and in the Church, at every hinge, Peter is first, and communion holds around him. And savor Peter's last recorded words in Acts: "we believe that we shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will" (15:11). The

first Pope's farewell line in this book is salvation by grace. Tell your group to remember that sentence the next time anyone says Rome and grace are strangers.

Thread 2, The Map. The first journey completes its loop and the council clears the road: the Gospel may now run to the end of the earth unencumbered. The great obstacle to circle three was never distance; it was the question this council settled.

Thread 1, The Name and Thread 4, The Breaking of the Bread. Both resting. The bread thread wakes soon; be ready.

Payoff registered tonight: Session 1's kingdom question (1:6) is answered by James's Amos citation. Make sure the group feels the arc close; it is the longest payoff in the study so far.

Session Goals

1. Participants can recount Lystra, including the Stephen-reversal of Paul's stoning, and state the realism of 14:22.
2. Participants can explain the significance of presbyters appointed in every church with prayer and fasting.
3. Participants can state the Judaizer position at full scriptural strength and explain why proof-texting alone could not settle the crisis.
4. Participants can walk the anatomy of the council, Peter's decisive word, James's confirmation, the binding decree, and articulate what the Church means by the living Magisterium.
5. Participants discover the Amos payoff of Session 1's kingdom question, and can explain the Church as the restored kingdom of David.

Time Note

Planned for 90 minutes: Win 15, Build 55, Send 15, prayer and memory verse 5. If running long, cut in this order: (1) the second Win question, (2) the Dig Deeper on the four abstentions, (3) compress question 2 (Lystra's whiplash) into a two minute retelling. Do not cut the steelman, the council anatomy, the Peter First resolution, or the Amos payoff; tonight is the study's ecclesiological summit and these four are the summit ridge.

Part 2: Discussion Guide

Opening Prayer

Come, Holy Spirit, who presided at Jerusalem when the apostles and elders gathered, and taught your Church to say, it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us. Preside at this table tonight. Give us the council's honesty in debate, its silence before Peter's witness, its obedience to Scripture, and its joy in the decree. Guard your Church's shepherds, and make us docile without being dull, and questioning without being proud. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Win (15 minutes)

1. Tell us about a disagreement in a family, parish, or workplace where both sides had genuinely good arguments. How was it finally settled, or was it?
2. Have you ever been wildly overpraised and harshly criticized by the same people? What did the whiplash teach you about crowds, and about yourself?

Build (55 minutes)

1. Read Acts 14:8-18, the scene at Lystra. What miracle opens it, what do the crowds conclude, and how do Paul and Barnabas react? Notice whose earlier miracle this one deliberately mirrors.

ANSWER, SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

A man crippled from birth, who has never walked, hears Paul, is seen to have faith, and at the command "stand upright on your feet" springs up and walks: Luke has given Paul a twin of Peter's Beautiful Gate healing from Session 3, pairing his two heroes stroke for stroke. The pagan crowd reaches for the only categories it has: Barnabas is Zeus, Paul is Hermes, and the priest of Zeus arrives with oxen and garlands for sacrifice. The apostles tear their garments, the Jewish gesture of horror at blasphemy, and cry, "We also are men, of like nature with you," turning the moment into a sermon on the living God who made heaven and earth. Like Peter lifting Cornelius from his knees in Session 8, the pattern holds: the true apostle refuses worship on reflex. Any minister who enjoys the pedestal has already fallen off it.

2. Read Acts 14:19-22. What do the same crowds do to Paul shortly afterward, and what makes this particular suffering, for this particular man, one of the most striking reversals in the New Testament? Recall Session 5. Then weigh Paul's summary sentence in verse 22.

ANSWER, SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Agitators turn the crowd, and the man they garlanded as Hermes is stoned and dragged out of the city, presumed dead. Now the reversal: Paul is the man who stood at Stephen's stoning holding the coats, consenting. He now receives the very death he once stood consenting over, minding the coats, and survives it, and his response is to get up and walk back into the city, then continue the mission the next day. The coat-minder has become the stoned man, and Stephen's prayer keeps compounding interest. Paul's own summary, spoken while strengthening the new disciples with fresh bruises on him: "through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God." No prosperity gospel survives contact with Acts 14. The kingdom's road is real, and it is a road, which is why the movement is called the Way and not the Shortcut.

3. Read Acts 14:23, one verse, slowly. What do Paul and Barnabas install in every church before leaving, by what means, and why should the vocabulary interest a Catholic? Connect the gesture to what we have seen twice before.

ANSWER, SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

"And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting, they committed them to the Lord." Elders is presbyterous, presbyters, the very word that wore down through the centuries into the English word priest, and the office is conferred the way we have twice watched office conferred: the solemnity of prayer and fasting that accompanied the Seven in Session 4 and the sending in Session 9. Before the first missionary journey ends, solemnly conferred pastoral office is standard equipment in every single congregation planted, however young, however remote. Church without presbyters was not a primitive stage later corrupted into clergy; it is a thing the apostles refused to leave behind them even once. The succession we discovered on the study's first night now ships with every church plant, and it still does: every parish you have ever entered came furnished the same way.

4. Read Acts 15:1-5. State the crisis precisely: who arrives at Antioch, what exactly do they teach, and why is verse 1 not a quarrel about customs but a rival gospel? How does the church at Antioch respond procedurally, and what does that response already teach?

ANSWER, SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Men from Judea teach the brethren: "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." The stakes are total: this adds a condition to salvation itself, which makes it a different gospel, and Paul and Barnabas engage them in no small dissension. And then the procedure, which is half the lesson: Antioch does not settle it locally by vote, and Paul, apostle by direct revelation, does not settle it by fiat. They are sent up to Jerusalem, "to the apostles and the elders about this question." When the Gospel itself is disputed, the instinct of the apostolic Church is to go to the apostolic center. The very road to the council is already a doctrine of the Church.

Build the steelman, and tonight we build it for the losing side, because honesty demands it. The Judaizers had Scripture, and not weak Scripture. God told Abraham that circumcision is "an everlasting covenant" in your flesh, and that the uncircumcised male "shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant" (Genesis 17:13-14). Everlasting: God's own word. The Torah's own on-ramp for Gentiles who wished to join Israel's worship ran through circumcision (Exodus 12:48). Jesus was circumcised, circumcised His whole life, and said not an iota would pass from the law (Matthew 5:18). Abraham believed *and* was circumcised; why should Gentile believers be exempt from what Scripture never revokes? Notice what you cannot do with this argument: you cannot defeat it by slapping a counter-verse on the table, because the Judaizers will slap Genesis 17 right back, and the word everlasting does not blink. Both sides have texts. Sit in that deadlock for a moment, honestly, and then ask the only question that matters: how does the apostolic Church actually break it?

5. Now read the council's anatomy: Acts 15:6-12. Who gathers, what happens first, who rises to speak, what does he claim and conclude, and what is the assembly's response when he finishes? Listen especially for which past event Peter cashes in, and for his final sentence.

ANSWER, SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

The apostles and the elders gather, and there is *much debate*: the Church does not fear argument, and the council is no rubber stamp. Then Peter rises, and cashes the check written in Session 8: "in the early days God

made choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe," God bearing witness by giving them the Spirit, cleansing their hearts by faith. Why then tempt God by yoking the disciples with what "neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear"? And his last recorded sentence in the entire book of Acts: "But we believe that we shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will." And all the assembly kept silence. The debate is over when Peter finishes; what follows, testimony and James's judgment, confirms rather than contests. The first Pope's farewell words in Acts are salvation by grace, a sentence worth keeping loaded for anyone who claims Rome and grace are strangers.

6. Live discovery, and the longest payoff in our study. Read Acts 15:13-18, James's speech, and then turn to Amos 9:11-12. What does the prophet promise will be rebuilt, and with what result among the nations? Now reach all the way back to our first session: what did the disciples ask Jesus on the Mount of Olives in Acts 1:6, and what have we just learned is the answer?

ANSWER, SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

James confirms Peter ("Simeon has related how God first visited the Gentiles") and seconds him from the prophets: God will rebuild "the dwelling of David, which has fallen," the tent of David, the Davidic kingdom, *so that the rest of men may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by my name*. On the study's first night the disciples asked, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?", and we noticed Jesus corrected their timetable but never denied their hope. Here, ten chapters later, is the answer from the council floor: the kingdom of David is being restored, and the proof is standing in the room: Gentiles streaming in to seek the Lord, exactly the sign Amos attached to the rebuilt tent. The Church of the apostles, with the son of David enthroned (Session 1's Daniel 7) and His officers seated in council, is the restored Davidic kingdom in seed and beginning (CCC 541, 669), present now and awaiting its fullness, and the Gentile mission is not a detour from Israel's hope but its arrival. One honest footnote worthy of this table: James quotes Amos in its Greek Septuagint form, whose wording differs from the Hebrew, and the apostles received and used that Greek Old Testament as Scripture: a small standing witness that the Bible has always lived inside the believing community that canonizes, translates, and reads it.

7. Read Acts 15:22-29, the decree itself, and 16:4-5, its delivery. Weigh the famous sentence of verse 28 word by word. What is the council claiming about its own decision, whom does the decision bind, and what happens in the churches that receive it?

ANSWER, SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

"It has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things." No merely human meeting talks like that. The council yokes its own judgment to the Spirit's in a single clause, and then binds churches its members had never visited: the letter goes to Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia, and Paul delivers "the decisions (the Greek is *dogmata*) which had been reached by the apostles and elders" to towns the council never saw, "for observance" (16:4). And the churches, so ordered, are not crushed but *strengthened in the faith, and increased in numbers daily* (16:5). This is the charter of what the Church calls the living Magisterium (CCC 85-87): when the deposit of faith is disputed, the Church of the apostles can gather, discern, and declare, and her declaration carries the Spirit's own authority, which is why an honest reader must face the council's method. Scripture was quoted at Jerusalem, but Scripture alone had not settled the question, because both sides had texts; what settled it was Scripture read inside the apostolic Church, by the apostolic office, with the Spirit's assistance. *Sola scriptura's* true test case is not a verse; it is this chapter, and the chapter answers with a council. And an honest concession travels with the claim: councils since have sometimes been messy, contentious, and slow, exactly like this one, much debate and all. The promise was never tidiness. It was truth.

8. One more honest press, because a thoughtful Protestant will raise it: "But James settled it with Scripture, with Amos; so Scripture was the final authority after all." Test that reading against the order of events and against what the decree actually contains.

ANSWER, SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Look at the order: the debate was ended by Peter's testimony of God's acts, before James spoke a word; the assembly's silence falls at 15:12, and James, rendering the presiding local judgment ("my judgment is," 15:19), confirms from Scripture a verdict already reached and gives it pastoral form, which is exactly the Catholic grammar: the Magisterium never contradicts Scripture and always demonstrates from it, but the *judgment* of which reading is true belongs to the apostolic office, since Scripture was on the table for both sides all along, and Genesis 17 did not stop saying everlasting. Look also at what the decree contains: four practical abstentions (idol food, blood, things strangled, unchastity) found in no prophecy and derived by pastoral judgment from Torah's laws for sojourners, provisions the council had authority to impose and the later Church had authority to adapt. A text cannot do that; only a living authority can. The council honored Scripture supremely, by settling what it means, and that act of settling is precisely the thing sola scriptura cannot supply and Acts 15 supplies in front of witnesses.

9. Read Acts 15:36-41 without flinching. What do Paul and Barnabas quarrel over, how badly does it end, and what does God quietly do with the wreckage? Trace John Mark's story to its end, with 2 Timothy 4:11 in hand.

ANSWER, SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Planning the second journey, Barnabas wants to bring John Mark; Paul refuses to take the man who deserted them at Perga; and there arose "a sharp contention, so that they separated," the son of encouragement sailing for Cyprus with Mark, Paul choosing Silas for the mainland. Luke reports it without varnish: two saints, fresh from saving the Church's doctrinal unity, fail to preserve their own partnership. And God's arithmetic with the wreckage: two mission teams now sail instead of one; Barnabas's patience remakes Mark, so thoroughly that years later Paul himself writes from prison, "Get Mark and bring him with you; for he is very useful in serving me" (2 Timothy 4:11); and the deserter of Perga becomes, by early tradition (Papias, preserved in Eusebius), the Evangelist Mark, whose Gospel echoes Peter's preaching. Sanctity does not exempt saints from conflict, and conflict does not exempt God from providence. Somebody at this table needs to know both halves of that sentence, and needs a Barnabas's patience, or needs to receive it.

DIG DEEPER: THE FOUR ABSTENTIONS

Why idol offerings, blood, things strangled, and unchastity? By an influential reading, these track the holiness laws that Leviticus 17-18 applied to "the stranger who sojourns among you": the Torah's own minimum for Gentiles living amid Israel. The council's genius is pastoral: Gentiles are not bound to circumcision and the law, and Jewish and Gentile believers must still be able to share one table, so the Gentiles are asked to forgo the practices most viscerally intolerable to their Jewish brethren, most of them tied to pagan temple culture. The provisions about food were pastoral discipline for that hour rather than perpetual law, and their lapse was already being discussed in St. Augustine's day; the prohibition of unchastity was moral and permanent. The council knew the difference, which is itself a lesson in how the Church reads her own decrees.

DIG DEEPER: WHIPLASH AT LYSTRA, AND A BOY WHO WATCHED

One more Lystra note for the file: on the return visit in the next chapter, Paul will meet a young disciple from this very town named Timothy (16:1), whose grandmother Lois and mother Eunice believed (2 Timothy 1:5). Which means the boy who became Paul's beloved son in the faith may well have first encountered the apostle as the man who was stoned in his hometown and got back up. Sometimes the most eloquent sermon a town ever hears is simply watching what a Christian does after the stones.

Send (15 minutes)

1. The council's method was debate without fear, then docility without resentment. Which half is harder for you: honest argument inside the Church, or genuine obedience once she has spoken? Where in your life right now does the harder half apply?
2. Barnabas staked his ministry, twice, on men others had written off, Saul in Session 7 and Mark tonight, and both bets became authors of the New Testament. Who is the written-off person in your world, and what would a Barnabas-sized investment in them look like?

Live It This Week

Two assignments from the council floor. First, pray for the successors: every day this week, pray by name for the Holy Father and for your own bishop, the living heirs of the men who gathered in Acts 15, asking for them exactly what the council displayed: courage in debate, fidelity to the deposit, and the Spirit's assistance in judgment. Second, read one conciliar page: find Dei Verbum, the Second Vatican Council's constitution on divine revelation, and read just paragraph 10, three minutes at most, where Scripture, Tradition, and Magisterium are described as so linked that none stands without the others. You have now watched that paragraph happen live in Acts 15; go see how the Church herself describes what you watched. Bring one sentence of reaction next week.

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, you promised the Spirit would guide your Church into all truth, and at Jerusalem you kept the promise in front of witnesses. Keep it still. Give your Church councils when she needs them, shepherds worth their silence, and children docile enough to be strengthened by her decrees and honest enough to bring her their hardest questions. Rebuild the tent of David in every heart at this table, and gather the nations in. Amen.

Scripture Memory Verse

"For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things." (Acts 15:28)

Part 3: Leader Reference Card

Every passage used in Session 10, in order of appearance. Flag these before the session.

PRIMARY TEXT

1. Acts 14:8-18 (Lystra: Zeus and Hermes)
2. Acts 14:19-23 (the stoning; tribulations; presbyters in every church)
3. Acts 15:1-5 (the crisis and the road to Jerusalem)
4. Acts 15:6-12 (much debate; Peter; the silence)
5. Acts 15:13-21 (James and Amos)
6. Acts 15:22-29 (the decree)
7. Acts 15:36-41 (the sharp contention)
8. Acts 16:4-5 (the dogmata delivered; the churches grow)

OLD TESTAMENT DISCOVERY PASSAGES

9. Genesis 17:9-14 (the everlasting covenant, steelman)
10. Exodus 12:48 (circumcision and the Passover sojourner, steelman)
11. Amos 9:11-12 (the tent of David rebuilt)
12. Leviticus 17-18 (the sojourner laws behind the abstentions)

NEW TESTAMENT CROSS REFERENCES

13. Matthew 5:18 (not an iota, steelman)
14. Acts 1:6 (the kingdom question, payoff)
15. Acts 3:1-10 (Peter's twin miracle); Acts 7:58 (the coats, reversal)
16. Acts 16:1; 2 Timothy 1:5; 2 Timothy 4:11 (Timothy; Mark restored)

CHURCH DOCUMENTS

17. CCC 85-87; CCC 890-891; CCC 1536, 1554; Dei Verbum 10