

Session 4: The Queen Mother

The woman at the king's right hand

LEADER PREPARATION GUIDE

SESSION OVERVIEW

Discovery Aim. From the courts of the kingdom of Judah, the group discovers the office of the queen mother, the *gebirah*, and sees why, if Jesus reigns on David's throne, his mother holds a real and intercessory place in his kingdom.

Catholic Touchstone. Mary exalted as Queen over all things (CCC 966); the 'mother of my Lord' as royal court language (Luke 1:43).

What You Need to Know

In the kingdom of Judah, the woman beside the throne was not the king's wife but his mother. Kings had many wives; each had only one mother, and she held a recognized office: the *gebirah*, the 'great lady.' The books of Kings quietly testify to the office's importance by naming the queen mother in the royal formula for nearly every king of Judah ('his mother's name was...'), a detail the northern kingdom's records do not share. Brant Pitre builds the queenship chapter of *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of Mary* on this office, and tonight the group excavates it from the texts themselves.

The group read 1 Kings 1 and 2 at home, and the contrast between the two chapters is the session's engine. In chapter 1, Bathsheba enters King David's presence and bows to the ground before her husband (1 Kings 1:16, 31). In chapter 2, her son Solomon is king: he rises to meet her, bows to *her*, and has a throne set for her at his right hand (1 Kings 2:19). Same woman, one chapter apart. What changed is not Bathsheba but her office: the wife of the old king has become the mother of the new one.

Then comes the verse that must be handled with complete honesty, because it is both the session's treasure and its trap. Solomon says: 'Make your request, my mother; for I will not refuse you' (1 Kings 2:20), the plainest description of the queen mother's intercessory role in Scripture. And then Solomon refuses her. Adonijah's request, which Bathsheba carries, is a veiled grab at the throne, and Solomon sees through it and executes him. Do not hide this from the group; hand it to them, because the steelman will use it, and because the honest answer is better than the airbrushed text: the type is flawed exactly where every type is flawed, and its failure points forward to a king who is wiser than Solomon and a mother whose requests are never self-serving. At Cana, four sessions of patience will pay this verse off.

The New Testament connection runs through a phrase the group has already discovered. Elizabeth's greeting, 'the mother of my Lord' (Luke 1:43), carries the ring of court language: in the royal psalms and the courts of Judah, 'my lord' is how one addresses the king (Psalm 110:1, 'The LORD says to my lord'; cf. 1 Kings 1:17). Read against Gabriel's announcement of David's throne, Elizabeth's Spirit-filled greeting hails Mary not merely as a relative but as the mother of the King, what Judah's grammar called the *gebirah*, for Gabriel has just said of Mary's son: 'the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever' (Luke 1:32–33). If the Davidic kingdom is truly restored in Jesus, the office of the king's mother is restored with it. (Kyrios in Luke also bears divine weight, as Session 3 showed; the court reading is a layer of the text, not a replacement for Luke's larger claims.)

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

The gebirah in the record of Judah. Beyond the accession formulas, the office surfaces at moments of crisis: King Asa deposes his grandmother Maacah 'from being queen mother' because of her idolatry (1 Kings 15:13), which proves it was an office one could hold and lose. Jeremiah addresses the crown's fall to both of its heads: 'Say to the king and the queen mother: Take a lowly seat, for your beautiful crown has come down from your head' (Jeremiah 13:18). When Jerusalem falls, King Jehoiachin surrenders together with his mother (2 Kings 24:12), and she goes into exile beside him (Jeremiah 29:2).

The queen at the right hand. Psalm 45, a royal wedding psalm the New Testament applies to the Messiah (Hebrews 1:8-9 quotes vv. 6-7 of Christ), places a royal woman in gold of Ophir standing at the king's right hand (Psalm 45:9). Interpreters debate whether she is the bride or the queen mother; what the verse establishes either way is that in David's court the right hand of the king is a woman's place of honor, the very place Solomon seated his mother.

A mother's counsel. Proverbs 31, the Bible's famous portrait of the valiant woman, presents itself as 'the words of King Lemuel... which his mother taught him' (Proverbs 31:1). Lemuel is otherwise unknown, possibly not even a king of Judah, so this is not direct evidence for the gebirah office; what it attests is the wider ancient pattern the office assumes: a king's mother as his teacher and counselor.

Voices of the Church

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: VEN. POPE PIUS XII

In the encyclical establishing the feast of Mary's Queenship, Pius XII teaches, in substance, that Mary is rightly hailed as Queen because she is the mother of the King whose kingdom has no end, and that her queenship is wholly derived from and subordinate to the royal dignity of her Son.

Ad Caeli Reginam (1954), summary

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: THE CHURCH'S ANCIENT ANTIPHONS

For roughly a millennium the Church has ended her day singing to Mary as queen: *Salve Regina*, Hail, holy Queen, Mother of mercy; and in Eastertide, *Regina Caeli*, Queen of heaven, rejoice. As with the Ark, the *lex orandi* carried the doctrine in song long before the theology manuals footnoted it.

Salve Regina; Regina Caeli (liturgical tradition)

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. ALPHONSUS LIGUORI

St. Alphonsus teaches, in substance, that Mary's queenship is a queenship of mercy: her royal office in her Son's kingdom is precisely to receive petitions and carry them to the throne, and he urges boundless confidence that the King hears the causes his mother pleads. This is the confidence-language of devotion and trust, not a mechanical guarantee of outcomes.

The Glories of Mary, Part I (commentary on the *Salve Regina*), esp. chs. 1 and 5 (summary)

Catechism Connection

CCC 966, drawing on Lumen Gentium 59, teaches that when her earthly course was finished Mary was 'exalted by the Lord as Queen over all things,' so that she might be the more fully conformed to her Son, the Lord of lords. Note carefully how the paragraph roots the queenship in conformity to Christ: she is queen because and only because he is King.

CCC 559 is worth a leader's glance: Jesus enters Jerusalem acclaimed as Son of David, yet he had always refused the crowds' attempts to make him king, and he conquers the Daughter of Zion neither by ruse nor by violence but by humility. The gebirah typology inherits that same transposition: an office of earthly courts, purified and elevated in the kingdom of the crucified King. Applications of tonight's texts to Marian intercession beyond what the paragraphs state should be marked as our extension.

Thread Watch

THREAD WATCH (LEADER ONLY)

Thread D ('the unanswered request') plants tonight: 1 Kings 2:20 promises 'I will not refuse you,' and the request is refused. Leave the tension standing and say so plainly: 'The type limps. Hold on to that limp until we watch this office work in the kingdom of God.' It resolves at Session 8, Cana, where the King's mother makes a request that is neither refused nor self-serving, and the sealed guesses open the same night.

Thread A ('the Woman'): fully dormant tonight. If anyone connects queenship to Revelation 12's crowned woman, receive it as before: 'Sit on it. It is coming.'

Continuity to name aloud: Elizabeth's 'mother of my Lord' was discovered in Session 3 as an Ark echo (2 Samuel 6:9). Tonight the same phrase turns out to be court language as well. Good typology is like that: the texts keep paying.

Session Goals

1. Group can describe the gebirah office from the evidence of Kings and Jeremiah, with resonances in Psalm 45 and Proverbs 31, having found the key texts themselves.
2. Group has confronted the Bathsheba problem honestly and can articulate why a flawed type strengthens rather than weakens the typology.
3. Group can explain Luke 1:43 in light of royal court language and Luke 1:32–33 as the restoration of David's throne.
4. Thread D planted; queenship understood as wholly derivative of Christ's kingship.

Timed Plan (75–90 minutes)

Segment	Minutes
Welcome and opening prayer	5
Win questions	10
Build: two audiences with Bathsheba (1 Kings 1 and 2)	20
Build: live discovery, the gebirah across the Old Testament	20
Build: 'mother of my Lord' and the restored throne; Voices	10
Build: steelman and answer	15
Send, Live It, memory verse, closing prayer	10

If short on time: Cut the Proverbs 31 segment of the discovery (mention it in one leader sentence) and trim the Voices to two, holding St. Alphonsus for the Take-Home. Do not trim the Bathsheba problem; unhandled, it becomes next week's doubt.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Opening Prayer

Leader prays: Father, you promised David a son whose throne would stand for ever, and when the kingdom lay in ruins you kept the promise anyway, in a way no court historian imagined. Tonight, open to us the courts of Judah so we can recognize the court of your Son. Through Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns for ever. Amen.

Win: Opening Questions

1. In your family or workplace, who is the person people quietly go through when they need something from the person actually in charge? How did that arrangement come to be?
2. What is the difference between influence that comes from an office and influence that comes from a relationship? Which lasts longer?

Build: Into the Text

1. You read 1 Kings 1 and 2 at home. Compare Bathsheba's two audiences: before David (1:15–16, 31) and before Solomon (2:19). Read both aloud. What changed, and why?

Read aloud: 1 Kings 1:15–16, 31; 1 Kings 2:19

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Before David, Bathsheba bows to the ground; she is one wife among many approaching her husband the king. Before Solomon, the king rises, bows to her, and seats her on a throne at his right hand.

The woman is the same; the office is new. In Judah the king's mother, the *gebirah*, held recognized honor precisely because the king had one mother and many wives. Sonship, not marriage, defined the queenship.

2. Read 1 Kings 2:20, Solomon's words to his mother, and then keep reading through verse 25. What does Solomon promise, and what does he actually do? Sit in the discomfort before answering.

Read aloud: 1 Kings 2:20–25

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

He promises: 'Make your request, my mother; for I will not refuse you.' Then he refuses the request, because Adonijah's petition for Abishag is a disguised claim on the throne (compare 2 Samuel 16:21–22, where taking the king's woman means taking the kingdom), and Solomon answers it with a death sentence.

Do not resolve this tonight; name it. The verse shows us the shape of the office: the queen mother is the kingdom's intercessor, the one who brings requests. And the story shows us the limits of every Old Testament type: a fallible king, a manipulated mother, a corrupted request. File the tension. This study will return to it when we watch a sinless King receive a request from a mother whose petitions carry no self-interest at all.

LIVE DISCOVERY: HUNTING THE GREAT LADY

Send the group hunting in three parties, giving only these clues: (1) 'Psalm 45 is a wedding song for the king that Hebrews 1 applies to Christ. Find the woman in it and note where she stands.' (2) 'Jeremiah 13:18 is a two-line oracle addressed to two people. Who are they, and what do they both wear?' (3)

'Second Kings 24:12 records a king's surrender. Who surrenders with him?'

Findings to surface: the queen stands at the king's right hand in gold of Ophir (Psalm 45:9), the same position of honor where Solomon seated his mother (whether the psalm's woman is bride or mother, the geography of honor is the point); Jeremiah addresses 'the king and the queen mother' together and both crowns fall (Jeremiah 13:18); Jehoiachin goes into Babylonian captivity with his mother at his side (2 Kings 24:12).

Then ask the room to state the conclusion themselves: in David's kingdom, the crown next to the king's belonged to his mother, in honor and in catastrophe alike.

3. Now the New Testament. Read Luke 1:31–33 and Luke 1:43. What does Gabriel say Jesus receives, and given tonight's Old Testament, what is Elizabeth really saying when she calls Mary 'the mother of my Lord'?

Read aloud: Luke 1:31–33; Luke 1:43

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Gabriel announces the restoration of the Davidic monarchy: 'the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David... and of his kingdom there will be no end.' This is coronation language, not metaphor.

In the royal court, 'my lord' addresses the king (Psalm 110:1). Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, is greeting the mother of her King, which in Judah's court grammar can be heard as greeting the gebirah. The first person other than Mary herself to recognize the restored kingdom recognizes, in the same breath, the restored office of the king's mother.

Name the continuity: in Session 3 this same verse echoed David before the Ark. Luke has loaded one greeting with both offices: the bearer of the Presence, and the mother of the King.

DIG DEEPER: THE MOTHER IN THE ACCESSION FORMULAS

For groups that want the pattern's full weight: skim the accession notices of Judah's kings and watch the refrain, 'His mother's name was...' (for example 1 Kings 14:21; 15:2, 10; 2 Kings 12:1; 14:2; 15:2, 33; 18:2; 21:1, 19; 22:1; 23:31, 36; 24:8, 18).

The historians of Judah considered the queen mother part of the reign's official identity. Ask: what does a bureaucracy's paperwork reveal about what a kingdom takes for granted?

STEELMAN: PRESENT AT FULL STRENGTH

Present with full force: 'This is the weakest typology yet. The queen mother was a Near Eastern court custom, not a divine institution; the one time Scripture shows her interceding, the request is refused and the petitioner executed, which on your logic should prove Marian intercession fails. Asa deposed his grandmother from the office, and Jeremiah shows its crown in the dust. Above all, the New Testament never once calls Mary a queen. You have taken Israel's palace protocol and turned it into dogma. And notice the pastoral danger: teaching people to route requests through the mother implies the King himself is unapproachable, which contradicts Hebrews 4:16, that we may draw near the throne of grace with confidence.'

Ask the group: which sentence lands hardest?

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Concede the true parts. The gebirah was a court office, it could be abused and lost, and Bathsheba's recorded intercession fails. The New Testament nowhere writes the sentence 'Mary is queen.' All granted.

Now weigh what the concessions actually cost. Types are supposed to limp; that is what makes them types and not the fulfillment. David sinned, Solomon fell, Jonah sulked, yet each remains a divinely intended pattern of Christ. Bathsheba's failed petition marks the exact spot where the type awaits a better king and a better mother: a king who cannot be deceived and a mother who asks nothing for herself. Keep that IOU; the Gospel cashes it at a wedding in Cana.

On 'the New Testament never calls her queen': it does something more Jewish than a title. It announces the restoration of David's throne to Mary's son (Luke 1:32–33), has a Spirit-filled Israelite greet her in the court grammar of that throne (Luke 1:43), and, later in this study, will show us a woman in heaven crowned with twelve stars, the mother of the child who is to rule all the nations (Revelation 12:1-5). The office comes with the kingdom; a first-century Jew did not need it spelled out.

On Hebrews 4:16, agree completely, and turn the point: the gebirah never replaced access to the king; petitioners still approached Solomon directly, and every subject of Christ approaches him directly in prayer and sacrament. The queen mother is not a tollbooth on the road to the throne; she is evidence of how thoroughly the King honors his own fourth commandment. Her intercession is his generosity, not his gatekeeping, and it is exercised entirely under him (CCC 966: queen so as to be more fully conformed to her Son).

Send: Taking It Out

1. Solomon rose and bowed to his mother in front of the whole court. What would it look like, concretely, for you to honor your own mother or father this week in a way others could see?
2. Where do you need an advocate right now, someone to carry a request you are struggling to carry alone, and whom could you ask?

Live It This Week

- Pray the Salve Regina slowly once a day this week; if it is new to you, keep the Take-Home sheet by your bed.
- Do one deliberate, visible act of honor toward your mother or father, living or deceased (a call, a letter, a Mass offered, a grave visited).
- Bring one intention each day to Christ the King through his mother's hands, and note at week's end what changed in you, whatever else changed.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

"at your right hand stands the queen in gold of Ophir."

Psalms 45:9 (RSV2CE)

Closing Prayer

Leader prays: Lord Jesus Christ, Son of David and Son of Mary, your kingdom is not from this world, yet you did not despise the offices of David's house; you filled them. Teach us to honor whom you honor, to ask boldly at your throne of grace, and to trust the advocate you gave us from the Cross. You live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

Close together: Hail, holy Queen, Mother of mercy, our life, our sweetness, and our hope...

LEADER REFERENCE CARD

Every passage used in this session, in order:

- 1 Kings 1:15–16, 31 (Bathsheba bows before David)
- 1 Kings 2:19 (Solomon enthrones his mother at his right hand)
- 1 Kings 2:20–25 (the promised and refused request; Thread D plant)
- 2 Samuel 16:21–22 (leader background: taking the king's woman)
- Psalm 45:9 (the queen at the right hand; live discovery)
- Jeremiah 13:18 (the king and the queen mother; live discovery)
- 2 Kings 24:12 (the king surrenders with his mother; live discovery)
- 1 Kings 15:13 (Maacah deposed from the office)
- Proverbs 31:1 (the queen mother as royal counselor)
- Hebrews 1:8–9 (Psalm 45 applied to Christ)
- Luke 1:31–33 (the throne of David restored)
- Luke 1:43; Psalm 110:1 ('mother of my Lord' as court language)
- Hebrews 4:16 (steelman: direct access to the throne of grace)
- Judah's accession formulas (Dig Deeper list)
- Psalm 45:9 (memory verse)