

SESSION SIX

The Banquet Foretold

Proverbs 9:1-6; Isaiah 25:6-9; Isaiah 55:1-3; Malachi 1:11

PART ONE · LEADER PREPARATION GUIDE

Session Overview

Discovery Aim. Participants hear the Old Testament lean forward: Wisdom builds her house and mixes her wine, Isaiah promises a feast on the mountain where death itself is swallowed up, an invitation goes out to buy without money, and Malachi foresees a pure offering presented to God among all nations, everywhere, continually. The Old Testament closes waiting for a meal.

Catholic Touchstone. Through the prophets, God formed his people in the hope of a new and everlasting covenant destined for all nations (CCC 64), and when Scripture reaches for images of final joy, it sets a wedding feast (CCC 1027). Tonight the group discovers that the hope of Israel, at its brightest, looks like a table.

What You Need to Know

Tonight is the hinge of the study. Six weeks of Old Testament rail come together as promise, and next week the group crosses into the Gospels. Your job tonight is to let the promises ring at full volume without touching their fulfillment. If the group leaves hungry and buzzing, the hinge has done its work.

Proverbs 9:1-6 personifies Wisdom as a great lady who has built her house with seven pillars, slaughtered her beasts, mixed her wine, and set her table. She sends her maids to the highest places in town with an invitation addressed, remarkably, to the simple and to him who is without sense: "Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed. Leave simpleness, and live." Bread and wine again, now as a feast whose eating gives life and understanding. Note the direction of the invitation: not the qualified but the needy.

Isaiah 25:6-9 is the summit text of the night. On this mountain, the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of fat things, of wine on the lees well refined. The mountain is Zion; the surrounding chapters place it there explicitly. The guest list is all peoples, all nations; the veil over the nations is destroyed. And at this feast, God swallows up death for ever and wipes tears from all faces. The verb deserves its own moment with the group: death, which entered the world through eating, is itself swallowed. The swallower is swallowed. Eating is healed by eating.

"Wine on the lees well refined" means wine aged on its sediment and then clarified: the strongest, richest, most patiently made wine there is. The menu detail is a theology: God serves the best he has, long prepared.

Isaiah 55:1-3 turns the banquet into an open invitation with an impossible economics: "he who has no money, come, buy and eat... without money and without price." And the diagnostic question of verse 2

belongs to every generation, including this one: why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? There is bread that satisfies and bread that does not, and the true food is given, not purchased. The invitation ends in covenant: hear, that your soul may live, and I will make with you an everlasting covenant.

Malachi writes after the exile, to a priesthood offering blemished, weary sacrifices, and through him God says something staggering (Malachi 1:11): "From the rising of the sun to its setting my name is great among the nations, and in every place incense is offered to my name, and a pure offering." Read it slowly with the group and let its geography sink in: a pure offering, to Israel's God, in every place, among the gentiles, from sunrise to sunset. Temple sacrifice could only ever happen in one place. Whatever Malachi foresees, it is an offering that can be made everywhere on earth at once, continually. Leave the question ringing: what kind of offering could that possibly be?

An honest hedge to carry: Israel's hope had many strands, a king, a new exodus, a new covenant, the nations streaming to Zion, and we are deliberately tracing one strand, the meal. Say so if the group asks. The claim is not that the banquet is the only shape of Israel's hope, but that it is a real, load-bearing strand that runs from the garden to the last page, and that we have the receipts.

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

Every thread this study has planted is audible tonight if you listen: bread and wine on Wisdom's table and in Melchizedek's hands; a feast on the mountain where the Passover's city stands; death, which came by a meal, dying at a meal; a pure offering everywhere echoing a priesthood that cannot be confined to one line or one place. Say none of this. The group's own ears are the instrument this session is tuning.

The mountain of Isaiah 25 is Zion: Salem, the city of Melchizedek, the destination of the Passover pilgrimage, the site of the temple with its golden table. Scripture's geography has been converging for six weeks, and tonight it names the summit.

By the first century, Israel's hope of the age to come was commonly voiced as a banquet: reclining at table in the kingdom. When the group reaches the Gospels next week, they will find that expectation alive and hungry in the crowds. Tonight plants the expectation in them.

Voices of the Church

St. Cyprian of Carthage

Letter 63, to Caecilius, 3rd century

St. Cyprian returns to this study for a second time, because his famous letter reads tonight's text too: he heard in Proverbs 9, the house built, the beasts slaughtered, the wine mixed, the table furnished, the simple summoned, a portrait of what the Lord would one day set before the nations. Wisdom's feast, for Cyprian, was a promise with a date he already knew.

St. Cyril of Alexandria

Commentary on Isaiah, 5th century

St. Cyril read the feast of rich food and aged wine on the mountain as God's promise of the messianic age: every nation summoned to one table, the shroud of ignorance torn away, and death itself, humanity's oldest guest, destroyed in the presence of the diners. The prophet, he taught, was describing a joy that only God could cater.

St. Justin Martyr

Dialogue with Trypho, 2nd century

St. Justin, debating the learned Jew Trypho within living memory of the apostles, pointed to Malachi's prophecy of a pure offering presented to God among the nations in every place, and testified that he could already watch it coming true: wherever believers gathered, from sunrise to sunset around the world, the offering Malachi foresaw was being made. What form it took, this study will let Scripture show in its own time.

Catechism Connection

- **CCC 64.** Through the prophets, God forms his people in the hope of salvation, in the expectation of a new and everlasting covenant intended for all, a hope carried by the poor and humble of the LORD.
- **CCC 1027.** Scripture speaks of the mystery of blessed communion with God in images: life, light, peace, a wedding feast, the wine of the kingdom, the Father's house. When God pictures our final joy for us, he sets a table.

Thread Watch

THREAD WATCH · LEADER ONLY

This is the hinge session. Every thread is audible; none may be named. Bread and wine (Thread B), the healing of eating (Thread A), the mountain geography, the pure offering everywhere. If the group starts connecting on their own, and a good group will, bless the instinct and bank the fire: next week we cross into the Gospels, and everything you are hearing is about to stand up and walk.

Guard the fulfillment texts absolutely. No Gospel previews, no liturgy connections, no matter how loudly Malachi 1:11 begs for them. St. Justin's voice box goes as far as tonight goes, and it deliberately stops short of the form of the offering.

Sealed guess mid-study check. Quietly remind the group at the end of the night that their sealed guesses from week one still exist and should stay sealed and findable. Three weeks from now they open. Do not say more than that.

Session Goals

1. Hear Wisdom's invitation: a built house, mixed wine, a set table, and a guest list of the simple, with life as the menu.

2. Discover Isaiah's mountain feast: the best food and wine God has, for all peoples, at which death itself is swallowed up for ever.
3. Feel the impossible economics of Isaiah 55 and the impossible geography of Malachi 1:11: food without money, and a pure offering in every place among the nations.
4. Leave with the Old Testament's posture in your bones: Israel closes her Scriptures waiting for a meal.

Time Note · One Hour Forty-Five with a Shared Meal

0:00 to 0:30, Table. Grace before the meal, eat together without hurry, and let the two Win questions surface naturally over food. Do not turn the table into a classroom.

0:30 to 1:20, Build. Fifty unhurried minutes. Bibles open at the table or moved to the living room, whichever your space favors. The Dig Deeper box is part of the flow, not an extra, and the live discovery moments deserve real hunt time.

1:20 to 1:35, Send. Two questions, no answer boxes, room for silence.

1:35 to 1:45, Live It This Week, memory verse, closing prayer.

If the night truly runs long: Merge the two Wisdom questions into one movement: read Proverbs 9:1-6 once and ask what Wisdom has prepared and who is on the guest list. Treat cuts as emergencies, not expectations; at this length the session should breathe on its own.

AT THE TABLE

The richest table of the study so far. Something aged, something abundant: good cheese, good bread, the best wine or drink your group does. Tonight the menu is Isaiah's, and it should taste like a promise.

PART TWO · DISCUSSION GUIDE

Opening Prayer · Grace Before the Meal

Lord of hosts, you have promised a feast of rich food and well-aged wine, on your mountain, for all peoples. Bless this table as a small rehearsal, and keep us hungry for the feast you are preparing. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Win · At the Table (30 minutes with the meal)

1. What is the best invitation you have ever received? What made receiving it feel the way it felt?
2. If you were throwing the feast of your life, no budget, what one dish and one drink have to be on the table?

Leader note: these are dinner conversation, not an agenda item. Ask them while people are still eating, and let the meal take its time.

Build · Opening the Word (50 minutes)

1. Read Proverbs 9:1-6. Wisdom is pictured as a great lady preparing something. List everything she has done, and notice what is on her table.

ANSWER · SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

She has built her house and hewn its seven pillars, slaughtered her beasts, mixed her wine, and set her table. Then she sends her maids to call from the highest places in town. The preparation is total: this hostess has spared nothing.

And on the table: bread and wine. "Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed." Six weeks in, the group should say it before you do: Scripture keeps setting the same two things on its most important tables.

2. Who is invited to Wisdom's feast, and on what terms? What do the guests get by eating?

ANSWER · SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

The invitation is addressed to the simple and to him who is without sense. Not the qualified, not the accomplished: the needy. The only credential for Wisdom's table is knowing you need what is served there.

And the eating does something: "Leave simpleness, and live, and walk in the way of insight." This is food that changes the eater, a meal that gives life and understanding. Keep that idea: in Scripture's deepest places, you become what the table gives you.

3. Live discovery: find Isaiah 25:6-9 and read it aloud slowly. Where is this feast, what is on the menu, and who is on the guest list?

Give the reading real weight; have one person read while the rest track the menu and the guest list.

ANSWER · SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

On this mountain, the LORD of hosts will make a feast: fat things full of marrow, wine on the lees well refined, which means wine aged patiently on its sediment and then clarified, the richest and strongest wine there is. God is serving the best he has, long prepared.

And the guest list detonates every border in the ancient world: for all peoples. The veil that is spread over all nations is destroyed on this mountain. Israel's God is throwing a feast, and the whole human race is invited.

4. Which mountain? Scan the surrounding verses (Isaiah 24:23 and 25:10) and name it. Why should this study care about the address?

ANSWER · SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Zion. The LORD of hosts will reign on Mount Zion, and his hand will rest on this mountain. The feast is set in Jerusalem.

Which means the geography this study has been tracking for six weeks just converged: Salem, where a priest-king blessed over bread and wine; the city where the Passover lambs would be eaten; the hill where the golden table stood with bread before God's face. And now, the address of the feast that ends death. Scripture is not being casual with its map.

5. Read Isaiah 25:7-8 again and stay on the verb. What does God do to death at this feast, and why is that particular verb almost unbearably fitting?

ANSWER · SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

He will swallow up death for ever. The Hebrew verb is the verb of gulping down, the same family used when the earth swallows Korah, and when the song of Exodus 15:12 says the earth swallowed Pharaoh's drowned army. At God's feast, death is on the menu, as the thing consumed.

Feel the symmetry the study has earned: death entered the world through a meal, through eyes that saw, a hand that took, a mouth that ate. And death dies at a meal. The swallower is swallowed. Eating, the wound of Eden, becomes the site of Eden's healing. If your group sits in silence for a moment here, let them.

6. Read Isaiah 55:1-3. What does this feast cost, and what is the diagnostic question of verse 2 accusing us of? Where does the invitation end up in verse 3?

ANSWER · SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

It costs nothing and it cannot be bought: "he who has no money, come, buy and eat... without money and without price." The economics are impossible on purpose. The true food is given, never purchased, and the only way to afford it is to admit you cannot.

Verse 2 is the diagnosis of every restless heart: why do you spend your money for that which is not

bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? There is bread that satisfies and bread that does not, and most of a human life can be spent buying the second kind. And the invitation lands in covenant: hear, that your soul may live; an everlasting covenant. This meal, whatever it is, comes with God binding himself to the eaters for ever.

DIG DEEPER

Isaiah 55:3 ties the everlasting covenant to "my steadfast, sure love for David." The feast and the King converge: the table God promises is somehow a Davidic table, hosted under the oath of Psalm 110 that David's lord would be a priest for ever. And the wine detail of Isaiah 25:6 rewards patience: wine on the lees is wine that took years to become itself. Israel's hope aged the same way. By the first century, the age to come was commonly pictured exactly as these texts taught Israel to picture it: as reclining at a banquet.

7. Now the strangest promise of the night. Read Malachi 1:6-14. What is wrong with the offerings God is rejecting, and what exactly does verse 11 foresee? What is geographically impossible about it, on the old rules?

ANSWER · SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

The priests of Malachi's day are offering blind, lame, sick, and stolen animals, sacrifices they themselves call a weariness, and God says he would rather someone shut the temple doors than continue the insult. Into that failure he speaks verse 11: from the rising of the sun to its setting, my name is great among the nations, and in every place incense is offered to my name, and a pure offering.

On the old rules this is impossible. Sacrifice to Israel's God happens in one place, Jerusalem, by one tribe's priesthood. Malachi foresees a pure offering made everywhere on earth, among the gentiles, continually, from sunrise to sunset. Whatever this offering is, it cannot be temple-bound animal sacrifice. The Old Testament's last prophets leave Israel with a riddle: what offering could be pure, universal, and perpetual? Leave it ringing. Do not answer it tonight.

8. Assemble six weeks. A garden where eating meant communion. A priest-king with bread and wine. A lamb that must be eaten. Bread from heaven. Bread before the Face, and a thanksgiving you eat. And now: Wisdom's table, a mountain feast that swallows death, food without money, a pure offering in every place. What is the Old Testament waiting for?

ANSWER · SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Hold the humility the question deserves: Israel's hope had many strands, a king, a new exodus, a new covenant, and we have been tracing one of them. But the strand is real, it is load-bearing, and tonight it spoke in full voice: the Old Testament is waiting for a meal. A feast God himself will host, on Zion, for all peoples, that gives life, costs nothing, kills death, and is somehow offered everywhere for ever.

Next week we cross into the Gospels. Watch what the story does with everything you are now

carrying. Bring your appetite.

Send · Taking It With You (15 minutes)

- 1.** Isaiah 55:2 asks why we spend our labor on what does not satisfy. Name the "bread that is not bread" you have been buying lately. What would it mean to stop paying for it?
- 2.** Wisdom invites the simple, and Isaiah invites those with no money. What would you have to admit you lack in order to accept an invitation like that? Is anything in you resisting the admission?

No answer boxes here. Ask, wait, and let silence do some of the work.

Live It This Week

- 1.** Fast from one "bread that does not satisfy" this week, one purchase, scroll, or habit you use to fill the Isaiah 55:2 hunger, and each time you feel its absence, pray one line: Lord, prepare me for your feast.
- 2.** Extend one impossible-economics invitation this week: feed or treat someone who cannot pay you back, and refuse repayment if offered.
- 3.** Read Isaiah 25:6-9 once each morning. By week's end, know verse 8 by heart without trying.

Scripture Memory Verse

"He will swallow up death for ever, and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces."

Isaiah 25:8

Closing Prayer

Lord of hosts, you have built the house, mixed the wine, and set the table, and you have promised to swallow death itself at your feast. Give us the honesty of the poor, the hunger of the simple, and a place at your mountain. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

PART THREE · LEADER REFERENCE CARD

Passages in order of use

- Proverbs 9:1-6 · Wisdom's house, mixed wine, and guest list
- Isaiah 25:6-9 · live discovery: the feast on the mountain; death swallowed up
- Isaiah 24:23; 25:10 · the mountain named: Zion
- Isaiah 55:1-3 · without money and without price; everlasting covenant
- Malachi 1:6-14 · the failed offerings and the pure offering in every place
- Isaiah 25:8 · memory verse

Leader only · do not distribute or read aloud

- Isaiah 55:3 with Psalm 110:4 · the Davidic covenant and the priest for ever (Dig Deeper)
- Psalm 22:26-29 · the afflicted shall eat and be satisfied; all nations worship (background, same pattern)
- Luke 13:29; 14:15 · banquet expectation alive in the Gospels (hold)
- Didache 14 with Malachi 1:11 · the early Church's reading (hold entirely; Session Eleven territory)