

# What Do You Seek?

## Session 6: The Door

*A study for seekers, and for the friends who walk with them*

### Part One: Leader Preparation Guide

#### Session Overview

**Discovery Aim:** The group discovers that the question this study is named for is the first sentence Jesus speaks in John's Gospel, traces for themselves the pattern that ran under every encounter, hears the assembled Gospel whole, and meets the verse the study has been quietly built on: He stands at the door and knocks, and the handle is on the inside.

**Catholic Touchstone:** God, infinitely perfect and blessed in Himself, in a plan of sheer goodness, calls man to seek Him, to know Him, to love Him with all his strength (CCC 1).

#### The Knock and the Door: Piece Six

**This week's piece, in one sentence:** The whole message is an invitation: He knocks and will not force the door; the yes is truly yours to give, and even that yes is His grace at work in your freedom.

Tonight the frame is finally named. Revelation 3:20 is read aloud for the first time, the threads are resolved by the group's own tracing, the sealed sheets are opened in private silence, and each person leaves with a response card nobody collects. Prepare the room accordingly: end the meal a little earlier, keep the lights warm, and rehearse the silences. This session is the reason the study exists; do not rush a minute of it.

#### What You Need to Know

John 1:35-42: the Baptist points, two of his disciples begin to follow, and then they reveal your group has been walking toward for six weeks: "Jesus turned, and saw them following, and said to them, 'What do you seek?'" (Jn 1:38). These are the first words Jesus speaks in the Gospel of John. The evangelist gives Him no sermon as an opener, no miracle, no title: a question, aimed at the seeking heart. The study's title was His question before it was ours.

Their answer is a location, not a doctrine: "Rabbi, where are you staying?" They do not want information about Him; they want to be where He is, which is what every ache in Session 1 was blindly asking for. His reply is the whole method of this study in three words: "Come and see" (Jn 1:39). And John adds the small, human timestamp, "it was about the tenth hour": the narrator remembers the exact hour of the afternoon his life changed. Eyewitness texture, worth a sentence in session.

The arc-trace is the session's centerpiece: the group, not the leader, walks back through all six encounters and answers one question per scene: who moved first? Jesus asked the woman for a drink. Forgiveness arrived before anyone in Capernaum requested it. Jesus raised the identity question Himself. On Calvary the initiative was positional: God arranged to die next to the thief. Nicodemus came at night, drawn by signs that had knocked first. And tonight Jesus turns and speaks first. Six scenes, one pattern, discovered rather than announced.

Then, and only then, Revelation 3:20 is read: “Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.” Name what the group has already seen: the blocked door in Capernaum, gates and keys at Caesarea Philippi, the garden gate reopened from a cross, the night threshold, and now the door itself, which He knocks at rather than opens; the handle, as the old preacher’s image puts it, is on the inside. Note also what the verse promises on the far side of the door: a shared meal, which this group has been eating for six weeks. The image was never an abstraction; it was the room they were sitting in. Leader background: in its original setting this verse is addressed to the church in Laodicea, believers gone lukewarm, and its own wording then widens to each hearer: if any one hears my voice and opens the door. The invitation to a drifted church and the invitation to a seeker are the same invitation, but know the context in case someone reads the whole chapter and asks.

The private response: sealed sheets are opened in silence, each person alone with what they wrote in Week 1. Then the response card, distributed face down, filled out or not filled out, taken home by its owner, collected by no one. The card’s options are honest paths, including “not yet.” Freedom is not a concession this study makes reluctantly at the end; it has been the second half of the frame since the first knock. A love that was compelled would not be love, and the Church itself teaches that the response of faith must be free.

## Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

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**Psalms 27:8.** “You have said, ‘Seek my face.’ My heart says to you, ‘Your face, LORD, do I seek.’” The final live discovery: even our seeking turns out to be a response; He said seek first. The psalm is the arc-trace in two lines.

**Genesis 3:9.** The first question God asks fallen humanity: “Where are you?” Leader background, and a quiet symmetry: the Bible’s first question to hiders, and John’s first question to seekers, are both God moving first.

## Voices of the Church

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**St. Augustine** *Confessions, Book 10*

“Late have I loved you, O Beauty ever ancient, ever new; late have I loved you!... You called, you shouted, and you broke through my deafness.” The study’s first voice returns as its last: the restless heart of Session 1, writing from the far side of the opened door, and noting who called first.

**Pope Benedict XVI** *Deus Caritas Est, 1*

“Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.” Six encounters later, the group can verify the claim from the text: it was never a system on offer. It was Him.

**St. John Paul II** *Homily at the inauguration of his pontificate, 1978*

“Be not afraid. Open wide the doors for Christ.” The sentence at the heart of a new pope’s inaugural homily is the sentence this study has been building toward: the knock is His; the door is yours.

## Catechism Connection

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- **CCC 1:** God calls man to seek Him, to know Him, to love Him: the study’s aim stated in the Catechism’s opening paragraph.

- **CCC 2002:** recalled from last week: God's free initiative demands man's free response.
- **CCC 160:** the response of faith must be free; nobody is to be forced to embrace the faith against their will. The response card is this paragraph in cardstock.

## Hosting Your Seeker Friend

### This Week's Coaching

Tonight's discipline is restraint. Do not watch your friend during the sealed-sheet silence; do not ask, tonight or ever, what they wrote or what they marked on the card. After tonight the program ends and the friendship continues, and the friendship is the delivery vehicle now: one coffee within two weeks, no agenda. If they want to keep going, tell them plainly what exists: this group's next study, the deep-dive sessions on the shelf, a Mass they can attend as a guest with you beside them, a pastor who will answer questions without a signup sheet. Offer with open hands. And if their card says not yet, believe them, stay their friend, and remember the man in Session 5 who took three chapters: the Gospel keeps a place for the slow yes.

## Thread Watch (leader only): Resolution Night

- **The First Word:** resolved by the group in the arc-trace. Your only job is to ask the question, scene by scene, and stay out of the way.
- **Doors and Thresholds:** resolved when Revelation 3:20 is read. Name the five thresholds gently; let the room make the connections aloud.
- **The Sealed Sheet:** opened in private silence, never shared, never referenced afterward. The meal, the two rules, and the uncollected card are the study's final arguments: this whole thing was true to its word.

## Session Goals

1. Land the reveal: the study's question is Jesus' first sentence in John's Gospel, and it was aimed at seekers.
2. Run the arc-trace so the group discovers the initiative pattern themselves, scene by scene.
3. Read Revelation 3:20 for the first time and let the door thread resolve in the room.
4. Present Piece Six: the assembled Gospel as a single invitation with the handle on the inside.
5. Hold the private response: sealed sheets in silence, response cards distributed and never collected.

## Time Note

Budget differently tonight: Win stays short, Build is the arc-trace, and the final twenty minutes belong to the assembled Gospel, the silence, and the cards. If anything must go, cut the Dig Deeper; never compress the silence. End at the table, on purpose, with dessert.

## Part Two: Discussion Guide

### Opening

*Leader prays alone, briefly.*

“God, six weeks ago we put a question on the table. Tonight, before we answer anything, let us find out whose question it was. Amen.”

### Win

The last voice from the top is the oldest one. A celebrated professor of rhetoric on the imperial fast track ran the full experiment: pleasure, ambition, applause, philosophy, and found every cistern cracked. He wrote the conclusion as a prayer, and the Church put it near the front of her Catechism: “you have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.” St. Augustine finished the sentence that Brady, Wallace, and Persson were each halfway through. Session 1's quote on a page has spent six weeks becoming a lab report.

1. Six weeks ago you named your version of the third Super Bowl ring. Has anything shifted in how you read your own restlessness since then?
2. Augustine ran the whole experiment before he turned around. Is there anything left on your list you still suspect might finally be enough?

### Build: The Reveal and the Arc-Trace

**Read John 1:35-42 aloud.**

1. Verse 38 contains a piece of information this study has been saving for six weeks: these are the first words Jesus speaks in the entire Gospel of John. Sit with that. Why would John make this question the opening line of his whole account?
2. Look at what the two disciples answer. He asks what they seek; they answer with, of all things, an address: “where are you staying?” What are they actually asking for?

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

John opens Jesus' public voice with a question to seekers because that is who the Gospel is for and what God has been doing since Eden, where His first question to hiding humanity was “Where are you?” (Gen 3:9). And the disciples' answer is the secret of the whole study: they do not request information or a doctrine; they want to be where He is. Every ache inventoried in Session 1 was this request, misaddressed. His answer is three words and it is the method of everything we have done here: “Come and see.” Then John, writing decades later, still remembers it was about four in the afternoon. You do not remember the hour of an idea; you remember the hour you met someone.

**The Arc-Trace.** *Leader: walk the group back through all six encounters, one question per scene: who moved first? Let them answer from memory; supply nothing unless truly stuck.*

3. The woman at the well. The paralytic in Capernaum. Caesarea Philippi. The thief on Calvary. Nicodemus at night. The two disciples tonight. Scene by scene: who moved first?

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

He asked her for a drink. Forgiveness arrived before anyone in the room requested it. He raised the identity question Himself. On Calvary the thief spoke first, but the nearness was arranged: God had positioned Himself to die within whispering distance of that man. Nicodemus walked through the night, drawn by signs that had already knocked. And tonight, Jesus turned and spoke first. Six scenes, one

pattern, no exceptions: in every encounter in this study, the initiative was His. We never once caught Him waiting to be found first.

4. One more discovery, the study's last. If the initiative was always His, what does that make of our seeking? Let's find Psalm 27:8.

**Live discovery:** *have the group find Psalm 27:8 and read it aloud.*

**ANSWER (share after the discussion)**

"You have said, 'Seek my face.' My heart says to you, 'Your face, LORD, do I seek.'" Even the seeking was a response. He said seek before we sought; the restlessness of Session 1 was never a solo signal firing in the dark. It was an answer already forming to a voice already calling. The title of this study has been quoting Him all along.

## **The Knock and the Door: The Frame, Named**

**Read Revelation 3:20 aloud, for the first time in this study:**

*Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me. (Revelation 3:20)*

Then say, in your own words: "You have seen this verse acted out for six weeks without hearing it once. A door blocked in Capernaum, and faith went through the roof. Gates and keys at Caesarea Philippi. A garden gate, locked since Eden, reopened from a cross, today. A threshold crossed at night. And the promise on the far side of the door is a meal, which is what we have been eating together since Week 1. One detail in the verse is the whole reason this study is built the way it is: He stands and knocks. He does not pick the lock. The handle is on the inside. That handle is not a word in the verse; it is an old picture of what the verse shows, a Lord who asks for the door to be opened rather than opening it Himself. He has done everything, made you for Himself, named the wall, become the answer, paid for it in person, wrapped it as a gift, and still He will not force the door. The yes He waits for is truly yours; and when you give it, it will be His grace that steadied your hand on the handle, never a hand forcing yours."

**Piece Six: The Assembled Message (read aloud, unhurried)**

"Here is the whole message, in the order you received it. You were made, on purpose, for a relationship with God; the restlessness was the homing signal. Something real stood in the way; not a rule broken but a connection broken, a disease with a physician. The answer was never a technique; it is a person, who asked you to your face who you say He is. On the cross, He paid for the wall in person; two men hung the same distance from Him, and only one asked. What He did is offered to you as a gift: grace first, faith that looks, a new birth of water and the Spirit, receivable at Nicodemus speed. And now the last piece: all of it stands at your door and knocks. It does not break the door down. It knocked through six encounters, and it is knocking in whatever brought you to this table six weeks ago. The question He asked two men on a road, He is asking you: What do you seek? And His invitation is still three words long: come and see."

## **The Sealed Sheet and the Card**

**The sealed sheet:** *"Take out your Week 1 sheet. In a moment, in silence, open it and read what you wrote when I asked what you were actually seeking. Compare it with what you have heard over six weeks. This is between you and the page; we will keep the silence for two full minutes." Keep the full two minutes. Do not watch anyone.*

**The response card:** *distribute cards face down. “This card is yours; nobody will collect it, tonight or ever. It lists honest next steps: keep exploring with this group when the next study begins; a private conversation with me or with a priest, questions welcome, no signup sheet; come to a Mass as a guest, with a friend beside you; begin the Church's path for those who want to enter, whenever you are ready; or, just as honestly: not yet. Mark it or pocket it blank. The door has a handle on the inside, and this card is proof we mean that.”*

#### **Where the Skeptic Is Strongest (steelman)**

One objection deserves the final word, so give it: “A decision reached in a warm room full of kind people is social pressure, not conviction. This whole study is a soft sales funnel.” Grant the premise entirely: a pressured yes is worthless, and Christianity itself says so; the Church teaches that the response of faith must be free, and that nobody is to be forced (CCC 160). Then point at the architecture: six weeks, and no one was ever called on, no answer was ever graded, the one written thing you produced was sealed and stays yours, and the card in your hand will never be collected. This study was built by people who believe the handle is on the inside because God built the door that way. If the knocking you may have felt these six weeks was only candlelight and good food, it will fade by Tuesday. If it does not fade, be honest about what that means, at whatever speed honesty takes.

#### **Dig Deeper (optional)**

Andrew's first act after the tenth hour is to find his brother: “He first found his brother Simon... He brought him to Jesus” (Jn 1:41-42). No argument is recorded, no sermon: found, told, brought. The brother he brought got a new name that afternoon, and the keys of Session 3 eventually landed on his shoulder. If someone brought you to this table six weeks ago, you have been living inside John 1:42 the whole time. There is no assignment here; just notice how the thing has always traveled: one person, walking beside another, saying come and see.

### **Send**

3. Of the six pieces, which one will you still be thinking about in a month? Which one do you still argue with?
4. “Come and see” is an invitation with a next step inside it. Whatever you marked or did not mark tonight, what would come-and-see look like for you, at your speed?

### **Live It This Week**

1. Keep the card where you will see it. Let it ask you its question once a day for a week.
2. Reread the six pieces on tonight's Take-Home once, aloud if you can, and notice which sentence lands differently than it did live.
3. If someone walked this study beside you, tell them one true thing about what these six weeks were like. They will want to know, and they promised not to ask.

### **Closing**

*Leader alone, briefly:* “Lord Jesus, you asked two men on a road what they were seeking, and they asked where you were staying, and you said come and see. Every person at this table has heard six weeks of knocking. Whatever each door does next, thank you for standing at all of them. Amen.” Then eat dessert; the study ends at the table on purpose.

**SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE**

*“Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.”* **Revelation 3:20**

**Before you dismiss:** hand out Take-Home 6, announce whatever comes next for this group, and thank the room by name where you can.

## Part Three: Leader Reference Card

### Every Passage in This Session

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#### Primary Texts

- John 1:35-42, the first question, the address, come and see, the tenth hour, Andrew finds Simon
- Revelation 3:20, the door, the knock, the one inside opens, the meal

#### Live Discovery Text

- Psalm 27:8, seek my face; your face, LORD, do I seek

#### Supporting Texts

- Genesis 3:9, the first question to hiders (leader background)
- The arc-trace: John 4:7; Mark 2:5; Matthew 16:15; Luke 23:39-43; John 3:2; John 1:38

#### Catechism

- CCC 1, 2002, 160

#### Memory Verse

- Revelation 3:20

#### The Knock and the Door

- Piece Six: the assembled Gospel as invitation; frame named; sealed sheets opened privately; response cards distributed, never collected