

THE TRUE BREAD

THE JEWISH ROOTS OF THE EUCHARIST

“My Father gives you the true bread from heaven.”

John 6:32

A Twelve Session Inductive Study · Catholic Armory

Using This Guide

What This Study Is

The True Bread is a twelve session inductive journey to the Eucharist by the road Israel walked: the scandal of John 6, the hope of a new exodus, the lamb that had to be eaten, the memorial that makes present, the manna, the bread of the Presence, the priest for ever, the cups of the Passover, the cross, Emmaus, and the supper of the Lamb. It is built for young adult groups meeting 75 to 90 minutes a session, and it is inductive in method: the group discovers from the biblical text before any conclusion is announced. Every session has three parts: a Leader Preparation Guide, a Discussion Guide, and a Leader Reference Card listing every passage used. All Scripture follows the Revised Standard Version, Second Catholic Edition.

The Mechanics That Need Protecting

This study plants seeds sessions before it harvests them, and its power depends on the leader's discipline. A sealed My Guess sheet is written at Session 1 and opened in a ritual at Session 10; two threads (the command to eat, and Isaac's question, where is the lamb?) run the length of the study and resolve at the end; and several details (hyssop, unbroken bones, the priestly bread) are read early under strict hands-off instructions. Answer boxes are shared only after the group has discussed; Take-Home sheets are distributed only after each session ends. Session 9 ends deliberately unresolved. Trust the architecture: nothing left open is left open by accident.

How This Study Handles Its Sources

Everything load bearing in this study is Scripture, read from the text in front of the group. The Catechism of the Catholic Church is cited by paragraph throughout. Quotations and teachings of the saints are either cited to a named work or presented explicitly as summaries; where a tradition comes from sources later than the New Testament (the rabbinic seder, the elevation of the Bread of the Presence, the four cups), the guide says so on the page, in the leader's script, and holds it lightly. Where the Church has not defined a question (including the beloved fourth cup reading of the crucifixion), the study presents it precisely as a proposal and keeps doctrine and proposal in separate hands. Honesty is this study's apologetic.

A Debt and a Recommendation

The territory this study walks, from the Passover to the manna to the bread of the Presence to the fourth cup, has been explored at book length by Brant Pitre in *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist*, whose treatment of these themes inspired this study's terrain. The study stands alone and draws all of its content directly from Scripture, the Fathers, and the Catechism; groups that finish it hungry for more are warmly encouraged to read the book. The final Take-Home says the same to participants.

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Take-Home sheets 1 through 12 are separate two page handouts, distributed after each session.

Session 1: Could a Jew Say This?

John 6:22-71, with Genesis 9:3-4 and Leviticus 17:10-14

Part One: Leader Preparation Guide

Session Overview

Discovery Aim. The group discovers for themselves why John 6:53 was the most shocking sentence a first century Jewish audience could hear, and that Jesus, given every chance to soften it, intensified it instead.

Catholic Touchstone. The Church has always read the Bread of Life discourse as pointing to the Eucharist, in which Christ gives his true flesh and blood as real food and real drink (CCC 1336, 1406).

What You Need to Know

This study begins where most Eucharist studies end: with the scandal. Before we ask what the Eucharist is, we are going to ask what it sounded like. Jesus of Nazareth was a Jew speaking to Jews, and everything he said about eating his flesh and drinking his blood landed on ears formed by the Torah. To hear him the way his first audience heard him, we have to know what they knew.

What they knew was this: few commands in their Scriptures are stated more solemnly or repeated more insistently than the prohibition on consuming blood. It predates Sinai. It is given to Noah, the ancestor of the whole post-flood family, repeated to Moses, and grounded in a principle: the life of the flesh is in the blood, and life belongs to God alone. Against that backdrop, Jesus does not merely say something strange in the synagogue at Capernaum. He says the one thing the Law seems to forbid most strictly, and he says it about himself.

The leader's task tonight is restraint. Do not rush to reassure the group that it all works out. Let the difficulty stand, because the difficulty is the discovery: the crowd's shock, the drawing back of many disciples, and Jesus's refusal to walk it back are themselves the strongest evidence of what he meant. This session plants questions the rest of the study will spend eleven weeks answering.

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

Genesis 9:3-4. After the flood, God gives Noah every moving thing for food, with one exception: flesh with its blood. It is given to Noah, ancestor of the whole post-flood family, before Israel exists.

Leviticus 17:10-14. God promises to set his face against anyone who eats blood, Israelite or sojourner alike, and gives the reason: the life is in the blood, and God has given blood one purpose only, atonement on the altar. Blood is for God, not for the table.

Deuteronomy 12:23. Moses repeats the command with unusual urgency: only be sure that you do not eat the blood. Israel's whole instinct about blood was formed by texts like these.

Fulfillment. In John 6, Jesus commands what Torah-formed ears could only hear as forbidden, and the rest of this study will ask why. Here is the shape of the answer we will discover together: the prohibition guarded a truth, that life is in the blood and that blood belongs to God. Jesus does not abolish that truth. He fulfills it: he gives his own life-giving blood, the blood of the divine Son, received not as ordinary blood at an ordinary table but sacramentally, in the mode he himself would provide, precisely so that his life would be in us (John 6:53).

Voices of the Church

St. Ignatius of Antioch (d. c. 107)

Writing to the church at Smyrna within living memory of the apostles, St. Ignatius described certain teachers who stayed away from the Eucharist. His summary of their error is striking: they abstain, he

wrote, because they do not confess that the Eucharist is the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ, the flesh which suffered for our sins and which the Father raised (*Letter to the Smyrnaeans* 7). Ignatius goes on to tell the faithful to keep away from such teachers; for a bishop of the apostolic age, this confession stood at the border of the Church's faith.

St. Justin Martyr (d. c. 165)

Explaining Christian worship to a pagan emperor around the year 155, St. Justin wrote that Christians do not receive the Eucharist as common bread or common drink, but as the flesh and blood of the Jesus who was made flesh (*First Apology* 66). Notice the audience: this is not private devotional language. It is how the Church publicly described her own faith little more than a century after the Last Supper.

St. John Chrysostom (d. 407)

Preaching through John's Gospel for his people, St. John Chrysostom drew attention, in summary, to the very thing your group will notice tonight: when the crowd found the saying hard, Jesus did not explain it away. Chrysostom took this as Christ teaching us that the Eucharist calls for faith before comprehension, and he urged his hearers to approach the altar with the awe the words deserve.

Catechism Connection

- CCC 1336: the first announcement of the Eucharist divided the disciples, just as the announcement of the Passion scandalized them; the Eucharist and the Cross are stumbling blocks, and the same mystery is a cause of division.
- CCC 1406: Jesus said that whoever eats his flesh and drinks his blood has eternal life; the Catechism cites John 6 directly as Eucharistic.
- CCC 1381: with St. Thomas Aquinas, the Church confesses that the true body and true blood of Christ in this sacrament cannot be apprehended by the senses, but only by faith, which rests on the authority of God.

THREAD WATCH

The command to eat. Tonight the group meets a command to eat that sounds impossible. Do not resolve it. This thread runs through the whole study: the lamb that had to be eaten, the manna that had to be gathered, the bread that stood before God's face. Keep a running mental list; the group will assemble it themselves by Session 12.

Sealed guess. Take-Home 1, distributed after tonight, carries the sealed My Guess box: in John's Gospel, Jesus's final word from the cross is that it is finished. What was finished? Collect the sealed sheets next week and keep them safe. They open at Session 10. Do not discuss the question tonight beyond reading it aloud.

Session Goals

1. Establish the group's covenant of honesty: hard questions are welcome here.
2. Discover the blood prohibition in Genesis, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy from the texts themselves.
3. Read John 6:22-71 and feel its full force without premature reassurance.
4. Meet the strongest form of the metaphor reading and begin answering it from the text.
5. Plant the sealed guess and the command-to-eat thread.

A note on time. This session runs 75 to 90 minutes. If you must cut, cut Dig Deeper and the second Send question. Do not cut the steelman chain; the honesty of this study depends on it.

Part Two: Discussion Guide

Opening Prayer

Leader: Father, your Son said things that were hard to hear, and he let his friends wrestle with them. Give us the honesty to wrestle tonight, and the trust of Simon Peter, who did not understand everything but knew he had nowhere better to go. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Win: Opening the Conversation

1. Tell us about a time someone you trusted asked you to accept something you could not yet understand. What did you do?
2. What is the hardest teaching of Jesus for you personally, the one you would quietly soften if you could?

Build: Into the Text

Leader: Before we open the Gospels tonight, we need to build the world Jesus's listeners lived in. Have three different people look up and read aloud Genesis 9:3-4, Leviticus 17:10-14, and Deuteronomy 12:23.

3. From these three passages alone, how serious was the prohibition on consuming blood? Who did it apply to, and what reason does God himself give for it?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

It is among the most absolute commands in the Torah. Genesis gives it to Noah, before Israel exists, addressed to the whole post-flood family. Leviticus extends it explicitly to the sojourner, threatens being cut off from the people, and God says he will set his face against the one who eats blood.

The reason is stated twice in Leviticus 17: the life of the flesh is in the blood. Blood carries life, life belongs to God, and God assigned blood a single sacred use, atonement on the altar. In the biblical world, to drink blood would be to seize for yourself what belongs to God alone.

4. Now keep all of that in your ears. Have someone read John 6:22-40. What is the crowd looking for, and what does Jesus offer them instead?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

The crowd wants more of yesterday's miracle, bread for the stomach, and they even cite the manna their fathers ate in the wilderness. Jesus redirects them from perishable food to food that endures to eternal life, and then makes the claim the whole study turns on: the true bread from heaven is not a thing but a person. I am the bread of life.

Do not miss that the crowd raised the manna first. We will spend two full sessions there. File it away.

5. Read John 6:41-51. The audience murmurs. Where else in Israel's story did the people murmur about bread from heaven? And how does Jesus respond to the murmuring: does he clarify, or escalate?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

They murmur just as the wilderness generation murmured against Moses when the manna was first given (Exodus 16). John is deliberately replaying the exodus.

Jesus escalates. The discourse climbs from believing in him, to eating the bread which is his flesh, given for the life of the world. Verse 51 removes the comfortable distance: the bread is his flesh.

6. Read John 6:52-59 slowly. The audience asks how this man can give us his flesh to eat. List exactly what Jesus does and does not do in his answer.

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

He does not say he was speaking figuratively. He does not soften a single word. Instead he adds the most offensive element possible for a Jewish audience: drinking his blood, the very thing the group just read God forbidding on pain of being cut off.

And the Greek sharpens. From verse 54 John shifts to *trogo*, a more concrete verb for eating, often carrying the sense of chewing. Treat the shift as supporting color rather than proof; the argument stands on the audience's reaction and Jesus's response. And be precise about what the Church claims: real eating, sacramental in mode, not a crude physical devouring. He also declares his flesh true food and his blood true drink (verse 55).

The Other Side of the Table

Leader: Now we let the strongest objection speak at full strength before we answer it. Read this to the group as persuasively as you can; do not weaken it.

The metaphor reading. Jesus constantly spoke in metaphors. He is the door, the vine, the light; nobody thinks he is made of wood or leaves. In this very chapter, eating and believing run in parallel: he who comes to me shall not hunger, he who believes in me shall never thirst (verse 35). And near the end he seems to say so himself: it is the spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail (verse 63). Surely eating his flesh simply means believing in him, and Catholics have built a mountain on a figure of speech. And the strongest form of this reading is not bare symbolism: many Reformed and evangelical Christians affirm a real, spiritual feeding on Christ received by faith, so that John 6 is fully true without any change in bread and wine, and they note that the discourse comes long before any institution narrative and contains no sacramental command.

7. That is a serious argument. Before anyone answers it, strengthen it: what is the best additional point you could add to it?

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

Let the group genuinely try. Good additions: metaphors were normal rabbinic teaching style; John's Gospel is full of misunderstood figures (the temple of his body, being born again, living water); and a literal reading seems to make Jesus command something the Torah forbids.

8. Now answer it from the text itself. Stay inside John 6 and the passages we have already read. What does the metaphor reading fail to explain?

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

First, the audience's reaction and Jesus's response. When his words are misunderstood elsewhere in John, clarification comes: Jesus unpacks being born again as water and the Spirit (John 3:5), and when the disciples take sleep literally he tells them plainly, Lazarus is dead (John 11:14); where he leaves a saying dark, John himself supplies the key later (the temple of his body, John 2:21-22). Here, as many of his disciples draw back and no longer walk with him, he explains nothing and intensifies everything, then turns to the Twelve and asks if they will also leave. People do not abandon a rabbi over a metaphor they were free to have explained.

Second, the idiom problem. Where eating someone's flesh appears figuratively in the Hebrew Scriptures, the sense is hostile: predatory oppression in Micah 3:3, and in Psalm 27:2 the RSV2CE renders the Hebrew idiom, to eat up my flesh, as uttering slanders. These texts do not fix one mechanical meaning, but they all point one direction: no biblical figure of eating flesh means believing in someone. A merely figurative reading would lean toward whoever persecutes me, not whoever trusts me; it does not produce belief.

Third, verse 63. Jesus says the flesh is of no avail, not my flesh, and the Catholic reading takes the contrast as Scripture elsewhere uses flesh against spirit: natural human perception against what God gives (compare John 3:6; 8:15). Others read verse 63 differently, and the group should know that; but on any reading, the verse cannot mean that Christ's own flesh avails nothing, or the Incarnation and the Cross would avail nothing either.

Be honest with the group about what we have and have not shown. Tonight establishes that Jesus meant something far more than a figure of speech and refused every exit. The spiritual-feeding reading is right that faith is how this bread is received (verse 47 stands); the open question it leaves, and this study presses, is whether the Lord who spoke this way gave only an idea to feed on, or the gift his words describe. How his words are fulfilled without violating what the blood prohibition protected is the question the next eleven sessions answer.

DIG DEEPER: The Words That Cost Him Disciples

Read John 6:60-71 as a group. This is the one passage where a Gospel records many disciples drawing back and no longer walking with Jesus over a teaching, and where he offers the Twelve the chance to leave with them.

Ask: what does Peter's answer, that they have nowhere else to go because Jesus has the words of eternal life, teach about the relationship between understanding and trust? Note verses 70-71: John himself ends the discourse on Judas, tying its unbelief to the betrayal to come.

Send: Taking It With You

9. Peter did not say I understand; he said to whom shall we go. Where in your life right now is God asking for that kind of trust?

10. If John 6 means what it appears to mean, what would have to change about the way you approach Mass this Sunday?

Live It This Week

- Read John 6 once more on your own, out loud if you can, and mark every place Jesus could have softened his words and did not.
- At Mass this Sunday, listen for the moment the priest says the words of Jesus over the bread and the cup, and silently pray Peter's words: Lord, to whom shall we go?
- Fill in your sealed My Guess sheet from the Take-Home, seal it, and bring it next week. Do not sign your name.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. John 6:68

Closing Prayer

Together: Lord Jesus, you said what you meant and you meant what you said, and you would not unsay it even when it cost you your friends. Give us ears formed by your whole word, and bring us back next week hungrier than we came. Amen.

Part Three: Leader Reference Card

Passage	Used For
Genesis 9:3-4	Blood prohibition given to Noah, binding all humanity
Leviticus 17:10-14	Life is in the blood; blood reserved for atonement; live discovery
Deuteronomy 12:23	Moses's urgent repetition of the prohibition
Exodus 16 (reference)	Wilderness murmuring behind John 6:41; developed in Session 5
John 6:22-40	Crowd seeks bread; Jesus the bread of life; manna raised by the crowd
John 6:41-51	Murmuring parallel; the bread is his flesh
John 6:52-59	Eat flesh, drink blood; trogo intensification; true food, true drink
John 6:60-71	Desertion of disciples; Peter's confession; Dig Deeper
John 6:35, 6:63	Steelman texts for the metaphor reading
Micah 3:3; Psalm 27:2	Figurative eat-flesh idiom means persecution (note: RSV2CE renders the Ps 27:2 idiom as slander); steelman answer
John 6:68	Memory verse

Session 2: The Hope of Israel

Deuteronomy 18:15-18; Isaiah 43:16-21; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Exodus 24:3-11; 2 Maccabees 2:4-8

Part One: Leader Preparation Guide

Session Overview

Discovery Aim. The group discovers, from the prophets themselves, the great hopes Israel's Scriptures had planted: a new Moses, a new exodus, and a new covenant, hopes alive in Jewish streams of Jesus's day and visible in the crowd of John 6; and that at Sinai the covenant was sealed in blood and crowned by a meal in God's presence.

Catholic Touchstone. At the Last Supper Jesus declared the cup the new covenant in his blood, deliberately taking up both Jeremiah's promise and the covenant meal of Sinai (CCC 610-611, 1965).

What You Need to Know

Last week the group felt the scandal of John 6. This week we step back and ask a different question: what had Israel's Scriptures taught her to hope for? If we imagine first century Jews waiting vaguely for a wise teacher, the Eucharist will always look like it came from nowhere. But the prophets had given Israel a remarkably specific hope, and its shape is the shape of the exodus.

The logic runs like this. Israel's founding memory was the exodus: God raised up Moses, struck Egypt, fed his people with bread from heaven, and bound himself to them in a covenant sealed with blood and crowned with a meal on the mountain. When Israel later fell into exile, the prophets did not promise something unrelated. They promised it all again, and greater: a prophet like Moses, a new and more glorious exodus, and a new covenant that would succeed where the old one had been broken.

Hold the group to the texts tonight. The payoff comes at the end, when they read the covenant meal of Exodus 24 and hear, perhaps for the first time, how much of the Last Supper was already on that mountain: blood, the words of the covenant, and elders eating and drinking in the presence of God. One caution on sources: where this session touches Jewish traditions outside Scripture, the guide says so plainly. Our argument stands on the biblical texts; the traditions show how naturally Israel read them.

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

Deuteronomy 18:15-18. Moses promises that God will raise up a prophet like himself, from among the people, whose words Israel must heed. By the first century this had become a living expectation; when the crowds in John 6:14 see the multiplication of loaves, they say this is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world. Bread from heaven made them think of the new Moses.

Isaiah 43:16-21. Isaiah names God as the one who made a way through the sea, then delivers a shock: remember not the former things. God is about to do a new thing, a new way in the wilderness. The prophet who invokes the exodus announces a new thing shaped like it; the Church has long read here a new and greater exodus.

Jeremiah 31:31-34. The only place the Hebrew Scriptures use the phrase new covenant. It will not be like the covenant made when God took Israel by the hand out of Egypt, the covenant they broke. It will reach the heart, and its foundation is forgiveness of sins.

Exodus 24:3-11. How the first covenant was actually made: sacrifice, the blood of the covenant thrown on the people, the words of the covenant read aloud, and then the astonishing verse 11: the elders beheld God, and ate and drank. At Sinai, covenant, blood, and meal belong to one event.

Fulfillment. At the Last Supper Jesus says: this is my blood of the covenant (Matthew 26:28), this cup is the new covenant in my blood (Luke 22:20). One sentence fuses Exodus 24 and Jeremiah 31. The new Moses seals the new covenant the old way, in blood and at a meal, with himself as both.

Voices of the Church

St. Irenaeus of Lyons (d. c. 202)

A summary of his teaching: Irenaeus, taught by St. Polycarp, who was taught by the apostle John, insisted that the two Testaments have one Author, and that Christ recapitulates Israel's whole story, gathering it up and bringing it to its goal in himself. For Irenaeus, the exodus was not background to the Gospel; it was, as we might put it, its first draft.

St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430)

Augustine gave the Church her most famous rule for reading the two Testaments together: the New is hidden in the Old, and the Old is unveiled in the New (*Quaestiones in Heptateuchum* 2.73; cited at CCC 129). Tonight's session is that rule in practice: the Last Supper is hidden on Sinai, and Sinai is unveiled in the upper room.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem (d. 386)

A summary of his catechesis: preparing new Christians for the sacraments, Cyril taught them to see the events of Israel, the exodus above all, as figures written for us, so that what God did once in shadow he now does in truth for the baptized at his table. The mystagogy of the early Church assumed exactly the reading this study is training your group to do.

Catechism Connection

- CCC 128-130: the Church reads the Old Testament in the light of Christ crucified and risen; typology discerns God's works of the Old Covenant as prefigurations of what he accomplished in Christ.
- CCC 610-611: at the supper Jesus gave the supreme expression of his free self-offering and instituted the Eucharist as the memorial of his sacrifice.
- CCC 1339-1340: by celebrating the Supper within the Passover meal, Jesus gave the Passover its definitive meaning.
- CCC 1965: the New Law fulfills the promise of Jeremiah 31; the Catechism quotes the new covenant promise (through Hebrews 8).

THREAD WATCH

The command to eat. Add tonight's link quietly: the first covenant was not complete until they ate and drank in God's presence (Exodus 24:11). Do not connect it aloud to the Last Supper before the group does.

Sealed guesses. Collect the sealed My Guess sheets tonight and store them unopened until Session 10. If anyone forgot, they may bring it next week.

Session Goals

1. Recover the three-part hope of Israel from the prophets: new Moses, new exodus, new covenant.
2. Discover in Exodus 24 that covenant making culminates in blood and a shared meal before God.
3. Hear the Last Supper words as the deliberate fusion of Sinai and Jeremiah.
4. Answer the interior-covenant steelman honestly from the text.
5. Collect the sealed guesses.

A note on time. If you must cut, cut the second Win question and the Dig Deeper on 2 Maccabees. Keep Exodus 24; the session fails without it.

Part Two: Discussion Guide

Opening Prayer

Leader: Father, you kept every promise you made to Israel, and you kept them in ways greater than anyone imagined. Open the Scriptures to us tonight the way your Son opened them to his friends, until our hearts burn within us. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Win: Opening the Conversation

1. What is something you waited years for? While you waited, how specific was your picture of what it would look like when it came?
2. When you picture the people of Jesus's day waiting for the Messiah, what do you imagine they expected him to actually do?

Build: Into the Text

Leader: Tonight the group builds Israel's hope from the ground up, one text at a time. Assign readers as you go.

3. Read Deuteronomy 18:15-18. Who is promised here, and what makes him like Moses? Then have someone read John 6:14. When the crowd saw bread multiplied in the wilderness, who did they conclude Jesus was?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

God promises to raise up a prophet like Moses, from among their brethren, with God's own words in his mouth, whom Israel must heed. The crowd in John 6, fed with miraculous bread in a deserted place, concludes Jesus is the prophet who is to come. In their minds, bread in the wilderness is exactly what the new Moses would do.

This is why the crowd immediately raises the manna in John 6:31. Last week we filed that away; now the group can see why it was the obvious challenge: if you are the new Moses, where is the new bread from heaven?

4. Read Isaiah 43:16-21. Isaiah introduces God with unmistakable exodus language, then tells Israel to remember not the former things. What is he doing? What is the new thing shaped like?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

He invokes the exodus (a way in the sea, chariots extinguished) precisely so that the promise of the new thing is heard as a new exodus: a way in the wilderness, water in the desert, a people formed for God's praise. The prophets repeatedly cast Israel's future salvation in exodus imagery, a deliverance the tradition has read as the exodus done again and done greater.

5. Read Jeremiah 31:31-34. List everything the text itself says about the new covenant: with whom, unlike what, written where, resting on what?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

With the house of Israel and the house of Judah; not like the covenant of the exodus, which they broke; the law written upon their hearts (the stone tablets of Sinai stand behind the contrast, Exodus 31:18, though Jeremiah's own wording names only hearts); everyone knowing the Lord; and at its root, sins forgiven and remembered no more.

Note what Jeremiah does not say: he does not describe the ceremony by which this covenant will be made. For that, Israel knew where to look, because covenants are made a particular way. That is our next text.

6. Read Exodus 24:3-11, the making of the first covenant. Walk through it step by step: what happens with the blood, with the words, and, in verse 11, at the end? What surprises you?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Sacrifices are offered; Moses throws half the blood on the altar and, after the people vow obedience, throws the blood of the covenant on the people themselves; the book of the covenant is read aloud; and then Moses, Aaron, and seventy elders go up, behold God, and eat and drink. The covenant is sealed in blood (verse 8) and then crowned by a meal in God's presence (verses 9 to 11).

Most groups are startled by verse 11. Let them be. In Scripture, a covenant is not paperwork; it makes a family, and families eat together. At Sinai, blood and meal together are the covenant's grammar.

7. Now put the pieces together yourselves. Have someone read Matthew 26:27-28 and Luke 22:20. Which of tonight's texts is Jesus quoting or fulfilling in each phrase, and what is he claiming by saying it over a cup?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

My blood of the covenant repeats Moses's words over the blood at Sinai (Exodus 24:8). The new covenant takes up Jeremiah 31, the only Old Testament passage with that phrase, including its promise of the forgiveness of sins (Matthew adds: poured out for the forgiveness of sins). And he says it at a meal, completing the Sinai pattern.

The claim is staggering: the new Moses is sealing the new covenant, and the blood of this covenant is his own, given not to be splashed on the people but to be drunk by them. Last week's scandal is beginning to show its logic. Do not push further tonight; the study will earn the rest.

The Other Side of the Table

Leader: Read the objection at full strength.

The interior-covenant reading. Jeremiah's new covenant is explicitly interior: law on the heart, everyone knowing the Lord, sins forgiven. It says nothing about a ritual, a meal, or a sacrament. Reading the Eucharist into it imports ceremony into a promise whose whole point was to move beyond ceremony to the heart. The new covenant is a relationship, not a rite.

8. Strengthen it first: what is the best case that the new covenant was meant to leave ritual behind?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Good additions: Jeremiah elsewhere attacks empty ritual (Jeremiah 7); the letter to the Hebrews says the old sacrifices could not perfect the conscience; and Jesus criticized externalism in worship.

9. Now answer from the texts we read tonight. Does interior mean unritual? Who defined how the new covenant would be enacted?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

The answer is not a theory; it is an event. Jesus himself, the night before he died, enacted the new covenant with a cup, a meal, and covenant blood, using Sinai's own words. If the new covenant excluded rite and meal, its own maker enacted it otherwise: interior transformation and divinely given signs are not opposites, and Jesus joined them in one cup.

And the opposition is false: at Sinai the covenant was both blood ceremony and vowed obedience of the heart; what God faulted was not that Israel had rites but that their hearts broke the covenant the rites sealed. Jeremiah promises a covenant that reaches the heart, and Jesus seals it in a way that enters the body: a cup that is drunk. Interior does not get more interior than that. What the prophets never imagined was not that the new covenant would have a meal, but whose blood would be in the cup.

Be honest about scope: nothing tonight yet establishes what the Eucharist is; that question waits for the Passover, the manna, and the Bread of the Presence. Tonight establishes the frame: covenant, blood, meal, together.

DIG DEEPER: The Hidden Vessels (2 Maccabees 2:4-8)

Read 2 Maccabees 2:4-8, a passage from the deuterocanonical books that many in your group may never have opened. At the exile, Jeremiah hides the tent and the ark, and declares they will stay hidden until God gathers his people again and the glory appears, as it did for Moses.

Ask: what does this tell us about how Jews at the time connected the coming restoration with the wilderness era and its worship? Jewish hope was not vague; it expected the return of God's glory and God's dwelling, and later Jewish tradition, in the Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch (2 Baruch 29:8, written around the end of the first century), even voiced the hope that the treasury of manna would descend again. That last expectation is outside Scripture, later than the apostles, and held lightly; the group will meet its biblical roots in Session 5.

Send: Taking It With You

10. God kept his promises in a form greater than the promise itself. Where might you be underestimating what God intends to do with a promise you are waiting on?

11. You are in the new covenant Jeremiah announced. When you receive the cup at Mass, what would it mean to receive it as covenant blood, the way the elders ate and drank on the mountain?

Live It This Week

- Read Exodus 24:3-11 once more this week, then read Luke 22:14-20 immediately after, and write down every echo you hear.
- At Mass, when the chalice is elevated, silently pray: the new covenant in your blood; count me among your covenant family.
- If you have never read the deuterocanonical books, read 2 Maccabees 2 this week as a start.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

*Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. **Jeremiah 31:31***

Closing Prayer

Together: Father of the covenant, you wrote your law on stone and now you write it on hearts. Write it on ours. Seal us in the blood of your Son, seat us at his table, and make us a people formed for your praise. Amen.

Part Three: Leader Reference Card

Passage	Used For
Deuteronomy 18:15-18	Prophet like Moses; live discovery
John 6:14, 6:31	Crowd identifies Jesus as the prophet; manna challenge explained
Isaiah 43:16-21	New exodus promise; live discovery
Jeremiah 31:31-34	New covenant text; live discovery; steelman text
Exodus 24:3-11	Blood of the covenant and the meal before God; hinge of the session
Matthew 26:27-28; Luke 22:20	Last Supper words fusing Sinai and Jeremiah
Jeremiah 7 (reference)	Steelman support: critique of empty ritual
2 Maccabees 2:4-8	Dig Deeper: exile, hidden tent and ark, expected return of glory
Jeremiah 31:31	Memory verse

Session 3: The First Passover

Exodus 12:1-14, 21-28, 43-49

Part One: Leader Preparation Guide

Session Overview

Discovery Aim. Reading Exodus 12 inductively, the group discovers the requirement almost everyone forgets: the lamb was not only offered. By command, the lamb had to be eaten.

Catholic Touchstone. Christ our paschal lamb has been sacrificed (1 Corinthians 5:7); the Passover's own law commands that the lamb be eaten (Exodus 12:8-11); on Christ the Lamb and the biblical memorial, see CCC 608 and 1363-1364.

What You Need to Know

Tonight the study arrives at its foundation. The Synoptic Gospels present everything Jesus did in the upper room as done inside a Passover meal (John's account raises chronological questions of its own, noted at Session 10), and everything the Passover means is set down in Exodus 12. Most Christians know the outline: a lamb, blood on the doorposts, the angel of death passing over. Almost nobody notices the command in verse 8, and it changes everything: they shall eat the flesh that night.

Walk the group slowly through the requirements: a lamb without blemish, a male, selected on the tenth day and kept until the fourteenth, in the midst of the family; killed at twilight by the whole assembly; its blood applied with hyssop; its flesh roasted and eaten, with nothing left over; its bones unbroken; and the whole rite commanded as a memorial forever. Each detail is load bearing, and several are planted tonight for harvest weeks from now. Say nothing about where they lead. Two details in particular, the hyssop and the unbroken bones, must be observed tonight and left completely alone.

The theological center is the discovery aim. In Egypt, a family that sacrificed its lamb but refused to eat it would not have kept the Passover as commanded. The eating was not a snack after the ritual; it was an integral, commanded part of the rite. When Paul writes that Christ our paschal lamb has been sacrificed, and immediately continues, let us therefore celebrate the feast, he is thinking like an Israelite: sacrificed lambs are for eating. Do not preach this connection tonight. Plant the Exodus data and trust the study.

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

Exodus 12:3-6. The lamb is chosen on the tenth day and lives with the family until the fourteenth. Israel's deliverance begins with a lamb brought into the house, known before it is offered.

Exodus 12:7-11. Blood on doorposts and lintel, and the command: they shall eat the flesh that night, roasted, with unleavened bread and bitter herbs, in haste, dressed for a journey.

Exodus 12:13-14. The blood is a sign; the Lord passes over; and the day is to be a memorial forever, a feast to the Lord throughout your generations. The Passover is commanded to be repeated, not merely remembered.

Exodus 12:22, 46. The blood is applied with a bunch of hyssop, and no bone of the lamb may be broken. Two small details. The Gospel of John saw both at the cross (John 19:29, 19:36). Tonight the group only observes them; the harvest comes in Sessions 10 and 12.

Fulfillment. John the Baptist introduces Jesus as the Lamb of God (John 1:29); Paul names him our paschal lamb (1 Corinthians 5:7); and the Passover's own law says what is done with such a lamb. The rite that saved Israel is the pattern that interprets both the Cross and the Supper, though the group must be allowed to assemble that themselves in the coming weeks.

Voices of the Church

St. Melito of Sardis (d. c. 180)

In his ancient Paschal homily (*Peri Pascha*), Melito preached, in summary, that the mystery of the Passover is new and old: old according to the law, new according to the Word; the sheep was the model, and the Lord the reality; what was slain in Egypt was the figure of the Lord who was to come. For the second century Church, Exodus 12 was already a Gospel text.

St. John Chrysostom (d. 407)

A summary of his preaching: Chrysostom told his people that the old Passover was the type and the new its truth, and he pressed the comparison of the two lambs: that one delivered from Egypt for a time; this one delivers the whole world from death forever. His constant pastoral point was that those who now eat the true Lamb should live like a people who have left Egypt behind.

St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)

In the *Summa Theologiae* (III, q. 73, a. 6): among all the figures of the Eucharist, Aquinas gave the Passover lamb a certain pride of place, because it prefigured this sacrament on every side: eaten with unleavened bread, immolated by the whole assembly, its blood preserving the people from the destroyer. His *Corpus Christi* hymn *Lauda Sion* names the figures: Isaac offered, the paschal lamb appointed, the manna given to the fathers.

Catechism Connection

- CCC 608: John the Baptist points to Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, recalling both the suffering Servant and the paschal lamb, symbol of Israel's redemption at the first Passover.
- CCC 1363-1364: in the biblical sense, memorial is not merely recalling the past; when Israel celebrates Passover, the exodus events are made present. This verse of Exodus 12:14 will carry Session 4.
- CCC 1150: the signs of the Old Covenant, Passover above all, prefigure the sacraments of the New.

THREAD WATCH

The command to eat. Tonight the thread gets its anchor text: Exodus 12:8. The lamb must be eaten. Add it to the quiet list beside John 6 and the covenant meal of Exodus 24.

Where is the lamb? A new thread is planted in the Dig Deeper: Isaac's question on Mount Moriah and Abraham's unfinished answer. It resolves in Session 12. Plant it and move on.

Hands off. Hyssop (12:22) and unbroken bones (12:46) must be read aloud tonight and never explained. If anyone connects them to the crucifixion, honor it briefly and say the study will get there. Do not elaborate.

Session Goals

1. Read Exodus 12 closely enough to reconstruct the Passover requirements from the text alone.
2. Discover that eating the lamb is commanded, not optional, and that the sacrifice is completed at the table.
3. Observe, without explanation, the hyssop and the unbroken bones.
4. Register the command that Passover be kept as a memorial forever.
5. Plant the Where is the lamb thread from Genesis 22.

A note on time. If you must cut, cut the second Win question and shorten the reading of Exodus 12:43-49 to verses 43 and 46-47. Do not cut the Dig Deeper tonight; the thread it plants is structural.

Part Two: Discussion Guide

Opening Prayer

Leader: Father, on the night you struck Egypt you sheltered your people under the blood of a lamb and gathered them at a table. Gather us now. Teach us this rite you commanded forever, and show us what you were preparing. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Win: Opening the Conversation

1. What is a meal your family repeats every year in exactly the same way? What would be lost if you skipped it once?
2. When you hear the word sacrifice, what picture comes to mind? Where does that picture come from?

Build: Into the Text

Leader: Tonight is pure inductive work in one chapter. The group's job is to become experts in Exodus 12. Read each block aloud, then reconstruct its requirements before opening the answer.

3. Read Exodus 12:1-6. List everything the text requires about the lamb and the timeline. Why do you think the lamb is chosen four days early and kept with the family?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

A lamb per household (small households share); without blemish; a male a year old; chosen on the tenth day; kept until the fourteenth; killed at twilight with the whole assembly participating. The text does not state why it is kept four days; let the group speculate, then note the effect: the lamb enters the home and is known. The victim is not anonymous. Israel's deliverance begins with a lamb in the house.

4. Read Exodus 12:7-11. After the blood is applied, what does verse 8 command? How is the lamb to be prepared and eaten, and what may be left over (see also verse 10)?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

They shall eat the flesh that night. Roasted whole, with unleavened bread and bitter herbs; nothing raw or boiled; nothing left until morning; eaten in haste, belted, sandaled, staff in hand. The eating is commanded in the same breath as the blood.

Draw the group's attention to what verse 8 rules out: a Passover where the lamb dies and no one eats. The blood goes to the doorpost, and the flesh, by command, goes to the table; Exodus knows no Passover without both.

5. Read Exodus 12:12-14. What does the blood accomplish, and what does verse 14 command about the future? What is the difference between remembering an event and keeping a memorial feast forever?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

The Lord passes over the blood-marked houses; judgment falls on Egypt and its gods. Verse 14 commands a memorial day, a feast to the Lord, kept as an ordinance forever, throughout their generations. Israel is not told to think about the exodus; Israel is told to do the Passover, every year, as if the night belonged to every generation.

Do not resolve tonight what memorial means; that is the whole of next week. Simply fix the fact: Passover is commanded as a perpetual feast, not a one-time rescue.

6. Read Exodus 12:21-28, then 12:43-49. Two details for sharp eyes: how is the blood applied in verse 22, and what does verse 46 forbid? Also, from 43-49, who may eat this meal?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

The blood is applied with a bunch of hyssop. Verse 46 forbids breaking any bone of the lamb, and requires the lamb be eaten in one house, the flesh not carried outside. No foreigner or uncircumcised male may eat it; the meal belongs to the covenant household, women and children included, and the sojourner may join once the males of his house are circumcised (12:43-49).

If someone connects hyssop or unbroken bones to the crucifixion, acknowledge it in one sentence and promise the study will return to both. Do not develop it; those seeds are for later sessions.

The Other Side of the Table

Leader: Read the objection at full strength.

The death-only reading. What saved Israel was the death of the lamb and its blood on the door: Exodus 12:13 says so in as many words. The meal was commanded covenant worship, and no serious reader calls it optional; but it contributed nothing to the deliverance itself. In the same way, what saves Christians is Christ's death on the cross, full stop. The Lord's Supper is obedient remembrance of that finished work, and making the eating essential to salvation confuses the memorial with the thing it commemorates.

7. Strengthen it: what is the best case that only the death and the blood mattered?

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

Good additions: Exodus 12:13 attributes the passing over to the blood, not the meal; the meal has practical features (haste, travel dress) suggesting mere provision; and Scripture elsewhere locates atonement in blood (Leviticus 17:11).

8. Now answer it from Exodus 12 itself. Does the text treat the eating as optional practicality or as command? What happens to a lamb that is sacrificed but not consumed?

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

First, concede the objection's center: Exodus 12:13 credits the blood with the passing over, and no one is saved by chewing. What the stronger reading must still face is the shape of the command. The eating is commanded with the same force as the blood (12:8), regulated in detail (how cooked, with what, by whom, in which house, nothing remaining), and protected by law (12:43-49 governs who may eat). A rite whose eating is fenced by that much law is not incidental catering.

Blood and meal are two halves of one act: the blood turns away death; the meal takes the lamb's life into the family that the blood just saved. Exodus knows nothing of a Passover that stops at the doorpost.

Be precise about what this does and does not prove. It does not yet prove anything about the Eucharist. It proves the pattern: in God's own design of the paschal sacrifice, the lamb that saves is the lamb you eat. Whether the true Lamb follows his own pattern is exactly the question this study is walking toward, and the group should feel that question forming on its own.

DIG DEEPER: Where Is the Lamb? (Genesis 22:1-14)

Read Genesis 22:1-14, the binding of Isaac on Moriah. Isolate verse 7, Isaac's question: where is the lamb? And Abraham's answer in verse 8: God will provide himself the lamb.

Then look closely at what God actually provides in verse 13: a ram, and Abraham names the place The LORD will provide (verse 14). A lamb was spoken of; a ram was given; and readers ancient and modern have heard in that wording a promise held open. Carry the question as the text lets you carry it: where is the lamb? Write it on the group's list and leave it open. It will not close for nine more weeks.

Send: Taking It With You

9. The lamb lived with the family before it was offered. What does it change about the meaning of sacrifice when the offering is known and near, not anonymous?

10. God commanded Israel to keep the feast forever so that no generation would stand outside the story. Where do you stand toward the feast Christ left his Church: inside the story, or watching it?

Live It This Week

- Read Exodus 12:1-14 once more and memorize the sequence: chosen, kept, killed, blood, eaten, forever.
- At Mass this Sunday, when you hear Behold the Lamb of God, remember Isaac's question and let it be your own: where is the lamb?
- Before next session, ask one older Catholic in your life what the word memorial in the Mass means to them, and just listen.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

For Christ, our paschal lamb, has been sacrificed. 1 Corinthians 5:7

Closing Prayer

Together: Lamb of God, chosen before the foundation of the world, you came into the house of Israel and were known among us. Mark our doorposts, gather us at your table, and keep us until morning. Amen.

Part Three: Leader Reference Card

Passage	Used For
Exodus 12:1-6	Selection and keeping of the lamb; live discovery
Exodus 12:7-11	Blood and the command to eat; discovery aim text
Exodus 12:12-14	Passing over; memorial forever (sets up Session 4)
Exodus 12:21-28	Hyssop (v. 22); instruction of children; live discovery
Exodus 12:43-49	Who may eat; one house; no bone broken (v. 46)
Leviticus 17:11 (reference)	Steelman support: atonement located in blood
Genesis 22:1-14	Dig Deeper: Where is the lamb thread planted
John 1:29; 1 Corinthians 5:7	Leader background: Lamb of God, paschal lamb
1 Corinthians 5:7	Memory verse

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

Session 5: Bread From Heaven

Exodus 16:1-36; Deuteronomy 8:2-3; Psalm 78:18-25; Wisdom 16:20-21

Part One: Leader Preparation Guide

Session Overview

Discovery Aim. The group discovers the manna as Scripture presents it: bread from heaven, given daily, teaching total dependence, celebrated as the bread of the angels, and, strangest of all, preserved before the LORD, throughout the generations, to be seen.

Catholic Touchstone. The manna in the desert prefigured the Eucharist, the true bread from heaven (CCC 1094).

What You Need to Know

Twice already the manna has knocked on our door: the crowd raised it in John 6, and the murmuring in Capernaum echoed the murmuring in the wilderness. Tonight we finally open Exodus 16 and let the group become experts in the manna itself. Next week they will carry that expertise back into John 6, so tonight's job is to load the text carefully and resist the urge to harvest early.

Keep the group attentive to the texture of the chapter. The bread comes down from heaven, with the dew, each morning. It cannot be stockpiled; hoarded manna breeds worms, except before the Sabbath, when a double portion keeps. Israel must trust God one day at a time for forty years. Even its name enshrines mystery: man hu, what is it? And the Old Testament's own commentary raises the register rather than lowering it: Psalm 78 calls it the grain of heaven and the bread of the angels, and the Book of Wisdom, in the deuterocanon, calls it the food of angels, suited to every taste.

The strangest detail is the one to plant most carefully: God commands an omer of manna to be kept in a jar before the LORD, throughout your generations, that they may see it. Bread, of all things, preserved in God's presence for the generations. Do not explain it. Let the group feel the oddness of preserved bread at the heart of Israel's worship and file it. It will return, more than once, before the study ends.

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

Exodus 16:4, 14-15. Bread rains from heaven; Israel asks what is it; Moses answers: it is the bread which the LORD has given you to eat. Heaven's bread is given to be eaten.

Exodus 16:16-30. Gather daily, an omer apiece; keep none until morning; on the sixth day, twice as much, and it keeps for the Sabbath. The manna is a forty year school of daily trust and Sabbath rest.

Exodus 16:31-35. Its taste: like wafers made with honey. Its span: forty years, until the edge of Canaan. And an omer kept in a jar before the testimony, throughout your generations, that they may see the bread.

Deuteronomy 8:2-3. Moses interprets: God humbled you and fed you with manna, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but that man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD. The manna taught Israel to live from God's mouth.

Fulfillment. Jesus fasted on Deuteronomy 8:3 (Matthew 4:4) and taught us to pray for our daily bread. Next week the group will hear him claim the manna outright. Tonight, only note where the trajectory points: if the figure was bread from heaven that Israel had to eat to live, the fulfillment will not be less than the figure.

Voices of the Church

St. Ambrose of Milan (d. 397)

In summary of his teaching to the newly baptized in *De Mystериis*: Ambrose set the two breads side by side. The manna was a wonder, bread from heaven; yet those who ate it died in the wilderness. What you receive at the altar, he told them, is greater than manna as the reality is greater than the shadow, for it is the body of Christ. The fathers ate the manna and died; this bread is given for eternal life.

St. Ephrem the Syrian (d. 373)

In summary of themes in his hymns (the cycle On Unleavened Bread among them): the deacon-poet of Syria loved to sing the manna as a figure straining toward its fulfillment. The bread that came down for a time fed the body of one people in one wilderness; the Bread of Life who came down from heaven gives himself to all peoples in every place, and the hungry are filled without the bread ever running out. The wilderness table, we might say with him, was a promise written in dew.

St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)

In his Eucharistic hymn *Sacris Solemnis*, Aquinas gave the Church the verse the world knows as *Panis Angelicus*: the bread of angels becomes the bread of men; the bread of heaven puts an end to the figures. O wonderful thing: the poor, the servant, the lowly eat their Lord. The hymn's panis angelicus takes up the psalm's phrase, bread of the angels; hearing Psalm 78 land on the altar is this study's gloss, and a natural one.

Catechism Connection

- CCC 1094: on this harmony of the two Testaments the Church's catechesis is built; among the figures, the manna in the desert prefigured the Eucharist, the true bread from heaven.
- CCC 1334: the bread of Israel's exodus received new significance; the remembrance of the manna recalls that Israel lives by the bread of the word of God.
- CCC 2837: the Fathers heard our daily bread in the Our Father as reaching beyond earthly bread to the Bread of Life; the Eucharist is our daily bread for the pilgrimage.

THREAD WATCH

The command to eat. Add: it is the bread which the LORD has given you to eat (Exodus 16:15). Heaven's gift, again, is given for eating.

Hands off. Two plants tonight, no watering. First, the jar of manna kept before the Lord (16:32-34): the group should feel its strangeness and move on; the Dig Deeper touches it and stops. Second, the taste like wafers made with honey: simply enjoy it. Say nothing that connects either to later sessions.

Session Goals

1. Reconstruct the manna from Exodus 16: its origin, its rhythm, its limits, its taste, its span.
2. Hear the Old Testament's own commentary raise the manna's register: grain of heaven, bread of the angels, food of angels.
3. Register the preserved bread of Exodus 16:32-34 without explaining it.
4. Answer the word-not-bread steelman while keeping Deuteronomy 8:3 at full strength.
5. Load the toolkit the group will carry into John 6 next week.

A note on time. If you must cut, cut the second Win question and compress Exodus 16:16-30 by reading verses 16-21 and 29-30 only. Keep Psalm 78 and Wisdom 16; the raised register matters next week.

Part Two: Discussion Guide

Opening Prayer

Leader: Father, you fed your people in a land of no harvests, morning by morning, for forty years. Teach us tonight what you taught them: that we live from your mouth and from your hand, one day at a time. Give us this day our daily bread. Amen.

Win: Opening the Conversation

1. Describe a season of your life when you could only manage one day at a time. Looking back, what did it grow in you that easier seasons never did?
2. Why do we find it so hard to trust provision we cannot stockpile?

Build: Into the Text

Leader: The group's task tonight is to become experts in the manna, because next week that expertise gets spent. Read each block aloud and reconstruct before revealing.

3. Read Exodus 16:1-15. Where does the bread come from, when does it come, and what do the people say when they first see it? What does Moses call it in verse 15?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

It comes from heaven (verse 4: behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you), each morning with the dew. The people say *man hu*, what is it, and the question becomes its name. Moses answers: it is the bread which the LORD has given you to eat. Note the whole shape: bread, from heaven, mysterious in nature, given by God, given to be eaten.

4. Read Exodus 16:16-30. What are the rules of the manna? What happens to hoarded manna, and what is different about the sixth day? What was God teaching Israel through this rhythm?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

An omer per person, gathered daily; whoever gathered much had nothing over, and whoever gathered little had no lack. Kept overnight it bred worms and became foul, except the sixth day's double portion, which kept fresh for the Sabbath. The rhythm taught daily dependence and Sabbath trust: God's provision cannot be banked, only received, and resting on his word does not leave you hungry.

5. Read Exodus 16:31-35. What did the manna taste like, how long did it last, and what does God command in verses 32-34? What is strange about that command?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

It tasted like wafers made with honey, and it fell for forty years, until Israel reached the border of Canaan. God commands an omer of it to be kept in a jar before the LORD, before the testimony, throughout your generations, so that later generations may see the bread.

Let the group name the strangeness: bread, of all things, preserved in God's own presence, generation after generation, to be seen. Do not resolve why. File it and move on.

6. Read Deuteronomy 8:2-3, Moses's own interpretation of the manna years. According to Moses, why did God feed Israel this way, and what was the lesson?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

God humbled Israel and fed them with manna, which they did not know, to make them know that man does not live by bread alone, but that man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD. The manna was catechesis: bread from God's hand teaching life from God's mouth. Hold on to the both-and

here; it matters in a moment.

7. Now hear the Old Testament sing about the manna. Read Psalm 78:18-25, then Wisdom 16:20-21 from the deuterocanon. What titles does the manna receive, and which direction do they push, toward ordinary bread or toward something greater?

ANSWER (*share after the discussion*)

Psalm 78: the grain of heaven; man ate of the bread of the angels. Wisdom: the food of angels, bread from heaven ready to eat, providing every pleasure and suited to every taste. Israel's own meditation did not domesticate the manna; it exalted it. The figure keeps growing in the telling, as if the manna itself were straining toward something it had not yet become.

The Other Side of the Table

Leader: Read the objection at full strength.

The word-not-bread reading. Moses himself tells us the manna's meaning, and it is not sacramental. Man does not live by bread alone but by every word from God's mouth: the manna points to the word, to teaching, to trust. The prophets agree; Amos threatens a famine not of bread but of hearing the words of the Lord. So when Jesus later calls himself the bread from heaven, the manna's own logic says he means his word and the faith that feeds on it. (This word-centered reading is common among some Protestant interpreters, though by no means all; many affirm a real spiritual feeding on Christ. Take it in its strongest form.)

8. Strengthen it: what is the best case that the manna points to the word rather than to a sacrament?

ANSWER (*share after the discussion*)

Good additions: Deuteronomy 8:3 is the Bible's only explicit interpretation of the manna; Jesus himself quotes it against Satan (Matthew 4:4); and wisdom literature elsewhere uses eating as a figure for receiving teaching (Proverbs 9:5; Sirach 24:19-21).

9. Now answer from tonight's texts. Does Deuteronomy 8:3 dissolve the bread into a metaphor? And what do the jar and the psalm do to a word-only reading?

ANSWER (*share after the discussion*)

Deuteronomy 8:3 interprets the manna; it does not evaporate it. Israel learned to live from God's mouth precisely by eating real bread from God's hand, every morning, for forty years. The lesson and the loaf came together; remove the loaf and there is no lesson. Scripture's pattern is word and bread, not word instead of bread.

The jar also sits oddly with a word-only reading: God preserves not a scroll before the testimony but bread, kept beside the tablets of the word. The jar does not prove a Eucharistic referent, but it keeps the bread itself from evaporating into metaphor. And the psalm's direction of travel runs the same way: bread of the angels raises the bread's dignity; it does not reduce it to a figure of speech.

Say plainly what is and is not settled: tonight does not prove the Eucharist from Exodus 16. It establishes the figure at full strength: heavenly bread, truly eaten, teaching life from God, memorialized before his face. Next week we hand this loaded text to Jesus in the synagogue at Capernaum and let him tell us what the manna was for. The group should go home suspecting the fulfillment will not be smaller than the figure.

DIG DEEPER: The Jar Before the Lord

Read Exodus 16:33-34 once more, then Hebrews 9:3-4, the New Testament's inventory of the Holy of Holies: the golden urn holding the manna kept inside the ark of the covenant, beside the tablets.

Ask only this: the tablets are God's word in stone. What is bread doing in there next to them, at the exact center of Israel's worship? Do not answer it. Write the question on the group's running list, beside the lamb question from Session 3.

Send: Taking It With You

10. Whoever gathered much had nothing over; whoever gathered little had no lack. Where is God inviting you to stop hoarding and start receiving daily, in your finances, your plans, your prayer?

11. Israel walked past a miracle every morning until it became boring to them (Numbers 11:6). What God-given bread have you allowed to become ordinary, and what would it take to taste the honey in it again?

Live It This Week

- Pray the Our Father slowly once a day, pausing at give us this day our daily bread, and name aloud what you need from God today only.
- Fast from one comfort for one day this week, and each time you miss it, pray Deuteronomy 8:3 from memory (in its own wording, not Matthew's quotation of it).
- Read Numbers 11:4-9 on your own and notice what forty years of miracle sounded like to bored hearts. Ask God to guard you from that.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

Man ate of the bread of the angels; he sent them food in abundance. Psalm 78:25

Closing Prayer

Together: Father, you rained bread on your grumbling people and never once stopped. Feed us from your mouth and from your hand. Make us a people who gather every morning, rest on your word, and never lose the taste of honey in your gifts. Amen.

Part Three: Leader Reference Card

Passage	Used For
Exodus 16:1-15	Bread rained from heaven; man hu; the command to eat; live discovery
Exodus 16:16-30	Daily gathering, no hoarding, Sabbath double portion
Exodus 16:31-35	Taste like honey wafers; forty years; the jar before the Lord
Deuteronomy 8:2-3	Moses's interpretation; steelman text; live discovery
Psalms 78:18-25	Grain of heaven; bread of the angels; live discovery
Wisdom 16:20-21	Food of angels, suited to every taste; deuterocanon
Matthew 4:4; Amos 8:11; Proverbs 9:5; Sirach 24:19-21	Steelman support: word as food
Hebrews 9:3-4	Dig Deeper: golden urn of manna in the ark
Numbers 11:4-9 (reference)	Bored hearts; Send question and Live It reading
Psalms 78:25	Memory verse

Session 6: The Manna of the Messiah

John 6:1-71 (second pass); Revelation 2:17

Part One: Leader Preparation Guide

Session Overview

Discovery Aim. Returning to John 6 with five weeks of tools, the group discovers that the whole discourse happens at Passover, that Jesus claims to be the reality the manna pointed to, and that his bread surpasses the manna at the exact point of contrast he chooses: your fathers ate, and died; whoever eats this bread will live for ever.

Catholic Touchstone. The Bread of Life discourse prepares for the institution of the Eucharist; Christ, the true bread from heaven, gives the food that endures to eternal life (CCC 1338, 1406).

What You Need to Know

Tonight is the study's first harvest. In Session 1 the group read John 6 cold and felt only the scandal. Since then they have learned the hope of the new Moses, the murmuring in the wilderness, and the manna at full strength: heavenly, eaten, exalted by psalm and sage, memorialized before God. Now they read the chapter again, and the experience should be like rewatching a film after learning the ending: details invisible the first time carry the weight.

Three discoveries drive the night. First, the timestamp almost everyone skips: the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand (John 6:4). John dates the entire bread discourse to Passover season, by his own sequence of feasts about a year before the Last Supper. Second, the manna claim: the crowd throws the manna at Jesus as a challenge, exactly as the new-Moses expectation predicts, and Jesus answers by claiming to be the true bread the manna anticipated. Third, the surpassing: Jesus chooses the comparison himself, and the point of comparison is death. The fathers ate the manna and died; the bread he gives conquers death.

One background note, clearly labeled for what it is. Some Jewish writings from around and after the New Testament era voice an expectation that in the days of the Messiah the manna would come down again. That expectation appears in texts outside the Bible, and we hold it lightly as historical background rather than proof. But Scripture itself carries the same instinct to its heaven: the risen Christ promises the victor the hidden manna (Revelation 2:17). The manna thread does not end in the wilderness.

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

Exodus 16 behind John 6. Bread from heaven, given to be eaten; murmuring at the gift; a whole generation fed and yet dying in the wilderness. John's chapter is built on Exodus's chapter, echo by echo.

Numbers 11:7-9. The manna fell with the dew, night by night, and the people ground and boiled it: bread that was genuinely eaten, genuinely daily, genuinely from God.

Fulfillment. Jesus takes the manna's whole shape and claims it: I am the living bread which came down from heaven. What descends now is not a substance but a person; what is promised now is not another forty years but eternal life; and what remains commanded is the same as it ever was: this bread is given to be eaten. Revelation 2:17 seals the trajectory: the manna, hidden with God, is the food of the world to come.

Voices of the Church

St. Ignatius of Antioch (d. c. 107)

On the road to his martyrdom in Rome, Ignatius begged the Christians there not to hinder his death, in words that show what bread meant to him: I desire the bread of God, which is the flesh of Jesus Christ

(*Letter to the Romans* 7). For the earliest generation after the apostles, the bread of God of John 6 had a name and a body.

St. Cyril of Alexandria (d. 444)

In summary of his commentary on John: Cyril taught that the Word of God, being life by nature, made his own flesh life-giving by making it his own. When we eat that flesh, in his teaching, we take his life into ourselves, and the body once dead in Adam is quickened for resurrection. For Cyril, whoever eats this bread will live for ever is not poetry; it is the life of the world to come already at work.

St. Carlo Acutis (1991-2006)

A witness from your own generation: Carlo Acutis, an Italian teenager who built websites cataloguing Eucharistic miracles and was canonized in 2025, summed up John 6 in the sentence he lived by: the Eucharist is my highway to heaven. He attended daily Mass from the age of seven; another saying widely attributed to him calls the tabernacle the most visited place on earth, because heaven's bread is there. The manna of the Messiah has fed teenagers within living memory.

Catechism Connection

- CCC 1338: John reports the words of Jesus in the synagogue at Capernaum that prepare for the institution of the Eucharist.
- CCC 1336: the first announcement of the Eucharist divided the disciples; the same mystery remains a stumbling block for hearts.
- CCC 1406: Jesus said: I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life.
- CCC 1524: the Eucharist given as viaticum is the bread for our final journey, the seed of eternal life. (The manna comparison, food for pilgrims to the border and this bread for pilgrims across it, is this study's own.)

THREAD WATCH

The command to eat. The thread reaches its New Testament peak short of the upper room, now as a declaration of necessity: unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man (John 6:53). The group can now hear that verse inside the whole chain: lamb, covenant meal, manna, and next, the bread only priests could eat.

Where is the lamb? John 6:4 puts a Passover on the horizon of the whole discourse. If anyone in the group connects the timestamp to a lamb, honor it in one sentence and hold. The question stays open.

Sealed guesses. Four sessions until they open. Confirm the envelopes are safe.

Session Goals

1. Re-read John 6 with the toolkit of Sessions 2 through 5 and experience the second-pass effect.
2. Discover the Passover timestamp of John 6:4 and register its weight.
3. Trace Jesus's argument from the crowd's manna challenge to his claim to surpass the manna.
4. Answer the no-institution-narrative steelman honestly from John's own design.
5. Follow the manna to its biblical end point in Revelation 2:17.

A note on time. If you must cut, cut the second Win question and read John 6:1-15 in summary rather than in full. Do not cut Revelation 2:17; the thread needs its heaven.

Part Two: Discussion Guide

Opening Prayer

Leader: Lord Jesus, five weeks ago we heard your hardest words and did not walk away. Tonight, open the same chapter to us as you opened the Scriptures on the road, and give us the bread that endures to eternal life. Amen.

Win: Opening the Conversation

1. Have you ever rewatched a film or reread a book after knowing how it ends? What changes on the second pass?
2. Since Session 1, has John 6 come to mind during the week, at Mass or elsewhere? Where?

Build: Into the Text

Leader: Announce plainly: tonight we go back to the chapter we started with, carrying everything we now know. Same text, new eyes.

3. Read John 6:1-15. First discovery: read verse 4 twice. When does this whole chapter happen? And given Sessions 2 and 3, why does that detail matter enormously?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

The Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand. John stamps the entire bread discourse with Passover, a Passover before the Last Supper's. The chapter about eating flesh unfolds in the season of the lamb that must be eaten. John rarely wastes a timestamp; he is telling the reader in what key to hear everything that follows.

Note also verses 14-15: the fed crowd concludes Jesus is the prophet who is to come, the new Moses of Deuteronomy 18, and moves to make him king. The group predicted this reaction in Session 2 before reading it.

4. Read John 6:25-34. What exactly is the crowd's challenge in verses 30-31, and why, given the new-Moses expectation, is it the obvious one? How does Jesus correct their reading of the manna in verses 32-33?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

They demand a sign and name it: our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, as it is written, he gave them bread from heaven to eat. The challenge reads naturally against Session 2's new-Moses hope: if you are the prophet like Moses, where is bread like his? That is a reading of the exchange, but the crowd's own words invite it: they have just called him the prophet (6:14) and now cite the manna (6:31). Jesus corrects two things: it was not Moses but my Father who gives the bread from heaven, and the giving is present tense: gives you the true bread. The true bread is not a substance falling on a camp; it is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. They answer like the Samaritan woman at the well: Lord, give us this bread always.

5. Read John 6:35-51. Watch the discourse climb. Where does it move beyond anything the manna ever was, and in verse 51, what three claims stack up in one sentence?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

The manna never said I; the bread now speaks. I am the bread of life; I have come down from heaven; and the climb completes at verse 51: I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live for ever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh. Three claims: the bread is himself; eating it defeats death; and the giving is future tense, pointing past the sermon to a gift not yet given. Hold that future tense; the steelman needs it.

6. Read John 6:47-58 and isolate the comparison Jesus himself draws with the manna, twice (verses 49-50 and 58). What is his chosen point of contrast? Given Session 5, why is that a staggering thing to claim?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Death. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died; this is the bread which comes down from heaven, that a man may eat of it and not die. Not such as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live for ever.

The group now knows, from Israel's own Scriptures, what stands on the manna's side of the scale: bread from heaven, bread of the angels (Psalm 78), food suited to every taste (Wisdom 16), bread kept before the LORD. Jesus does not rehearse those titles; he goes straight past them to the one point no bread ever touched: the grave. The manna sustained life for forty years; this bread overturns death forever.

7. Last discovery. Read Revelation 2:17, the risen Christ speaking to the church at Pergamum. Where does the manna thread end, and what does that promise to those who conquer?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

To him who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna. That is the promise, exactly. Hearing behind it the jar kept before the LORD, and ahead of it the food of glory, is the reading this study has been building, and the group has earned it, so long as it is marked as reading rather than as the verse's own words. Scripture's last word on the manna is a promise to the victors.

The Other Side of the Table

Leader: Session 1 answered the metaphor reading. Tonight's objection is more sophisticated. Read it at full strength.

The no-institution reading. Grant that John 6 is realistic language; it still is not about the Eucharist, because John is the one Gospel with no institution narrative. At his Last Supper there is a foot washing, not a this is my body. If John understood chapter 6 eucharistically, the omission is inexplicable. Read in its own context, the discourse resolves into faith: this is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent (6:29), and it is Peter's belief, not any meal, that ends the chapter (6:68-69).

8. Strengthen it: what is the best additional case that John's silence at the supper undoes a Eucharistic reading of chapter 6?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Good additions: John is the latest Gospel and could presume nothing; verse 40 (every one who sees the Son and believes has eternal life) runs exactly parallel to verse 54 (he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life), suggesting eating is believing; and John elsewhere spiritualizes: living water, born again.

9. Now answer from John's own design. What do the Passover timestamp, the future tense of 6:51, and John's habits as a writer do to this objection? And are faith and eating actually rivals in the chapter?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

First, a longstanding Catholic reading answers the silence: John does not omit the Eucharist; he relocates it. The timestamp at 6:4 sets the discourse one Passover before the Cross, and the future tense (the bread which I shall give) points forward from the sermon to a gift still coming. John gives us the theology of the gift at one Passover and lets the other Gospels record its institution at the next. His first readers, worshipping in churches that had celebrated that gift for decades, were well placed to hear it.

Second, John does this on purpose elsewhere. He has no narrative of Jesus's baptism either, yet chapter 3 is the New Testament's deepest baptism text. Writing last, John's habit is to give the meaning of the sacraments his readers already lived, not to repeat the accounts they already had.

Third, the parallel of verses 40 and 54 proves relation, not identity, and the direction of the discourse decides which way the relation runs: it climbs from believing to eating, and after verse 51 it never climbs back down. If eating merely restated believing, the intensification, the desertion, and the refusal to soften (Session 1) are inexplicable. In the chapter's own order, faith is the door and the bread is what faith receives: this is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent, and the one who believes is the one told, eat. The Church has never chosen between 6:29 and 6:53, and neither did John.

DIG DEEPER: Give Us This Bread Always

Set John 6:34 beside Matthew 6:11. The crowd prays, Lord, give us this bread always; Jesus taught us to pray, give us this day our daily bread.

The Church's tradition, gathered at CCC 2837, hears in the Our Father's rare word for daily (*epiousios*) a bread beyond the pantry, referred directly to the Bread of Life. Ask: when you pray the Our Father this week, what are you actually asking for, and would you dare mean it the way the Fathers did?

Send: Taking It With You

10. The crowd chased Jesus around a lake for bread that perishes. What are you currently pursuing with that kind of energy, and what would it look like to labor for the food that endures (6:27)?

11. Your fathers ate, and died. Every merely earthly answer to hunger ends there. Where do you most need the bread that does not end there, this month, honestly?

Live It This Week

- Reread John 6 one more time in one sitting, now as a second-pass reader, and write down the single verse that hit differently than it did in Session 1.
- Arrive ten minutes early to Mass this Sunday and spend them before the tabernacle with one sentence of Carlo Acutis in mind: heaven's bread is here.
- Memorize the memory verse well enough to say it with your eyes closed.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live for ever... **John 6:51**

Closing Prayer

Together: Lord Jesus, true bread from heaven, our fathers ate and died, and you have promised more. Feed us with yourself, keep us until the hidden manna, and let us live for ever. Amen.

Part Three: Leader Reference Card

Passage	Used For
John 6:1-15	Multiplication; Passover timestamp (6:4); prophet-king reaction
John 6:25-34	Manna challenge; true bread correction; give us this bread always
John 6:35-51	The climb; I am the living bread; future tense of 6:51
John 6:47-58	Chosen contrast with the manna: they died, this bread conquers death
John 6:29, 40, 60-71	Steelman texts: faith emphasis; parallel of 40 and 54
Revelation 2:17	The hidden manna; thread's end point; live discovery
Numbers 11:7-9	Leader background: the manna genuinely eaten
John 3 (reference)	Steelman answer: John's sacramental method without institution accounts
Matthew 6:11	Dig Deeper: daily bread beside John 6:34
John 6:51	Memory verse

Session 7: The Bread of the Presence

Exodus 25:23-30; Leviticus 24:5-9; 1 Samuel 21:1-6; Matthew 12:1-8

Part One: Leader Preparation Guide

Session Overview

Discovery Aim. The group discovers the bread almost nobody has heard of: holy bread kept perpetually before God's face, called a covenant for ever, offered with a memorial portion, and commanded to be eaten by priests, with vessels for wine standing beside it on the golden table.

Catholic Touchstone. Bread and wine stood among the signs of the Old Covenant that receive their fulfillment in the Eucharist (CCC 1333-1334); and the Church keeps the Blessed Sacrament reserved in the tabernacle, the abiding Presence before which we adore (CCC 1378-1379).

What You Need to Know

Tonight's material is the study's best kept secret. Ask most Christians about bread in the Old Testament and you will hear about manna and maybe unleavened bread. Almost no one knows that in the Holy Place of Israel's sanctuary, on the golden table, twelve loaves stood before the LORD always, week after week, century after century. The Hebrew name is *lechem ha-panim*, literally the bread of the face: bread kept before the face of God. Our translations render it the bread of the Presence.

Walk the group through its law slowly, because every clause is doing work. The bread is set before me always (Exodus 25:30). The table carries flagons and bowls for pouring libations: bread and wine together before the Lord. In Leviticus 24 the loaves are twelve, evoking the twelve tribes; frankincense goes with them as a memorial portion, the same memorial family of words the group learned in Session 4; the arrangement is called a covenant for ever; and the bread is a most holy portion that Aaron and his sons shall eat in a holy place. Holy bread, covenant bread, memorial bread, bread before God's face, bread that must be eaten, and by law only by the priests. The group has spent six weeks building the categories to hear all of that.

One item tonight requires your most careful honesty, and the guide scripts it for you: a tradition recorded in the Babylonian Talmud (Menahot 29a; compare Hagigah 26b) describes the priests, at the great pilgrimage feasts, lifting the golden table to show the bread of the Presence to the pilgrims and saying: behold, God's love for you. It is a breathtaking picture, and it may well preserve a genuine memory of temple practice. But the Talmud was written down centuries after the temple fell, so we present it exactly as what it is, a later Jewish tradition held lightly, and we let the biblical texts carry the argument. The study's credibility is worth more than any illustration.

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

Exodus 25:23-30. A table of acacia overlaid with pure gold, with plates, dishes, flagons, and bowls for libations, and the command: you shall set the bread of the Presence on the table before me always. Bread, with vessels for wine, perpetually before God.

Leviticus 24:5-9. Twelve cakes in two rows; pure frankincense with the bread as a memorial portion offered by fire; set in order every sabbath on behalf of the people of Israel as a covenant for ever; eaten by Aaron and his sons in a holy place as a most holy portion.

1 Samuel 21:1-6. David, fleeing Saul, receives the holy bread at Nob, the bread of the Presence removed from before the Lord. The priest hesitates; the bread is not common.

Fulfillment. Jesus himself reaches for this bread. Defending his disciples in the grainfields, he cites David eating the bread of the Presence, and then says the sentence that reframes the whole institution: something greater than the temple is here (Matthew 12:6). The categories of the bread of the Face, covenant bread before

God, eaten by a priestly people, do not dissolve in the New Covenant; the Church's tradition has seen them waiting for their reality. Do not preach the tabernacle connection tonight; the group's own eyes will get there, and the Catechism Connection names it for you if they ask.

Voices of the Church

St. Bede the Venerable (d. 735)

In summary of his book *De Tabernaculo*, a verse by verse meditation on the sanctuary: Bede read the tabernacle's furnishings as figures of Christ and his Church, the table and its loaves among them: God's people presented before him and fed in his presence. (The compressed formulation is ours; the method is his.) For Bede, the furniture of the tabernacle was prophecy in gold and bread.

St. Alphonsus Liguori (1696-1787)

In summary of his little classic *Visits to the Blessed Sacrament*: Alphonsus taught generations of Catholics to do what Israel's priests did, to come regularly before the bread that stands in God's presence. Of all devotions, he wrote, adoration of Jesus in the Sacrament is the greatest after the sacraments themselves, the one dearest to God and most useful to us; the King of heaven keeps residence among us, and love waits there for visitors.

St. Peter Julian Eymard (1811-1868)

In summary of his preaching: the founder of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament, called the Apostle of the Eucharist, took the perpetual bread as his life's theme. The Presence is not an occasional visit but an abiding: Emmanuel remains, day and night, in the tabernacle; and a saying attributed to him promises that an age is renewed when it rediscovers the Eucharistic Presence at its center. That Exodus's always, before me finds its truth at the tabernacle is this study's application of his theme.

Catechism Connection

- CCC 1333-1334: at the heart of the Eucharist are bread and wine; among the Old Covenant signs, bread and wine already carried covenant significance that the Eucharist fulfills.
- CCC 1378: the Church worships the Eucharist not only during Mass but outside it, reserving the consecrated hosts with the greatest care and exposing them to solemn veneration.
- CCC 1379: the tabernacle was first intended for reserving the Eucharist for the sick; as faith in the Real Presence deepened, the Church became conscious of adoring her Lord present under the species, and the tabernacle became the living heart of her churches.

THREAD WATCH

The command to eat. Tonight's link is the strangest yet: they shall eat it in a holy place (Leviticus 24:9). Holy bread before God's face, and the law still ends in eating. The chain now runs: lamb, covenant meal, manna, and priestly bread.

Priesthood seed. By law this bread belonged to Aaron and his sons; 1 Samuel 21 records the great exception. If anyone asks whether Christians count as priests, smile and say: excellent question, hold it two weeks. Do not open 1 Peter 2 tonight.

Sealed guesses. Three sessions until they open. Confirm the envelopes are safe.

Session Goals

1. Meet the bread of the Presence in its own texts and reconstruct its law: perpetual, covenantal, memorial, holy, eaten.
2. Notice the libation vessels: bread and wine together on the golden table.

3. Present the Talmudic elevation tradition with full honesty as later tradition, held lightly.
4. Hear Jesus cite this bread and claim something greater than the temple.
5. Answer the arbitrary-typology steelman from the texts.

A note on time. If you must cut, cut the second Win question and the Dig Deeper. Keep the Talmud paragraph with its hedges intact; shortened honesty is how studies lose trust.

Part Two: Discussion Guide

Opening Prayer

Leader: Father, you commanded bread to stand before your face always, and you have never wanted your people far from your table. Open to us tonight what almost no one knows, and let us see your love set out in gold and bread. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Win: Opening the Conversation

1. What is something you keep permanently in a place of honor in your home, and what does keeping it there do for you?
2. If a friend asked you where in the world God is most concretely present, what would you honestly answer?

Build: Into the Text

Leader: Announce: tonight we meet a bread most Christians have never heard of, and we will let its own laws tell us what it is.

3. Read Exodus 25:23-30, God's instructions for the golden table. What is the table made of, what vessels go on it, and what does verse 30 command? The Hebrew name for this bread is *lechem ha-panim*, the bread of the face. What is it doing in the sanctuary?

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

Acacia wood overlaid with pure gold, with plates and dishes, and flagons and bowls with which to pour libations, that is, vessels for wine offerings. And the command: you shall set the bread of the Presence on the table before me always. In the very design of the sanctuary, bread stands perpetually before the face of God, with vessels for wine offerings among the table's equipment.

Let someone in the group notice it before you do: bread, and vessels for wine, together at the LORD's table. Then move on without developing it; the pairing is an observation about the table's equipment, and later sessions will weigh it.

4. Read Leviticus 24:5-9, the full law of this bread. Reconstruct it: how many loaves and why; what goes with the bread and what is that offering called; what is the arrangement called in verse 8; and what happens to the bread in verse 9?

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

Twelve cakes, in two rows of six; the number naturally evokes the twelve tribes, all Israel before the LORD. Pure frankincense goes with it as a memorial portion offered by fire, the same memorial vocabulary the group learned in Session 4. Every sabbath it is set in order on behalf of the people of Israel as a covenant for ever. And it is for Aaron and his sons, who shall eat it in a holy place, for it is a most holy portion.

Slow down and stack the group's six weeks of categories: this is covenant bread, memorial bread, bread before God's presence, holy bread, and bread commanded to be eaten, by priests. Every major word of this study is sitting on one golden table.

5. Read 1 Samuel 21:1-6. David, on the run, comes to the priest at Nob. What does he receive, and what does the passage insist about this bread even while bending its rule?

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

There is no common bread at hand, only holy bread, the bread of the Presence removed from before the LORD. The priest gives it to David and his men only after establishing their fitness. Even in the exception, the text underlines the rule: this bread is not ordinary, and eating it is a sacred matter.

Leader, read this paragraph aloud, hedges and all: Jewish tradition preserved a striking memory of this bread. The Babylonian Talmud, written down centuries after the temple was destroyed, records that at the

great pilgrimage feasts the priests would lift the golden table to show the bread of the Presence to the pilgrims and say: behold, God's love for you. Because the source is late, we hold the picture lightly; it may preserve genuine temple practice, or later idealization. What Scripture itself guarantees is enough: God commanded bread before his face, forever, on behalf of his people. If the priests ever did lift that table, they were only saying out loud what the law already meant.

6. Read Matthew 12:1-8. Defending his hungry disciples, which story does Jesus reach for, and what enormous claim does he make in verse 6? Why does it matter that Jesus himself put this bread into the Gospel?

ANSWER (*share after the discussion*)

He cites David eating the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him or his men to eat, but only for the priests, and then declares: I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. Jesus knows this bread, invokes its law and its great exception, and stands himself above the temple that housed it.

For our study, the payoff is methodological: the bread of the Presence is not an obscurity we dredged up; it is a text Jesus himself handled, in a dispute about eating, while claiming to be greater than the sanctuary of the Presence. The categories are his before they are ours.

The Other Side of the Table

Leader: Read the objection at full strength.

The arbitrary-typology reading. Ancient temples were full of furniture, and Israel's had bread on a table. Connecting that to the Eucharist is typology hunting: pick any old object, find a vague resemblance, declare a prophecy. The New Testament never calls Jesus the bread of the Presence; even Hebrews, which walks through the sanctuary piece by piece and mentions the table and the bread (Hebrews 9:2), draws no Eucharistic conclusion from it. A connection Scripture never draws is a connection we invented.

7. Strengthen it: what standards should separate real biblical typology from wishful pattern-matching?

ANSWER (*share after the discussion*)

Let the group build real criteria. Good ones: the type should be prominent, not trivial; the correspondence should be specific, not vague; Scripture or the apostolic Church should treat the institution as forward-pointing; and the fulfillment should be greater than the figure, not sideways from it.

8. Now test tonight's bread against the group's own criteria. Does it pass? Answer only from the texts we have read.

ANSWER (*share after the discussion*)

Prominent: it stood in the Holy Place, in gold, perpetually; Jesus himself cites it. Specific: not bread in general, but bread that is covenantal, memorial, perpetual, before God's presence, holy, commanded to be eaten, with vessels for wine at hand, a striking convergence of features, several explicit in the texts themselves, not a vague resemblance. Forward-pointing: the whole sanctuary was a copy and shadow of heavenly things (Hebrews 8:5), a forward reference for the sanctuary as a whole rather than a one-to-one code for each object; and Jesus's something greater than the temple is here claims the reality that the temple and everything in it served. Greater, not sideways: on this reading, bread before God's face is answered by God's own presence as bread.

Concede honestly what the objection gets right: no New Testament verse says Jesus is the bread of the Presence, and we will not pretend one does. Typology is convergence, not proof-texting. But convergence is now the story of this study: lamb, covenant meal, manna, and the bread of the Face do not each prove the Eucharist; together they draw its exact shape, a century before it existed. At some point the objection must explain the shape.

DIG DEEPER: The Furniture of the Holy Place

Read Hebrews 9:1-5, the New Testament's tour of the sanctuary: the lampstand, the table and the bread of the Presence, and behind the veil the golden urn holding the manna.

Ask the group to consult their running list from Session 5. Bread on the table before the Presence; bread preserved in the urn at the heart of the ark. Why is Israel's sanctuary so full of bread? Do not answer. The list is nearly ready to answer itself.

Send: Taking It With You

9. Bread stood before God's face always, and God's people knew where to find his presence. Where, concretely, is that in your week? What would change if you treated the tabernacle in your parish as Exodus treats the golden table?

10. Behold, God's love for you: whether or not the priests ever said it over the bread, God says it over the gift the Church has seen this bread foreshadowing. When did you last let yourself be shown that, rather than just told it?

Live It This Week

- Visit your parish church once this week outside of Mass, find the tabernacle lamp, and sit for ten minutes before the Presence with no agenda.
- Memorize the memory verse, and each time you pass a Catholic church this week, pray it once.
- Read Hebrews 9:1-10 slowly on your own and list every object the author names, noticing how many involve bread.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

And you shall set the bread of the Presence on the table before me always. Exodus 25:30

Closing Prayer

Together: Lord God, you set bread before your face and called it a covenant for ever. Set us in your presence like that bread: offered, remembered, and wholly yours. And teach us to seek your face where you have promised to be found. Amen.

Part Three: Leader Reference Card

Passage	Used For
Exodus 25:23-30	The golden table; libation vessels; before me always; live discovery
Leviticus 24:5-9	Twelve loaves; memorial portion; covenant for ever; priests shall eat
1 Samuel 21:1-6	David and the holy bread at Nob; live discovery
Matthew 12:1-8	Jesus cites the bread; something greater than the temple; live discovery
Hebrews 9:1-5	Dig Deeper: sanctuary tour; table, bread, urn of manna
Hebrews 8:5; 9:2	Steelman texts: copy and shadow; Hebrews's silence
Babylonian Talmud (tradition)	Elevation of the table; presented hedged, held lightly
Exodus 25:30	Memory verse

Session 8: A Priest Forever

Genesis 14:17-20; Psalm 110; Hebrews 7:1-28; Mark 14:22-24

Part One: Leader Preparation Guide

Session Overview

Discovery Aim. The group discovers the Bible's strangest priest: before Levi, before Aaron, Melchizedek blesses Abram and brings out bread and wine; a psalm promises the Messiah a priesthood of his order for ever; Hebrews crowns Jesus with it; and at his one great offering, Jesus takes bread and wine.

Catholic Touchstone. The Church sees in the gesture of the king and priest Melchizedek, who brought out bread and wine, a prefiguring of her own offering (CCC 1333); Christ is the unique high priest after the order of Melchizedek (CCC 1544).

What You Need to Know

Every sacrifice needs a priest. The group has watched the shape of the Eucharist assemble for seven weeks: a lamb that must be eaten, covenant blood at a meal, bread from heaven, bread before the Face. Tonight the question becomes: who offers? And Scripture's answer begins long before Aaron, with three verses in Genesis and one line in a psalm that the New Testament spends three chapters unpacking.

Melchizedek appears from nowhere: king of Salem, priest of God Most High, no genealogy, no death notice. He blesses Abram after the battle, receives a tenth of everything, and, the detail our study cares about, he brought out bread and wine. Be precise here, because precision is our credibility: Genesis says he brought out bread and wine; it does not use the word sacrifice. The Church's tradition, as old as her liturgy, has read the act as a priestly offering, and the grammar invites it, since the verse explains the act by his office: he was priest of God Most High. But we will present the text as it stands and label the sacrificial reading as the Church's venerable interpretation, which is exactly what the Roman Canon does when it prays of the offering of your high priest Melchizedek.

Then Psalm 110, the psalm Jesus himself loved to quote: the Lord swears to David's lord, you are a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek. Hebrews takes the oath with total seriousness: a priesthood outside Levi's line, prior to it, greater than it, and permanent. And here is the discovery the group should be allowed to make with their own mouths: if the Messiah's priesthood is of Melchizedek's order and not Aaron's, then, the Church has always reasoned, his offering will bear his own order's mark and not Aaron's. Hebrews sums up Aaron's atonement offerings as the blood of bulls and goats (10:4), though Israel's worship also offered grain and wine. What did Melchizedek bring out? And what did Jesus take into his hands on the night he gave himself up?

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

Genesis 14:17-20. Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought out bread and wine; he was priest of God Most High. He blesses Abram, and Abram gives him a tenth of everything. The Bible's first named priest acts with bread and wine in his hands.

Psalm 110:1-4. A royal psalm of David: the Lord says to my lord, sit at my right hand; and then the oath: the Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, you are a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek. The Messiah will be a priest, and not a Levitical one.

Hebrews 7. The New Testament's longest sustained argument: Melchizedek, resembling the Son of God, continues a priest for ever; Levi, still in Abraham's loins, in effect paid him tithes; perfection was not through the Levitical priesthood; Jesus, of Judah not Levi, is priest by the power of an indestructible life, holding his priesthood permanently, able for all time to save those who draw near through him, since he always lives to make intercession.

Fulfillment. On the night he was betrayed, the priest for ever took bread, and then the cup, whose contents he himself calls the fruit of the vine (Mark 14:22-25). The new priesthood's offering is not another animal; Aaron's altar could multiply victims for ever and perfect no one. The offering of the order of Melchizedek is the priest himself, given under bread and wine. What Genesis whispered, the upper room performed.

Voices of the Church

St. Cyprian of Carthage (d. 258)

In summary of *Letter 63*, which the group met in Session 4: Cyprian read Melchizedek exactly as this session does. The order of Melchizedek, he wrote, is seen in the sacrament of the Lord's sacrifice: as Melchizedek, priest of God Most High, offered bread and wine and blessed Abraham, so our Lord offered the same, that is, his body and blood, and the ancient blessing comes to Abraham's true children at the altar. The third century read Genesis 14 as a Eucharistic text without embarrassment.

St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430)

In summary of his teaching in the *City of God*: Augustine marveled that in Melchizedek the sacrifice first appeared which is now offered to God by Christians throughout the whole world, so that what the psalm swore of Christ, you are a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek, is fulfilled before the world's eyes at every altar. For Augustine, the global daily offering of bread and wine was itself evidence that the oath of Psalm 110 had come true.

The Roman Canon (the most ancient Eucharistic Prayer of the Roman rite)

Not a saint but a praying voice preserved in the Roman rite for well over a millennium: in Eucharistic Prayer I, immediately after the consecration, the priest asks God to accept these gifts as once he accepted the offering of your high priest Melchizedek, a holy sacrifice, a spotless victim, naming him alongside Abel and Abraham. At the very moment the Church offers the Body and Blood, she remembers the man who brought out bread and wine. The liturgy is the oldest commentary the Church has.

Catechism Connection

- CCC 1333: the Church sees in the gesture of the king and priest Melchizedek, who brought out bread and wine, a prefiguring of her own offering.
- CCC 1544: everything the Old Covenant priesthood prefigured finds its fulfillment in Christ, the one mediator, whom the Church's tradition considers, with the letter to the Hebrews, the unique high priest after the order of Melchizedek.
- CCC 1410: it is Christ himself, the eternal high priest of the New Covenant, who, acting through the ministry of the priests, offers the Eucharistic sacrifice; and it is the same Christ, really present under the species of bread and wine, who is the offering.

THREAD WATCH

The command to eat. No new eat-command tonight, but a pairing to notice quietly: bread and wine together, for the second week running, first among the golden table's vessels, now in Melchizedek's hands.

Where is the lamb? Melchizedek meets Abram in Genesis 14; Isaac's question waits eight chapters ahead in the same man's story. If anyone reaches for Moriah, honor it in a sentence and hold.

Sealed guesses. Two sessions until they open. Next week's session ends deliberately unresolved; this is the calm before it.

Session Goals

1. Meet Melchizedek in Genesis 14 and state precisely what the text says and does not say.

2. Hear Psalm 110's oath and Jesus's own use of the psalm.
3. Follow Hebrews 7's argument for a priesthood outside and above Levi's.
4. Draw the mode-of-offering inference with the group's own mouths: Melchizedek's order offers bread and wine.
5. Answer the Hebrews-silence steelman with full honesty.

A note on time. If you must cut, cut the second Win question and read Hebrews 7:1-3 and 7:23-27 rather than the whole chapter. Do not cut the precision paragraph about brought out versus offered; it is the session's honesty anchor.

Part Two: Discussion Guide

Opening Prayer

Leader: Father, you swore an oath and will not change your mind: your Son is a priest for ever. Bring us tonight to the altar where that oath is kept, and bless us as Abram was blessed, with bread and wine and the name of God Most High. Amen.

Win: Opening the Conversation

1. Who in your life has blessed you, in the old sense: spoken over you words that actually shaped what you became?
2. When you hear the word priest, what do you picture first, and where did that picture come from?

Build: Into the Text

Leader: Tonight we track one figure across the whole Bible: three verses in Genesis, one oath in a psalm, three chapters in Hebrews, and one night in an upper room.

3. Read Genesis 14:17-20. List everything the text tells us about Melchizedek: his titles, his actions, and what he brings. Be exact: what does verse 18 say he did with the bread and wine, and how does the verse explain the act?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

King of Salem and priest of God Most High, the first person in the Bible called a priest. He brought out bread and wine, blessed Abram by God Most High, maker of heaven and earth, and received from Abram a tenth of everything.

Hold the group to precision: the text says he brought out bread and wine; it does not say he sacrificed them. But notice how the verse explains the act: he brought out bread and wine, and he was priest of God Most High. The office is given as the frame for the gesture. The Church's tradition, from her earliest centuries and in her most ancient Eucharistic Prayer, has read the act as a priestly offering. We hold the text and the tradition together honestly: what Genesis states is bread, wine, priesthood, and blessing, side by side.

4. Read Psalm 110:1-4. Who is speaking to whom in verse 1, and what does God swear in verse 4? Then read Mark 12:35-37: what does Jesus himself do with this psalm?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

The LORD speaks to David's lord: sit at my right hand. Then the oath, sworn and irrevocable: you are a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek. David's greater son, the Messiah, will be a priest, and of Melchizedek's order, not Aaron's.

Jesus quotes this exact psalm about the Messiah and presses its riddle on his hearers: David calls him Lord. It is the psalm the New Testament quotes most often, and Jesus himself pressed its riddle. When we build on Psalm 110, we are standing where Jesus stood.

5. Read Hebrews 7:1-3, 11-17, and 23-27. What is Hebrews's argument for why the Messiah's priesthood outranks Levi's, and what can this priest do that Aaron's line never could?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Melchizedek precedes and outranks Levi: Abraham, with Levi in effect still in his loins, paid him tithes and received his blessing, and the inferior is blessed by the superior. Perfection did not come through the Levitical priesthood, so the psalm promises another order. Jesus, from Judah, is priest not by genealogy but by the power of an indestructible life; he holds his priesthood permanently because he continues for ever; he is able for all time to save those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make

intercession; and unlike the daily offerings of mortal priests, he did this once for all when he offered up himself.

6. Now make the inference yourselves; do not let the leader make it for you. Hebrews sums up Aaron's atonement offerings as the blood of bulls and goats (10:4). If Jesus is priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek, what mark would you expect his offering to bear? Then read Mark 14:22-25 and say what he took into his hands.

ANSWER (*share after the discussion*)

Melchizedek's order is marked, from its first appearance, by bread and wine and blessing. And on the night he was betrayed, the priest for ever took bread, blessed, broke, and gave: this is my body; then the cup: this is my blood of the covenant. The offering of the new priesthood is himself, and its appearance is what Melchizedek's story led the Church to expect: bread and wine (CCC 1333).

Let the group feel how the pieces close: the victim is the priest (Hebrews 7:27, he offered up himself), and the appearance matches the order's first appearance in Scripture, as the Church has read it. In that reading, Aaron's altar explains the Cross's language of blood and sacrifice; Melchizedek's table explains why the sacrifice reaches us looking like a meal.

The Other Side of the Table

Leader: Read the objection at full strength.

The Hebrews-silence reading. Hebrews is the New Testament's authorized commentary on Melchizedek, and its interests are explicit: the name, the titles, the missing genealogy, the tithes, the blessing, the for ever. It never once mentions the bread and wine. If the inspired author, arguing at full stretch for Christ's Melchizedekian priesthood, did not reach for that detail, then the detail was not the point, and the Eucharistic reading hangs on the one clause Hebrews declined to use.

7. Strengthen it: what is the best additional case that the bread and wine are incidental to Melchizedek's significance?

ANSWER (*share after the discussion*)

Good additions: in the Genesis narrative the bread and wine can be read as royal hospitality, provisions for Abram's weary men; Hebrews's silence is total, not partial; and the strongest typology should follow the inspired author's own emphasis.

8. Now answer honestly. Does our argument require Hebrews to have made the bread-and-wine link? Where does the datum actually come from, and who else in the tradition carried it?

ANSWER (*share after the discussion*)

Concede the silence fully: Hebrews argues from the oath and the order, not from the menu, and our case never claimed otherwise. Hebrews establishes exactly what we need it for: that Jesus is priest for ever of Melchizedek's order, and that his self-offering is once for all. The bread and wine come from Genesis itself, where they are the first thing the text tells us this priest did. A commentary using some details does not delete the others; Hebrews interprets Salem as king of peace (7:2) yet never identifies the city with Jerusalem, and no one concludes the location is meaningless.

And the reading did not wait for us. Cyprian in the third century, Augustine preaching to the world, and the Roman Canon at the altar all carried Genesis 14 to the Eucharist. The question the silence-argument cannot answer is the one the whole study keeps posing: why does the Messiah's chosen sign, on the night of his offering, happen to match the signature of the very priestly order the oath assigned him? One coincidence is a coincidence. We are now five figures deep.

Keep the claim calibrated: typology converges; it does not compel. But the convergence is doing exactly

what the Church says figures do: drawing the shape of the gift before the gift is given.

DIG DEEPER: Blessed and Tithed

Melchizedek does two things besides the bread and wine: he blesses, and he receives a tenth. Read Hebrews 7:6-10 on the blessing, and then Luke 24:50-51, the last thing Jesus does on earth: he lifted up his hands and blessed them.

Ask: the priest for ever begins his heavenly session the way Melchizedek met Abram, hands raised in blessing. What does it mean that Christian life happens under those raised hands, and that we bring him, like Abram, a portion of everything?

Send: Taking It With You

9. He always lives to make intercession for those who draw near through him. Right now, tonight, the priest for ever is praying for you. What would you want him saying to the Father on your behalf this week?

10. Abram gave Melchizedek a tenth of everything after receiving bread, wine, and blessing. What proportion of your life does the priest who gives you himself actually receive back, honestly? What is one concrete step this month?

Live It This Week

- Pray Psalm 110 once this week, slowly, as Jesus's own psalm, and pause on verse 4 long enough to hear God swear.
- At Mass, when the priest extends his hands over the gifts, remember whose priesthood is acting through his, and silently pray: priest for ever, offer me with yourself.
- Write down one way you will imitate Melchizedek this week: bless someone out loud, by name, invoking God, and mean it.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, "You are a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek."
Psalm 110:4

Closing Prayer

Together: Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, you swore an oath and keep it at every altar: a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek. Bless us as Abram was blessed, receive what we bring, and hold us under the raised hands of your Son. Amen.

Part Three: Leader Reference Card

Passage	Used For
Genesis 14:17-20	Melchizedek: priest, blessing, tithe, bread and wine; live discovery
Psalms 110:1-4	The oath: priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek
Mark 12:35-37	Jesus's own use of Psalm 110
Hebrews 7:1-3, 11-17, 23-27	Priesthood above Levi; indestructible life; once for all
Mark 14:22-25	The priest for ever takes bread and the cup, the fruit of the vine; live discovery
Hebrews 7:6-10; Luke 24:50-51	Dig Deeper: blessing hands
Roman Canon (Supra quae)	Liturgical witness: the offering of your high priest Melchizedek
Psalms 110:4	Memory verse

Session 9: The Cups of the Passover

Exodus 6:6-8; Luke 22:14-20; Mark 14:22-26; Matthew 26:36-46

Part One: Leader Preparation Guide

Session Overview

Discovery Aim. The group discovers that the Last Supper was a structured Passover liturgy with more than one cup; that after the cup of blessing Jesus vowed not to drink the fruit of the vine again until the kingdom; that the company sang the hymn and left; and that, on the traditional shape of the meal, the liturgy is left unfinished, while on the canonical text itself the host has vowed off the vine and walked into the night.

Catholic Touchstone. By celebrating the Last Supper with his apostles in the course of the Passover meal, Jesus gave the Passover its definitive meaning (CCC 1339-1340); and his word over the cup reaches forward: until I drink it new in the kingdom of God (CCC 1403).

What You Need to Know

Read this paragraph twice, because tonight's discipline is unusual: this session must end unresolved. Next week the sealed guesses from Session 1 are opened, and everything tonight sets the table for that opening. Your job is to help the group see a tension in the text with their own eyes, feel its weight, and go home without an answer. If you resolve it tonight, even by a hint, you will spend next week's payoff for a moment's satisfaction. Hold the line.

Here is the ground. The Passover of Jesus's day was not a casual dinner but a structured liturgy of courses and cups. Jewish tradition, codified in the Mishnah around the year 200, describes four cups of wine framing the meal, with the cup after supper called the cup of blessing, and the Hallel psalms sung near the end. Because the Mishnah is later than the New Testament, and because Passover itself changed after the temple fell, we present that structure as tradition and hold its details lightly. But tonight's argument never leans on it, because the New Testament carries its own evidence: Luke records two distinct cups at the Supper; Paul independently calls the Eucharistic cup the cup of blessing, the traditional name of the cup after the meal; and Mark tells us they sang the hymn. A multi-cup liturgy with fixed songs is visible in the inspired text itself.

Then come the two data that create the tension. After the cup, Jesus vows: I shall not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God. And the company sings the hymn and goes out to the Mount of Olives, with the Passover, by its own customary shape, not yet complete. A vow not to drink, and a liturgy walked out of before its end. Later that night, in Gethsemane, Jesus is praying about a cup. Lay those stones tonight. Do not build the arch.

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

Exodus 6:6-8. Four promises of redemption in God's own voice: I will bring you out, I will deliver you, I will redeem you, I will take you for my people. Jewish tradition came to associate the cups of the Passover with these four promises; the association is traditional, but the promises themselves are the bedrock of the feast.

The Passover meal's shape. Courses, cups, and psalms: a liturgy of eating and drinking through Israel's redemption. The Gospel accounts move through it: a cup shared with thanksgiving (Luke 22:17), the bread during the meal, the cup after supper (Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 11:25), the hymn at the end (Mark 14:26).

Fulfillment, held back. Tonight, deliberately, we do not state the fulfillment. The texts will place a vow, an unfinished liturgy, and a cup in Gethsemane side by side. Next week, with the sealed guesses open on the table, the group will say the fulfillment themselves.

Voices of the Church

St. Gaudentius of Brescia (d. c. 410)

In summary of his Paschal preaching: Gaudentius, a bishop and friend of St. Ambrose's generation, taught the newly baptized that the Passover of the Jews was the shadow and the Church's Eucharist the truth: the one heir of both testaments keeps the feast, and what Israel ate in figure at its ordered meal, the Church now receives in reality. His Easter sermons walk the old feast and the new side by side.

St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)

In the Summa Theologiae (III, q. 74, a. 5), on the sacrament's matter: Aquinas noted that the Lord himself, at the Supper, called the contents of the cup the fruit of the vine, and the Church follows him: true wine of the grape is the matter of the sacrament of his blood. The Passover cups were real wine at a real table; so is the chalice. That the order of grace takes up rather than floats free of creation is our gloss, but it is his instinct.

St. Catherine of Siena (1347-1380)

In summary of her letters: a Doctor of the Church whose letters return again and again to the Blood, she urged her correspondents to drink from the side of Christ crucified, to find in the Blood both the price of their souls and the proof of God's madness of love. For Catherine, the question of what fills the cup, and what it costs, and who will drink it, lay close to the heart of the Gospel. Tonight the group begins asking her question from inside the upper room.

Catechism Connection

- CCC 1339-1340: Jesus chose the time of Passover; by celebrating the Supper in the course of the Passover meal he gave the Passover its definitive meaning, his passing over to the Father anticipated in the Supper and celebrated in the Eucharist.
- CCC 1403: at the Supper the Lord directed his disciples' attention toward the fulfillment of the Passover in the kingdom of God: I shall not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day; the Eucharist ever since has carried that forward-leaning hope.
- CCC 1130: the Church celebrates the mystery of her Lord until he comes; the liturgy strains toward the day when God will be all in all.

THREAD WATCH

The command to eat. Tonight the thread reaches the upper room itself: take, eat; drink of it, all of you. Every prior link, lamb, covenant meal, manna, priestly bread, is present at this table. Say nothing; the group's list says it for them.

HOLD THE ENDING. The session must end with the tension unresolved: the vow, the unfinished shape, the cup in the garden. If a group member connects it to the Cross, honor it warmly in one sentence: hold that thought until next week; bring it sealed if you must. Do not confirm, deny, or elaborate. This is the study's strictest hands-off.

Sealed guesses: FINAL PREP. Next session opens with the ritual. Bring every sealed sheet. Plan the first thirty minutes of Session 10 for the opening: John 19:28-30 read aloud, sheets returned unopened, then opened and read around the circle before any teaching. Review the Session 10 guide this week, not next.

Session Goals

1. Establish the Passover's liturgical shape honestly: New Testament evidence first, Mishnah tradition hedged.
2. Discover Luke's two cups and Paul's cup of blessing as first century evidence of a structured, multi-cup meal.

3. Fix the vow of Mark 14:25 and the departure after the hymn in the group's memory.
4. Follow the cup language into Gethsemane and stop there.
5. End unresolved, with the tension named and held for next week.

A note on time. If you must cut, cut the second Win question and the Dig Deeper. Never cut Matthew 26:36-46; the session's cliffhanger lives there. Protect ten minutes at the end for silence and the closing prayer.

Part Two: Discussion Guide

Opening Prayer

Leader: Father, on the night your Son was betrayed he kept the feast your servants had kept for a thousand years, and he filled its cups with meaning older than Egypt and newer than tomorrow. Seat us at that table tonight. Let us watch, and listen, and not look away. Amen.

Win: Opening the Conversation

1. Have you ever deliberately left something unfinished, a conversation, a project, a goodbye, because finishing it would cost too much or mean too much? Tell us what holding it open felt like.
2. What family meal or celebration in your life has a fixed order, where everyone would notice if a step were skipped?

Build: Into the Text

Leader: First, lay the background honestly. Read this aloud: Jewish tradition, written down in the Mishnah around the year 200, describes the Passover meal as a liturgy of four cups of wine, with the cup after the meal called the cup of blessing and portions of the Hallel psalms sung at prescribed points, the last of them after the meal. Tradition came to link the four cups to God's four promises in Exodus 6, which someone should now read aloud: Exodus 6:6-8. Because these sources were written after the New Testament, we will hold their details lightly and ask a sharper question: how much of this structure can we see in the New Testament itself?

3. Read Luke 22:14-20 slowly, watching the tableware. How many cups does Luke record, and where do they fall in the meal? What does that alone establish?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Two distinct cups: one near the start, which Jesus receives with thanksgiving and shares (verse 17), and the cup after supper, over which he speaks the words of the new covenant (verse 20). Whatever else is true, Luke shows the Supper as a meal with distinct cups at distinct moments: an ordered meal, not a free-form dinner, with the words of institution spoken at a particular point within it.

4. Now read 1 Corinthians 10:16a, just the first phrase: the cup of blessing which we bless. Paul is writing in the fifties of the first century, probably before any written Gospel and long before the Mishnah. What is quietly significant about the name he uses for the Eucharistic cup?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

The cup of blessing is, in later Jewish usage, the fixed name of the cup of thanksgiving after the meal; identifying Paul's phrase with that cup is a traditional reconstruction, not something the verse states. What the New Testament itself anchors is firmer: Paul's own institution account places the covenant cup after supper (1 Corinthians 11:25), exactly where Luke places it, and his name for the Church's cup, the cup of blessing which we bless, already sounds fixed in the fifties. The reconstruction is plausible; the canonical data are certain.

5. Read Mark 14:22-26. Fix two details in your memory as exactly as the text gives them. First: immediately after the cup, what does Jesus vow in verse 25? Second: what is the last thing the company does in the room, and where do they go?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

The vow: truly, I say to you, I shall not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God. The departure: and when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Add the hedged note: by the tradition's shape, the hymn would be the concluding portion of the Hallel,

with a final cup still to come. On the tradition's terms, they leave before the liturgy's last station. On the Gospel's own terms, something stronger and stranger is true either way: the host of the feast has just vowed not to drink wine again, and has walked out into the night.

6. Read Matthew 26:36-46, Gethsemane, later that same night. What image does Jesus pray with, three times? Keeping tonight's whole session in your ears, what do you notice, and what do you not yet know?

ANSWER (*share after the discussion*)

My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; and again, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, thy will be done. The man who vowed off the fruit of the vine is on his face in a garden praying about a cup he must drink.

Leader: this answer box deliberately stops here. Name the stones on the table: a Passover with ordered cups; the covenant spoken over the cup after supper; a vow not to drink again; the hymn, and a departure; and now a cup, three times, in the garden. Then say, in these words or your own: we are not going to resolve this tonight. Next week we open what you sealed nine weeks ago, and you will resolve it yourselves.

The Other Side of the Table

Leader: Tonight's objection is aimed at our method itself. Read it at full strength; it deserves it.

The anachronism reading. The four-cup seder comes from the Mishnah, compiled around the year 200, and Passover itself was transformed after the temple's destruction in the year 70, when the lamb could no longer be sacrificed. Reading a third century Jewish liturgy back into a first century Gospel is anachronism, and any argument built on which cup Jesus was holding is built on sand. Serious study should refuse the reconstruction outright.

7. Strengthen it: why is this objection not a technicality but a genuinely important principle?

ANSWER (*share after the discussion*)

Because retrojection is how bad history is made: later sources systematically idealize and reorganize earlier practice; a rite without lamb or temple had to change; and a study that cuts corners on dating forfeits its right to be believed on anything else. The group should own this principle, not merely tolerate it.

8. Now audit tonight's argument against that principle. Which of our claims rest on the Mishnah, and which rest on the New Testament alone? Does the tension we ended with survive if the Mishnah is set aside entirely?

ANSWER (*share after the discussion*)

Set the Mishnah aside completely and count what remains from the inspired text alone: the Supper is a Passover meal (Luke 22:15); it has at least two ordered cups at fixed stations (Luke 22:17, 20); the Church's cup carries the fixed name cup of blessing in the fifties of the first century (1 Corinthians 10:16); the company sings a hymn before going out (Mark 14:26); Jesus vows off the fruit of the vine after the covenant cup (Mark 14:25); and within the hour he prays about a cup he must drink (Matthew 26:39, 42). Every stone in tonight's tension is canonical.

What the Mishnah adds is background color and a traditional map of the meal, and we labeled it as exactly that each time we used it. That is the method of this whole study: tradition may illustrate; only Scripture bears weight. The tension you are carrying home tonight was built entirely from the second kind of stone.

DIG DEEPER: The Hymn They Sang

Tradition assigns the Hallel, Psalms 113 through 118, to Passover, its final portion after the meal; the Gospel says only that they sang a hymn. With that hedge stated, open Psalm 116:12-13 and read it aloud: What shall I render to the Lord for all his bounty to me? I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord.

Then Psalm 118:22-24: the stone which the builders rejected. If these were the songs, this is what Jesus sang, on his feet, walking into the night of his arrest. Read them again in silence. Say nothing else.

Send: Taking It With You

9. Jesus prayed, let this cup pass, and then, thy will be done. What cup are you currently asking God to take away, and what would his second sentence cost you to pray with him?

10. The company sang on the way to Gethsemane. What do you sing, or say, or cling to, on the way into the things you dread? Is it strong enough?

Live It This Week

- Read Psalms 113 through 118 across the week, one or two a day, as the songs of Passover night, and mark every verse that sounds different in the mouth of Jesus.
- Do not try to solve the unfinished meal this week. When your mind reaches for the answer, turn it into a prayer instead: Lord, finish what you began.
- Come next week no matter what. Session 10 opens what you sealed at the beginning, and the circle should be whole.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

Truly, I say to you, I shall not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God. Mark 14:25

Closing Prayer

Leader, after a full minute of silence: Lord Jesus, you kept the feast and left it open; you vowed off the vine and prayed about a cup. We do not yet say what we suspect. Keep us in the tension you chose, and bring us back together to see it finished. Together: Amen.

Part Three: Leader Reference Card

Passage	Used For
Exodus 6:6-8	The four promises of redemption; traditional root of the cups
Luke 22:14-20	Two cups at fixed stations; covenant words at the cup after supper
1 Corinthians 10:16a	The cup of blessing as a fixed first century name; live discovery
Mark 14:22-26	The vow of 14:25; the hymn and departure; live discovery
Matthew 26:36-46	The cup in Gethsemane; session cliffhanger; strict hands-off
Luke 22:15	Steelman answer: the Supper as Passover in the canonical text
Psalms 116:12-13; 118:22-24	Dig Deeper: the Hallel, hedged; the cup of salvation
Mishnah (tradition)	Four cups and Hallel: background only, always labeled, never load-bearing
Mark 14:25	Memory verse

Session 10: The Fourth Cup

John 19:28-37; Mark 15:22-23; Matthew 27:33-34; with harvests from Exodus 12

Part One: Leader Preparation Guide

Session Overview

Discovery Aim. With their nine-week-old guesses open on the table, the group discovers that John presents the death of Jesus as the completion of his Passover: the vow kept, wine refused at the start and received at the end, hyssop, unbroken bones, and only then: it is finished.

Catholic Touchstone. The sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are one single sacrifice: the victim is one and the same, only the manner of offering is different (CCC 1367); the Supper anticipated what the Cross accomplished (CCC 1339, 610-611).

What You Need to Know

Tonight is the summit, and it begins with a ritual, not a lesson. The first thirty minutes belong to the sealed guesses. Follow the script in the discussion guide exactly: John 19:28-30 read aloud in silence first, then every sheet returned to its writer unopened, then opened and read around the circle, unsigned and uncommented, before one word of teaching. Nine weeks of trust are cashed in those thirty minutes. Do not rush them.

Then the texts. Hold two things in balanced hands tonight, because the session's integrity depends on the balance. The first hand holds what is certain. Mark 14:25: after the cup, Jesus vowed off the fruit of the vine until the kingdom. Mark 15:23: at Golgotha they offered him wine mingled with myrrh, and he did not take it; the vow holds. John 19:28-30: at the very end, knowing that all was now finished, he said, I thirst, and received the vinegar (sour wine), on hyssop, and said, It is finished. John 19:31-37: his legs were not broken, that the scripture might be fulfilled, not a bone of him shall be broken. Hyssop and unbroken bones are Passover law, Exodus 12:22 and 12:46, the two details your group read nine weeks ago under strict instructions to observe and never explain. Tonight they harvest both themselves, and they will remember planting them.

The second hand holds what is proposed. Many Catholic teachers, ancient instincts and modern voices alike, have drawn these data into one reading: that Jesus, having left the Passover liturgy open at the table, completed it on the Cross with that final cup, so that the Supper and Calvary are one continuous act of sacrifice, begun in the upper room (Mark 14:15) and finished on the cross, at the ninth hour of the Synoptic accounts. It is a beautiful and serious proposal, and this session presents it as a proposal: a way of seeing that the texts invite but do not compel, and that the Church has not defined. What the Church does teach, definitively, needs no cup arithmetic: the Mass and the Cross are one single sacrifice (CCC 1367). The proposal illuminates the dogma; the dogma never depended on the proposal. Keep that order straight tonight and the session will be both thrilling and honest.

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

Exodus 12:22, harvested. The blood of the lamb was applied with a bunch of hyssop. John alone records that the sponge of vinegar was put on hyssop and lifted to the mouth of the dying Lamb (John 19:29). The instrument of the first Passover's blood touches the lips of the last.

Exodus 12:46, harvested. You shall not break a bone of it. John records that the soldiers broke the legs of both others and, finding Jesus dead, did not break his, that the scripture might be fulfilled: not a bone of him shall be broken (John 19:33, 36). John leaves the source unnamed; the wording is the Passover lamb's law (Exodus 12:46; Numbers 9:12; compare Psalm 34:20), and John has already set the scene at Passover (19:14).

Psalms 69:21. For my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink: John says Jesus spoke to fulfil the scripture without naming it, and Psalm 69:21, the psalm of the righteous sufferer, is the text commonly understood. Scripture's fulfillments layer; they do not compete.

Fulfillment. The chain, from the canonical texts alone: a Passover meal with covenant words over the cup; a vow not to drink again; wine refused at the crucifixion's start; the vinegar received at its end, with John's own note that Jesus acted knowing that all was now finished; hyssop; bones unbroken; it is finished; and blood and water from the opened side (John 19:34), which the Fathers loved to read as the sacramental life of the Church flowing from the new Adam's side. Whatever name we give the final drink, the canonical reading this session proposes binds Supper and Cross into one Passover, with John's own lamb texts bearing the weight.

Voices of the Church

St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430)

In summary of his teaching in the *City of God*: Christ is both the priest who offers and the offering itself, and he willed the Church's daily sacrifice to be the sacrament of this one offering, in which she learns to offer herself in him. That Supper, Cross, and altar are one sacrifice seen whole is the Church's teaching his words serve (CCC 1367); the compression is ours.

St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)

In the *Summa Theologiae* (III, q. 83, a. 1), with his broader teaching on the Mass: the celebration of this sacrament is an image and a making present of the sacrifice of the Cross, and in it the whole mystery of our salvation is comprised. The victim is one, the priest is one; the altar does not add a second offering to Calvary but places us at the one offering. Aquinas would recognize tonight's balance: the certainty belongs to the unity of the sacrifice, not to any reconstruction of the meal.

St. John Henry Newman (1801-1890)

An honest attribution: in his novel *Loss and Gain*, Newman placed in the mouth of a character his own famous cry about the Mass: to me nothing is so consoling, so piercing, so thrilling, so overcoming, as the Mass; it is not a mere form of words, it is a great action, the greatest action that can be on earth: the evocation of the Eternal. What the group discovers tonight, that the action on the altar and the action on Golgotha are one, is why Newman could write that sentence without exaggeration.

Catechism Connection

- CCC 1364: in the Eucharist, the sacrifice Christ offered once for all on the cross remains ever present; as often as the sacrifice of the Cross is celebrated on the altar, the work of our redemption is carried out.
- CCC 1366-1367: the Eucharist is a sacrifice because it re-presents the sacrifice of the cross, is its memorial, and applies its fruit; the victim is one and the same, only the manner of offering is different.
- CCC 1339-1340: by celebrating the Supper in the course of the Passover, Jesus gave the Passover its definitive meaning: his passing over to the Father, anticipated in the Supper, accomplished in his death and resurrection.

THREAD WATCH

Sealed guesses: OPENING NIGHT. The ritual script is in the discussion guide. Non-negotiables: John 19:28-30 first, in silence after; every sheet read aloud by its own writer; no commentary between readings; teaching begins only after the last sheet.

The command to eat. Do not advance the thread tonight; the summit belongs to the cup. The full list assembles at Session 12.

Where is the lamb? Tonight John calls the fulfillments by their Passover names, and someone will likely say the word lamb. Honor it: yes, and the question from Moriah gets its full answer in two weeks. Hold the last door shut.

Session Goals

1. Conduct the sealed guess opening ritual with full solemnity.
2. Harvest the hyssop and the unbroken bones planted in Session 3.
3. Establish the canonical chain: vow, refusal, reception, it is finished.
4. Present the fourth cup reading precisely as a proposal, and the one-sacrifice teaching precisely as doctrine.
5. Answer the over-reading steelman without surrendering what John actually wrote.

A note on time. The ritual takes thirty minutes; the session runs 90. If you must cut, cut the Dig Deeper and the second Send question. Nothing else. Never compress the ritual.

Part Two: Discussion Guide

The Opening of the Guesses

Leader, follow this script. Say: nine weeks ago, before you knew where this study was going, each of you sealed an answer to one question: Jesus's final word from the cross was, It is finished. What was finished? Tonight we open them. First, the text.

Read John 19:28-30 aloud, slowly. Keep thirty seconds of silence. Then return each sealed sheet to its writer, unopened. Go around the circle: each person opens their own sheet and reads exactly what they wrote, without explaining or apologizing. No one comments between readings, including you. When the last sheet has been read, keep another moment of silence, and then say: every one of you wrote something true. Tonight we find out how much more was finished than any of us guessed. Then begin.

Win: After the Opening

1. What was it like to hear your own nine week old guess read in your own voice? Did the study change what you would write today?
2. Which of the other guesses around the circle struck you, and why?

Build: Into the Text

Leader: Tonight the group harvests seeds they planted themselves. Let them do the reaping; your job is only to put the right texts side by side.

3. First, reassemble what we carried out of Session 9. From memory if you can: what did Jesus vow after the cup (Mark 14:25), and in what state did the company leave the meal?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

The vow: I shall not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God. They sang the hymn and went out into the night: on the tradition's shape, the meal left open; on the text's own terms, the host sworn off the vine and soon praying about a cup.

4. Read Mark 15:22-23 and Matthew 27:33-34. Arriving at Golgotha, what is Jesus offered, and what does he do? Given the vow, what do you make of it?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Wine mingled with myrrh (Matthew: wine mingled with gall); when he tasted it, he would not drink it. The drugged wine was a mercy, a dulling of pain, and he refused it. Whatever else is true, the vow of Mark 14:25 is holding: at the start of the crucifixion, Jesus will not take the fruit of the vine, even as anesthesia. He goes to the work awake.

5. Now read John 19:28-30 again, this time with study eyes. Note the exact sequence John gives: what does Jesus know, what does he say, what does he receive, on what is it lifted, and what does he say last? Who in this scene is in control?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said, to fulfil the scripture, I thirst. A bowl of vinegar stood there; they put a sponge full of the vinegar on hyssop and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished; and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

The sequence is deliberate and Jesus drives it: the thirst is announced knowing all was finished and to fulfil the scripture; the drink is received; and only after receiving it does he declare completion and hand over his spirit. Read as the Church reads it, he remains at the end what he was at the Supper, the giver: no one takes his life from him; he lays it down (John 10:18).

Someone should catch the word hyssop; if not, ask what the wine was lifted on, and wait. This is their Session 3 seed. Let whoever remembers Exodus 12:22 say it aloud: hyssop is what applied the lamb's blood to the doorposts on Passover night.

6. Read John 19:31-37. What do the soldiers do to the two others, what do they not do to Jesus, and how does John himself explain it? Whose law is John quoting, and where did we read it?

ANSWER (*share after the discussion*)

They break the legs of the two crucified with him; finding Jesus already dead, they do not break his, and one pierces his side, from which blood and water flow. John names the fulfillment: these things took place that the scripture might be fulfilled, not a bone of him shall be broken. John leaves his source unnamed, but the wording is the Passover lamb's law (Exodus 12:46; Numbers 9:12; compare Psalm 34:20), the second detail the group read and filed nine weeks ago.

Say it carefully and confidently: the evangelist who stood at the cross quotes lamb law over the body of Jesus, in Passover season. Hyssop and unbroken bones are not our typology; the texts are John's own.

7. Now the whole arc, and the guesses on the table. Lay the pieces in order: the Passover meal and its covenant cup; the vow; the refusal at Golgotha's start; the reception at its end; hyssop; unbroken bones; it is finished. What was finished? Answer in layers, from what is certain outward to what is proposed.

ANSWER (*share after the discussion*)

Certain, from the texts: the scriptures were being fulfilled to the end (John 19:24, 28, 36-37), and Jesus, knowing that all was now finished (19:28), declared it (19:30); the work the Father gave him was finished (John 4:34; 17:4); and his Passover was finished: John has framed the death with the lamb's own laws, and the Supper's vow and the Cross's final drink enclose the Passion like brackets. The Supper and the Cross are one act of sacrifice, begun at the table, accomplished on Calvary, which is exactly the Church's dogma: one victim, one priest, one sacrifice (CCC 1367).

Proposed, and beloved: many Catholic teachers gather these same data into a sharper picture: that the final cup of the open Passover liturgy was that vinegar on the hyssop, so that Jesus finished the seder itself from the wood of the cross. We present that reading as what it is, a proposal the texts invite but do not compel, and the Church has not defined. Hold it as gift, not as proof. Notice what needs no proposal at all: every guess sealed nine weeks ago named something true, and the truest summary was on the table before any of us wrote: the Passover of the Lamb, complete.

The Other Side of the Table

Leader: The summit gets the sharpest objection. Read it at full strength.

The over-reading objection. Tetelestai means the work of atonement is finished, and that is all it needs to mean. The fourth cup reading is too clever: we cannot know the first century seder's exact shape (your own Session 9 said so); the refused wine of Mark 15:23 was an offered painkiller, not a liturgical station; and John tells us plainly why Jesus said I thirst: to fulfil the scripture, meaning Psalm 69, not a seder rubric. A moving reconstruction is still a reconstruction, and reverence for the Cross should not depend on it.

8. Strengthen it: what is the best additional case for reading the final drink as nothing more than Psalm 69 fulfilled?

ANSWER (*share after the discussion*)

Good additions: Luke and Mark record the sour wine without any Passover framing; sour wine (posca) was simply the soldiers' ration, present by ordinary circumstance; and multiplying fulfillments risks making every detail carry more than the author intended.

9. Now answer with tonight's own discipline. What did this session actually claim as certain, and does John's text give the Passover framing, or did we? Where does the doctrine rest?

ANSWER (*share after the discussion*)

Agree with the objection's guardrails; they are ours. This session asserted the seder reconstruction only as a proposal, and no doctrine leaned on it. But the objection concedes too little in the other direction, because the Passover framing of John 19 is not our overlay: John quotes the unbroken-bone scripture whose wording is the lamb law (Exodus 12:46; Numbers 9:12), John alone names the hyssop, John sets the day as the day of Preparation of the Passover (19:14), a timestamp whose exact chronology is debated but whose Passover framing is not, and John's Baptist opened the Gospel with Behold, the Lamb of God (1:29). Psalm 69 and the Passover do not compete; John's fulfillments layer. The vow of Mark 14:25 and the refusal of Mark 15:23 are likewise canonical data, not reconstruction.

So the honest position holds both hands open: certainly, John presents the Cross as the completion of the true Passover, and the Church teaches that Supper and Cross are one sacrifice; possibly, the final cup was the seder's own last station, a reading we may love without requiring. Nothing tonight was built on the second hand. Everything tonight was built on the first.

DIG DEEPER: Blood and Water

Read John 19:34-35 once more: blood and water from the pierced side, with John's solemn eyewitness oath attached. Then read 1 John 5:6-8, the same author: this is he who came by water and blood.

The Fathers loved this wound: as Eve was drawn from the side of the sleeping Adam, the Church and her sacraments, the water of baptism and the blood of the Eucharist, flow from the side of the new Adam asleep in death (see CCC 766, 1225). Ask only: what does it mean that the sacraments come from precisely there?

Send: Taking It With You

10. He refused the wine that would dull the pain and received the wine that finished the work. Where in your life are you numbing what God is asking you to finish awake?

11. Nine weeks ago you could not have written tonight's answer. What else in your faith might be one honest study away from opening like these envelopes did?

Live It This Week

- Keep your opened guess sheet somewhere you will see it, as a record that patient attention to Scripture pays what it promises.
- At Mass this Sunday, at the elevation of the chalice, pray the memory verse silently, and receive Communion, if you are able, as the completion he handed you.
- Read John 19 start to finish once this week, alone, aloud, and slowly.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

When Jesus had received the vinegar, he said, "It is finished"; and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.
John 19:30

Closing Prayer

Together: Lord Jesus, host of the feast and priest of the offering, you finished the work the Father gave you, you fulfilled the Passover of our redemption, and you did not let one drop of it fall outside his will. What you finished, apply to us. What you opened from your side, pour into us. Amen.

Part Three: Leader Reference Card

Passage	Used For
John 19:28-30	Ritual text; thirst, hyssop, vinegar, it is finished; live discovery
Mark 14:25	The vow, reassembled from Session 9
Mark 15:22-23; Matthew 27:33-34	Wine refused at the start; the vow holding
John 19:31-37	Unbroken bones; Exodus 12:46 quoted by John; blood and water
Exodus 12:22, 46	Session 3 seeds harvested: hyssop and bones
Psalms 69:21	Layered fulfillment; steelman text
John 19:14; John 1:29; John 10:18; 4:34; 17:4	Leader support: Passover frame, host to the end
John 19:34-35; 1 John 5:6-8	Dig Deeper: blood and water; CCC 766, 1225
John 19:30	Memory verse

Session 11: Known in the Breaking of the Bread

Luke 24:13-35; Acts 2:42-47

Part One: Leader Preparation Guide

Session Overview

Discovery Aim. The group discovers that on the first Easter evening, the risen Jesus did with two disciples exactly what this study has done for ten weeks, opened the Scriptures about himself beginning with Moses, and that he chose to be recognized not in the explanation but in the breaking of the bread.

Catholic Touchstone. The Church has kept the name from that evening: the Breaking of Bread (CCC 1329), and the Mass to this day moves as Emmaus moved: the Scriptures opened on the road, the bread broken at the table (CCC 1346-1347).

What You Need to Know

A note of precision first, because this study keeps its habits to the end: Luke tells us two disciples walked to Emmaus, and he names only one, Cleopas. The second is left unnamed; a later, uncertain tradition, prompted by Mary of Clopas at the cross (John 19:25), has wondered whether the companion was Cleopas's wife. Say two disciples throughout, as the text does, and let the second walker stay as open as Luke left them, which has the happy effect of leaving room on that road for every reader.

Now the shape of the session. After the summit of Session 10, tonight is the descent into daylight: what does the finished Passover look like in the risen world? Luke's answer is a seven mile catechesis. The two disciples know all the facts and none of the meaning; their hope is past tense, we had hoped. The stranger does not begin with his identity; he begins with Moses and all the prophets, interpreting in all the scriptures the things concerning himself, which is, the group should be allowed to notice with a jolt, precisely the method of the last ten weeks. Then, at table, four verbs: he took the bread and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to them. Luke has used a closely parallel chain twice before: at the feeding of the five thousand, and, with gave thanks where Emmaus says blessed, at the Last Supper. Their eyes were opened and they recognized him; and he vanished out of their sight.

Handle the vanishing with the Fathers' delicacy rather than a syllogism: at the moment they know him in the bread, the appearance withdraws, and what remains with them is the burning, the road back to Jerusalem, and, as the Fathers loved to reflect, the bread in which he chose to be known. Luke then hands the Church one of her most ancient names for the Eucharist, twice: he was known to them in the breaking of the bread, and, in the second chapter of his second volume, the baptized devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Whether the meal at Emmaus was itself a Eucharist in the full sense, the Church has discussed with honest latitude; what Luke certainly teaches is where the risen Christ chooses to be known, and what his Church, from her first page, did about it.

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

Beginning with Moses. Luke 24:27 is this study's charter written into the Gospel: beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. The lamb, the covenant meal, the manna, the bread of the Face, Melchizedek's offering, the cups: the risen Lord's own curriculum ran through the texts this group now knows.

The burning heart. Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the scriptures? (Luke 24:32). Israel's Scriptures, rightly opened, do not merely inform; they kindle. The group has ten weeks of evidence.

Fulfillment. The two movements of Emmaus, Scripture opened and bread broken, became the two tables of the one Mass, the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist (CCC 1346-1347). Every Sunday since

has been the Emmaus road walked again: the Church hears him in the Scriptures and knows him in the breaking of the bread.

Voices of the Church

St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430)

In summary of his Easter preaching on this Gospel (see Sermon 235): Augustine pressed his hearers with the obvious question and its stunning answer. Where did the Lord will to be recognized? Not in the long exposition on the road, but in the breaking of the bread. And Augustine turned it on the congregation: this was written for us, who do not see him with our eyes; whoever believes, let him take comfort: the Lord is known in the breaking of the bread, and he has not withdrawn from us what he gave at that table.

St. John Paul II (1920-2005)

In summary of his apostolic letter *Mane Nobiscum Domine*, whose very title renders the disciples' plea of Luke 24:29 (the verse reads: Stay with us, for it is toward evening), the pope read Emmaus as the image of the whole Christian life. Wherever hope has died into we had hoped, the risen Christ draws near on the road, warms the heart through the Scriptures, and makes himself known in the breaking of the bread; and the Church's task in every age is to pray that plea and to live from that recognition.

St. Thérèse of Lisieux (1873-1897)

From *Story of a Soul*, in summary of a passage she wrote about Communion: it is not to remain in the golden ciborium that Christ comes down to us each day from heaven, but to find another heaven, the heaven of our soul, in which he takes his delight. The two disciples begged a stranger to stay; Thérèse knew how completely he had said yes.

Catechism Connection

- CCC 1329: the Eucharist is called the Breaking of Bread because Jesus used this rite when he blessed and distributed the bread as master of the table, above all at the Last Supper; it is by this action that his disciples will recognize him after his Resurrection.
- CCC 1346-1347: the liturgy of the Eucharist unfolds according to a fundamental structure preserved throughout the centuries: the liturgy of the Word and the liturgy of the Eucharist form one single act of worship; and the Catechism itself asks: is this not the same movement as the Paschal meal of the risen Jesus with his disciples, who walking with them explained the Scriptures, then sat at table, took bread, blessed, broke, and gave?
- CCC 1391-1392: Communion with the Body and Blood of Christ preserves, increases, and renews the life of grace; what material food does for bodily life, Communion does for the spiritual.

THREAD WATCH

The command to eat. Quietly add the risen tense: the Lord who commanded eating from Egypt onward now chooses eating as the place of recognition. The whole chain assembles aloud next week; tonight, one sentence at most.

Where is the lamb? One week left. If the group is aching for it, smile: bring your list next week; we finish everything.

Study wrap prep. Next session is the finale: ask everyone to bring their running lists and their Take-Homes if they kept them. Review the Session 12 commissioning ritual this week.

Session Goals

1. Keep Luke's precision: two disciples, only Cleopas named.

2. Walk the Emmaus structure: dead hope, Scripture opened, bread broken, recognition, mission.
3. Discover the four-verb chain and its two Lukan precedents.
4. Trace the breaking of the bread from Emmaus into Acts as the Church's own name and practice.
5. Answer the ordinary-meal steelman with honest latitude.

A note on time. If you must cut, cut the second Win question and the Dig Deeper. Keep Acts 2:42; the session's argument completes there.

Part Two: Discussion Guide

Opening Prayer

Leader: Lord Jesus, you caught up with two grieving friends on the worst road of their lives and set their hearts on fire with the Scriptures. Catch up with us tonight. Open the word until it burns, and stay with us, for it is toward evening. Amen.

Win: Opening the Conversation

1. Tell us about a conversation on a walk or a drive that changed how you saw something. Why do moving conversations reach places sitting ones do not?
2. Have you ever failed to recognize someone you knew well because they were somewhere you never expected them? What finally gave them away?

Build: Into the Text

Leader: A note before reading: Luke says two disciples and names only Cleopas; the second is left unnamed (a later, uncertain tradition has wondered about Cleopas's wife, from Mary of Clopas in John 19:25). We will say two disciples, as Luke does.

3. Read Luke 24:13-24. Take the disciples' own summary of the weekend in verses 19-24. What facts do they have right? So what exactly is missing, according to their own words in verse 21?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

They have essentially everything: Jesus of Nazareth, prophet mighty in deed and word, condemned and crucified, the third day, the women's report, the empty tomb, the vision of angels. Their facts are the Creed's facts.

What is missing is in three words: we had hoped. Hope in the past tense. They possess the data of Easter and none of its meaning, walking away from Jerusalem with the resurrection already reported to them. Information, the group should notice, was never the disciples' problem, and it is rarely ours.

4. Read Luke 24:25-27. Where does the stranger begin, and what is his method in verse 27? Slow down and recognize it: what has he just done, and where have you seen it before?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

He begins not with his identity but with their Scriptures: was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory? And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

Let the room feel the jolt: this is the method of the last ten weeks. Moses first: the lamb, the covenant meal, the manna, the bread of the Presence; the prophets and the psalms: the new covenant, the priest for ever, the cup of salvation. The risen Lord's own Easter catechesis ran the route this group has walked. The study did not invent its method; it borrowed his.

5. Read Luke 24:28-32. At the table, list the four verbs of verse 30 in order. Where has Luke used a closely matching chain before? Look up Luke 22:19 and Luke 9:16 and compare. And what happens at the moment of recognition?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

He took the bread and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to them. Luke 22:19, the Last Supper: took, gave thanks, broke, gave. Luke 9:16, the feeding of the five thousand: took, blessed, broke, gave. Three tables, one closely matching fourfold pattern (22:19 says gave thanks where 24:30 says blessed). Luke is writing the echo on purpose; the two disciples were not at the Last Supper, but Luke's readers, at their own weekly table, cannot miss it.

Their eyes were opened and they recognized him; and he vanished out of their sight. Handle the vanishing gently, as the Fathers did: at the moment they know him in the bread, the appearance withdraws, and what remains is the burning and the road; and the Fathers loved to add: and the bread, the place he chose to be known. Recognition does not end the presence; it redirects where they look for it. Hold the bread clause as the Fathers' reflection, not a detail Luke narrates.

6. Read Luke 24:33-35, then Acts 2:42-47, Luke's second volume, days after Pentecost. What phrase does Luke use in 24:35, and what has it become by Acts 2:42? What four things does the newborn Church devote itself to?

ANSWER (*share after the discussion*)

He was known to them in the breaking of the bread: Luke gives us the phrase at Emmaus. By Acts 2:42 it stands with a definite article among the four marks of the Jerusalem community's life, the text the Church has always read Eucharistically (CCC 1329); verse 46's daily breaking of bread in homes shows meal and rite living close together, and interpreters discuss where each verse sits. What is certain: the phrase from Easter evening names, within weeks of Pentecost, something the community devoted itself to.

The Church keeps the name (CCC 1329), and the shape: the Scriptures opened, then the bread broken, the two tables of every Mass (CCC 1346-1347). Emmaus was not a one-time consolation; it was the template.

The Other Side of the Table

Leader: Read the objection at full strength.

The ordinary-meal reading. The supper at Emmaus was hospitality, not a sacrament. The two disciples were not at the Last Supper and had no institution to recognize; there is no cup, no covenant word, no this is my body. They recognized Jesus because they had seen him bless and break bread before, perhaps at the feeding of the multitude, the way you know a friend by a familiar gesture. Building Eucharistic doctrine on a roadside dinner reads the Mass back into a text about recognition.

7. Strengthen it: what is the best additional case that this was recognition of a gesture, not a sacrament?

ANSWER (*share after the discussion*)

Good additions: Luke elsewhere shows the risen Jesus eating ordinary food to prove he is no ghost (Luke 24:41-43); the disciples' report emphasizes knowing him, not receiving anything; and sound method should not demand every bread text be the Eucharist, a caution this very study has used against others.

8. Now answer with the study's own honesty. What does our case actually rest on: this one meal, or something larger in Luke's two volumes? And what may be held with latitude?

ANSWER (*share after the discussion*)

Grant the latitude honestly: whether the Emmaus table was itself a Eucharist in the full sense, the text does not say, and faithful readers have weighed it differently; nothing tonight requires deciding it. The case rests on what Luke has done as an author across two volumes: he stamps the meal with the closely matching four-verb pattern of the Last Supper and the feeding; he introduces the phrase the breaking of the bread at this table; and he then uses that same phrase, definite article and all, for the newborn community's practice in Acts. An author who did all that by accident would be the luckiest writer in history.

And note what the gesture-recognition reading quietly concedes: that Jesus is known, on Easter evening, in the taking, blessing, breaking, and giving of bread. That concession is the session's whole claim. This ancient name for the Eucharist does not say he was proven or explained in the breaking of the bread; it says he was known there, and Luke wrote it for every disciple who would never see the road but would always have the table.

DIG DEEPER: We Had Hoped

Go back to Luke 24:21 and sit with the past tense: we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. They say this to the Redeemer, on the third day, with the tomb already empty.

Ask: what have you filed under we had hoped, a calling, a person, a version of your faith? The Emmaus pattern is that the risen Christ walks precisely into the past tense, and reopens it with Scripture and bread. What would you need to let him near enough to try?

Send: Taking It With You

9. The two disciples recognized him and immediately walked seven miles back in the dark to tell the others. Recognition became mission within the hour. When you receive him at Mass this week, who is your Jerusalem, and what is your seven miles?

10. Stay with us, for it is toward evening. What would it mean to pray that this week not as a quotation but as your actual request?

Live It This Week

- At Mass this Sunday, live the two tables deliberately: during the readings, ask him to make your heart burn; at the fraction, when the priest breaks the Host, pray: let me know you in the breaking of the bread.
- Take one walk this week with no phone, and narrate the road to Christ as the two disciples did, griefs and dead hopes included.
- Pray Stay with us, Lord each evening at dusk, and bring next week your running lists: every thread of this study resolves at the final session.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread. Luke 24:35

Closing Prayer

Together: Stay with us, Lord, for it is toward evening and the day is far spent. Open the Scriptures until our hearts burn, break the bread until our eyes open, and send us back down the road with news too good to walk slowly. Amen.

Part Three: Leader Reference Card

Passage	Used For
Luke 24:13-24	Two disciples; the facts without the meaning; we had hoped
Luke 24:25-27	Beginning with Moses: the study's method in the Lord's mouth
Luke 24:28-32	Four verbs; recognition; the vanishing; live discovery
Luke 22:19; Luke 9:16	The verb chain's two Lukan precedents; live discovery
Luke 24:33-35	He was known in the breaking of the bread; mission
Acts 2:42-47	The breaking of bread as the Church's fixed practice; live discovery
Luke 24:41-43	Steelman support: risen Jesus eating ordinary food
Luke 24:21	Dig Deeper: we had hoped
Luke 24:35	Memory verse

Session 12: The Supper of the Lamb

John 1:29; Revelation 5:6-14; 19:6-9; 1 Peter 2:4-9; 1 Corinthians 5:7-8

Part One: Leader Preparation Guide

Session Overview

Discovery Aim. The group closes every thread with their own hands: Isaac's question from Moriah is answered by the Baptist and enthroned in Revelation; the command to eat is assembled from Egypt to the marriage supper of the Lamb; and the words of the Mass are discovered to be Scripture's own words for both.

Catholic Touchstone. The Eucharist is the pledge of the glory to come, the anticipation of the heavenly banquet, the marriage supper of the Lamb (CCC 1402-1405); at every Mass, at the invitation to Communion, the Church deliberately joins the Baptist's cry and heaven's beatitude over the Host: Behold the Lamb of God; blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

What You Need to Know

Tonight everything comes home. Two threads have run through twelve weeks. The first was sealed at Session 3, when the group left Moriah with Isaac's question unanswered: where is the lamb? Abraham promised God would provide the lamb, and God provided, that day, a ram; readers ancient and modern have heard in the wording a promise held open. The second thread has grown a link nearly every week: the command to eat, from the flesh of the Passover lamb to the covenant meal on Sinai, the manna, the priests' holy bread, the hard words of Capernaum, the upper room, and the table at Emmaus. Both threads end at the same verse, and the group must be the ones to land them.

The lamb thread lands in three steps the group takes aloud: John the Baptist answers Isaac across eighteen centuries, Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world; Revelation 5 enthrones the answer, a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, between the throne and the elders, worshiped by every creature; and Revelation 19 seats us at his table: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb. Then the discovery that lifts the roof off: at every single Mass, at the invitation to Communion, the priest, holding the Host over the chalice, deliberately joins and adapts the two verses: Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb. Most of the group will have heard those words hundreds of times without hearing Genesis 22, John 1, and Revelation 19 inside them. Tonight they will never unhear it.

The eating thread lands with 1 Peter 2. Session 7 planted a seed under strict hold: the bread of the Presence belonged, by law, to the priests alone (with David's famous exception). Tonight the group reads that the baptized are a holy priesthood, a royal priesthood, built into a spiritual house to offer spiritual sacrifices. The bread the law gave to the priests alone is now offered to a people made a royal priesthood in Christ, received in the Church's communion and rightly disposed. Close with the commissioning ritual: the group assembles the entire eat-command chain aloud, each person taking one link, ending at Revelation 19, and then each is sent with the study's summary sentence. This is a finale; let it feel like one, and end on time so it lands clean.

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

Genesis 22:7-8, resolved. Where is the lamb? God will provide himself the lamb. The ram in the thicket kept Isaac alive, and the wording kept the question audible. John 1:29 is the answer's announcement; Revelation 5 is its enthronement; the altar rail is its address.

The whole chain, resolved. Exodus 12:8, they shall eat the flesh; Exodus 24:11, they beheld God, and ate and drank; Exodus 16:15, the bread which the Lord has given you to eat; Leviticus 24:9, they shall eat it in a holy place; John 6:53, unless you eat; Matthew 26:26, take, eat; Emmaus, known in the breaking of the bread;

Revelation 19:9, blessed are those invited to the supper. From Egypt to glory, God saves a people by feeding them himself.

Fulfillment. The Eucharist is where both threads live now: the Lamb, standing as though slain, given to a priestly people, as the pledge and beginning of the supper that never ends (CCC 1402-1405). The study ends where every Mass ends: fed, blessed, and sent.

Voices of the Church

St. Ignatius of Antioch (d. c. 107)

The voice that opened this study closes it. Writing to the Ephesians, Ignatius called the Eucharist the medicine of immortality, the antidote against death, that we should live for ever in Jesus Christ (*Letter to the Ephesians* 20). In Session 1 he told us what the bread is; now we can hear what he heard: the bread the fathers ate could not keep them from dying; this bread is death's cure.

St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)

The antiphon *O Sacrum Convivium*, traditionally attributed to him, which the Church still sings and the Catechism quotes (CCC 1402): O sacred banquet, in which Christ is received, the memory of his Passion is renewed, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us. Four clauses, and this study has spent a session or more inside each: the banquet, the memorial, the grace, the pledge. The antiphon compresses our twelve weeks into one breath.

St. Teresa of Calcutta (1910-1997)

In summary of her constant teaching: Mother Teresa built her whole work on the Eucharist received each morning and Christ served in the poor each day, and she would not let the two be separated: the Lord substantially present in the Host, in the Church's full sense (CCC 1374), is the same Lord truly encountered in the least of his brothers (Matthew 25:40); the modes differ, the Person does not. The supper of the Lamb, she showed a doubting century, does not end at the church door; it sends. Her sisters still begin every day of service at the altar.

Catechism Connection

- CCC 1402-1405: the Eucharist is the anticipation of the heavenly glory; in it we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes and pray Marana tha; there is no surer pledge of the new heavens and new earth than the Eucharist, the pledge of future glory.
- CCC 1344: the pilgrim Church, in the Eucharist, marches toward the heavenly banquet, when all the elect will be seated at the table of the kingdom.
- CCC 1419: Christ, passing from this world to the Father, has given us in the Eucharist the pledge of glory with him; participation in the Holy Sacrifice identifies us with his Heart, sustains our strength along the pilgrimage of this life, and makes us long for eternal life.

THREAD WATCH

Where is the lamb: RESOLUTION NIGHT. The three-step landing (John 1:29, Revelation 5, Revelation 19) belongs to the group. Your only job is to put the texts in front of them in order and then read the Ecce Agnus Dei aloud at the moment scripted in the guide.

The command to eat: RESOLUTION NIGHT. The commissioning ritual assembles the chain aloud, one link per person. Assign links before the session if your group is shy; the chain is printed in the guide.

Afterward. Collect honest feedback, celebrate, and point the group onward; the final Take-Home carries suggestions for continuing, including the book that inspired this study's territory.

Session Goals

1. Resolve the lamb thread through the group's own three-step landing.
2. Harvest the priesthood seed from Session 7 with 1 Peter 2.
3. Assemble the complete command-to-eat chain aloud in the commissioning ritual.
4. Discover the Ecce Agnus Dei as Scripture's own words, John 1:29 joined to Revelation 19:9.
5. Send the group with the study's summary and a concrete rule of Eucharistic life.

A note on time. If you must cut, cut the second Win question and the Dig Deeper. The commissioning ritual and the Ecce Agnus Dei moment are the untouchables. End on time; finales that run long stop being finales.

Part Two: Discussion Guide

Opening Prayer

Leader: Father, twelve weeks ago we heard the hardest words your Son ever said, and we stayed at the table. Tonight, finish what you began in us: answer the oldest question, assemble the longest thread, and seat us, even now, at the supper of the Lamb. Amen.

Win: Opening the Conversation

1. Looking back across all twelve sessions, which single discovery has most changed how you experience Mass?
2. What question did you walk in with, twelve weeks ago, that you would answer differently tonight?

Build: Into the Text

Leader: Announce: tonight we close every door we deliberately left open. Bring out your lists. We start on Moriah.

3. From Session 3, restate the open question: read Genesis 22:7-8 and verse 13 once more. What did Isaac ask, what did Abraham promise, and what did God actually provide that day? So what remained outstanding when Genesis closed?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Isaac: where is the lamb? Abraham: God will provide himself the lamb. And God provided, that day, a ram caught in the thicket. Isaac lived; and the wording, a lamb promised, a ram given, has been heard ever since as a promise held open, so that the question stayed audible for eighteen centuries: God will provide the lamb.

4. Read John 1:29. Standing by the Jordan, what does John the Baptist say when he sees Jesus, and whose question is he answering? Then read Revelation 5:6-14: where is the Lamb now, in what condition, and what is heaven doing about it?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. Across eighteen centuries, the Baptist answers Isaac: here is the lamb. And Revelation shows where the answer now stands: a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders, receiving the worship of every creature in heaven and on earth: slain, yet standing; the sacrifice complete, the victim alive. Moriah's question has become heaven's liturgy.

5. Read Revelation 19:6-9. What feast does heaven announce, and what does the angel command John to write in verse 9? Then, leader: read aloud, slowly, the words the priest says at every Mass, at the invitation to Communion, holding the Host over the chalice: Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb. Group: what did you just hear?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

The marriage supper of the Lamb, and the beatitude: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb. And the Mass's invitation to Communion deliberately joins and adapts those two scriptures: John 1:29 and Revelation 19:9 (the Missal says called where Revelation says invited, and supper for marriage supper; the joining is the Church's own act of quotation), the Baptist's answer to Isaac and heaven's wedding invitation, said over the Host, to you, every single Sunday.

Give this discovery room. Many will realize they have heard the answer to where is the lamb hundreds of times at the altar rail without ever hearing Moriah inside it. From tonight, they cannot not hear it.

6. One seed remains, planted in Session 7 under strict hold: the law gave the bread of the Presence to the priests alone. Read 1 Peter 2:4-9. What does Peter call the baptized, twice, and what are they built to do? So to whom is the holy bread now given?

ANSWER (*share after the discussion*)

A holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ; and again: a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people. Baptism has done what lineage once did: in Christ, the whole people is priestly.

Now the Session 7 seed flowers: the bread before God's face was most holy, and the law gave it to the priests alone. The true Bread of the Presence is given at every altar to a priestly people: baptized into Christ's priesthood (the common priesthood, distinct in essence from the ministerial priesthood that offers the sacrifice, CCC 1547), and received in the Church's communion, rightly disposed (CCC 1385). What was once one family's lawful portion in one holy place now feeds the whole royal priesthood. Read 1 Corinthians 5:7-8 as the seal: Christ, our paschal lamb, has been sacrificed; let us, therefore, celebrate the festival.

The Other Side of the Table

Leader: One last objection, at full strength, in honor of a study that never skipped one.

The symbol-of-union reading. Revelation is apocalyptic literature; its images are symbols, and everyone agrees. The marriage supper of the Lamb is a symbol of final union with God, not a heavenly meal, and certainly not a church service. Linking the Mass to Revelation 19 over-literalizes a metaphor, and a study that has preached restraint for twelve weeks should practice it at the finish line. And the strongest form of the objection is not skepticism about heaven: grant a real eschatological banquet, grant the biblical resonance of the feast; what Revelation 19 still does not establish is the Catholic Mass, its sacrificial theology, or the Real Presence, and no communion antiphon can retrofit that.

7. Strengthen it, then answer it. What is right in the objection, and what does it miss about how symbols, sacraments, and the Church's own liturgy actually relate?

ANSWER (*share after the discussion*)

Right: Revelation speaks in symbol, the supper of the Lamb is an image of union, and no one claims heaven serves courses. Concede it all cheerfully.

What it misses: symbols are chosen, and the question is why God's chosen image for final union is a wedding feast of a slain-yet-standing Lamb, at the end of a Bible whose whole redemption story, as this group can now recite, runs through lambs that must be eaten and covenants sealed at tables. The Mass does not literalize the symbol; the Mass and the symbol both point to the same reality, and the Eucharist is that reality's pledge and anticipation, given now (CCC 1402-1405): the Church eats the supper's first course, so to speak, while the hall is still filling. And it was the liturgy itself, not this study, that set Revelation 19:9 into the invitation to Communion. Restraint means claiming no more than the Church claims; it has never meant claiming less. As for the strongest form: agreed, Revelation 19 does not prove the Mass, and this session never asked it to; twelve weeks of lamb, covenant meal, manna, presence-bread, priesthood, and cup did that work. What Revelation 19 adds is the destination: the same Lamb, the same supper, the pledge (CCC 1402) already on our altars.

DIG DEEPER: The Hidden Manna, One Last Time

Read Revelation 2:17 once more: to him who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna. Then let the group flip back through their own lists: the jar before the testimony (Exodus 16), the golden urn in the ark (Hebrews 9), the promise to the victor.

Ask only this, and let it be the study's last open window rather than a closed door: if the manna waits in heaven, and the supper of the Lamb is heaven's feast, what do you suppose the Church has been tasting all along?

The Commissioning

Leader: Stand the group in a circle. Assign one link to each person (double up as needed) and have them proclaim the chain in order, reference and phrase, around the circle:

- Exodus 12:8: they shall eat the flesh that night.
- Exodus 24:11: they beheld God, and ate and drank.
- Exodus 16:15: it is the bread which the LORD has given you to eat.
- Leviticus 24:9: they shall eat it in a holy place.
- John 6:53: unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood.
- Matthew 26:26: take, eat; this is my body.
- Luke 24:35: he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.
- Revelation 19:9: blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Then say over the group: From Egypt to glory, God saves a people by feeding them himself. You have seen the whole table set. Go to it every Sunday like people who know what is on it, and bring someone hungry with you. Amen.

Send: Taking It With You

8. You are now someone who knows what the Eucharist is. What is your concrete Eucharistic rule of life from here: Mass, adoration, thanksgiving after Communion? Name it aloud; the group is your witness.

9. Who in your life is standing where you stood twelve weeks ago? What is one real step to bring them to this table, or this study, this year?

Live It This Week

- Sunday, at the Ecce Agnus Dei, hear all of it: Isaac's question, the Baptist's answer, heaven's invitation, and answer Amen like a person invited by name.
- Begin your named rule of Eucharistic life this week, not next.
- Write down the one sentence from this study you most want to still believe in ten years, and put it where you will find it again.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb. Revelation 19:9

Closing Prayer

Together: Lamb of God, slain and standing, you were the answer before we knew the question, and the bread before we knew our hunger. Keep us at your supper all our days, and when the hall is full and the feast begins, let every one of us be found at the table. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Part Three: Leader Reference Card

Passage	Used For
Genesis 22:7-8, 13	The open question restated; live discovery
John 1:29	The Baptist answers Isaac; live discovery
Revelation 5:6-14	The Lamb standing as though slain; heaven's liturgy
Revelation 19:6-9	Marriage supper; the beatitude; Ecce Agnus Dei moment
1 Peter 2:4-9	Royal priesthood; Session 7 seed harvested
1 Corinthians 5:7-8	Christ our paschal lamb; let us celebrate the festival
Revelation 2:17	Dig Deeper: the hidden manna, final open window
Commissioning chain	Ex 12:8; 24:11; 16:15; Lev 24:9; Jn 6:53; Mt 26:26; Lk 24:35; Rev 19:9
Revelation 19:9	Memory verse