



Special Edition

BIBLE BASICS^{for} CATHOLICS

A New Picture of Salvation History

Discussion Guide by
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Whether you're reading *Bible Basics for Catholics* with a group from your parish, in your regular small group or book club, or on your own, this guide is designed to help you get the most out of your reading. The questions are designed to be read and discussed after each chapter. If you're reading this on your own, take time after each chapter to pray and reflectively consider these questions. If you're reading this book as part of a group, instructions for the facilitator of the group are below.

Instructions for Facilitators

This study guide is designed to cover eight one- to two-hour meetings, plus a ninth closing session, but this schedule can be adjusted to meet the needs of the group. If a group is being created specifically to discuss this book, you might find it helpful to have a half-hour introductory session in which group members can meet each other and books can be handed out prior to the first meeting for discussion.

Materials Needed

- *Bible Basics for Catholics* (page numbers in this document reference the book)
- *Optional:* Journals for personal preparation and reflection before or after the group discussion

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1. Setting the Son in the Garden: The Covenant with Adam

Opening Prayer

Loving Father,

Thank you for this precious gift of your Word that through it we may come to know and worship you more fully and love you more deeply.

Lord Jesus Christ, today we gather as your disciples. We sit at your feet ready to listen to your Word. We humbly ask that you open our ears that we may hear with our intellect and open our hearts that we may know you intimately.

Come, Holy Spirit, fill us with your gifts of wisdom, understanding, and knowledge that we may grow in love, faithfulness, and joy. Amen.

Discussion Questions

1. By establishing the setting of humanity's story in God's creation, Eden is described as the first "sanctuary" (p. 31).

Define sanctuary. It has both secular and religious connotations. List both.

2. God then created Adam and placed him in this sanctuary, Eden.

Describe yourself as a creation of God. We are made in his "likeness and image." What does this mean to you?

Identify those qualities that make you uniquely you. Describe yourself as a child of God. Include vocabulary specific to family relationships.

3. God created the earth (and the universe!) as a temple and placed Adam at the center of this place of worship.

Like Adam, we find ourselves in the dual role of children of God and stewards of this beautiful temple. How does this knowledge of your identity change, augment, or otherwise inform the ways in which you see yourself?

4. Examine your life through the lens of the Adamic Covenant discussed in this chapter. We are baptized as priest, prophet, and king. We are also sons and daughters of the Father, and finally, we are “bridegrooms” because we are called to relationship with the Lord.

How does recognizing ourselves in these roles empower and enrich how we live our faith?

5. What tangible steps can you take to grow in faith?

Select one of the roles discussed in this chapter: priest, prophet, king, child of God, or bridegroom. Create a plan to develop this area of your faith life. It can include prayer, spiritual reading, developing a habit, or seeking spiritual direction, to name a few. The possibilities are as unique as you.

Bonus: Draw a stick figure of yourself, joyful in your role as child of God. Add a symbol of your desire to grow in faith.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Thank you for your Fatherhood. We are grateful for the lives you have given us and for the world in which we live.

We praise you and glorify you in word and deed as we strive to fulfill our roles in your Creation. Bless us in our endeavor to live fully your teachings. Amen.

2. Washing Up and Starting Over: The Covenant with Noah

Opening Prayer

Loving Father,

Thank you for this precious gift of your Word that through it we may come to know and worship you more fully and love you more deeply.

Lord Jesus Christ, today we gather as your disciples. We sit at your feet ready to listen to your Word. We humbly ask that you open our ears that we may hear with our intellect and open our hearts that we may know you intimately.

Come, Holy Spirit, fill us with your gifts of wisdom, understanding, and knowledge that we may grow in love, faithfulness, and joy. Amen.

Discussion Questions

1. Adam and Eve broke the covenant with God, and that act of disobedience carried consequences for them and for us.

What are these consequences? List the punishments described as they pertain to Adam and Eve.

Explain how Adam and Eve's sin has consequences for us.

2. God is compassionate and merciful—a God of second chances (and more!).

Describe God's mercy in Adam and Eve's lives. Describe how he extended his mercy to all humanity by creating a Covenant with Noah.

3. How do we use this knowledge of God's mercy in our day-to-day living? We see a broken covenant made anew in Noah. In fact, as we continue reading, we'll see how God renews these covenants time and again.

Think of a part of your life that needs renewal, mercy, or forgiveness. Implement a plan to address this through intentional action, whether it is prayer, reaching out to someone, or making a change in behavior. It can be as simple as receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

4. God's mercy is evident in his desire to bring us back to him each time we fail. He loves us! Share a time in your life when you felt pulled by doubt or despair. Where did you find hope and the fortitude to recover from this period? What can you learn from this experience to help carry you forward the next time you encounter a spiritual doubt?
5. God's plan for us is perfect. We are not. Yet our loving Father is moved with compassion for us and offers us his love and forgiveness at each misstep we make.

Consider an action or a small step that you can take to renew your commitment to God. What can you do today to start anew?

Bonus: Draw a stick figure of yourself, joyful in your role as child of God. Add a symbol of hope.

Closing Prayer

Compassionate Father,

Thank you for your mercy. We are grateful for the waves of your compassion that wash over us, cleanse us, and make us new in the Spirit.

We praise you and glorify you in word and deed as we strive to live in perfect relationship with you. Bless us in our endeavor to live fully your teachings. Amen.

3. A New Hope: The Covenant with Abraham

Opening Prayer

Loving Father,

Thank you for this precious gift of your Word that through it we may come to know and worship you more fully and love you more deeply.

Lord Jesus Christ, today we gather as your disciples. We sit at your feet ready to listen to your Word. We humbly ask that you open our ears that we may hear with our intellect and open our hearts that we may know you intimately.

Come, Holy Spirit, fill us with your gifts of wisdom, understanding, and knowledge that we may grow in love, faithfulness, and joy. Amen.

Discussion Questions

1. In this chapter, we see a pattern of God's love for his children. When Adam and Eve fell, he renewed the Covenant with Noah. And then Noah falls, even after God demonstrates his great mercy in saving him and his family. Once again, the relationship with God is broken. Once again, God repairs it—this time with Abram by giving him three blessings and changing his name to Abraham.

List three blessings God has given you.

2. Identify how Abraham failed to trust in God and his perfect plan. What do you think was at the root of Abraham's decision to follow Sarah's advice and take Hagar as a wife in order to produce a son? Not trusting God? Impatience? Pride? Explain your answer.

Do you have implicit trust in God's plan for you?

3. In Abraham and Sarah, we see a situation that is closer to our modern experience. We're not given a garden paradise to tend or a charge to build an ark. Instead, we are given a simple command to trust the Lord and his unique plan for us.

How can you apply this lesson in trusting the Lord and his plan to your life?

4. Abraham and Sarah took matters into their own hands instead of waiting for God's perfect plan. The result was strife for both Abraham and Sarah and also Hagar.

Waiting for God's timing is not a recent invention. Examine a time in your life when you felt God wasn't acting quickly enough and you acted to get something. How did that play out? How did you feel? What did that do to your relationship with God?

5. God gave Abraham an opportunity to repair their relationship. God asked Abraham to sacrifice his only son, Isaac. It is the ultimate sacrifice of his only son (and foreshadows God's sacrifice of his only begotten Son). Abraham's willingness to trust God now, with higher stakes, is duly noted by God.

We often make sacrifices for those we love. Can you approach these sacrifices with detachment as an offering for God? How does spiritual detachment release you from holding onto your will and open you to God's will?

Bonus: Draw a stick figure of yourself, joyful in your role as child of God. Add a symbol of one of God's blessings for you.

Closing Prayer

Faithful Father,

Thank you for your unconditional love. We are grateful for the many blessings you have poured out for us, seen and unseen.

We praise you and glorify you in word and deed as we strive to love and trust you unconditionally. Bless us in our endeavor to live fully your teachings. Amen.

4. God's Laws, Israel's Flaws: The Covenant through Moses

Opening Prayer

Loving Father,

Thank you for this precious gift of your Word that through it we may come to know and worship you more fully and love you more deeply.

Lord Jesus Christ, today we gather as your disciples. We sit at your feet ready to listen to your Word. We humbly ask that you open our ears that we may hear with our intellect and open our hearts that we may know you intimately.

Come, Holy Spirit, fill us with your gifts of wisdom, understanding, and knowledge that we may grow in love, faithfulness, and joy. Amen.

Discussion Questions

1. God's promise to Abraham is kept; Abraham did indeed become the father of nations. His descendants, however, became enslaved in Egypt, and God sent Moses to free them. Through Moses we received the Ten Commandments and other rules for leading holy and virtuous lives.

Recall your early catechism training: list the Ten Commandments.

2. Identify the commandments that order our relationship with God, the Father. Identify the commandments that order our behavior toward each other, our brothers and sisters.

3. The Ten Commandments are specific to certain behaviors but also have a broad application. For example, “Thou shall not kill” is very clear about prohibiting murder, but there are broader applications of this commandment. It can also apply to not killing (destroying) a person’s spirit as well as to other ways we can wound or kill someone metaphorically.

Do you consciously apply these rules for living a faithful life? Do you have a regular examination of conscience? How could you introduce this into your weekly or daily routine?

4. The story of the Israelite people in the desert shows us the depth of God’s love for his people even as they continue to disappoint him through their sinful behavior. The Israelites suffer for their sinfulness, yet God condescends, time and again, to offer them a new covenant. God does not give up on them, until finally, they give themselves over to God’s laws and the remade covenant.

How do we express our rebellion against God’s law today? Our society is rife with examples, but look interiorly too as you consider this question.

5. Our heavenly Father is a loving and just God. We have seen that there are consequences to our disobedience. In his mercy, God has provided not only the Ten Commandments but also other practices that help us achieve and sustain lives of holiness.

What practice (or devotion) have you integrated in your spiritual life that has borne fruit?

Bonus: Draw a stick figure of yourself, joyful in your role as child of God. Add a symbol of a devotion or practice that helps you grow in holiness.

Closing Prayer

Merciful Father,

Thank you for your guidance. We are grateful for the steadfast love you have shown us, even as we have rebelled against you.

We praise you and glorify you in word and deed as we strive to align our wills and hearts to your great plan for us. Bless us in our endeavor to live fully your teachings. Amen.

5. Once and Future King: The Covenant of David

Opening Prayer

Loving Father,

Thank you for this precious gift of your Word that through it we may come to know and worship you more fully and love you more deeply.

Lord Jesus Christ, today we gather as your disciples. We sit at your feet ready to listen to your Word. We humbly ask that you open our ears that we may hear with our intellect and open our hearts that we may know you intimately.

Come, Holy Spirit, fill us with your gifts of wisdom, understanding, and knowledge that we may grow in love, faithfulness, and joy. Amen.

Discussion Questions

1. In the years following the Mosaic Covenant, the nation of Israel grows, but not without some growing pains. Nevertheless, it is in the Davidic Covenant that part of Abraham's blessings come to fruition.

List David's characteristics. Connect them to Adam.

2. Describe how David fulfills Abraham's blessings and his role in salvation history.
3. David is described as "a great reformer who personally 'practiced what he preached'" (p. 89).

Do you have an area in your spiritual life that could use a little reform? What small change could you implement in your practice of the faith that would refresh your relationship with the Lord or help you go deeper in your relationship?

4. Examine your faith life in relation to David's public displays of worship and praise. Are you ready to be as forthright in declaring your faith as he was?

David wrote songs of worship. Perhaps writing praise music is not your cup of tea, but think about how you worship. Do you pray communal prayers in a strong and loud voice? Do you sing in Mass? Do you perform the Sign of the Cross reverently and with confidence in public?

5. Consider how David is similar to Jesus Christ. Connect David to Jesus.

How does God work through these covenants—the Adamic, Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic Covenants—to guide us as a people, align us to his will, and prepare us for the coming of his Son, Jesus Christ?

Bonus: Draw a stick figure of yourself, joyful in your role as child of God. Add a symbol of your favorite psalm of thanksgiving, praise, or repentance.

Closing Prayer

Almighty Father,

Thank you for fulfilling your promises and for your grand design for your people. We are grateful for your paternal guidance and correction.

We praise you and glorify you in word and deed as we strive to grow and blossom as your sons and daughters. Bless us in our endeavor to live fully your teachings. Amen.

6. Stormy Today, Sonny Tomorrow: The New Covenant in the Prophets

Opening Prayer

Loving Father,

Thank you for this precious gift of your Word that through it we may come to know and worship you more fully and love you more deeply.

Lord Jesus Christ, today we gather as your disciples. We sit at your feet ready to listen to your Word. We humbly ask that you open our ears that we may hear with our intellect and open our hearts that we may know you intimately.

Come, Holy Spirit, fill us with your gifts of wisdom, understanding, and knowledge that we may grow in love, faithfulness, and joy. Amen.

Discussion Questions

1. This chapter about the period of the prophets marks a transition for the Jewish people. The Davidic Covenant has fallen apart, and the Jewish nation is fragmented and spreading further away from Jerusalem. Some have outright rejected God and returned to pagan worship. It is a time marked by exile, captivity, and even annihilation of some tribes of Israel. God sees this and repeatedly sends prophets to warn his people of the error of their ways.

Name the three primary prophets and briefly explain their contribution to the New Covenant. What were their warnings?

What promises about the New Covenant are inherent in each of the three primary prophets' teachings? How do these promises affect your faith today?

2. Describe, in your own words, Israel's decline during this period of time. Include a discussion about Israel's political identity and how that may have affected their identity as God's people. How might this also affect them personally in their relationship with the Lord?

Explain how God continued to support the Israelites in spite of their quarreling and departure from David's and Solomon's earlier examples.

3. What have you learned about God's commitment to his people during this period of the prophets?

Have you ever experienced a period of doubt or felt yourself drifting away from the faith? What brought you back? Did you feel or see evidence of God's presence in your life during a dark time?

4. Examine the New Covenant in relation to "God setting his sanctuary in the midst of his people" (p. 119). Explain how sanctuary is used here.

What does the creation of a new Temple mean for the Jewish people? And what does it mean for us as Christians today?

5. The prophets were strong personalities, but they were charged by God to deliver a strong message. How were they received? Were their warnings heeded?

Do you have a favorite prophet, or are you drawn in a particular way to a prophet because of certain characteristics? Why?

How do you respond to people today who carry God's message in the media or social media?

Bonus: Draw a stick figure of yourself, joyful in your role as child of God. Add a symbol of a gift you would ask of God.

Closing Prayer

Generous Father,

Thank you for fulfilling your promises and for your concern and watchfulness over our lives, especially when we wander away from your path. We are grateful for your paternal guidance and correction.

We praise you and glorify you in word and deed as we strive to recommit ourselves to you. Bless us in our endeavor to live fully your teachings. Amen.

7. The Grand Finale: The Eucharistic Covenant

Opening Prayer

Loving Father,

Thank you for this precious gift of your Word that through it we may come to know and worship you more fully and love you more deeply.

Lord Jesus Christ, today we gather as your disciples. We sit at your feet ready to listen to your Word. We humbly ask that you open our ears that we may hear with our intellect and open our hearts that we may know you intimately.

Come, Holy Spirit, fill us with your gifts of wisdom, understanding, and knowledge that we may grow in love, faithfulness, and joy. Amen.

Discussion Questions

1. Since the end of Solomon's reign we've seen a steady decline of the Jewish nation, both politically and in the faith tradition. Now, at the opening of this chapter, we see a nation that has slowly been recovering its position. It's not quite at the height of its heyday as it was in David's time, but there are signs of it recovering its identity as God's Chosen People.

List three major events that affected the Jewish nation, and briefly state the consequences of those events.

2. Explain the significance of genealogy to the Jewish people. Identify the lineage of the Maccabees and the Herods. Why were these houses destined to fail? Were they not part of Abraham's legacy? How do you understand where the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants fit in these scenarios?

3. John Bergsma's illustrations are fun, but they are also excellent tools to visually capture and represent the complexity of the roles and covenants in the biblical narrative. Use Bergsma's illustrations to identify Jesus as the new Adam. Identify the five roles that Jesus fulfills. Discuss these roles in relation to the covenants.

How does understanding these roles help you understand the person of Jesus better?

4. Connect each of the previous covenants to the Eucharistic Covenant. Relate each major player to Jesus. How is the Eucharistic Covenant the culmination of all the covenants that preceded it?
5. This chapter first explains Jesus as the fulfillment of the earlier covenants and then explains the institution of the Eucharist as the formation of a new and everlasting covenant. What does the "New Covenant" mean to you?

Will you respond differently when you hear the words "everlasting covenant" in the Mass?

Bonus: Draw a stick figure of yourself, joyful in your role as child of God. Add Jesus beside you.

Closing Prayer

Loving Father,

Thank you for your greatest gift to us, your Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ. We are grateful for your expansive and perfect love.

We praise you and glorify you in word and deed as we strive to love you as you love us. Bless us in our endeavor to live fully your teachings. Amen.

8. Covenant Consummation: The Wedding Feast of the Lamb

Opening Prayer

Loving Father,

Thank you for this precious gift of your Word that through it we may come to know and worship you more fully and love you more deeply.

Lord Jesus Christ, today we gather as your disciples. We sit at your feet ready to listen to your Word. We humbly ask that you open our ears that we may hear with our intellect and open our hearts that we may know you intimately.

Come, Holy Spirit, fill us with your gifts of wisdom, understanding, and knowledge that we may grow in love, faithfulness, and joy. Amen.

Discussion Questions

1. What are the three time periods referenced in Revelation? How does breaking down this complex book of the Bible into these distinct eras help you see Revelation in a broader sense and give it historical relevance as well as a modern perspective?
2. Describe the “new Temple city” (p. 162). Consider the historical meanings of temple, both literal and figurative.
3. Analyze the Bride and the Lamb. What and whom do these characterizations symbolize?
4. The beautiful imagery of family completes the relationship we began with, as a child of God. Explain the metaphor of the Wedding Feast of the Lamb. Are we invited to this feast as neighbors or family?

5. How does this symbolism of the Bride and the Lamb change or support your understanding of Revelation? Of your faith? Of your understanding of the Catholic Church?

Bonus: Draw a stick figure of yourself, joyful in your role as child of God. Place yourself in heaven, surrounded by God's love.

Closing Prayer

Eternal Father,

Thank you for the gift of the Holy Mass that gives us a foretaste of heaven. We are grateful for the celebration of the Eucharist.

We praise you and glorify you in word and deed as we strive to one day join you in heaven. Bless us in our endeavor to live fully your teachings. Amen.

A Last Word

Opening Prayer

Loving Father,

Thank you for this precious gift of your Word that through it we may come to know and worship you more fully and love you more deeply.

Lord Jesus Christ, today we gather as your disciples. We sit at your feet ready to listen to your Word. We humbly ask that you open our ears that we may hear with our intellect and open our hearts that we may know you intimately.

Come, Holy Spirit, fill us with your gifts of wisdom, understanding, and knowledge that we may grow in love, faithfulness, and joy. Amen.

Discussion Questions

1. How can you become an evangelist and share the Good News? Who is your audience? Friends at the coffee shop? A family member at a social gathering?
2. What storytelling mode are you most comfortable using? A face-to-face conversation? A social media post?
3. In this conclusion, John Bergsma challenges us to share the Christian story. Are you committed to being an evangelist?

Bonus: Draw a stick figure of yourself, joyful in your role as child of God. Add a megaphone to symbolize your voice.

Closing Prayer

Eternal Father,

Thank you for the gift of community and sharing. We are grateful for the opportunity to share your Good News.

We praise you and glorify you in word and deed as we strive to be messengers of your love. Bless us in our endeavor to live fully your teachings. Amen.