

# Through the Bible in 24 Months



## WEEK 1 OF 104

*Beginnings*

Week 1 of 104 · 1% of the way through the Bible

### THIS WEEK'S READINGS

|                       |                  |
|-----------------------|------------------|
| General Old Testament | Genesis 1-7      |
| Wisdom Literature     | Proverbs 1       |
| Gospels               | Matthew 1:1-2:12 |
| General New Testament | Acts 1:1-2:13    |

### THIS WEEK AT A GLANCE

Everything starts somewhere. This week all four of your readings stand at a beginning, and that is no accident. Genesis opens with a world spoken into being by a God who calls it good, and closes your reading with that same world washed clean by a flood. Proverbs opens with a father leaning toward his son and saying, in effect, here is where wisdom starts. Matthew opens with a genealogy that looks like a list of names until you notice that God has been keeping a promise for two thousand years. And Acts opens with a small, frightened group of men in an upstairs room who are about to be handed the keys of the kingdom. Read them together and a single truth surfaces: nothing in the story of God is accidental, and nothing in it is finished.

**How to use this guide:** Read all four passages during the week. Your teacher will take up two of them in class, one in each session. For the other two, work through the "Extended Class Discussion or Self-Study" questions on your own and write your answers in the space provided.

### GENERAL OLD TESTAMENT Genesis 1-7

### Creation, the Fall, and the Flood

#### WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

These chapters lay the foundation for everything that follows in Scripture. God creates the heavens and the earth and pronounces them good, and He makes man and woman in His own image. Then comes the ruin: a serpent, a choice, a hiding, and a world that grows so corrupt God resolves to wash it away. Yet even here God is already speaking about a Seed who will crush the serpent, and He is already saving a family in an ark.

#### FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Read Genesis 1:26-27 slowly. What does it actually mean that men and women are made in the image of God, and what practical difference should that make in how we treat the people we will see this week?
2. Genesis 3:15 is often called the first gospel. Trace what God promises there, and discuss how the rest of the Bible answers it.

3. God tells Adam and Eve the consequence of eating, and the serpent tells them something different. Where do we still hear the serpent's two arguments today, that God is holding out on us and that the consequence will not really come?

#### EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Write down every time the phrase "and God saw that it was good" or something like it appears in Genesis 1. What does the repetition tell you about how God feels about the world He made?
2. In Genesis 2:18–25, what is God's stated design for marriage? Compare your answer with what Jesus says in Matthew 19:4–6.
3. Genesis 3 records the first sin. List the steps by which Eve moved from listening, to looking, to taking. Where in your own week does that sequence usually begin?
4. Read Genesis 4:1–12. Why was Abel's offering accepted and Cain's rejected? See Hebrews 11:4 before you answer.
5. Genesis 6:8–9 says Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord and walked with God in a generation that had abandoned Him. Name one specific way you are being asked to walk with God this week when the people around you are not.

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## WISDOM LITERATURE Proverbs 1

### Where Wisdom Begins

#### WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Solomon opens his collection by telling you what it is for: to know wisdom, to receive instruction, to give prudence to the simple. Then he gives the thesis of the entire book in one line, that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. The chapter closes with Wisdom herself standing in the street, calling out to anyone who will listen, and warning what happens to those who will not.

#### FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Proverbs 1:7 says the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. What does it mean to fear God, and how is that different from being afraid of Him?

2. In Proverbs 1:10–19, what exactly is the invitation the sinners offer, and why is it so attractive? What makes the young man’s refusal possible?
3. Wisdom is pictured in 1:20–33 as calling out in public, not whispering in secret. What does that say about how available God’s wisdom actually is, and about why people still miss it?

#### EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List the purposes of Proverbs given in 1:1–6. Which of those do you most need right now?
2. Look up Proverbs 9:10, Job 28:28, and Psalm 111:10. What do all four passages have in common?
3. A proverb is a general principle about how life usually goes under God’s order, not an absolute promise. Why does that distinction matter when you read a verse like Proverbs 1:33?
4. Proverbs 1:8–9 speaks of a father’s instruction and a mother’s teaching. Who has God placed in your life to give you that kind of instruction, and are you actually listening to them?
5. Read 1:24–32 carefully. What is the difference between God refusing to hear and a person having waited too long to listen?

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## GOSPELS Matthew 1:1–2:12

### The Promise Kept

#### WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Matthew begins not with a manger but with a family tree, because he is writing to prove that Jesus is the promised Son of David and Son of Abraham. Then the account turns to the announcement to Joseph, the virgin birth, and the arrival of wise men from the east who come looking for a King while Jerusalem’s own king is troubled by the news.

#### FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Matthew opens with a genealogy. Why would he begin a gospel that way, and what is he claiming in 1:1 before he tells a single story?
2. Read Matthew 1:20–23 together. What does Matthew say the virgin birth accomplishes, and why does the name Immanuel matter to the whole book?

3. Compare the reaction of Herod and Jerusalem in 2:3 with the reaction of the wise men in 2:10–11. What makes the same news terrifying to one and joyful to the other?

#### EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Read through the genealogy and note the women named in it (1:3, 5, 6, 16). What is surprising about that list, and what might Matthew be signaling?
2. Matthew 1:21 explains the name Jesus. What does he say Jesus will save His people from, and what does He not promise to save them from?
3. Look up Isaiah 7:14 and Micah 5:2, and note how Matthew uses each. How many Old Testament quotations can you find in this reading?
4. Joseph is called a just man in 1:19. Trace what he does in 1:24–25 and 2:13–14. What does obedience look like in his life?
5. The wise men brought what they had and worshiped. What would it look like this week for you to bring God something that actually costs you something?

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## GENERAL NEW TESTAMENT Acts 1:1–2:13

### Power From On High

#### WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Luke picks up where his gospel ended. The risen Jesus spends forty days with His apostles, tells them to wait in Jerusalem for the promise of the Father, and then ascends out of their sight. The apostles return, pray, and replace Judas. Then the day of Pentecost arrives with a sound like a rushing mighty wind, and men from every nation under heaven hear the wonderful works of God in their own languages.

#### FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. In Acts 1:6 the apostles ask about restoring the kingdom to Israel. How does Jesus answer them in 1:7–8, and what does His answer correct?
2. Jesus tells the apostles to wait for power before they witness (1:4–8). Why the waiting? What does that suggest about the difference between effort and Spirit-empowered work?

3. Read Acts 2:5–12. What exactly happened when the apostles spoke in tongues, and what was the purpose of the miracle?

#### **EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY**

1. List everything Acts 1:1–11 tells you about the forty days between the resurrection and the ascension.
2. What qualifications does Peter give in 1:21–22 for the man who would replace Judas? Why do those qualifications matter for the credibility of the whole book?
3. Acts 1:8 gives a geographic outline of the entire book. Write it out, and as you read Acts over the coming weeks, note where each stage begins.
4. Compare the tongues of Acts 2:4–11 with the description in 1 Corinthians 14:6–12. Were these known human languages or unintelligible speech? Give your evidence.
5. The apostles “continued with one accord in prayer and supplication” (1:14) while they waited. What are you currently waiting on God for, and what is your waiting actually filled with?

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**NEXT WEEK'S READING:** Genesis 8–16 · Proverbs 2 · Matthew 2:13–3:17 · Acts 2:14–47

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