

Through the Bible in 24 Months



WEEK 5 OF 104

Whom We Answer To

Week 5 of 104 • 5% of the way through the Bible

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

General Old Testament	Genesis 31–36
Wisdom Literature	Proverbs 5–6:19
Gospels	Matthew 6
General New Testament	Acts 5:17–6:15

THIS WEEK AT A GLANCE

Somebody is always watching. That sounds like a threat until you notice who. Jacob spends a night alone at a river with a Man he cannot throw, and limps away with a new name and a settled account with God. Solomon tells a man standing near the wrong doorway that his ways are already in full view of the Lord, whatever the neighbors know. Jesus says the giving and praying and fasting that count are the kind nobody sees, because the Father sees in secret and that is enough. And in Jerusalem, twelve men flogged by the highest court in their nation walk out rejoicing, because they had already settled whose verdict mattered.

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 31–36

Wrestling at the Jabbok

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Jacob slips away from Laban with his wives, his children, his flocks, and, unknown to him, his father-in-law's household idols in Rachel's saddlebag. Laban overtakes him, they build a heap of stones, and Jacob turns toward the brother he cheated twenty years earlier. On the night before the meeting he sends everyone across the ford and wrestles until daybreak with a Man who dislocates his hip and gives him a new name. Then the brothers embrace, Dinah is violated, a city is slaughtered, and Rachel dies on the road to Bethlehem.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Jacob wrestles all night and walks away limping, blessed, and renamed (32:24–32). Talk about what he is actually fighting for, and why God lets the struggle run until daybreak rather than settling it in a moment.
2. Simeon and Levi deceive an entire city and then slaughter it over their sister's violation, and they answer their father with a question he never answers back (34:25–31). Was a real wrong done to Dinah? Where does righteous anger end and vengeance begin, and how do Romans 12:19 and Ephesians 4:26 help us draw that line?

3. God tells Jacob in 35:1 to go back to Bethel, where he first met Him, and Jacob immediately tells his household to hand over the foreign gods among them. Where is your Bethel, and what would you have to bury along the road to get there?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Write out Jacob's prayer in 32:9–12. How much of it appeals to what he deserves, and how much of it appeals to what God has promised?
2. Read Genesis 32:28 beside Hosea 12:3–6. What does Hosea say Jacob did during that night at the ford, and what does the prophet want his own generation to learn from it?
3. Trace Jacob's two names through chapters 32 through 35. When is he called Jacob and when is he called Israel? Notice that the old name never entirely disappears, and consider why.
4. Genesis 35 records one birth and three deaths. List them in order, and then read what God says to Jacob in 35:9–12 in the middle of all that loss.
5. Jacob limped for the rest of his life. Name the weakness God has left in you that keeps you leaning on Him, and this week thank Him for it out loud in prayer instead of asking Him again to take it away.

WISDOM LITERATURE Proverbs 5–6:19

Traps a Man Walks Into

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Solomon gives an entire chapter to the woman whose words are smoother than oil and whose end is bitter as wormwood, and he follows the road all the way down to the groaning at the end. Then he turns and speaks warmly about a man's own wife. The next section is a set of short, blunt warnings: do not co-sign for a stranger, do not sleep your life away (go look at an ant), and do not become the man who spreads discord. It closes with seven things the Lord hates.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Proverbs 5:3–14 follows the adulterer all the way to the end of the story, from honey on the lips to groaning in a ruined life. Trace that progression out loud. Why is the ability to see the end of a road the single most valuable thing a tempted person can have?

2. Verses 15 through 19 are strikingly warm: drink water from your own cistern, rejoice with the wife of your youth, be captivated by her love. How does genuine delight in your own marriage protect a person better than willpower alone, and what would actually feed that delight this week?
3. Proverbs 6:16–19 lists six things the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to Him. Read them one at a time. Which of the seven is most quietly tolerated among good church people, and why do we let that one pass?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List the seven things of 6:16–19 and mark how many of them involve the tongue. Then read James 3:5–10 and note what James says a tongue can accomplish.
2. Proverbs 5:21–23 says a man's ways are before the eyes of the Lord and that his own iniquities take him captive. According to the passage, who does the trapping, and what finally kills the fool?
3. Read Proverbs 6:1–5 about striking hands in a pledge for a neighbor, then compare 11:15, 17:18, and 22:26–27. Is Scripture forbidding generosity here, or forbidding something else? Support your answer.
4. Go to the ant (6:6–11). List everything the ant does and everything the text says it does not have. Then note the exact way poverty arrives in verse 11.
5. Solomon tells a man to keep his way far from her door (5:8). Name the door you have been walking past “just to look,” and change the route this week: the app, the drive home, the account you follow, the friendship you keep warm for the wrong reason.

GOSPELS Matthew 6

Your Father Who Sees

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Jesus turns from what we do to why we do it. Giving, praying, and fasting all appear here, and each one comes with the same warning and the same promise: perform for people and people are all the reward you get, but the Father sees in secret. In the middle He gives the model prayer and then, of all the lines in it, circles back to the one about forgiveness. The chapter closes with treasure, the eye, two masters, and the most tender passage on anxiety in all of Scripture.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Three times in 6:1–18 Jesus says of the hypocrites, “they have their reward.” Talk about what that sentence means. Why is a human audience such a poor trade, and where are the people in this room most tempted to make it?
2. Walk through the model prayer in 6:9–13 one phrase at a time. What comes first, what comes second, and how does that order compare with the way most of us actually pray? Then look at what Jesus chooses to underline in 6:14–15.
3. Jesus commands us not to worry three times (6:25, 31, 34) and supplies reasons rather than just orders. Which of His reasons lands hardest on you, and what is the specific worry you would have to hand over this week in order to obey Him?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List the three acts of righteousness in 6:1–18. For each one, write down what the hypocrites do, what Jesus commands instead, and what the Father does in response.
2. Compare Matthew 6:14–15 with Matthew 18:21–35 and Ephesians 4:32. What is the stated relationship between being forgiven by God and forgiving other people?
3. Trace the word “treasure” through 6:19–21. Write down the three things Jesus says about treasure stored on earth, and note which direction He says the heart travels.
4. Verses 22 and 23 speak of the eye as the lamp of the body, and they sit between the paragraph on treasure and the one on two masters. Explain how the eye connects those two ideas.
5. Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (6:33). Look honestly at where your first hour, your first dollar, and your first thought went yesterday, then change one of the three this week and keep a record of what happens.

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

The high priest and the Sadducees, filled with indignation, put the apostles in the common prison. An angel opens the doors at night and sends them right back to the temple to speak all the words of this life. The officers find the prison locked, guarded, and empty. Hauled before the council, Peter answers with one sentence that Christians have been repeating ever since. Gamaliel counsels patience, the apostles are beaten and leave rejoicing, and then the first internal conflict in church history arrives over a food distribution.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Peter answers the council in 5:29 with a single sentence: "We ought to obey God rather than men." Talk about where that principle applies and where it does not. How do we hold it together with Romans 13:1–7 and 1 Peter 2:13–17?
2. The apostles walked out of a flogging rejoicing that they had been counted worthy to suffer shame for His name (5:41). That is not a normal human response to a beating. What had changed in those men, and what would have to change in us before that sentence could be written about our congregation?
3. Acts 6:1–7 records a real complaint in a growing church, brought into the open instead of buried or gossiped about. Look closely at how the apostles handled it. What does this teach us about complaints, about delegation, and about what leaders must refuse to be pulled away from?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Trace what the angel tells the apostles to do in 5:20 and what they actually do in 5:21, 5:25, and 5:42. Where are they teaching, and how often?
 2. Gamaliel's advice in 5:34–39 sounds wise and has been quoted for two thousand years. Read it carefully. Where is he right, and where would his rule be dangerous if a person adopted it as a general principle?
 3. List the qualifications required of the seven men in 6:3 and compare them with 1 Timothy 3:8–13. What kind of man does the Lord's church need for its practical work, and why do character requirements come before ability?
 4. Acts 6:4 contains the apostles' own statement of their priorities. Write it out word for word. What did they refuse to be pulled away from, and why does that still matter for preachers and elders today?
 5. The seven were chosen so that no widow would be overlooked. Name the person in our congregation most likely to be overlooked this month, and do one specific thing for that person before Sunday.
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NEXT WEEK'S READING: Genesis 37-43 · Proverbs 6:20-7:27 · Matthew 7-8:13 · Acts 7:1-53

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