

Through the Bible in 24 Months



WEEK 7 OF 104

Power to Forgive

Week 7 of 104 • 7% of the way through the Bible

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

General Old Testament	Genesis 44-50
Wisdom Literature	Proverbs 8
Gospels	Matthew 8:14-9:8
General New Testament	Acts 7:54-8:40

THIS WEEK AT A GLANCE

Power usually protects itself. This week you will watch it do the opposite. Joseph stands over ten brothers who once sold him for silver, holds their lives in his hand, and weeps instead of settling accounts. Wisdom, who was there when God set the mountains in place, comes down to a city gate and calls out to simple people with no claim on her at all. Jesus stills a storm, empties a graveyard of its terror, and then tells a paralyzed man the thing he had not thought to ask for: your sins are forgiven. And Stephen, under a hail of stones, spends his last breath asking God not to charge this to the men throwing them.

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 44-50

You Meant It for Evil

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

A silver cup turns up in Benjamin's sack, and the brother who once sold Joseph for silver steps forward and offers to become a slave in his brother's place. Joseph cannot hold himself together any longer. The family comes down to Egypt, Jacob stands in front of Pharaoh and blesses him, and Israel settles in Goshen. Then Jacob crosses his hands over two grandsons, speaks a blessing over his twelve sons, and dies. The brothers panic, Joseph weeps again, and Genesis closes with a coffin in Egypt and a promise about bones.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Judah's speech in 44:18-34 is the longest any brother makes in Genesis, and it ends with him offering to be a slave so Benjamin can go home to his father. Set the Judah of 37:26-27 beside the Judah of 44:33. What changed in that man, and what does genuine repentance look like when it finally arrives?
2. Joseph says twice, in 45:5-8 and again in 50:20, that God sent him and meant it for good. How can both things be true at the same time, that his brothers did a wicked thing and that God accomplished salvation through it, without making God responsible for their sin?

3. In 50:19 Joseph asks his terrified brothers, “Am I in the place of God?” That question is the hinge of his forgiveness. Whom are you still holding to account in a way that would have to be released before you could ask Joseph’s question honestly?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Trace every time Joseph weeps from chapter 42 through chapter 50 and list the occasions. What do those tears tell you about a man who had every reason to have gone hard?
2. Read Jacob’s blessing on Judah in 49:8–12, then read Revelation 5:5 and Hebrews 7:14. How did the scepter stay with Judah, and who is the one to whom the obedience of the peoples belongs?
3. Jacob deliberately crosses his hands over Ephraim and Manasseh in 48:13–20 and refuses to be corrected. List the other places in Genesis where the younger has been set ahead of the elder, and consider what God is teaching about how He chooses.
4. Genesis ends with an embalmed body in a coffin in Egypt (50:24–26). Read Hebrews 11:22 and Exodus 13:19. Why did Joseph’s instruction about his bones matter enough to be remembered for four hundred years?
5. Joseph spoke kindly to the men who cost him twenty years, and the text says he comforted them. Name the person you have technically forgiven but never spoken warmly to, and do one kind thing for that person this week without explaining why.

WISDOM LITERATURE Proverbs 8

Wisdom Standing at the Gate

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Wisdom does not hide. She stands on the high places, beside the road, at the crossroads, at the gates of the city where business is done, and she calls out to the simplest people in the street. Her words, she says, are plain to anyone who wants to understand them, and worth more than silver. Kings reign by her. And then the chapter lifts into one of the most beautiful passages in the Old Testament, in which Wisdom describes being there before the mountains, delighting in God and rejoicing in the world He was making.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Wisdom takes her stand where the traffic is: the high hill, the crossroads, the city gate, and she calls to the simple and even to fools. What does that say about how available God's wisdom actually is, and why do so many people still walk past it?
2. In 8:22–31 Wisdom speaks of existing before the mountains and the depths, and of rejoicing in the world and delighting in the sons of men. This is poetic personification, not a separate person of the Godhead. How should we read this passage carefully, and what do 1 Corinthians 1:24, 30 and Colossians 2:3 allow us to say about Christ?
3. Verses 35 and 36 draw a stark line: whoever finds wisdom finds life, and whoever sins against her loves death. Nobody in this room would say he loves death. Where do our actual choices this week say something different from what we would claim with our mouths?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List everything Wisdom says about her own speech in 8:6–9. How many of those same claims could be made about the word of God, and which passages would you use to support them?
2. Proverbs 8:13 defines the fear of the Lord by what it hates. Write out the four things named. Which of the four is easiest for a religious person to hold on to without noticing?
3. Compare Proverbs 8:22–31 with John 1:1–3 and Colossians 1:16–17. What is genuinely alike in these passages, and what difference of literary genre has to be kept in mind so that the comparison is not pressed too far?
4. Trace the language of value through 8:10–19: better than silver, better than rubies, better than choice gold. According to those verses, what does Wisdom actually hand out to those who find her?
5. Wisdom stands at the gate, where in that world the decisions of a city were made (8:3). Name the one real decision in front of you this month, and before you decide it, take it first to Scripture and then to one wise Christian, in that order.

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Jesus touches a fevered woman's hand and she gets up and serves supper. By evening the whole town is at the door. A scribe volunteers to follow and is told about foxes and birds and homelessness. On the lake a storm nearly swamps the boat while He sleeps, and a word from Him ends it. On the far shore two men nobody could pass are set free, and the town asks Him to leave. Then friends bring a paralyzed man, and Jesus begins with the one thing nobody had asked Him for.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Matthew stacks these accounts deliberately: fever, storm, demons, paralysis, and sin all give way to Him. Trace the progression. What is Matthew proving about Jesus, and why does he finish the sequence with forgiveness rather than with another miracle?
2. In 9:2 Jesus tells a paralyzed man that his sins are forgiven before He says one word about his legs, and the scribes immediately think "blasphemy." They were right about the principle. What is actually at stake in their objection, and how does Jesus settle it in 9:5-6?
3. Two would-be followers appear in 8:19-22, and both receive a hard answer instead of encouragement. What is Jesus protecting them from? And what have you been telling yourself you will do for the Lord as soon as one more thing is settled?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Peter's mother-in-law is healed and immediately gets up and serves them (8:15). List everyone healed or delivered in this reading, and note what each one does next.
 2. Matthew 8:17 quotes Isaiah 53:4. Read Isaiah 53 in full and then 1 Peter 2:24. Is Matthew teaching that bodily healing is guaranteed to Christians in the atonement? Answer from both contexts.
 3. In the boat the disciples cry, "Lord, save us! We are perishing!" and Jesus calls them of little faith (8:25-26). Trace what they got right in that sentence and what they got wrong.
 4. The people of the region asked Jesus to leave after the demoniacs were freed (8:34). List what the encounter cost them and what it gained them, and consider why they weighed it the way they did.
 5. Matthew says Jesus saw "their faith" (9:2); read Mark 2:3-5 for the detail Matthew leaves out. Name the person you would carry to Jesus if you were willing to be genuinely inconvenienced, and take one concrete step toward them this week.
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Scattered, and Still Preaching**WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE**

Stephen looks up, sees the Son of Man standing at God's right hand, and says so, and the council stops listening. He dies praying for the men killing him while a young man named Saul holds the coats. Persecution breaks over the church and scatters it, and everywhere the scattered Christians go they preach. Philip goes down to Samaria, where a famous sorcerer believes and is baptized and then makes a terrible offer. Then an angel sends Philip away from a crowded city to an empty road, where one man is reading Isaiah out loud.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Acts 8:1–4 says the church was scattered by persecution and that those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word. What does that tell us about who does the preaching in the New Testament, and about what God does with what we would have called a catastrophe?
2. Simon believed, was baptized, and continued with Philip, and then Peter tells him he is poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity and must repent and pray (8:13, 20–24). Work through what this account settles about whether a Christian can fall, and about how a Christian who has sinned is restored.
3. The Ethiopian asks, "See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?" Philip had started at Isaiah 53 and preached Jesus to him. How does a man get from a passage about a suffering servant to a chariot stopped beside water, and what does that tell us about what gospel preaching must include?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Set Stephen's last two prayers (7:59–60) beside the words of Jesus in Luke 23:34 and 46. List the parallels, and note what Stephen calls the moment of his death.
2. Trace the spread of the gospel in this reading against the outline Jesus gave in Acts 1:8. Which stage has been reached here, and who is actually carrying it forward?
3. Read Acts 8:14–19 carefully. Why did Peter and John have to come down from Jerusalem, and what do Hebrews 2:3–4 and 1 Corinthians 13:8–10 say about why those gifts were given and how long they were to last?
4. List everything the Ethiopian does from 8:27 through 8:39, in order. At what point in that sequence does the text say he went on his way rejoicing?
5. Philip left a whole city that was full of joy in order to stand on a desert road for one man. Name the one person God has put on a road with you, and have the conversation with him this week rather than next.

NEXT WEEK'S READING: Exodus 1-8 · Proverbs 9-10 · Matthew 9:9-38 · Acts 9

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