

Through the Bible in 24 Months



WEEK 8 OF 104

Called and Sent

Week 8 of 104 · 8% of the way through the Bible

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

General Old Testament	Exodus 1-8
Wisdom Literature	Proverbs 9-10
Gospels	Matthew 9:9-38
General New Testament	Acts 9

THIS WEEK AT A GLANCE

Three men this week are minding their own business when God interrupts them. Moses is keeping somebody else's sheep on the back side of a desert and has not been near Egypt in forty years. Matthew is sitting at a tax booth doing the one job guaranteed to make him hated in his own town. Saul is walking a road toward Damascus with warrants in his bag and murder in his heart. Not one of them volunteered. Meanwhile, in Proverbs, Wisdom sets a table and sends her servants out to call from the highest place in the city, and Folly calls from her doorway using almost the same words. Read all four together and you will see that God rarely waits until we feel ready. He calls. The only question left is what we do with the invitation.

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 Exodus 1-8

The God Who Came Down

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Four hundred years pass between the last page of Genesis and the first page of Exodus, and everything has changed. Joseph is forgotten, Israel is enslaved, and a king is drowning Hebrew boys in the Nile. One baby survives in a basket, grows up in a palace, kills a man, and runs. Forty years later a bush burns without being consumed, and God tells him His name. Moses goes back, Pharaoh hardens, the bricks get harder, and the plagues begin.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Exodus 2:23-25 says that God heard, remembered, looked, and knew. Israel had been groaning for generations before that sentence was written. How do you hold on to a God who hears when the rescue has not come yet?
2. At the burning bush Moses raises four objections (3:11; 3:13; 4:1; 4:10). Walk through them one at a time and notice how God answers each. Which of those excuses sounds most like the ones you use?

3. Exodus says both that Pharaoh hardened his own heart (8:15, 8:32) and that the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart (4:21; 9:12). How do those two statements fit together without making God the author of a man's sin?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. In Exodus 8, trace the two compromises Pharaoh offers Moses (8:25 and 8:28). Write down what each one would have cost Israel if Moses had accepted it.
2. The plagues are not random disasters. Read Exodus 12:12 and then look back at the Nile, the frogs, and the livestock. Whom was God actually putting on trial?
3. Read Hebrews 11:23–27 alongside Exodus 2. What was Moses choosing, and what was he seeing that the narrative in Exodus never mentions?
4. Moses asks "Who am I?" and God answers with a promise about Himself rather than a compliment about Moses (3:11–12). Why does that answer strengthen a man more than reassurance would?
5. The midwives feared God rather than the king (1:17–21). Name one place this week where you will have to answer to God while somebody with power over you wants something else, and decide now what you will do.

WISDOM LITERATURE Proverbs 9–10

Two Invitations, Two Roads

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Chapter 9 sets two dinner parties side by side. Wisdom has built her house, prepared her meat, mixed her wine, and sent her servants out to call from the high places of the city. Folly sits loudly at her own door and calls to the very same people with nearly the same words. Then chapter 10 changes gear entirely. Solomon begins the short, two-line contrasts that will run for the rest of the book: diligent hands and lazy ones, guarded lips and gushing ones, the righteous and the wicked.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Wisdom and Folly call out to the same people in nearly identical words (9:4 and 9:16). Compare the two invitations line by line. What is actually different between the two tables, and why is that difference so easy to miss in the moment?

2. Proverbs 9:7–9 says a scoffer hates the one who corrects him while a wise man loves him for it. Think back to the last time somebody corrected you. Which of those two men did you sound like, and what did the people around you learn from your reaction?
3. Chapter 10 keeps returning to the mouth (verses 11, 19, 20, 21, 31, 32). Read those verses aloud in order and describe the portrait of speech they add up to. Where does that portrait press hardest on how we talk at home?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Write out everything Proverbs 9:1–3 says Wisdom has already done before she issues a single invitation. What does her preparation suggest about how seriously God takes the offer?
2. Compare Proverbs 9:10 with Proverbs 1:7 and Psalm 111:10. Why do you think this same refrain keeps returning at the seams of the book?
3. Proverbs 10 speaks about wealth in verses 2, 4, 15, and 22. Hold those four together with 1 Timothy 6:17–19 and state plainly what Proverbs is promising and what it is not.
4. Folly's entire pitch is in 9:17: stolen water is sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant. Name the specific appeal hidden in that sentence, and name three places our culture makes the same pitch.
5. Proverbs 10:19 warns that where words are many, sin is not far behind. Pick one conversation you know is coming this week and decide right now what you are not going to say in it.

GOSPELS Matthew 9:9–38

The Physician and the Harvest

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Jesus walks past a tax booth, says two words to the man sitting in it, and Matthew gets up and follows. Then Matthew throws a dinner party, and the wrong people come. The Pharisees object, John's disciples ask about fasting, and Jesus answers both with pictures of patches, wineskins, and a bridegroom. A ruler's daughter dies, a woman touches the hem of His garment, two blind men follow Him into a house, and a mute man speaks. The section ends with Jesus looking at a crowd and feeling something.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Jesus tells the Pharisees to go and learn what “I desire mercy and not sacrifice” means (9:13). If our congregation actually went and learned that lesson, name three things that would look different about us next month.
2. In 9:16–17 Jesus talks about unshrunk patches and old wineskins. What is He claiming about the relationship between what He is bringing and the old order, and why could the two not simply be stitched together?
3. Matthew 9:36 says Jesus was moved with compassion because the crowds were weary and scattered, like sheep without a shepherd. When did you last look at a crowd of strangers that way, and what is it about our ordinary week that keeps us from seeing people like that?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Trace the four miracles in 9:18–34 and note in each case who took the initiative: Jesus, the person in need, or someone acting on their behalf.
2. Matthew’s account of his own call takes one sentence (9:9). Read Luke 5:27–29 and write down what Matthew leaves out about himself, then consider why he might have left it out.
3. Look up Hosea 6:6, the verse Jesus quotes in 9:13. What was Hosea confronting in Israel, and how does knowing that sharpen the rebuke Jesus is delivering?
4. The woman in 9:20–22 believes that touching the hem of His garment will be enough. Where is the line between faith and superstition, and how does Jesus draw that line in verse 22?
5. Jesus’ remedy for a plentiful harvest and too few laborers is prayer (9:38). Choose one person by name to pray for every day this week, and decide on one thing you will actually do about them.

The Road to Damascus

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Saul is still breathing threats and murder, and he has letters in hand authorizing arrests in Damascus. Then a light, a voice, and three days of blindness. God sends a frightened disciple named Ananias to the most dangerous man in the country, and Saul rises, is baptized, and starts preaching in the synagogues he came to

raid. He escapes the city in a basket, is vouched for by Barnabas in Jerusalem, and the chapter closes with Peter healing Aeneas and raising Dorcas.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Jesus asks, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" though Saul had never laid a hand on Jesus Himself. What is Jesus claiming about His relationship to His church, and how should that claim change the way we handle one another?
2. Saul saw the Lord, believed, prayed, and went without food for three days, and yet Ananias still told him, "Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins" (Acts 22:16). Walk carefully through what that sequence tells us about when a person's sins are actually forgiven.
3. Ananias argues with God about this assignment (9:13–14), then goes and opens with the words "Brother Saul." Who is the person you would least want to see walk into the assembly next Sunday, and what would it cost you to call him brother?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List everything Acts 9:1–9 tells you about Saul before the light on the road, then list everything it tells you about him in the three days after.
2. Compare the three accounts of Saul's conversion in Acts 9, Acts 22, and Acts 26. Note the detail that each account adds and what all three hold in common.
3. Acts 9:31 gives a four-part description of the churches at that moment. Write out the four things Luke says about them, and decide which one your congregation most needs right now.
4. Read Galatians 1:15–24 alongside Acts 9:19–30 and work out the timeline of Saul's first few years as a Christian. What surprises you about how long the quiet part lasted?
5. Barnabas took Saul in when the Jerusalem disciples were still afraid of him (9:26–27). Name one person on the edges of your congregation, and this week do for them exactly what Barnabas did.

NEXT WEEK'S READING: Exodus 9–16 · Proverbs 11 · Matthew 10 · Acts 10:1–33

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