

Through the Bible in 24 Months



WEEK 11 OF 104

A Place to Dwell

Week 11 of 104 • 11% of the way through the Bible

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

General Old Testament	Exodus 24-30
Wisdom Literature	Proverbs 13
Gospels	Matthew 12:9-50
General New Testament	Acts 11:19-12:25

THIS WEEK AT A GLANCE

God has never needed a place to live. And yet the first great construction project He hands Israel is a building, with gold and acacia wood and yarn dyed blue, purple, and scarlet, and the reason is stated in one line: “that I may dwell among them.” This week is full of houses. Jesus describes a house swept clean and left standing empty, which turns out to be the worst thing you can do with a house, and then He looks around a circle of ordinary people and calls them His mother and brothers. Proverbs 13 walks you through a home where a lamp is either burning or going out. And in Acts, the church prays at midnight in Mary’s house while an angel is quietly unlocking a prison door. All week, ask the question: who lives in your house?

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 24-30

That I May Dwell Among Them

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

The covenant is ratified with blood sprinkled on an altar and on the people, and seventy elders go up the mountain, see the God of Israel, and eat a meal. Then Moses disappears into the cloud for forty days, and God gives him the blueprints. An ark with a mercy seat, a table, a lampstand, curtains, an altar, a court, garments for a high priest with twelve names over his heart, seven days of consecration, incense, and a basin. Every measurement specified.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Exodus 25:8 states the purpose of the entire project in one sentence. Read it aloud and sit with it. What does it reveal about what God actually wants, and where in Scripture does that desire finally arrive?
2. The high priest carried the names of the twelve tribes on his shoulders and again over his heart whenever he went into the holy place (28:9-12, 28:29). What is being pictured there, and how do Hebrews 7:24-25 and 4:14-16 fill it out?

3. Everything is specified: dimensions, materials, colors, and even a recipe for the incense that no one was permitted to duplicate for personal use (30:37–38). Why that level of detail, and what does it say about worship designed according to our own preferences?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Walk in from the courtyard gate to the Most Holy Place, listing each piece of furniture in the order you would meet it and naming what happened there.
2. Read Hebrews 9:1–14 alongside Exodus 25 and 26. Which elements does the writer call a copy and a shadow, and what does he say the reality turned out to be?
3. In Exodus 24:3 and 24:7 the people answer Moses twice. Write down exactly what they promised, then set that promise beside Exodus 32:1–6 and consider what it teaches about our own sincere intentions.
4. List the requirements for Aaron's consecration in chapter 29. Count how many of them involve blood, and explain why blood is so central to approaching God (Hebrews 9:22).
5. The lamp was to burn continually, tended morning and evening, and it required beaten olive oil that somebody had to prepare in advance (27:20–21). Name one unseen habit of your own spiritual life that has quietly gone out, and relight it this week.

WISDOM LITERATURE Proverbs 13

The Lamp That Stays Lit

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Solomon moves through a household in this chapter. A son who listens and a scoffer who does not. A mouth that guards a life and a mouth that ruins one. A lazy man whose soul wants everything and has nothing. A lamp that shines and a lamp that gets snuffed out. Hope deferred that makes a heart sick, and desire fulfilled that is a tree of life. Wealth gathered too fast and wealth gathered a little at a time. And the plain warning that you become the people you walk with.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Proverbs 13:12 says hope deferred makes the heart sick. Name the kinds of waiting that actually do that to a person, and talk about what a congregation can do for somebody in the middle of one.

2. Verse 20 says the one who walks with wise men will be wise, and the companion of fools will be destroyed. Look honestly at your own calendar from the last month. Who have you actually been walking with, and what has it been making you?
3. Verse 24 says the one who spares the rod hates his son. How do you hold that verse together with Ephesians 6:4, and what does discipline look like when it is genuinely done in love rather than in anger?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Trace every verse in this chapter that deals with the mouth or with words (verses 2, 3, 5, 13). What single warning do all of them share?
2. Compare Proverbs 13:7 with Luke 12:15 and 2 Corinthians 6:10. Describe the difference between actually having something and merely appearing to.
3. Proverbs 13:11 says wealth gained hastily dwindles while wealth gathered little by little increases. List the modern versions of hasty wealth that this verse would have you walk away from.
4. Verse 22 speaks of a good man leaving an inheritance to his children's children. Set money aside for a moment and write down what else you are currently leaving them.
5. Verse 20 ties your character directly to your company. Name one friendship that is quietly pulling you downward and one you have neglected that would build you up, and make one phone call before the week ends.

GOSPELS Matthew 12:9–50

A House Swept and Empty

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Jesus heals a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath, and the Pharisees walk out and begin planning His death. Matthew answers by quoting Isaiah about a Servant who will not break a bruised reed or quench a smoking flax. Then the accusations come: He casts out demons by Beelzebub. Jesus answers with a divided kingdom, a bound strong man, and a solemn warning about blaspheming the Spirit. They demand a sign; He offers Jonah. The chapter ends with His mother and brothers standing outside.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. The Pharisees watch a man's withered hand restored and then go out and plot how to destroy Jesus (12:10–14). How does a person get to the point where somebody else's mercy makes him angry?
2. Jesus speaks of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit as the sin that will not be forgiven (12:31–32). In the context of this chapter, what exactly were these men doing, and what would you say to a Christian who lies awake afraid he has committed it?
3. The man in 12:43–45 gets the unclean spirit out, leaves the house swept and put in order and empty, and ends up worse than he started. Where are you trying to be a Christian by subtraction, and what needs to move in and take up residence?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Read Isaiah 42:1–4 and set it beside Matthew 12:18–21. List what the prophecy says about how God's chosen Servant would conduct Himself, and where you see each trait in this chapter.
2. Trace the three answers Jesus gives to the Beelzebub charge in 12:25–29, and write out each argument in your own words.
3. Jesus says men will give account for every idle word on the day of judgment (12:36). Compare James 3:2–12, and explain why God takes ordinary speech that seriously.
4. Identify the sign of Jonah in 12:39–41, and then read 1 Corinthians 15:3–4 and show how that sign turns out to be the center of the gospel itself.
5. Jesus stretches out His hand toward His disciples and says whoever does the will of His Father is His brother and sister and mother (12:50). Name one member of your congregation you have been treating as an acquaintance rather than as family, and do something about it this week.

GENERAL NEW TESTAMENT Acts 11:19–12:25

Antioch and the Prison Door

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Refugees from the persecution over Stephen keep preaching as they run, and in Antioch some of them do something no apostle had done yet: they speak to Greeks. A great number believe, Barnabas is sent, he goes

and finds Saul, and for a year they teach a church that receives a new name. Then Herod kills James with a sword, arrests Peter, and the church gathers at midnight to pray. An angel, a chain, a gate that opens by itself, and a servant girl too excited to open the door.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Unnamed men from Cyprus and Cyrene did what no apostle had yet attempted and preached to Greeks (11:20). Why do you suppose Luke never tells us their names, and what does that suggest about who actually carries the gospel into new places?
2. James is killed with the sword and Peter is delivered by an angel, in the same chapter, under the same king, during the same persecution (12:2, 12:7). How do you hold those two facts together, and what should it do to the way we pray?
3. The church is praying earnestly for Peter, and when he knocks at the gate they tell the girl she is out of her mind (12:13–16). Be honest with each other: what are you praying for right now that you would be astonished to actually receive?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List everything Acts 11:22–26 tells you about Barnabas, including what he did and how Luke describes him. Why was he exactly the right man to send to Antioch?
2. The disciples were first called Christians at Antioch (11:26). Look up Acts 26:28 and 1 Peter 4:16, and consider what the New Testament does with that name and what it implies about wearing any other.
3. Trace the relief effort in 11:27–30. Note who decided, how much each gave, who carried it, and to whom it went.
4. Set Herod's end in 12:21–23 beside Peter's deliverance in 12:6–11, and describe what Luke is showing his readers about who actually governs history.
5. Barnabas encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord (11:23). Name one newer or struggling Christian in your congregation, and this week do for them exactly what Barnabas did.