

Through the Bible in 24 Months



WEEK 12 OF 104

Willing Hearts

Week 12 of 104 • 12% of the way through the Bible

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

General Old Testament	Exodus 31–40
Wisdom Literature	Proverbs 14
Gospels	Matthew 13:1–30
General New Testament	Acts 13

THIS WEEK AT A GLANCE

A heart is a strange thing. The same nation that melts its jewelry into a calf will, a few weeks later, bring so much gold and yarn and goat's hair for the tabernacle that Moses has to publish an order telling them to stop giving. Proverbs 14 says the heart knows its own bitterness, and that a road can look right the whole way to its end. Jesus sits down in a boat and describes four kinds of soil, which is really four kinds of heart, and only one of them ever produces anything. And in a synagogue in Pisidian Antioch a room full of people hears one sermon: some are glad and glorify the word of the Lord, and others fill up with envy and throw it back. Same seed. Same sermon. Different ground.

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 31–40

The Calf and the Glory

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

God names a craftsman, fills him with His Spirit, and hands Moses two tablets written with His own finger. At the bottom of the mountain, Israel is already making a calf. Moses breaks the tablets, grinds the idol to powder, and then pleads for the nation three separate times, offering to be blotted out himself. He asks to see God's glory and is hidden in a cleft of rock. Then the work begins, the people give until they have to be stopped, and the glory fills the tent.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Aaron does not propose worshipping some other god. He builds a calf and then announces "a feast to the Lord" (32:4–5). Why does that distinction matter so much, and what shapes does the same mistake take among us?

2. Moses intercedes for Israel three times and finally offers to be blotted out of God's book in their place (32:11–14, 30–32; 33:12–17). Trace his arguments one by one. What does his praying teach us about interceding for people who plainly do not deserve it?
3. The people brought so much material for the tabernacle that Moses had to issue a restraining order (36:5–7). When did you last see generosity in the Lord's church that had to be restrained, and what would have to change in us before that could happen here?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Trace the golden calf from 32:1 to 32:6, listing each step from the people's first request to the feast. Identify the exact point at which this became idolatry.
2. Read Exodus 33:12–23 slowly. Write down what Moses asks God for, what God grants, and what God withholds.
3. Exodus 31:1–6 says God filled Bezalel with His Spirit for design and craftsmanship. Compare Romans 12:6–8 and 1 Corinthians 12:4–7, then list the skills in your own congregation that are being used and the ones that are sitting idle.
4. Count how many times chapters 39 and 40 say "as the Lord commanded Moses." Why would the writer repeat a phrase that many times, especially so soon after chapter 32?
5. Exodus 35:21 says everyone came whose heart was stirred and whose spirit was willing. Name one possession or one skill of yours that the Lord's work could use, and this week offer it to somebody who can actually put it to work.

WISDOM LITERATURE Proverbs 14

A Way That Seems Right

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

This chapter looks hard at the gap between how things appear and how they are. A house is built or torn down by the woman in it. An empty stall stays clean and produces nothing. A road can look right the whole way down and end in death. Laughter can cover a grieving heart. The simple will believe anything, and the prudent checks.

A quick temper acts foolishly. And the way you treat a poor man turns out to be a statement about what you think of God.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Proverbs 14:12 says there is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death. How does a wrong road come to look so right, and what actually protects a person from walking down one?
2. Verse 10 says the heart knows its own bitterness, and a stranger does not share its joy. Where does that leave us when we try to comfort someone who is hurting, and what does it require of us before we open our mouths?
3. Proverbs 14:31 says that whoever oppresses the poor reproaches his Maker, while he who honors God has mercy on the needy. Read it beside verse 21. What connection is Solomon drawing between how we treat poor people and what we actually believe about God?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List every verse in this chapter that mentions the heart (verses 10, 13, 14, 30, 33). What portrait of a person's inner life do they give when you take them together?
2. Proverbs 14:15 says the simple believes every word, but the prudent considers his steps. Compare Acts 17:11 and 1 Thessalonians 5:21, and describe how a Christian should handle a claim he cannot verify.
3. Verse 4 observes that where there are no oxen the trough stays clean, but much increase comes by the strength of an ox. Explain the point in your own words, then name one place where you have chosen tidiness over fruitfulness.
4. Trace what this chapter says about anger in verses 17 and 29. Who has seen the worst of your temper, and what have they concluded from it about your faith?
5. Verse 31 ties your treatment of the poor directly to your reverence for God. Identify one struggling person you actually know by name, and do something specific and unadvertised for them this week.

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

The crowds are so large that Jesus pushes out from shore and teaches from a boat. He tells a story every farmer in the audience had lived: a sower, a path, rocky ground, thorns, and good soil. When the disciples ask why He teaches this way, He quotes Isaiah about people who have closed their own eyes, and then tells them how privileged they are to see. He explains the four soils one by one, and then tells another story about an enemy who sows weeds at night.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Jesus explains His use of parables by quoting Isaiah 6:9–10 about people who have closed their own eyes (13:13–15). Is He concealing truth or revealing it, and how do both turn out to be true of the same story?
2. Go through the four soils one at a time (13:19–23). Which one describes the danger you are personally most likely to face, and what would actually have to change for you to be good ground?
3. In the parable of the weeds, the servants want to go pull them up and the owner tells them to wait until harvest (13:28–30). What does that teach about the church in this present age, and where exactly is the line between that patience and tolerating sin in the congregation?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Write out the four soils with what happens to the seed in each, and name the specific cause of failure in each of the first three.
2. The seed is the word of the kingdom (13:19). Read Luke 8:11 and 1 Peter 1:22–25, and describe what those passages say about how a person comes to new life.
3. Jesus says the good ground bears thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold (13:23). Why would He name three different yields, and what does that suggest about measuring ourselves against other Christians?
4. Trace the thorns in 13:22, the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches. List the specific thorns growing in your own calendar right now.
5. Good ground is not an accident; it is ground somebody has broken up. Read Hosea 10:12, then name one hard place in your own heart and one specific thing you will do this week to break it open.

Sent from Antioch

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

The church at Antioch is worshiping and fasting when the Holy Spirit says to set apart Barnabas and Saul. They sail to Cyprus, where a sorcerer opposes them and a Roman proconsul believes. John Mark goes home. In another Antioch, in the hills of Pisidia, Paul stands up in a synagogue and preaches a sermon that walks from Egypt to David to an empty tomb, and ends with forgiveness the Law of Moses could never provide. The next Sabbath nearly the whole city comes, and the trouble starts.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. The church at Antioch sent away its two most capable teachers (13:1–3). What did that cost that congregation, and what does it say about how a healthy church ought to think about the people it has?
2. Paul's sermon ends with a claim that would have staggered his hearers: by Jesus everyone who believes is justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses (13:38–39). Walk through what the Law could not do and what Christ does instead.
3. Two groups heard the identical sermon in that synagogue, and one group was glad and glorified the word while the other filled up with envy and contradicted it (13:45, 13:48). What made the difference, and where do you watch both responses play out today?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Outline Paul's sermon in 13:16–41. Note where he begins, how much time he spends on Israel's history, where he turns to Jesus, and how he closes.
 2. Acts 13:46 says these men judged themselves unworthy of everlasting life, and 13:48 says as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed. Read both verses carefully and work out how they fit together.
 3. Trace the itinerary of this first preaching tour. List every place Barnabas and Saul go, in order, from Antioch to the end of the chapter.
 4. John Mark left them at Perga and went back to Jerusalem (13:13). Read Acts 15:37–39, Colossians 4:10, and 2 Timothy 4:11, and trace what eventually became of him.
 5. Paul and Barnabas went where they were sent and shook the dust from their feet where they were refused (13:51). Name one person you quit talking to about Christ because it got discouraging, and take one step back toward them this week.
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NEXT WEEK'S READING: Leviticus 1-7 · Proverbs 15 · Matthew 13:31-14:12 · Acts 14

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