

Through the Bible in 24 Months



WEEK 13 OF 104

The Cost of Drawing Near

Week 13 of 104 • 12% of the way through the Bible

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

General Old Testament	Leviticus 1-7
Wisdom Literature	Proverbs 15
Gospels	Matthew 13:31-14:12
General New Testament	Acts 14

THIS WEEK AT A GLANCE

Open Leviticus and the first thing you notice is smoke: chapter after chapter of animals and blood and fire, and behind all of it one insistent message, nobody comes near God for free. Proverbs 15 says it more quietly: God delights in the prayer of the upright and turns away from the sacrifice of the wicked, so the real cost was never the animal. Then Jesus tells about a man who finds treasure buried in a field and sells everything he owns to buy it, and He tells it as good news. In the same reading a prophet loses his head over a birthday present. And Paul, stoned and dragged out of town for dead, gets up, walks back in, and tells young Christians that we enter the kingdom through many tribulations. Nothing worth having has ever been cheap.

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 Leviticus 1-7

How to Come Near

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

God calls to Moses from the tent He has just filled, and the subject is approach. Five offerings follow. A burnt offering consumed entirely on the altar. A grain offering of fine flour, without leaven, seasoned with salt. A peace offering that ends in a shared meal. A sin offering for the man who sinned without meaning to. And a trespass offering that requires restitution with a fifth added. Then chapters 6 and 7 turn to the priests, with a fire that must never be allowed to go out.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. The worshiper laid his hand on the head of the animal and then killed it himself (1:4-5). Why would God require the man to do the killing, and what would a lifetime of that have taught him about his own sin?
2. Leviticus makes deliberate provision for a poor man: two birds instead of a lamb, and a measure of flour instead of birds (5:7-13). What does that provision tell you about God, and what does it plainly not mean about how serious the sin was?

3. Hebrews 10:1–4 says the blood of bulls and goats could never take away sins. If that is true, then what were these offerings actually doing during the fifteen hundred years they were offered?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List the five offerings in chapters 1 through 7, and for each one note its purpose and what happened to the animal or the grain.
2. Read Hebrews 9:11–14 and 10:1–14 beside this reading, and write down every way the offering of Christ differs from the offerings described here.
3. In the peace offering (chapter 3 and 7:11–21), part was burned, part went to the priests, and part was eaten by the worshiper and his household. Why would God design an offering that ends in a shared meal?
4. Leviticus 5:14 through 6:7 requires both a sacrifice and restitution with an added fifth. Explain what that combination teaches about repentance when another person has been wronged.
5. The fire on the altar was never to go out, and the priest laid wood on it every single morning (6:12–13). Name the daily, unglamorous thing you must do to keep your own fire burning, and then actually do it every day for seven days.

WISDOM LITERATURE Proverbs 15

A Soft Answer

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

This chapter starts with a sentence most of us could have used yesterday: a soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. From there Solomon watches God watching us, since the eyes of the Lord are in every place. He weighs the worship of the wicked against the prayer of the upright, prefers a little with the fear of the Lord to a great fortune with trouble, prefers vegetables with love to steak with hatred, and keeps circling back to the person who will actually take correction.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Proverbs 15:1 says a soft answer turns away wrath. Think of a specific argument you lost control of recently. What would a soft answer have actually sounded like in that moment, and what would it have cost you to give it?

2. Verse 8 says the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, while the prayer of the upright is His delight. How can an act of worship be offensive to God, and what does that mean for the way we walk into the assembly on Sunday?
3. Verses 16 and 17 both begin with “better is little.” Read them aloud and name the two trades Solomon is describing. Which of those trades is your household currently making, and how would anyone watching know?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Trace every verse in this chapter that deals with the tongue (verses 1, 2, 4, 7, 23, 26, 28). What connection keeps surfacing between what is in the heart and what comes out of the mouth?
2. Proverbs 15:3 says the eyes of the Lord are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good. Compare Psalm 139:1–12 and Hebrews 4:13, and explain why that fact is both a comfort and a warning.
3. List everything this chapter says about receiving correction (verses 5, 10, 12, 31, 32). Which of those verses most accurately describes your usual reaction?
4. Verses 13 and 15 tie the condition of the heart to a person’s face and to the quality of his days. Describe how someone’s inner life shows up in a room before he says a word.
5. Verse 23 says a word spoken in due season, how good it is. Identify one person who needs a timely word from you, and speak it this week, before the season for it passes.

GOSPELS Matthew 13:31–14:12

Treasure Worth Everything

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Jesus keeps telling stories: a mustard seed that becomes a tree, leaven working through three measures of meal, a man who stumbles on buried treasure and buys the whole field, a merchant who finds one pearl and liquidates everything, and a dragnet hauled onto the beach for sorting. He explains the wheat and the weeds privately to His disciples. Then He goes home to Nazareth, where the neighbors take offense at Him, and Matthew tells us what happened to John the Baptist at a birthday party.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. The mustard seed and the leaven both describe something almost invisible that ends up everywhere (13:31–33). What are these parables claiming about the kingdom, and how does that compare with the kind of kingdom Israel had been hoping for?
2. The man who found the treasure and the merchant who found the pearl each sold everything he owned, and Matthew says the first one did it with joy (13:44–46). What separates sacrifice that is grim from sacrifice that is glad, and which of the two have you been offering God?
3. Jesus did not do many mighty works in His hometown because of their unbelief (13:58). How does familiarity produce that kind of blindness, and where have we grown too accustomed to something holy to be moved by it?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Trace Jesus' explanation of the wheat and the weeds in 13:36–43 and identify each element: the sower, the field, the good seed, the weeds, the enemy, the harvest, and the reapers.
2. The dragnet in 13:47–50 ends much like the wheat and weeds. List what both parables say about the final separation, when it happens, and who carries it out.
3. Read Matthew 13:52 about the scribe who brings out of his treasure things new and old. Describe how that verse should shape the way a Christian handles both Testaments.
4. Set the response of Nazareth (13:54–57) beside the response of Herod (14:1–2). Explain what each reveals about the way familiarity and guilt distort how people see Jesus.
5. John the Baptist told a king the truth about his marriage and it cost him his head (14:3–12). Name one truth you have been softening because of what saying it plainly might cost, and say it this week.

GENERAL NEW TESTAMENT Acts 14

Through Many Tribulations

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

In Iconium a great multitude believes and the city splits in two, and Paul and Barnabas leave ahead of a stoning. In Lystra Paul heals a man lame from birth, and the crowd decides the gods have come down in human form and

brings oxen and garlands to the gates. The two men tear their clothes and preach a Creator who has been sending rain and harvests all along. Then the crowd turns, Paul is stoned and dragged out for dead, and the next day he walks to the next town.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. The same crowd that tried to offer sacrifices to Paul at Lystra helped stone him a short while later (14:13, 14:19). What does that say about the worth of popular approval, and how should a Christian handle being praised?
2. Compare Paul's message to pagans in 14:15–17 with his synagogue sermon in 13:16–41. What changes, what stays the same, and what does that teach us about speaking to people who share none of our assumptions?
3. Paul and Barnabas told brand new disciples that we must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God (14:22). How does that square with the way Christianity is often presented today, and what should a person honestly expect when he obeys the gospel?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Trace the return route in 14:21–26. Why would these two men deliberately walk back through the very cities that had just run them out?
2. Acts 14:23 says they appointed elders in every church. Read 1 Timothy 3:1–7 and Titus 1:5–9, and list the qualifications God requires of the men who serve in that work.
3. List the three things Paul and Barnabas did for the new disciples in 14:22–23, and explain what each one accomplishes for a young congregation.
4. Set Paul's stoning in 14:19 beside 2 Corinthians 11:24–28 and Galatians 6:17. Add up what following Christ actually cost this man over his lifetime.
5. Paul got up after being stoned and walked straight back into the city that had done it (14:20). Name one place where you quit after being embarrassed or hurt, and decide what walking back in would look like for you this week.