

Through the Bible in 24 Months



WEEK 14 OF 104

Authorized Worship

Week 14 of 104 • 13% of the way through the Bible

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

General Old Testament	Leviticus 8–13
Wisdom Literature	Proverbs 16
Gospels	Matthew 14:13–15:9
General New Testament	Acts 15

THIS WEEK AT A GLANCE

Somebody has to decide how God is approached, and this week all four readings agree that it is not us. Leviticus spends seven careful days ordaining Aaron, and then two of his sons improvise with a censer and die for it. Proverbs warns that a road can feel right the whole way down and still end badly. Jesus feeds five thousand from a boy's lunch, walks across a lake, and then tells religious men who had built a fence of rules around God's word that their worship is empty. And in Jerusalem the apostles settle the first great controversy of the church by refusing both to bind what God never bound and to loosen what He plainly said. Read them together and you will want to ask, before anything else, who told you to do that.

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 8–13

Ordained Priests and Strange Fire

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Moses washes, clothes, and anoints Aaron and his sons, and for seven days they stay at the door of the tabernacle. On the eighth day Aaron offers for the people, the glory of the Lord appears, and fire comes out and consumes the offering. Then that same fire consumes Nadab and Abihu, who offered incense God had not asked for. The rest of the reading sorts out what Israel may eat, what makes a person unclean, and how the priest examines skin disease.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Leviticus 8 and 9 build through seven long days toward one moment, the glory of the Lord appearing before the whole congregation. Walk through what God required before that moment came, and talk about why He was so particular about every detail.

2. Leviticus 10:1–3 says Nadab and Abihu offered fire before the Lord “which He had not commanded them.” Why was God’s silence not permission, and where are we tempted to reason the other way about worship today?
3. The food laws of Leviticus 11 made an Israelite noticeably different at every single meal. In what ways does God make His people visibly different now, and what has that difference already cost you?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Trace the ordination in Leviticus 8 and list each thing Moses does in order. Count how many times the chapter says “as the Lord commanded Moses.”
2. Leviticus 9:24 and 10:2 both describe fire coming out from before the Lord. Set the two scenes side by side and write down what is the same and what has changed.
3. Read Mark 7:18–19, Acts 10:9–16, and 1 Timothy 4:1–5. What happened to the clean and unclean food laws, and on whose authority did they end?
4. Leviticus 13 puts the priest, not the sufferer, in charge of pronouncing a man clean or unclean. Notice how Jesus honors that arrangement in Luke 5:12–14, and say why He might have done so.
5. Aaron had just lost two sons and “held his peace” (10:3). Name one place this week where you will have to accept God’s word without receiving an explanation, and decide now how you will respond.

WISDOM LITERATURE Proverbs 16

The Lord Weighs the Spirit

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

This chapter keeps setting two things beside each other: what a man intends and what God actually does. You plan your way, the Lord directs your steps. Your ways look pure in your own eyes, the Lord weighs the spirits. Here are the familiar lines about pride going before destruction and a way that seems right to a man, and the quiet praise of the person who rules his own spirit, whom Solomon rates above the general who takes a city.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Verses 1 through 9 keep putting a man’s planning next to the Lord’s rule over the outcome. How do you commit your work to the Lord without sliding into either anxious control or lazy passivity?

2. Proverbs 16:18 says pride goes before destruction. Describe how pride actually operates in a decent, hard-working, church-attending person, and what usually brings it into the open.
3. Verse 25 says there is a way that seems right to a man, and its end is death. If it seems right the whole way down, how would a person ever find out he is on it, and who is positioned to tell him?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Go through the chapter and mark every verse that names the Lord. Read just those verses together and describe the picture of God that emerges.
2. Set Proverbs 16:2 beside 1 Samuel 16:7 and Hebrews 4:12–13. What are these passages saying about the difference between how you see yourself and how God sees you?
3. Proverbs 16:32 ranks self-control above military conquest. Write down two moments in an ordinary Tuesday where that battle is actually won or lost for you.
4. Remember that a proverb is a general principle and not a guarantee. Read 16:7 alongside 2 Timothy 3:12, and explain how a Christian should hold both verses at once.
5. Verse 24 calls pleasant words a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and health to the bones. Name one person who needs such a word from you, write the sentence you will say, and say it before Sunday.

GOSPELS Matthew 14:13–15:9

Loaves, Waves, and Tradition

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Hearing that John has been beheaded, Jesus withdraws by boat, but the crowds follow on foot. He heals their sick and then feeds more than five thousand people from five loaves and two fish. That night He sends the disciples across the lake, prays alone, and comes to them walking on the water. Peter walks, doubts, and sinks. Then scribes and Pharisees arrive from Jerusalem with a question about unwashed hands, and Jesus answers with Isaiah.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Jesus has just learned that John was executed and He withdraws to be alone, yet the crowd follows and 14:14 says He was moved with compassion. How does that scene change what you assume compassion costs?

2. Peter asks to come, walks, and then begins to sink. Work through exactly when he starts to go down, and consider what the Lord's question in 14:31 is actually asking him.
3. In 15:3–9 Jesus says their tradition made the commandment of God of no effect. How does a good practice quietly become a binding rule, and what can a congregation do to keep that from happening?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List the steps Jesus takes in 14:18–19 to feed the crowd. Notice who actually carries the bread to the people, and suggest why Matthew bothers to record that.
2. In 14:33 the men in the boat worship Jesus and call Him the Son of God. Find two other places in Matthew where someone says the same thing, and note who is speaking each time.
3. Read Mark 7:1–13 next to Matthew 15:1–9. Explain what Corban was, and trace how a rule made by men allowed a son to sidestep a command written by God.
4. Isaiah 29:13 is quoted in 15:8–9. Copy out what Isaiah says is wrong with that worship, phrase by phrase, and hold your own worship up against each one.
5. Name one practice in your own life of faith that you cannot find anywhere in the New Testament. Decide this week whether you hold it as a personal preference or have begun to treat it as law.

GENERAL NEW TESTAMENT Acts 15

The Question Settled at Jerusalem

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Men come down from Judea to Antioch teaching that Gentiles must be circumcised to be saved. Paul and Barnabas dispute it sharply, and the church sends them to Jerusalem. There the apostles and elders hear the case: Peter recalls what God did at the house of Cornelius, Paul and Barnabas report the signs among the Gentiles, and James answers from the prophets. A letter goes back to Antioch, and the church rejoices. Then Paul and Barnabas part company over John Mark.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. The chapter opens with a sentence that could have split the church in half: unless you are circumcised you cannot be saved. Why was this not a small disagreement, and what exactly was at stake in how it got answered?
2. Follow how the question was actually settled in verses 6 through 21. What kinds of evidence did these men appeal to, and just as importantly, what did they never appeal to?
3. Paul and Barnabas separate over John Mark in 15:36–41, and Luke does not take sides. How should Christians handle a sharp disagreement that is not about doctrine, and what evidence is there that this one eventually ended well?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Write out the four things the letter asks Gentile believers to abstain from (15:20, 29), and suggest why these four in particular were named to churches full of new converts out of paganism.
2. Read Galatians 5:1–6 alongside this chapter. Explain what Paul says accepting circumcision would have done to a Gentile Christian's standing before God.
3. James quotes Amos 9:11–12 in verses 15 through 18. Identify what he understands the rebuilding of David's fallen tabernacle to be, and let that shape how you read Old Testament promises about Israel.
4. Peter says God made no distinction, "purifying their hearts by faith" (15:9). Turn back to Acts 10:44–48 and record what Peter commanded those same believers to do.
5. Name one preference of yours that you have quietly begun to treat as a requirement for other Christians. Decide what you will do about it this week, and tell one person you have decided it.

NEXT WEEK'S READING: Leviticus 14–20 · Proverbs 17 · Matthew 15:10–39 · Acts 16

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