

Through the Bible in 24 Months



WEEK 15 OF 104

Made Clean

Week 15 of 104 • 14% of the way through the Bible

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

General Old Testament	Leviticus 14-20
Wisdom Literature	Proverbs 17
Gospels	Matthew 15:10-39
General New Testament	Acts 16

THIS WEEK AT A GLANCE

This week is about getting clean and staying that way, and about how far short soap falls. Leviticus takes a man who has been shut outside the camp and brings him back with cedar, hyssop, and a bird let loose into the open field, and then gives Israel one day a year when a goat walks off into the wilderness carrying the nation's sin on its head. Solomon says the furnace is for gold but the Lord tests hearts. Jesus tells a crowd that no meal ever defiled anyone, that the trouble comes up from inside, and then heals the daughter of a woman everyone else would have called unclean. And at Philippi a businesswoman and a jailer are washed on the same day. Cleanness, it turns out, has always been God's work and never our achievement.

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 14-20

Atonement and a Holy People

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

You begin with the ceremony for restoring a healed leper and for cleansing a contaminated house, then laws about bodily discharges. Chapter 16 is the center: the Day of Atonement, when the high priest goes behind the veil with blood and two goats, one killed and one sent away. Chapter 17 says the life is in the blood. Chapters 18 through 20 then spell out what a holy people look like in bed, in business, in speech, and toward neighbors, each section punctuated by four words: I am the Lord.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Leviticus 16 gives Israel one day a year when the high priest passed behind the veil. Walk through what he did with the two goats, and talk about what that ritual taught the nation about sin that a sermon could not have taught them.

2. Leviticus 19 sets “you shall love your neighbor as yourself” in the same chapter as rules about harvesting field corners and mixing fabrics. How do you decide which parts of a chapter like that still speak to a Christian, and by what authority do you decide it?
3. Leviticus 18 and 20 deliberately set Israel’s sexual life apart from both Egypt behind them and Canaan ahead of them. Where does the New Testament take up that same standard, and what is holding it costing Christians now?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Trace what happens to each of the two goats in Leviticus 16:7–22, and write down exactly where each one ends up and why.
2. Read Hebrews 9:6–14 and 9:24–28 beside Leviticus 16. List three ways the writer says the work of Christ goes beyond anything Aaron accomplished on that day.
3. Leviticus 17:11 gives God’s own reason for forbidding the eating of blood. Copy out the reason, then read Hebrews 9:22 and 1 Peter 1:18–19 and explain the connection.
4. Leviticus 19:13–18 gathers commands about wages, the deaf, the blind, gossip, grudges, and hatred. List them, and mark the one you break most easily without noticing.
5. Jesus called Leviticus 19:18 the second greatest commandment. Name the neighbor you find hardest to love, and do one concrete, inconvenient thing for that person before next Sunday.

WISDOM LITERATURE Proverbs 17

The Furnace and the Friend

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Solomon opens with a dry crust eaten in peace and ranks it above a house full of feasting and fighting. He compares the refiner’s furnace to the way the Lord tests hearts. He warns about starting quarrels, about paying back good with evil, about a father’s grief over a foolish son. And he gives two of the best-loved lines in the book: a friend loves at all times, and a merry heart does good like medicine.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Verse 1 prefers a dry crust with quietness to a house full of feasting with strife. Describe a home where that trade has actually been made, and talk about what it takes day by day to keep it made.
2. Verse 3 says the refining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold, but the Lord tests hearts. How does God actually test a heart, and how would a person recognize that it is happening to him?
3. Verse 9 says covering a transgression seeks love while repeating a matter separates friends. Where is the line between covering an offense and confronting a sin that must be dealt with (Matthew 18:15; Galatians 6:1)?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Go through the chapter and count the verses that concern the tongue, quarrels, or strife. Roughly what portion of Proverbs 17 is that, and why might Solomon give it so much room?
2. Proverbs 17:15 says justifying the wicked and condemning the just are equally an abomination. Read Romans 3:23–26 and explain how God justifies the ungodly without being guilty of either one.
3. Verse 17 says a friend loves at all times and a brother is born for adversity. List the people who actually showed up the last time your life came apart, then ask whose list you are on.
4. Verse 22 says a merry heart does good like medicine. Add Nehemiah 8:10 and Philippians 4:4 to it, and explain how joy can be commanded rather than merely felt.
5. Verse 14 says stop contention before it breaks loose, the way you would stop a leak in a dam. Name the argument you are currently keeping alive, decide what you will surrender to end it, and end it this week.

GOSPELS Matthew 15:10–39

What Defiles, and Great Faith

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Jesus calls the crowd close and says something no rabbi would have said: what goes into the mouth does not defile a man, what comes out of it does. The disciples report that the Pharisees are offended, and Jesus calls them blind guides. Then He leaves Jewish territory altogether. A Canaanite woman follows Him begging for her demon-tormented daughter, absorbs what sounds like a refusal, and answers so well that Jesus calls her faith great. The reading ends on a mountain with four thousand men fed.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. In 15:17–20 Jesus names what actually comes out of a person's heart. Read the list aloud slowly, and talk about why He begins with thoughts rather than with actions.
2. The Canaanite woman is met first with silence, then with a hard saying about children's bread and little dogs, and finally with praise for great faith. Track what she says and does at each stage, and consider what Jesus was drawing out of her.
3. The disciples come to Jesus worried that the Pharisees were offended by what He said. When is offending people evidence that we have told the truth, and when is it evidence that we have told it badly?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Write out the evils Jesus lists in 15:19, and add the ones Mark includes in Mark 7:21–22. Mark which of them are invisible to everyone but God at the moment they occur.
2. Jesus says in 15:13 that every plant the Father has not planted will be uprooted. Read Matthew 7:21–23 with it and describe the kind of religion He is warning about.
3. Find every word the Canaanite woman speaks in 15:22–27 and copy her sentences in order. What do those three short speeches have in common?
4. Set the feeding of the four thousand (15:32–39) beside the five thousand in 14:15–21 and note the differences in location, numbers, loaves, and leftover baskets. Suggest why the Holy Spirit preserved both accounts.
5. Jesus locates the trouble in the heart rather than in the hands. Name one habit that is steadily shaping your heart in the wrong direction, and give it up this week rather than managing it.

GENERAL NEW TESTAMENT Acts 16

Doors Opened in Macedonia

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Paul takes Timothy with him, and the Spirit closes door after door until a vision at Troas points across the water to Macedonia. At Philippi the first convert is Lydia, a seller of purple, whose heart the Lord opened by the riverside. A slave girl with a spirit of divination follows them until Paul casts it out, and her owners drag them

before the magistrates. Beaten and locked in stocks, they sing at midnight, an earthquake opens the prison, and the jailer asks the most important question in the book.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Paul has Timothy circumcised in 16:3, just after carrying a letter that said circumcision is not required. Explain why that is not a contradiction, and name the principle Paul is following (1 Corinthians 9:19–23).
2. Lydia is a successful businesswoman and the jailer is a Roman civil servant with blood on his hands. Compare the two conversions and list everything the two accounts have in common.
3. Paul and Silas pray and sing hymns at midnight with open wounds on their backs and their feet in stocks. What makes that possible for a human being, and where in your own week does the same capacity get tested?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Trace the route in 16:6–12 on a map, marking where the Spirit forbids, where the vision comes, and where Luke quietly begins writing “we.”
2. Read Acts 16:14 with Romans 10:17 and Acts 17:11. By what means did the Lord open Lydia’s heart, and what does that tell you about how anyone is converted?
3. Copy out the jailer’s question and Paul’s answer in 16:30–31, then read straight through verses 32 to 34 and list everything that happened before the man rejoiced.
4. The slave girl was saying something true about Paul and Silas (16:17). Explain why Paul refused her testimony, and compare how Jesus handled a similar situation in Mark 1:34.
5. Lydia opened her home the same day she was baptized, and would not take no for an answer. Name one door of yours (home, table, car, calendar) and open it to someone specific this week.

NEXT WEEK’S READING: Leviticus 21–27 · Proverbs 18–19 · Matthew 16:1–17:13 · Acts 17

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