

Through the Bible in 24 Months



WEEK 18 OF 104

Costly Surrender

Week 18 of 104 • 17% of the way through the Bible

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

General Old Testament	Numbers 5-9
Wisdom Literature	Proverbs 21
Gospels	Matthew 18:21-19:30
General New Testament	Acts 19:11-20:16

THIS WEEK AT A GLANCE

Somebody is always counting the cost this week, and the bills are steep. A man in Israel who defrauded his neighbor has to pay it all back with a fifth added on top. Twelve tribal leaders bring twelve wagonloads of silver and gold, and God has every identical offering written down in full. Solomon says doing right is worth more to God than the whole sacrificial system. Jesus forgives a debt no man could ever repay and then watches a rich young man walk away because the price of following was one thing too many. And in Ephesus a crowd of new Christians builds a bonfire out of books worth a working man's lifetime of wages, and nobody sells them first. Grace is free. Following is not 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 Numbers 5-9

Vows, Blessing, and the Cloud

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

God cleanses the camp, requires full restitution with a fifth added, and provides a procedure for a husband who suspects his wife. Then comes the Nazirite vow, and the blessing Aaron was to pronounce over Israel. Chapter 7 records twelve days of identical gifts from twelve tribal leaders. The Levites are cleansed and presented, Israel keeps Passover a year out of Egypt, and the reading ends with the cloud over the tabernacle, telling the nation when to camp and when to march.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Numbers 9:15-23 says Israel moved when the cloud moved and stayed while it stayed, whether that meant two days or a year. What would living that way actually cost you, and where are you currently refusing either to wait or to move?
2. Chapter 7 records twelve offerings that are identical in every particular, and God has Moses write out all twelve in full rather than saying the others brought the same. Why would He spend a chapter that way?

3. The Nazirite vow was entirely voluntary, and once taken it had to be kept precisely (Numbers 6:1–21). What place do voluntary commitments have in a Christian’s life, and what is the danger in making one?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Numbers 5:5–8 requires confession, full restitution, and an added fifth. Set it beside Zacchaeus in Luke 19:8, and write down what genuine repentance includes beyond feeling sorry.
2. Copy out the blessing of Numbers 6:24–26, and take each of the three lines in turn, saying exactly what it asks God to do for His people.
3. Trace the movement of the cloud in Numbers 9:15–23, and count how many times that passage says “at the command of the Lord.”
4. Numbers 9:6–14 makes provision for men who were ceremonially unclean or away on a trip when Passover came. Read it with Hebrews 4:15–16 and say what God’s willingness to make that provision reveals about Him.
5. Restitution costs money and pride at the same time. Name something you owe, whether in dollars or in an apology, and pay it this week with the extra fifth added.

WISDOM LITERATURE Proverbs 21

Better Than Sacrifice

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Solomon begins with a king’s heart in God’s hand, like water in an irrigation channel, and ends with a war horse saddled while deliverance belongs to the Lord. In between he says every man’s way looks right to himself, that God prefers justice to sacrifice, that a rooftop corner beats a house full of quarreling, that the lazy man’s appetite kills him because his hands refuse to work, and that the man who stops his ears at the cry of the poor will one day cry unheard.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Proverbs 21:3 says doing righteousness and justice is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice, though God Himself commanded the sacrifices. Read 1 Samuel 15:22, Micah 6:6–8, and Matthew 23:23, and talk about what that verse is actually getting at.

2. Verse 2 says every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the hearts. If your own eyes are unreliable witnesses, how do you find out what is really in your heart?
3. Twice this chapter prefers a corner of the roof or the wilderness to a house full of contention (21:9, 19). Instead of deciding who in a home is at fault, talk about what it takes to stop being the contentious one.

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Collect the verses in this chapter that concern the poor, including 21:13 and 21:26. Write down what the chapter says will happen to the man who will not listen to the cry of the needy.
2. Proverbs 21:5 sets the plans of the diligent against the haste of the grasping. Compare Luke 14:28–30 and explain how the two passages are making the same point.
3. Verse 31 says the horse is prepared for the day of battle, but deliverance is of the Lord. Read Psalm 20:7 and 1 Samuel 17:45–47, and describe what preparation and trust look like when they are working together.
4. Verses 13 and 21 both attach consequences to conduct. Explain how a Christian holds such sayings as general principles rather than as a formula for getting what he wants out of God.
5. Verse 26 says the righteous gives and does not spare. Give something away this week that you would honestly rather keep, and tell no one that you did it (Matthew 6:3–4).

GOSPELS Matthew 18:21–19:30

Debts, Vows, and Riches

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Peter asks whether forgiving seven times is enough, and Jesus tells him about a servant forgiven an unpayable debt who then throttles a fellow servant over pocket change. Then Jesus leaves Galilee, and Pharisees test Him with a question about divorce. He answers from Genesis. Children are brought to Him and the disciples try to stop it. A rich young man asks what good thing he must do, keeps the commandments, and walks away sorrowful. Peter, watching him go, asks what the disciples will get.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Peter offers seven times as a generous limit and Jesus answers seventy times seven. Compare the two debts in the parable (18:24, 28) and talk about why the servant's behavior is not merely ungrateful but absurd.

2. In Matthew 19:3–9 Jesus answers a question about divorce by going all the way back to Genesis. Trace His argument step by step, and state plainly what God joined, what Moses permitted and why, and what one exception the Lord names.
3. The rich young man goes away sorrowful, and Jesus lets him go without renegotiating. What was he unwilling to surrender, and what is the thing in your life that occupies the same place?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Work out roughly what ten thousand talents and a hundred denarii were worth in wages (18:24, 28). Write the two figures side by side, then read 18:32–35 again with those numbers in front of you.
2. Read Matthew 6:14–15 and Ephesians 4:32 with the final verse of the parable. State clearly what Jesus says happens to a Christian who will not forgive his brother.
3. Jesus quotes Genesis 1:27 and Genesis 2:24 in Matthew 19:4–6. Copy both verses out, and list every element of God's design for marriage that He draws from them.
4. Matthew 19:13–15 has Jesus receiving children and saying the kingdom belongs to such as these. Read it with Matthew 18:3 and Ezekiel 18:20, and say what these passages together settle about children and guilt.
5. Jesus told the young man to go, sell, give, and come. Name the possession, plan, or ambition that would be hardest for you to hand over, and take one concrete step this week toward loosening your grip on it.

GENERAL NEW TESTAMENT Acts 19:11–20:16

Bonfires, Riots, and Midnight

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

God works extraordinary miracles through Paul at Ephesus, and seven traveling exorcists borrow the name of Jesus with humiliating results. Fear falls on the city, believers confess their practices, and a pile of magic books worth fifty thousand pieces of silver goes up in flames. A silversmith named Demetrius sees his trade collapsing and starts a riot in the theater. Later, at Troas, the disciples gather on the first day of the week to break bread, and a young man falls asleep in a window.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. The seven sons of Sceva tried to use the name of Jesus the way a man uses a tool (19:13–16). What went wrong for them, and where do people still treat the name of Christ as a technique rather than as a Lord?
2. The Ephesian believers burned books worth fifty thousand pieces of silver, publicly, and nobody sold them first (19:18–20). Why was that necessary rather than wasteful, and what would the equivalent bonfire cost you?
3. Acts 20:7 says the disciples came together on the first day of the week to break bread. Notice what that verse assumes rather than argues, and discuss what it establishes about the practice of the New Testament church.

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Trace the speech of Demetrius in 19:25–27 and note the order of his concerns. Identify the reason he gives his fellow tradesmen first and the reason he offers the crowd.
2. The town clerk quiets a mob of thousands with three arguments (19:35–40). List them in order, and note what he says about using lawful channels.
3. Acts 19:11 calls these “unusual miracles.” Read 2 Corinthians 12:12 and Hebrews 2:3–4, and explain what purpose such signs were serving and for whom.
4. Acts 20:7–12 is a window into a first-century assembly. List everything you can learn from it about when they met, why they met, how long they stayed, and what happened.
5. The Ephesians destroyed what they could easily have sold. Name one thing in your house, on your phone, or on your calendar that is holding you back spiritually, and get rid of it this week rather than storing it somewhere.

NEXT WEEK'S READING: Numbers 10–16 · Proverbs 22 · Matthew 20 · Acts 20:17–21:26

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