

Through the Bible in 24 Months



WEEK 19 OF 104

Grumbling and Greatness

Week 19 of 104 • 18% of the way through the Bible

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

General Old Testament	Numbers 10–16
Wisdom Literature	Proverbs 22
Gospels	Matthew 20
General New Testament	Acts 20:17–21:26

THIS WEEK AT A GLANCE

Three days out from the mountain where God had spoken, Israel started complaining, and it never really stopped: about the food, about the leadership, about the land, until a man named Korah decided he should be holding the censer himself. Solomon quietly observes that a good name is worth more than money and that rich and poor have the same Maker. Jesus tells a story about workers who received exactly what they agreed to and resented the owner anyway, and then a mother asks Him for the two best seats in the kingdom minutes after He describes His own crucifixion. Meanwhile, on a beach at Miletus, a tired preacher kneels in the sand with the elders of Ephesus and tells them that greatness looks like giving yourself away.

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 10–16

Complaint, Unbelief, and Rebellion

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Israel finally leaves Sinai in perfect marching order, with silver trumpets and the ark going before them. Within three days the complaining starts, and fire falls at the edge of the camp. They crave meat, Moses tells God he cannot carry the people alone, and seventy elders are appointed. Miriam and Aaron challenge Moses. Twelve spies survey Canaan and ten of them terrify the nation, which costs Israel forty years. Then Korah, Dathan, and Abiram claim the priesthood, and the ground opens under them.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Israel is three days out from Sinai when the complaining begins (11:1). Trace what they complained about in chapters 11, 14, and 16, and talk about what all of those complaints have underneath them.
2. Ten spies and two saw the same land, the same walled cities, and the same giants (13:27–33). What made the reports so different, and where does that same difference show up in the decisions you are facing?

3. Korah's argument in 16:3 sounds almost scriptural: all the congregation is holy, so why do you exalt yourselves above them? What was actually wrong with it, and how does a Christian tell honest questioning from rebellion?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List the complaints recorded in Numbers 11 through 16, and beside each one write the consequence God attached to it.
2. Numbers 12:3 calls Moses more humble than all men on the face of the earth. Read 12:1–13 and note carefully what he did and what he refused to do when his own family attacked him.
3. Read Hebrews 3:7–4:11 with Numbers 14 open beside it. Identify what the writer says the wilderness generation failed to do, and what warning he draws from it for Christians.
4. Trace what Caleb says in 13:30 and 14:6–9, then find what God says about him in 14:24. Write down the exact phrase God uses to describe him.
5. Complaining is the sin these chapters treat most severely and the one we treat most lightly. Go twenty-four hours this week without a single complaint, and write down what the attempt teaches you about yourself.

WISDOM LITERATURE Proverbs 22

Train Up a Child

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Solomon opens by pricing a good name above great riches and observing that the rich and the poor have the same Maker. Then come some of the most quoted lines in the book: the prudent man who sees trouble coming, the child trained in the way he should go, and the borrower who is servant to the lender. Halfway through, the book changes shape as the sayings of the wise begin, with warnings about robbing the poor, befriending an angry man, cosigning a debt, and moving an old boundary stone.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Proverbs 22:1 says a good name is to be chosen rather than great riches. Talk about how a person actually builds one over years, and how quickly it can be spent.

2. Verse 6 says train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it. Since this is a proverb rather than a guarantee, how should faithful parents of a wandering child read it?
3. Verse 7 says the borrower is servant to the lender. Where do you see that playing out in ordinary life around you, and what would getting free of it actually require?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Collect every verse in Proverbs 22 that concerns the poor (22:2, 9, 16, 22–23). Write out what the chapter says God Himself does about the way the poor are treated.
2. Proverbs 22:3 says the prudent foresees evil and hides himself, while the simple pass on and are punished. Give two examples from your own life where you saw it coming, and two where you did not.
3. Verse 24 warns against making friendship with an angry man. Read 1 Corinthians 15:33 and explain how friendships shape a person far more than he intends or notices.
4. Verse 29 says a man diligent in his business will stand before kings. Set it beside Colossians 3:23–24 and describe what changes when a Christian works as though for the Lord.
5. Verse 9 blesses the man with a generous eye who gives his bread to the poor. Identify one need you already know about and have been pretending not to see, and meet it before next Sunday.

GOSPELS Matthew 20

The Last Shall Be First

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

A landowner hires workers at dawn, then again at nine, noon, three, and five, and at quitting time pays everyone the same denarius, starting with the last. The all-day crew is outraged. Then Jesus takes the twelve aside and tells them in detail what will happen in Jerusalem, and the mother of James and John immediately asks for the two seats beside His throne. Jesus answers with a cup, a definition of greatness, and a ransom. The chapter ends with two blind men shouting on the road out of Jericho.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. The workers who bore the burden and heat of the day received exactly what they had agreed to, and they were still furious (20:10–12). What was really bothering them, and when have you felt the same way about somebody else's blessing?
2. The mother of James and John asks for the two best seats in the kingdom immediately after Jesus describes His own crucifixion (20:17–21). What does that sequence expose about the disciples, and how does Jesus redefine greatness in 20:25–28?
3. Jesus asks the blind men the same question He had just asked James and John: what do you want Me to do for you (20:21, 32)? Compare the two answers, and consider what your own honest answer would be this week.

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List the five times the landowner goes out to hire and note exactly what he promises each group (20:1–7). Notice which group had a wage agreed in advance.
2. Read Matthew 20:28 with Mark 10:45 and 1 Timothy 2:5–6. Explain what the word “ransom” claims about what the cross actually accomplished, and for how many.
3. Jesus asks James and John whether they are able to drink His cup. Trace what became of those two men in Acts 12:2 and Revelation 1:9, and note how the Lord's answer came true.
4. Matthew 20:18–19 is the most detailed of the predictions of the crucifixion. List every specific detail, and then check each one against Matthew 27.
5. Jesus says whoever desires to be great among you must be your servant. Name one act of service this week that will be genuinely inconvenient and that nobody will see, and do it.

GENERAL NEW TESTAMENT **Acts 20:17–21:26**

Farewell at Miletus

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Paul sends for the elders of Ephesus and gives them the only address to church leaders recorded in Acts. He reviews three years of work among them, tells them the Holy Spirit has warned him that chains and tribulation

wait in every city, and charges them to shepherd the flock. They kneel on the beach and weep. Then, city by city, disciples and a prophet named Agabus warn him not to go up to Jerusalem. He goes anyway, and on arrival is asked to take part in a vow.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. In Acts 20:17 Paul sends for the elders, and in 20:28 he calls those same men overseers and tells them to shepherd the flock. Look at all three words together and talk about what they settle regarding the leadership of a congregation.
2. Paul says he is innocent of the blood of all men because he did not shrink from declaring the whole counsel of God (20:26–27). What gets quietly left out when a preacher, a teacher, or a parent shrinks back, and why is that temptation so strong?
3. Paul is warned in city after city and goes to Jerusalem anyway, saying he is ready not only to be bound but to die (21:13). How do you tell resolve from stubbornness, and what did the brethren finally say when he would not be persuaded?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List everything Paul says in 20:18–21 about the way he conducted himself among the Ephesians for three years, including what he taught and where he taught it.
2. Acts 20:28 says the Holy Spirit made them overseers of the church of God, which He purchased with His own blood. Read 1 Peter 5:1–4 and 1 Timothy 3:1–7, and write out what an elder is, what he does, and what he must be.
3. Paul warns that savage wolves will come in, and that from among their own selves men will rise up speaking perverse things (20:29–30). Follow that warning into 1 Timothy 1:3 and Revelation 2:1–7 and see what became of Ephesus.
4. Acts 20:35 quotes a saying of Jesus that appears nowhere in the four gospels. Write it out, and note what Paul had just been talking about when he quoted it.
5. Paul could say he had coveted no one's silver or gold and had worked with his own hands to support others. Name one specific way you will give this month that genuinely costs you, and do it without telling anyone.

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