

Through the Bible in 24 Months



WEEK 23 OF 104

They Say and Do Not

Week 23 of 104 • 22% of the way through the Bible

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

General Old Testament	Deuteronomy 1-5
Wisdom Literature	Proverbs 26
Gospels	Matthew 23
General New Testament	Acts 25:13-26:32

THIS WEEK AT A GLANCE

Everybody in this week's readings knows what is right. That is exactly the problem. Moses stands on the plains of Moab and tells a new generation the story of how their parents heard God clearly and would not go up. Proverbs shows you a sluggard who can explain, brilliantly, why he cannot get out of bed. Jesus stands in the temple and says of the most religious men in the nation, "they say, and do not do." And in a marble hall in Caesarea a king who knows the prophets listens to a prisoner in chains, agrees with almost every word, and says, "You almost persuade me." Almost. Read these four together and you will stop asking whether you know enough.

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 Deuteronomy 1-5

Remember What You Heard

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Moses begins his last sermons on the plains of Moab, a month before he dies. He retells the story: the appointing of judges, the spies at Kadesh, the refusal to go up, the forty years, the nations God told them not to touch, and the defeat of Sihon and Og. He tells them he asked God to let him cross the Jordan and was told to stop asking. Then he turns to exhortation, warning them never to add to God's word or forget what they saw, and he recites the Ten Commandments to the children of the men who heard them at Sinai.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Moses opens his final address by reminding a new generation exactly how their parents failed at Kadesh (1:19-46), and he does not soften a word of it. Why begin a book of instruction with a family failure, and what does honest remembering do for a people who are about to receive everything they were promised?

2. Deuteronomy 4:2 forbids adding to God's word or taking from it. Where does adding usually come from, and where does subtracting usually come from, and which of the two do people who genuinely love God tend to do more often?
3. In 3:23–27 Moses pleads to be allowed to cross the Jordan, and God says, “Let it suffice you; speak no more to Me of this matter.” How does a person keep serving God wholeheartedly after He has clearly said no to something you wanted very much?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Read through chapter 4 and count how many times the phrase “the Lord your God” appears. What is Moses pressing into them with that repetition, and how does it change the tone of the commands?
2. Deuteronomy 4:9 tells them to keep their souls diligently, not to forget what their eyes saw, and to teach it to their children and grandchildren. List what they were specifically to remember, and then name one thing God has done in your family that your grandchildren will never know unless you tell them.
3. Compare the Ten Commandments in Deuteronomy 5:6–21 with Exodus 20:1–17. Note every difference you find, especially the reason given for the Sabbath in 5:15, and explain what that change emphasizes for this generation.
4. Read Deuteronomy 4:15–19 and then Romans 1:21–25. Why does God tie the prohibition of images to the fact that Israel saw no form at Horeb, and in what ways do people still reshape God into something more manageable?
5. In 5:29 God says, “Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments.” Name the one command you consistently intend to keep and consistently do not, and decide what has to change this week for the intention to become a habit.

WISDOM LITERATURE Proverbs 26

Fools, Sluggards, and Meddlers

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

This is the chapter of unflattering pictures. Honor to a fool is like snow in summer. A fool repeating his folly is like a dog returning to his vomit. A sluggard turns on his bed like a door on its hinges and insists there is a lion in

the street. A man who meddles in someone else's quarrel is grabbing a passing dog by the ears. Gossip goes down into the innermost parts like a delicacy. And a man with warm words and a cold heart is a cheap clay pot with a thin coat of silver.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Verses 4 and 5 give what look like opposite instructions about answering a fool. Work out how both can be true at once, and describe a real situation where each of them would be the right move.
2. Verses 20 through 22 say that where there is no wood the fire goes out, and that a talebearer's words go down into the innermost parts. Why do we remember gossip so easily and forget good reports so fast, and what does verse 20 identify as the thing that actually stops a fire?
3. The sluggard in 26:13–16 always has a reason, and verse 16 says he considers himself wiser than seven men who can give a sensible answer. Where do we do our most creative excuse-making, and who in your life is actually allowed to challenge it?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List every comparison used for the fool in verses 1 through 12. Put them side by side and describe the single picture of foolishness that emerges.
2. Verse 12 says there is more hope for a fool than for a man wise in his own eyes. Read Romans 12:16 and 1 Corinthians 3:18–20, and explain why self-conceit is a worse condition than ordinary foolishness.
3. Proverbs 26:18–19 describes a man who wounds his neighbor and then says he was only joking. Think of the last time humor was used to say something true and cruel. Who was hurt, and what should have been said instead?
4. Read 26:23–28 and trace the portrait of the man with burning lips and a wicked heart. Count how many disguises he uses, and note what verse 27 says finally happens to him.
5. Verse 20 says that where there is no wood the fire goes out. Identify one conversation, group message, or habit through which you have been supplying the wood, and decide exactly how you will stop before next Sunday.

They Say and Do Not

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Jesus turns from His questioners to the crowd and the disciples and says the hardest things He ever said. Do what the scribes and Pharisees teach from Moses' seat, He says, but do not do what they do, because they bind burdens and will not lift a finger. Then come seven woes: shutting the kingdom, devouring widows' houses, making converts worse than themselves, splitting hairs over oaths, tithing garden herbs while omitting justice and mercy, cleaning the outside of the cup, and building tombs for prophets their fathers killed. The chapter ends in tears over Jerusalem.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Jesus tells the crowd to do what the scribes and Pharisees say and not what they do (23:2-3). How can a man's teaching be right while his life is a warning, and what does that mean both for how we listen to teachers and for how we live as ones?
2. In 23:23 Jesus says they carefully tithed mint, anise, and cumin while omitting justice, mercy, and faith, and that they should have done the one without leaving the other undone. Which duties do we count most carefully, and which are we most likely to leave undone?
3. This chapter is safest read as a mirror rather than a window. Work through the seven woes slowly, and name the one that comes closest to home for people like us, who love the Scriptures and attend faithfully.

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List the seven woes in order, and write a short phrase naming the specific sin condemned in each one.
 2. Read 23:8-12 carefully. What is Jesus forbidding when He says to call no man your father on the earth, and what is He plainly not forbidding? Compare 1 Corinthians 4:15, Ephesians 6:1-2, and Acts 7:2.
 3. Trace the word "blind" through 23:16, 17, 19, 24, and 26. What does the repetition tell you about the effect hypocrisy has on the person practicing it?
 4. Verses 37 through 39 end the chapter with grief rather than anger. Read them beside Luke 19:41-44 and Ezekiel 18:32, and describe the heart behind the woes.
 5. Verse 26 says to cleanse first the inside of the cup and dish, so that the outside may be clean also. Name the one area of your life you have been managing from the outside, and take one specific step this week toward cleaning it from the inside.
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Almost Persuaded**WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE**

King Agrippa and Bernice arrive in Caesarea, and Festus, who has to send a prisoner to Rome without knowing what to write, lays the case before them. The next day the hall fills with officers and city leaders, and Paul, in chains, gives the finest defense in the book. He tells his life from youth, his rage against the name of Jesus, the light on the Damascus road, and the commission to open blind eyes and turn people from darkness to light. Festus shouts that he is mad. Agrippa says he is almost persuaded.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Paul tells his conversion a third time, and this time he includes the commission he was given (26:16–18). Read those verses slowly. What is the gospel said to accomplish for people, and how much of that list have you actually experienced?
2. Festus interrupts loudly that Paul is out of his mind, and Paul answers that he speaks words of truth and reason, adding that this thing was not done in a corner (26:24–26). How do you answer someone who assumes faith is for people who cannot think clearly?
3. Agrippa says, “You almost persuade me to become a Christian.” What keeps a man who knows the prophets, and knows the facts, from taking the last step, and what is the “almost” in your own life right now?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Compare the three accounts of Paul’s conversion in Acts 9, 22, and 26. Make a short list of what appears only in this third telling, and consider why Paul included those things before a king.
2. Write out the commission of Acts 26:18 in its separate parts. Then read Colossians 1:13–14 and 1 Peter 2:9 and note where the same ideas show up in language for all Christians.
3. Paul says in 26:20 that he preached that men should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance. Read Luke 3:8–14 and 2 Corinthians 7:10–11, and describe what repentance looks like when it is genuine.
4. Trace Agrippa’s part in the scene from 26:1 through 26:32. Note how his tone changes, and explain what his final private verdict about Paul reveals about the case against him.
5. Paul said, “I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.” You have no vision; you have the completed word of God, which is better (2 Peter 1:19). Name the most recent thing Scripture asked of you that you have not done, and do it this week.

NEXT WEEK'S READING: Deuteronomy 6-15 · Proverbs 27-28 · Matthew 24:1-35 · Acts 27

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