

Through the Bible in 24 Months



WEEK 25 OF 104

Ready and Faithful

Week 25 of 104 · 24% of the way through the Bible

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

General Old Testament	Deuteronomy 16–25
Wisdom Literature	Proverbs 29
Gospels	Matthew 24:36–25:30
General New Testament	Acts 28

THIS WEEK AT A GLANCE

This week is about the long middle, the stretch where nobody is watching. Israel gets the rules for ordinary life in a land they do not yet own: how to judge a case, how to pay a hired man, what to leave on the vine for the widow, how honest the weights in your pouch have to be. Proverbs warns about the man who has been corrected ten times and has stiffened his neck once too often. Jesus tells story after story about a delay, a bridegroom a long time coming, a master away on business, servants who must decide what to do while the house is empty. And Acts closes with an apostle in a rented room in Rome, chained to a soldier, teaching everyone who comes through the door.

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 16–25

Justice, Mercy, and Honest Scales

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Moses lays out how life is to work in the land. Three yearly feasts. Judges who take no bribe and follow justice, and only justice. A king who is forbidden horses, wives, and treasure, and required to write out the law in his own hand. A promise of a Prophet like Moses. Cities of refuge, two or three witnesses, limits on warfare, the rights of a firstborn, honest weights, a parapet on the roof so nobody falls, wages paid the same day, and grain deliberately left in the field for the widow and the stranger.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Deuteronomy 16:18–20 charges judges to refuse bribes, show no partiality, and follow justice, and only justice. Why is impartiality so difficult for ordinary people who have no gavel, and where are we most likely to shade a judgment because of who is involved?

2. The law of the king in 17:14–20 forbids him horses, wives, and silver, and requires him to write out his own copy of the law and read it every day of his life. Why would God attach those particular limits to power, and what would the same restraints look like on someone in authority today?
3. Deuteronomy 18:15–19 promises a Prophet like Moses whom God will raise up from among their brethren. Read Acts 3:22–23 and John 6:14. What became of that promise, and what consequence does Peter attach to refusing to hear Him?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Work through chapters 24 and 25 and list every law that protects a poor man, a widow, a stranger, an orphan, a hired worker, or even an ox. What kind of God stands behind a legal code with that many protections in it?
2. Deuteronomy 18:9–14 forbids every form of divination, witchcraft, and consulting the dead. List what is banned, then read Isaiah 8:19–20 and 1 Timothy 4:1, and explain why God treats this so severely.
3. Read Deuteronomy 25:13–16 on differing weights and measures, then Proverbs 11:1 and Micah 6:10–11. Where does a person today keep two sets of weights in his pocket?
4. Deuteronomy 21:22–23 says a man hanged on a tree is accursed of God. Read Galatians 3:13 and 1 Peter 2:24, and write out what Paul does with that verse and why it matters to you personally.
5. Deuteronomy 24:19–22 commands leaving the forgotten sheaf in the field, the olives on the branch, and the grapes on the vine. Name the modern equivalent of a deliberate margin left for somebody else, and decide the specific margin you will leave this month.

WISDOM LITERATURE Proverbs 29

The Neck That Will Not Bend

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

The chapter opens with one of the most sobering verses in the book: a man often rebuked who hardens his neck will suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy. From there it moves through rulers who make a people rejoice or groan, a child left to himself, a fool who vents everything he feels, a man hasty in his words, an angry

man who stirs up strife, pride that brings a man low, and the fear of man that lays a snare. It ends by reminding you where justice finally comes from.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Proverbs 29:1 describes a man often rebuked who stiffens his neck and is suddenly broken beyond remedy. What has happened inside a person by the tenth refusal that had not yet happened at the first, and why does the proverb call the end sudden?
2. Proverbs 29:18 says that where there is no revelation the people cast off restraint, and then adds that happy is the one who keeps the law. How are those two halves connected, and what happens over a few years to a family or a congregation that quietly stops opening the Book?
3. Proverbs 29:25 says the fear of man brings a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord shall be safe. Where has the fear of what people think shaped a decision you made this year, and what would trusting the Lord have looked like in that same moment?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Collect the verses in this chapter about anger and hasty speech (29:8, 11, 20, 22). Put them together and describe the man who says everything he feels the moment he feels it.
2. Read Proverbs 29:15 and 29:17 with Hebrews 12:9–11. What is correction supposed to produce in a child, and how do the two passages describe the outcome?
3. Trace the proverbs about rulers and authority in this chapter (29:2, 4, 12, 14, 26). What kind of ruler does God bless, and what does verse 26 say about where a man's judgment finally comes from?
4. Read Proverbs 29:23 alongside Luke 14:11 and James 4:6. Write one sentence explaining the relationship Scripture consistently draws between humility and honor.
5. Verse 1 speaks of someone rebuked repeatedly. Name the correction you have now heard more than once from more than one person, and decide today, in writing, what you are going to do about it.

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Jesus turns from the fall of Jerusalem to His own return, and the first thing He says is that nobody knows the day or the hour. Life will look ordinary, as it did before the flood, right up until it does not. Then come three pictures of a delay: a servant left in charge of the household who decides his master is taking a long time, ten young women waiting with lamps for a bridegroom who is late, and three servants entrusted with their master's money while he is away on a long trip.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Jesus says plainly that no one knows the day or the hour (24:36). Why would God deliberately withhold that information from us, and how would our daily lives actually change if the date were published?
2. The faithful servant and the evil servant do the same job under the same conditions; what separates them is what each does while the master delays (24:45–51). What does the evil servant say in his heart first, and how does a Christian's private thinking show up in his conduct six months later?
3. The one-talent servant did not steal, lose, or waste anything. He returned exactly what he had been given (25:24–30). Why is that treated so severely, and what has God put in your hands that is currently buried in a safe place?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Read 24:37–41 about the days of Noah and the two in the field. In the flood, who was taken away and who was left behind? Compare Genesis 7:21–23 and Luke 17:26–37, and state what “taken” means in this passage.
 2. List everything the wise virgins did that the foolish ones did not (25:1–13). Identify the one thing that could not be borrowed at the last minute, and explain why.
 3. Compare the master's words to the first two servants in 25:21 and 25:23. Note what is identical and what is different, and write what that says about how God measures faithfulness.
 4. Read 24:45–47 with 1 Corinthians 4:2 and 1 Peter 4:10. What is a steward, what does he own, and what is the single thing required of him?
 5. Name the ability, opportunity, or resource God has given you that you have been sitting on because you were afraid of failing with it. Take the first concrete step this week, and tell one person that you have taken it.
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No One Forbidding Him

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

The survivors come ashore on Malta and are met with unusual kindness. A viper fastens on Paul's hand as he gathers sticks for the fire, and the islanders decide first that he is a murderer and then that he is a god. He heals the father of the leading man, and the whole island brings its sick. Three months later they sail for Italy. Brethren walk out from Rome to meet him on the road, and Luke says Paul thanked God and took courage. In Rome he rents a house, reasons with the Jewish leaders all day, and preaches for two years.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. On Malta the islanders conclude Paul is a murderer when the snake bites him and a god when he shakes it off (28:4–6). How quickly do people swing between those two verdicts about a Christian, and how should we hold both the criticism and the praise without being moved by either?
2. In 28:15 brethren walk out thirty and forty miles to meet Paul on the road, and Luke says that when he saw them he thanked God and took courage. Why would the simple presence of a few Christians do that for a man like Paul, and who needs you to make that walk this week?
3. Paul spends an entire day expounding the kingdom of God and persuading them concerning Jesus from Moses and the Prophets, and Luke says some were persuaded and some disbelieved (28:23–24). What does that outcome teach us to expect, and how do you keep teaching faithfully when the results are mixed?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Trace Paul's activity from the moment he reaches shore to the end of the chapter, and note every act of service he performs. Then note what he does first after settling in Rome, and what that priority says about him.
2. Read Acts 28:26–27 and then Isaiah 6:9–10 and Matthew 13:14–15. Whose eyes are shut in that passage, and who shut them? Be careful to quote the text exactly.
3. Acts ends with Paul preaching the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him. Why might Luke have ended his book there instead of telling us how Paul's trial turned out?
4. Count how many times chains or bonds are mentioned in Acts 28. Then read Philippians 1:12–14 and 2 Timothy 2:9, and write out what Paul concluded about his imprisonment.

5. Paul was under guard in a rented house and still received all who came to him (28:30). Name your own current limitation, whether health, schedule, money, or circumstance, and name one person you will invite into it this month.

NEXT WEEK'S READING: Deuteronomy 26-34 · Proverbs 30 · Matthew 25:31-26:25 · Romans 1:1-2:11

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