

Through the Bible in 24 Months



WEEK 26 OF 104

Choose Life

Week 26 of 104 • 25% of the way through the Bible

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

General Old Testament	Deuteronomy 26–34
Wisdom Literature	Proverbs 30
Gospels	Matthew 25:31–26:25
General New Testament	Romans 1:1–2:11

THIS WEEK AT A GLANCE

This week four readings put you at a fork in the road and refuse to let you stand there. Moses, at the end of a long life and a long march, gathers Israel on the plains of Moab and sets life and death in front of them in plain words, then climbs a mountain to die. Agur prays the most honest prayer in Proverbs, asking for neither poverty nor riches because he knows what both do to a man. Jesus divides the nations like a shepherd separating sheep from goats, and two days later Judas names his price. Paul opens his letter to Rome announcing a gospel that is the power of God, then shows what becomes of people who keep choosing the other road. Read them together and you will feel the weight of an ordinary week.

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 26–34

The Last Words of Moses

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Moses finishes his final sermons and then finishes his life. You will read the liturgy of the firstfruits basket, the blessings shouted from Mount Gerizim and the curses from Mount Ebal, the covenant renewed in Moab, and the great call to choose life. Then Joshua is commissioned, Moses sings a song he was told to teach the nation, he blesses the tribes one by one, and he climbs Mount Nebo to see a land he will never walk in.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. In Deuteronomy 26:1–11 the worshiper carries a basket to the altar and recites his whole family history before he sets it down. Why does God tie giving so tightly to remembering, and what would that change about the way you give?
2. Deuteronomy 30:11–20 sets life and death, blessing and cursing, in front of the nation. Walk through what Moses says the choice actually involves, and discuss why he insists the word is not far off but very near.

3. Moses is shown the whole land from Nebo and told he will not enter it. What does that scene teach us about the holiness of God, and about serving Him faithfully for years and still hearing no?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Count the verses given to blessing in Deuteronomy 28:1–14 and then the verses given to cursing in 28:15–68. What is the sheer weight of that chapter meant to press on a reader?
2. Read Deuteronomy 29:29 slowly and write in your own words the line it draws between what God has kept to Himself and what He has handed to us and to our children.
3. Moses calls heaven and earth as witnesses against Israel (30:19; 31:28). Trace what he is doing, then compare Joshua 24:22 and Isaiah 1:2.
4. Deuteronomy 32 is a song, and songs work by images. Find every picture Moses uses for God in verses 1–18, from the Rock to the eagle, and note which one you least expected.
5. Deuteronomy 34:10–12 says no prophet has arisen like Moses. Read Acts 3:22–23 and Hebrews 3:1–6, then name one specific instruction from the Prophet greater than Moses that you have been putting off, and obey it this week.

WISDOM LITERATURE Proverbs 30

Agur's Honest Prayer

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

A man named Agur takes over the book for a chapter, and he begins by admitting he is worn out and does not have wisdom. From that low place he says something magnificent about the purity of God's word, prays the only prayer in Proverbs, and then teaches by counting: four things that never say enough, three things too wonderful to understand, four small creatures wiser than their size, four things stately in their walk. It is the most personal chapter in the book.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Agur opens by saying he is weary, that he is more brutish than any man, and that he has not learned wisdom (30:1–3). Why would God place a wise man's confession of ignorance inside a book about wisdom?

2. Proverbs 30:7–9 is the only recorded prayer in the book, and Agur fears riches every bit as much as poverty. Talk through the two dangers he names, and be honest about which one your own household is actually facing.
3. Verses 5 and 6 warn against adding to God’s words. How does that warning reach into how we worship and organize the Lord’s church, and how do sincere people add without ever intending to?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Write out the five questions of Proverbs 30:4, then read John 3:13 and Ephesians 4:9–10. Who alone can answer them, and what is Agur driving his reader toward?
2. List the four things in 30:15–16 that never say “enough.” What do they share, and where do you recognize that same appetite in your own week?
3. Proverbs 30:11–14 sketches a generation in four strokes. Name each trait, then decide which of the four our own culture would most indignantly deny.
4. The four small creatures of 30:24–28 are called exceedingly wise. Identify the particular wisdom of each one, and say which of the four you most need this year.
5. Notice the order of Agur’s prayer: he asks God to remove falsehood from him before he asks for bread. Name one exaggeration, convenient omission, or half truth you routinely tell, and stop telling it this week.

GOSPELS Matthew 25:31–26:25

Sheep, Goats, and Silver

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Jesus finishes His last long discourse with the scene of final judgment: the Son of Man on His throne, the nations gathered, a shepherd dividing sheep from goats, and both groups astonished by the verdict. Then the narrative turns hard. The chief priests plot, a woman pours a jar of costly ointment on Jesus’ head and is scolded for it, Judas sells his Lord for thirty pieces of silver, and the Passover room is prepared for a meal that will change everything.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. In Matthew 25:31–46 both groups are genuinely surprised by the verdict. Why are the sheep as astonished as the goats, and what does that tell you about the kind of life Jesus is describing?
2. A woman pours out ointment worth nearly a year's wages and is criticized for waste (26:6–13). When is extravagance toward Christ exactly right, and how do we tell worship and waste apart?
3. Judas asks the priests what they are willing to give him, and at the table every disciple asks, "Lord, is it I?" Talk about how a man drifts from following to selling, and where that drift usually begins.

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List the six acts of mercy named in Matthew 25:35–36, and mark the ones that cannot be done at a distance or with a check.
2. Read 25:34 and 25:41 side by side and notice for whom the kingdom was prepared and for whom the fire was prepared. What difference does that careful wording make?
3. Compare Matthew 26:6–13 with John 12:1–8. What additional detail does John supply about the objection, and how does it change the way you hear it?
4. Follow the money through this reading: the ointment, the poor, and the thirty pieces of silver. Trace what each use of money reveals about the heart behind it, and compare Zechariah 11:12–13.
5. Jesus ties the verdict to how His brethren were treated. Name one member of your congregation who is sick, homebound, grieving, or forgotten, and write down the day and hour this week that you will go to them.

GENERAL NEW TESTAMENT Romans 1:1–2:11

Not Ashamed of the Gospel

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Paul introduces himself to a church he has never visited and takes seven verses to do it, because he cannot say his own name without saying what the gospel is. He tells them he has longed to come, then states his theme: the gospel is God's power to save everyone who believes. From there he traces how a world that knew God refused to honor Him, and how God gave it over to what it wanted. Then, in chapter 2, he turns on the reader who has been agreeing.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Paul says he is not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God to salvation (1:16). Where do Christians today go quietly silent, and what would actually change if we believed that verse on a Tuesday at work?
2. Three times Paul says God “gave them up” or “gave them over” (1:24, 26, 28). Discuss what that kind of judgment is, and why it is more frightening than fire from heaven.
3. Romans 2:1–11 turns suddenly on the reader who has been nodding along through chapter 1. How does Paul spring the trap, and what does he say the goodness of God is meant to produce?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Trace the descent in Romans 1:21–32 one step at a time, beginning with a refusal to glorify God and give thanks. At which step does the slide become visible to other people, and at which step did it actually begin?
2. Romans 1:5 and 16:26 both speak of “obedience to the faith.” Read the two verses together and write out what that phrase says about the relationship between believing and obeying.
3. According to Romans 1:19–20, what has God made plain to every human being, and on what ground does Paul say men are without excuse? Compare Psalm 19:1–4 and Acts 14:17.
4. List what Romans 2:6–11 says God will render and on what basis He will render it. Then set it beside 2 Corinthians 5:10 and Galatians 6:7–8 and note how consistent the New Testament is on this.
5. Romans 2:4 says the goodness of God is leading you to repentance. Name one kindness of God you have been enjoying for years while leaving one sin untouched, and take the first concrete step toward repentance this week.

NEXT WEEK'S READING: Joshua 1–8 · Proverbs 31 · Matthew 26:26–56 · Romans 2:12–3:20

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