

Through the Bible in 24 Months



WEEK 27 OF 104

Words and Works

Week 27 of 104 • 26% of the way through the Bible

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

General Old Testament	Joshua 1-8
Wisdom Literature	Proverbs 31
Gospels	Matthew 26:26-56
General New Testament	Romans 2:12-3:20

THIS WEEK AT A GLANCE

For six days Israel walked around Jericho and said nothing at all, and on the seventh a shout brought the walls down. In Proverbs a mother tells her son that charm lies, that beauty fades, and that a woman's own works will praise her in the gates where everyone can see them. In an upper room Peter swears he will die before he denies his Lord, and before the rooster crows he is running through the dark with the rest of them. And Paul tells a man who owns the law, teaches the law, and boasts in the law that it is not the hearers who are justified but the doers. All four readings ask you the same uncomfortable question: does your life say what your mouth says?

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 Joshua 1-8

Crossing Over Into the Land

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

A new leader, a new generation, and a river at flood stage. God commissions Joshua with a command to be strong and to keep the book of the law in his mouth. Two spies are hidden by a Canaanite woman who has heard what God did at the Red Sea. The Jordan is cut off, stones are stacked, a covenant sign is restored, the manna stops, and Jericho falls without a battering ram. Then one man's hidden theft costs thirty six lives at Ai.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. God tells Joshua to be strong and courageous three times in chapter 1, and each time He attaches a different reason (1:6, 7, 9). Trace all three, and say honestly which of the three you lean on least.
2. Jericho fell after six silent days of walking and one shout. Why would God choose a plan that made His people look foolish to everyone watching from the wall, and where is He asking you to obey without a strategy that makes sense?

3. Achan buried his loot under his tent and thirty six men died at Ai before anyone knew why (7:1–5). How does this passage press on the common idea that what I do privately is nobody else’s business?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Copy out Joshua 1:8 and list what it commands a person to do with the book of the law, and then what it promises. How is that different from simply reading the Bible more often?
2. Rahab’s confession in 2:9–11 names what she had heard about God. List the events she mentions, then read Hebrews 11:31 and James 2:25 and note what each of those verses credits her with.
3. Israel stacks twelve stones out of the riverbed (4:1–9, 19–24). Write down the reason Joshua gives, then name the stones of remembrance your own family has set up, or admit that you have none.
4. In 5:13–15 Joshua asks the Commander of the Lord’s army whose side He is on, and the answer is essentially “neither.” Explain what that answer corrects, and compare Isaiah 55:8–9.
5. Achan tells his own story in 7:20–21 in four verbs: I saw, I coveted, I took, I hid. Identify the step at which you can still stop, and decide right now what you will do the next time you reach it.

WISDOM LITERATURE Proverbs 31

Her Own Works Praise Her

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

The book closes with two voices. First a mother speaks to her royal son, warning him about women, about wine, and about the ease with which a man in power forgets the people who have no voice. Then comes the famous acrostic, twenty two verses on a woman of strength: her husband trusts her, she is busy before dawn, she buys a field, she reaches out to the poor, and the last word about her is not beauty but the fear of the Lord.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. The first nine verses are a mother’s counsel to a king. Walk through her three warnings and discuss what each one has to do with how he will finally use his power.
2. Proverbs 31:8–9 tells the king to open his mouth for those who cannot speak for themselves. Who in your town has no voice, and what would opening your mouth for them actually cost you?

3. The poem ends by saying charm is deceitful and beauty is vain (31:30). Which qualities of this woman does our culture celebrate, which does it overlook, and where does the church quietly agree with the culture instead of with the text?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Go through 31:10–31 verse by verse and list everything this woman actually does. How many of those things happen inside her house, and how many happen outside it?
2. Verse 30 says the woman who fears the Lord shall be praised. Set that beside 1 Peter 3:3–4 and 1 Timothy 2:9–10 and write down what all three passages agree on.
3. Notice what her husband and her children say about her (31:23, 28–29). When did you last say out loud, to the person who serves your household most, something like verse 29?
4. Verse 20 puts her hand out to the poor right in the middle of her business dealings. Explain what the writer is refusing to separate, and compare James 1:27 and 1 John 3:17.
5. This poem is an alphabetical portrait, not a checklist for a single Tuesday. Choose one quality from it, name the specific habit that would build it, and start that habit this week.

GOSPELS Matthew 26:26–56

The Cup He Did Not Refuse

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

At the table Jesus takes bread, gives thanks, breaks it, and tells them what it is. He passes the cup and speaks of blood shed for many for the remission of sins. They sing and walk out to the Mount of Olives, where He tells them they will all stumble and Peter insists he will not. Then Gethsemane: three prayers, three sleeping friends, an armed crowd, a kiss, a drawn sword, and the sound of everyone running away.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Jesus hands them bread and a cup and tells them exactly what each one means (26:26–29). How should His own words shape what goes through your mind when the tray reaches you on the first day of the week?

2. Peter promises he will die before he denies, and he means every word of it (26:33–35). Where does confidence in our own loyalty fail us, and what would honest preparation have looked like for Peter that night?
3. Three times Jesus asks that the cup pass, and three times He submits (26:39–44). Talk about what it means for us that our Lord asked to be spared, and what it means that He went anyway.

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Write down every phrase Jesus speaks at the table in 26:26–29. Note what He says the cup is and for what purpose it is poured out, then compare 1 Corinthians 11:23–26.
2. Jesus says He will not drink of the fruit of the vine again until He drinks it new with them in His Father's kingdom (26:29). Read Acts 2:42, Acts 20:7, and Colossians 1:13, and say when and where His people keep this feast now.
3. Make two columns. In one, list everything Jesus says and does in Gethsemane; in the other, everything the disciples say and do. Then look at the two columns together.
4. In 26:53 Jesus says He could ask His Father for more than twelve legions of angels. Work out roughly how many that is, then explain in your own words why the request was never made.
5. The disciples could not watch with Him for one hour (26:40–41). Choose a real day, a real time, and a real place this week to pray for one unhurried hour, and write all three down before you close the book.

GENERAL NEW TESTAMENT Romans 2:12–3:20

Every Mouth Stopped

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Paul closes the door on every escape route. Gentiles who never had the law still show its work written on their hearts; Jews who have the law are judged by whether they keep it. Real circumcision is of the heart. Then he asks what advantage Israel had, answers that they were entrusted with the words of God, and finishes by stacking Old Testament quotations one on top of another until every mouth is stopped and the whole world stands guilty before God.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Paul says the hearers of the law are not just before God but the doers of the law will be justified (2:13), and then says the deeds of the law justify no one (3:20). How do you hold those two verses together without weakening either?
2. Romans 2:17–24 describes a religious man who teaches everyone but himself. Where are we most likely to do that, and what warning signs would tell us it is already happening?
3. Paul piles up six quotations to prove that none is righteous (3:10–18). Why go to that much trouble, and what is he determined to shut down before he says one word about grace?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List everything Romans 2:17–20 says the religious man was confident of, then list the questions Paul fires back in 2:21–23. Look at how the two lists mirror each other.
2. Romans 2:28–29 defines a real Jew and a real circumcision. Compare Philippians 3:3, Colossians 2:11–12, and Galatians 6:15, and write out what circumcision of the heart is and how a person receives it.
3. In 3:1 Paul asks what advantage there is in being a Jew. Give his answer from 3:2, then read Romans 9:4–5 and note what responsibility came bundled with that privilege.
4. Trace the parts of the body named in 3:13–18, from throat to tongue to lips to mouth to feet to eyes. What portrait of a whole person is Paul assembling, and where does he say it all starts?
5. Romans 3:20 says that by the law comes the knowledge of sin. Name one command of Christ that has recently shown you something about yourself you would rather not have seen, and say what you will do about it before next Sunday.

NEXT WEEK'S READING: Joshua 9–15 • Psalm 1–3 • Matthew 26:57–27:14 • Romans 3:21–4:25

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