

Through the Bible in 24 Months



WEEK 28 OF 104

Whose Counsel

Week 28 of 104 • 27% of the way through the Bible

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

General Old Testament	Joshua 9-15
Wisdom Literature	Psalms 1-3
Gospels	Matthew 26:57-27:14
General New Testament	Romans 3:21-4:25

THIS WEEK AT A GLANCE

Somebody is always offering advice. Israel takes one look at moldy bread and cracked wineskins, signs a treaty without asking the Lord a single question, and lives with the consequences for the rest of its history. Psalm 1 blesses the man who will not take his seat among the scornful. Psalm 2 watches the kings of the earth take counsel together against the Lord and against His Anointed, and then hears heaven laugh. In Jerusalem a whole council meets in the night, hunting for witnesses who will say what has already been decided. And Paul, having stopped every mouth, tells us at last what God settled long before any of those meetings: that He would be both just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

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 9-15

The Land Taken and Divided

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Word of Jericho and Ai spreads, and the Canaanite kings respond in two ways. Most of them form coalitions and fight. The Gibeonites put on worn shoes and carry stale bread, and talk Israel into a treaty nobody prayed about. Five kings besiege Gibeon, hailstones fall, and the sun stands still. Then the southern campaign, the northern coalition at the waters of Merom, a long list of defeated kings, and the dividing of the land, where an eighty five year old man asks for the hardest hill in it.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Joshua 9:14 says the men took the Gibeonites' provisions and did not ask counsel of the Lord. Which decisions in your life get made that way, and what part did the evidence in their hands play in keeping them from praying?

2. Israel kept a treaty that had been obtained by fraud, and generations later God still held them to it (9:18–21; 2 Samuel 21:1–2). Discuss the weight that gives to a promise, and name where keeping your word is presently costing you something.
3. Caleb is eighty five and asks for the hill country where the giants live (14:6–14). What has kept that man strong for forty five years, and what would his kind of old age look like in our congregation?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Trace the Gibeonite deception step by step in 9:3–15. At which point should Israel have caught it, and name precisely what they leaned on instead of God.
2. Joshua 10:12–14 records a long day. Write down exactly what the text claims, and note the explanation the writer gives in verse 14 for the whole episode.
3. List the phrases that keep repeating through chapters 10 and 11, such as “utterly destroyed” and “as the Lord commanded Moses.” What is the writer establishing by all that repetition?
4. Read Joshua 11:18–20 alongside Exodus 8:15 and Exodus 9:12, and write out how Scripture speaks about hardened hearts. Who hardens first, and what does God then do?
5. Caleb says three times that he wholly followed the Lord (14:8, 9, 14) after forty five years of waiting on a promise. Name the promise of God you have been waiting on longest, and decide what wholly following looks like for you over the next thirty days.

WISDOM LITERATURE Psalm 1–3

Two Roads and a Throne

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

The Psalter opens with a door and a choice. Psalm 1 sets a rooted tree beside blowing chaff and tells you which life bears fruit. Psalm 2 lifts you up to see the nations conspiring against God and His Anointed, and then lets you hear heaven laugh. Psalm 3 drops you into the worst night of David’s life, running from his own son, with ten thousand men against him and voices telling him God is finished with him. He lies down and sleeps.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Psalm 1:1 moves from walking, to standing, to sitting, and from counsel, to path, to seat. Follow that progression and discuss how a person's circle quietly becomes his character.
2. Psalm 2 says the nations rage and the One enthroned in heaven laughs. How do we hear that laughter rightly, so that it steadies us without making us smug about the people God is warning?
3. David wrote Psalm 3 while fleeing from Absalom, with people saying there is no help for him in God. What does he do with that accusation in verses 3 through 6, and how would you answer the same accusation this week?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Write out the three verbs and the three companions of Psalm 1:1 in order, and describe the movement they trace from casual contact to settled belonging.
2. List every contrast Psalm 1 draws between the righteous and the wicked, including what it says happens to each in the judgment. Which contrast lands hardest on you?
3. Psalm 2 is applied to Jesus in Acts 4:25–28, Acts 13:33, and Hebrews 1:5 and 5:5. Read all four passages and write down who this psalm is finally about and when the New Testament says it was fulfilled.
4. Psalm 3:5 says, “I lay down and slept; I awoke, for the Lord sustained me.” Given what was happening to David that night, explain why that one sentence is the most remarkable in the psalm.
5. Psalm 1:2 describes a man who meditates in God's law day and night. Decide now the time of day, the length, and the passage you will use for meditation this week, and write all three down before you close the book.

GOSPELS Matthew 26:57–27:14

The Night They Judged God

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

The council assembles in the dark and goes looking for testimony that will fit a verdict it has already reached. Witnesses contradict each other. Finally the high priest puts Jesus under oath, and Jesus answers with words from Daniel and the Psalms that seal His death. Outside in the courtyard a fisherman warms himself and swears

three times that he never knew the Man. Judas returns his silver to men who no longer need him. And in the morning, standing before a Roman governor, Jesus says almost nothing at all.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. The council hunted for false witnesses and still could not get two stories to agree (26:59–61). Why does Matthew take the trouble to tell us that, and what does the collapse of the evidence prove about the Man on trial?
2. Peter's denial comes apart in three stages, each one louder than the last (26:69–75). Trace the escalation, and talk about why the second lie always costs less than the first.
3. Judas felt remorse, returned the money, and said out loud that he had betrayed innocent blood (27:3–5). Where does his sorrow stop short of repentance, and how do we tell those two apart in ourselves?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Write out the high priest's question in 26:63 and Jesus' answer in 26:64. Identify the two Old Testament passages He weaves together (Psalm 110:1 and Daniel 7:13) and state exactly what He is claiming.
2. Set 2 Corinthians 7:9–10 beside Judas in 27:3–5 and Peter in 26:75. Name what separates godly sorrow from the sorrow of the world, and what each kind of sorrow produced.
3. List every indignity done to Jesus from 26:67 through 27:14, and note who did each one. How many different groups take part before the sun comes up?
4. Jesus answers Pilate once and then falls silent (27:12–14). Read Isaiah 53:7 and 1 Peter 2:21–23, and write down what that silence was accomplishing and what it teaches us.
5. Peter wept bitterly and later stood up to preach and to feed the Lord's sheep (Acts 2:14; John 21:15–17). Name one failure you have been carrying quietly, take it to God specifically this week, and name one act of service you will do instead of hiding.

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

After two and a half chapters of indictment, Paul says two words that change everything: “But now.” A righteousness from God has been revealed apart from law, through faith in Jesus Christ, for everyone who believes, because everyone needed it. God set forth Christ as the covering for sin so that He could be both just and the One who justifies. Then Paul proves the whole thing from Abraham, who was counted righteous long before circumcision, long before Moses, and long before anyone could boast.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Romans 3:21 begins with “But now.” After everything Paul has said since 1:18, what do those two words change, and why does he insist this righteousness is apart from the law yet witnessed by the Law and the Prophets?
2. Paul says boasting is excluded (3:27). If salvation is by grace and yet God commands us to obey Him, how do we talk about our own obedience without turning it into a boast?
3. Abraham was counted righteous in Genesis 15:6, years before circumcision and centuries before the law was given. Discuss what Paul proves by that timing, and what James 2:21–24 adds that we must not lose.

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Explain in your own words, from 3:24–25, what “justified,” “redemption,” and “propitiation” mean. Say each one the way you would say it to a fifteen year old.
2. Romans 4:3 quotes Genesis 15:6. Read Genesis 15, then Genesis 22:1–18 and Hebrews 11:8–19, and trace what Abraham’s faith actually did over the course of his life.
3. List everything Romans 4:18–22 says about Abraham’s faith when his body and Sarah’s were long past hope. Which of those descriptions is furthest from your own praying?
4. Set Romans 3:28 beside James 2:24 and write out how both statements are true, paying close attention to what each writer means by the word “works.”
5. Romans 4:25 says He was delivered for our offenses and raised for our justification. Read Romans 6:3–4 and Acts 22:16. If you have never been buried with Christ in baptism, settle it this week; if you have, name one person you will tell what it meant.

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