

Through the Bible in 24 Months



WEEK 29 OF 104

A Place of Refuge

Week 29 of 104 · 28% of the way through the Bible

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

General Old Testament	Joshua 16–24
Wisdom Literature	Psalms 4–6
Gospels	Matthew 27:15–56
General New Testament	Romans 5–6

THIS WEEK AT A GLANCE

God told Israel to set aside six cities and keep the roads to them clear, so that a man with blood on his hands and a relative coming up behind him would have somewhere to run. That picture runs through all four readings this week. David lies down with enemies multiplying around him and calls God his shield, his glory, and the lifter of his head. Joshua, old and near the end, tells a nation that not one word of God's promises had failed, and then asks them to choose. On a hill outside Jerusalem, in three hours of darkness, the refuge itself is purchased. And Paul tells a guilty man exactly how to get inside: buried with Christ in baptism, and raised to walk in a life he did not have before.

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 16–24

Not One Word Failed

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

The surveying finishes, seven tribes are shamed into claiming what God has already given them, and Joshua gets his own small town last of all. Then come the six cities of refuge, forty eight towns for the Levites, and one of the great summary sentences in Scripture: not one word of all the good things God promised had failed. The eastern tribes go home and build an altar that nearly starts a civil war. Finally Joshua gathers everyone at Shechem and makes them choose.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Joshua 20 sets apart six cities of refuge with roads kept open to them. Walk through how the system actually worked, and discuss what it shows about a God who holds justice and mercy together without letting go of either.

2. Joshua 21:45 says not one word of the Lord's good promises failed, and yet chapters 16 through 19 admit plainly that Canaanites remained in the land. How do you hold those two statements together without softening either one?
3. The altar by the Jordan almost caused a war between brothers (22:10–34). What did the western tribes do right in the way they confronted their kinsmen, and what would that same approach look like in a congregational disagreement this year?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Name the six cities of refuge listed in Joshua 20:7–8 and locate them on a map. What do you notice about how they are spaced across the country and on both sides of the Jordan?
2. Read Joshua 22:21–29 and write out the eastern tribes' explanation of their altar. What were they afraid of, and does the rest of Israel's history suggest they were right to fear it?
3. In Joshua 23:6–13 Joshua warns against mixing with the remaining nations. List the specific things he tells Israel not to do, and note the reason he attaches to each one.
4. Joshua 24:2–13 retells the nation's history in God's own voice. Count how many times God says "I," and then describe what all that repetition does to the appeal in verse 14.
5. Joshua says, "Choose this day whom you will serve," and then declares for his own household (24:15). Say out loud who and what your household actually serves, and name one thing in your home that needs to be gone by the end of the month.

WISDOM LITERATURE Psalm 4–6

Evening, Morning, and Tears

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Three short prayers from real nights and real mornings. Psalm 4 is spoken at the end of a hard day, with people asking how long his honor will be turned to shame, and it ends with a man lying down and sleeping in peace. Psalm 5 is a morning prayer, laid out before God like an offering at daybreak. Psalm 6 is the first of the penitential psalms, a man so worn out with weeping that he says he makes his bed swim, until something shifts in the last two verses.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Psalm 4 ends with sleep and Psalm 5 begins with morning. Talk about what the pairing says about a day of faith, from the last thought at night to the first one at dawn.
2. Psalm 4:4 says, "Be angry, and do not sin. Meditate within your heart on your bed, and be still." Paul quotes it in Ephesians 4:26. Discuss what a Christian is supposed to do with anger at eleven o'clock at night.
3. Psalm 6 spends nine verses in tears and then turns hard in the last two. Nothing in the circumstances has changed. What has changed, and how do we pray our way there honestly rather than by pretending?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Go through Psalm 5 and make two lists: every request David makes, and every description he gives of God. Which list is longer, and why does that order matter?
2. Psalm 4:6–7 contrasts what most people are asking for with what David asks for. Write both down, then put your own name honestly beside one of them.
3. Psalm 5:11–12 piles up three pictures of protection: refuge, defense, and a shield of favor surrounding the righteous. Examine each, then compare Psalm 91:1–4 and Ephesians 6:16.
4. Trace what Psalm 6 says about David's bones, his soul, his bed, his eyes, and his enemies. Notice that he describes terrible suffering without once accusing God of wrongdoing.
5. David says, "My voice You shall hear in the morning; in the morning I will direct it to You, and I will look up" (5:3). Set your alarm five minutes earlier every day this week and do exactly that, and write down what you notice by Friday.

GOSPELS Matthew 27:15–56

The Place Called Golgotha

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Pilate offers the crowd a choice between a murderer and the Messiah, washes his hands, and hands Jesus over. Soldiers dress Him in scarlet, crown Him with thorns, and kneel in mockery. A stranger from Cyrene carries the beam. At Golgotha they crucify Him between two thieves, gamble for His clothes, and read the charge nailed

above His head. From noon until three the land goes dark. Then a loud cry, a torn veil, a shaken earth, and a Roman officer who says something nobody expected.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. The chief priests taunt Him with the words, “He saved others; Himself He cannot save” (27:42). In what sense were they more right than they knew, and how does that change the way we hear the whole scene?
2. From noon to three the land is dark, and Jesus cries out the opening line of Psalm 22. Read that psalm together, and discuss carefully what He was saying from the cross and what He was not saying.
3. The centurion who supervised the execution says, “Truly this was the Son of God” (27:54). What did that man see that changed him, and what would someone watching your ordinary week have to see to reach the same conclusion?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Read Psalm 22 straight through, then list every detail in it that shows up in Matthew 27. Remember that the psalm was written roughly a thousand years earlier.
2. Make a list of everyone who mocks Jesus in 27:27–44: soldiers, passersby, chief priests, scribes, elders, and even the robbers. Notice how many different kinds of people find common ground at the cross.
3. Matthew records four things that happened at the moment of Jesus’ death (27:51–53). Write them down, then read Hebrews 10:19–22 on the first of them and say what the torn veil means for you personally.
4. Barabbas walked free because Jesus was condemned in his place (27:15–26). Trace what that exchange pictures, and compare 2 Corinthians 5:21, Isaiah 53:5–6, and 1 Peter 3:18.
5. The women who had followed from Galilee stood watching from a distance, still there when everyone else had gone (27:55–56). Name one costly, quiet act of faithfulness you will do this week and tell nobody about it.

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Having been justified, Paul says, we have peace with God, and he spends a chapter describing what that peace includes: access, hope, a love proved at the cross, and reconciliation with the God we were at war with. Then he sets Adam beside Christ, one bringing sin and death into the world and the other bringing righteousness and life. Chapter 6 answers the obvious objection, that grace makes sin harmless, and the answer runs straight through the water of baptism and out the other side.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Romans 5:1–5 names what a justified person already has. List each item, and say honestly which of them is hardest for you to believe on an ordinary discouraging Tuesday.
2. Paul says we glory in tribulations (5:3–5). How is that different from pretending trouble is not trouble, and where have you actually watched the chain of verses 3 and 4 work itself out in a real person?
3. Romans 6:1–4 answers the charge that grace makes sin safe. Walk through what Paul says happened to us in baptism, and discuss why he regards that as a complete answer to the objection.

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List everything Romans 5:1–11 says a justified person has, and mark which of those are present possessions rather than future hopes.
2. Romans 5:12 says death spread to all men because all sinned. Set that beside Ezekiel 18:20, Matthew 18:3, and Matthew 19:14, and write out what Scripture actually teaches about infants and guilt.
3. Copy out Romans 6:3–4, then read Acts 2:38, Galatians 3:26–27, Colossians 2:12, and 1 Peter 3:21. Where do these passages agree about what baptism is and what it accomplishes?
4. Count the times Paul uses the language of slaves and masters in Romans 6:15–23, then trace the two owners, the two kinds of service, and the two wages he sets against each other.
5. Romans 6:13 says to present your members to God as instruments of righteousness. Pick one part of your body, your eyes, your tongue, your hands, or your feet, and name exactly what presenting it to God would cost you this week.