

Through the Bible in 24 Months



WEEK 31 OF 104

Sons and Heirs

Week 31 of 104 • 30% of the way through the Bible

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

General Old Testament	Judges 8–15
Wisdom Literature	Psalms 9–10
Gospels	Mark 1:1–34
General New Testament	Romans 8:12–39

THIS WEEK AT A GLANCE

This week you meet men with enormous power and no clear idea whose they are. Gideon wins a war, refuses a crown, and then makes an ephod that ruins his family. Jephthah makes a vow no one should ever make. Samson tears a lion apart with his bare hands and cannot say no to anything he wants. Meanwhile two psalms ask out loud why God stands far off while the helpless are hunted, and then answer their own question: He is the helper of the fatherless. Mark opens his Gospel with a voice out of a torn heaven saying, “You are My beloved Son,” before Jesus has preached a word. And Paul tells frightened Christians in Rome that they have received the Spirit of adoption, by whom they cry, “Abba, Father.”

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 Judges 8–15

Deliverers Who Needed Delivering

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Gideon finishes the war, turns down a crown with a good speech, and then makes a golden ephod that his family and his nation stumble over. His son Abimelech murders seventy brothers on one stone to make himself king, and Jotham, the one who escapes, tells Israel's first parable. Then Jephthah, thrown out by his own family, makes a vow that costs him everything. And a barren woman is told she will bear a son who must never cut his hair.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Gideon refuses the crown with one of the best sentences in the book and then makes an ephod that becomes a snare to him and his whole house (8:22–27). How does a man do the right thing and the ruinous thing in the same chapter?
2. Jotham's parable of the trees is the first parable in Scripture (9:7–20). Work out what each tree represents and discuss what it says about who ends up in charge when useful people will not take responsibility.

3. Samson's strength was entirely from God and his weakness was entirely his own. Trace both through chapters 13 through 15, and discuss what this warns us about gifted people, in the pulpit and in the pew, whose character never grew up.

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Read Judges 8:22–27 and list exactly what went wrong with Gideon's ephod. Compare Exodus 20:4–5 and Deuteronomy 12:8, and notice how quickly a memorial becomes an idol.
2. Write out Jephthah's vow (11:30–31) and what followed (11:34–40). Read Leviticus 27:1–8 and Deuteronomy 12:31, then state carefully what the text says and what it does not say.
3. List everything the angel tells Manoah's wife about her son in 13:3–5, and set it beside the Nazirite requirements of Numbers 6:1–8. Which parts of that vow did Samson actually keep?
4. Trace how often Samson's decisions begin with something he saw or wanted (14:1–3; 15:1–3; 16:1). What does that reveal about the engine driving his life, and where do you recognize the same engine?
5. Judges 13:5 says Samson would only "begin to deliver Israel." Name one assignment from God you have settled for merely beginning, and take the next step on it this week.

WISDOM LITERATURE Psalm 9–10

The Helper of the Fatherless

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Two psalms written as one long alphabetical poem, holding together the two things we usually keep apart. Psalm 9 is confident: God judges righteously from His throne, He does not forget the cry of the humble, and nations that forget Him will not stand. Psalm 10 opens with the question most of us are afraid to say out loud: why do You stand far off and hide in times of trouble? Then it climbs inside the mind of a man certain that God is not watching.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Psalm 9 celebrates a God who judges, and Psalm 10 opens by asking why that God is standing far off. Discuss how the two belong together, and what it means that God put both of them in the songbook of His people.

2. Psalm 10:4–11 lets us hear what the wicked man says in his heart. List those sentences, and talk honestly about which of them we half believe on our worst days.
3. Both psalms keep returning to the poor, the oppressed, and the fatherless. What does that repetition tell you about what God notices, and who is currently invisible in our own congregation?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Read the two psalms straight through as one poem and list the words, images, and requests that appear in both. What does putting them together do to each one?
2. Make a list of everything Psalm 9 says God does for the oppressed, then add what Psalm 10:14 and 10:17–18 say. Which promise do you most need to believe this month?
3. Psalm 10:4 says that in his pride the wicked will not seek God and that God is in none of his thoughts. Compare Psalm 14:1 and Romans 1:28, then describe in your own words what practical atheism looks like in a person who would never deny God out loud.
4. Trace the verbs addressed to God in Psalm 10:12–18: arise, lift up Your hand, do not forget, see, hear, prepare, strengthen, judge. Which of them is the prayer of your own heart right now?
5. Psalm 10:17–18 says God hears the desire of the humble and does justice to the fatherless and the oppressed. Learn the name of one person near you who is fatherless, widowed, or alone, and do one specific thing for that person before Sunday.

GOSPELS Mark 1:1–34

The Beginning of the Gospel

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

A new Gospel begins, and it begins at a sprint. No genealogy, no shepherds, no wise men. A prophecy, then a man in camel's hair eating locusts in the desert, calling a whole region to repentance. Jesus comes to be baptized, the heavens are torn open, and a voice calls Him beloved Son. Forty days in the wilderness get two verses. Then He preaches the kingdom, calls four fishermen away from their nets, silences an unclean spirit in a synagogue, and by sundown the whole town is at the door.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Mark skips the birth entirely and opens with a man shouting in a wilderness. What does that beginning tell you about the kind of Gospel Mark is writing and the kind of readers he had in mind?
2. At the baptism the Father says, "You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (1:11), before Jesus has preached a sermon, healed anyone, or gone to a cross. Discuss why that order matters for people who are exhausted from trying to earn approval.
3. Twice in this short reading people are astonished at His authority (1:22, 27). Where in your own life does the authority of Jesus actually get the final word, and where do you still quietly negotiate with Him?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Count how many times "immediately" or "straightway" appears in Mark 1:1–34. Describe the effect all that speed has on a reader, and what it suggests about Mark's purpose.
2. Write out what John preached according to 1:4–8, then read Acts 19:1–5. How was John's baptism different from the baptism the risen Christ commanded?
3. Mark 1:15 summarizes Jesus' first preaching in four short phrases. List them, then read Daniel 2:44, Mark 9:1, and Acts 2:1–4, 36–41, and state when the kingdom actually came.
4. Trace what happens from sunset in 1:32 to early morning in 1:35. Given the day He had just had, what does Jesus do next, and what does that suggest about His own habits and priorities?
5. Simon, Andrew, James, and John left nets, a boat, hired servants, and a father. Name what you would have to leave in the boat to follow Jesus more closely, and take one real step toward leaving it this week.

GENERAL NEW TESTAMENT Romans 8:12–39

Nothing Shall Separate Us

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Paul moves from obligation to family. We are debtors, but not to the flesh; those led by the Spirit are sons of God, and we have received a Spirit of adoption by whom we cry, "Abba, Father." Then come heirs, suffering, a groaning creation, a Spirit who helps us pray, and the promise that God works all things together for good. The

chapter ends in one of the great crescendos in Scripture, a list of everything that cannot separate us from His love.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Paul says we did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear but the Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry, “Abba, Father” (8:15). How is the fear of a slave different from the confidence of a son, and which of the two do you actually pray with?
2. Romans 8:28 is quoted at more funerals than any other verse. Read it slowly with both of its qualifying clauses in place, and discuss what it genuinely promises and what it never said.
3. Romans 8:29–30 uses the words “foreknew” and “predestined.” Work carefully through what Paul says we were predestined to, and discuss what this passage settles and what it does not.

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List everything Romans 8:12–17 says is true of a child of God, and mark carefully the condition Paul attaches at the end of verse 17.
2. Trace the three groanings in Romans 8:22–27. Who or what groans in each case, and what is each one waiting for?
3. Copy out Romans 8:29 and identify precisely what God predestined. Compare Ephesians 1:3–5 and 2 Thessalonians 2:13–14, noting how many times the words “in Him” or “in Christ” appear and how a person comes to be there.
4. Make a list of everything Romans 8:35–39 says cannot separate us from the love of God. Then notice whose name is absent from that list, and read Hebrews 3:12–14 and Galatians 5:4.
5. Romans 8:32 asks how God, having given His own Son, will not also freely give us all things with Him. Name one thing you have been afraid to ask God for, and ask Him plainly this week.

NEXT WEEK’S READING: Judges 16–21; Ruth 1–4 · Psalm 11–15 · Mark 1:35–2:28 · Romans 9–10

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