

Through the Bible in 24 Months



WEEK 32 OF 104

Mercy for Outsiders

Week 32 of 104 • 31% of the way through the Bible

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

General Old Testament	Judges 16–21; Ruth 1–4
Wisdom Literature	Psalms 11–15
Gospels	Mark 1:35–2:28
General New Testament	Romans 9–10

THIS WEEK AT A GLANCE

The book of Judges ends in the dark. A strong man dies blind between two pillars, a Levite butchers a woman and mails the pieces to the tribes, and a nation goes to war against its own brother. The writer keeps telling you why: there was no king, and everyone did what was right in his own eyes. Then, quietly, Ruth begins. A widow from Moab follows her mother-in-law home and ends up at the feet of a man with the right to redeem her. David asks who may dwell on God's holy hill. Jesus reaches out and touches a leper. And Paul, heartbroken over his own countrymen, insists that God's word has not failed and that whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

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 16–21; Ruth 1–4

From Ruin to Redemption

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Samson's story ends where compromise always ends: in a Philistine lap, then in chains, grinding grain with his eyes gouged out. What follows is worse. Micah builds a shrine and hires a Levite, the tribe of Dan steals both, a concubine is abused to death at Gibeah, and Israel nearly wipes out Benjamin. Then the scene changes. In the same rough period a famine drives one family to Moab, and a Moabite widow named Ruth comes home with Naomi, gleans in Boaz's field, and finds a redeemer.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Judges says twice that there was no king in Israel and that everyone did what was right in his own eyes (17:6; 21:25). Where do you hear that same standard spoken out loud in our culture, and what does it finally cost a person to live by it?
2. Samson had strength no man has had since and almost no self-control. Trace the concessions he made long before Delilah ever called for a razor, and talk together about how slow compromise actually works.

3. Boaz had the legal right to redeem Ruth but no obligation to marry her. Why does he do it anyway, and how does his kindness answer what Naomi said about God in Ruth 1:20–21?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List the specific choices Samson makes in Judges 16 that he had already made in some form in Judges 14 and 15. What pattern emerges, and where does the pattern finally take him?
2. Read Judges 19–21 with 21:25 in front of you. How does the writer want you to feel about these chapters, and why do you think he adds not one word of moral comment?
3. Trace every occurrence of the words redeem, redeemer, and kinsman in Ruth 3 and 4. What did such a man have the right and the power to do? Compare Leviticus 25:25 and 25:47–49.
4. Ruth 1:16–17 is one of the great confessions in the Old Testament. Write it out line by line and note exactly what Ruth surrenders in each phrase.
5. Naomi came home empty and ended the book with a grandson in her lap (Ruth 4:16–17). Name one place where you have quietly decided God is finished being good to you, then do one thing this week that a person who believed otherwise would do.

WISDOM LITERATURE Psalm 11–15

Who May Dwell With God

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Five psalms of David, every one of them written from a world that has come loose. Friends tell him to flee to the mountains like a bird. Flattering lips and double hearts fill the city, and he wonders aloud whether any godly man is left. He asks how long God will forget him, and then turns and sings. He looks out at a world of fools who say in their hearts that there is no God. And he ends by asking who may dwell on God's holy hill.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Psalm 11:3 asks what the righteous can do if the foundations are destroyed, and David answers in verse 4 by telling you where God is seated. What does that answer change about a frightening week, and what does it honestly not change?

2. Psalm 13 travels from “How long, O Lord?” to “I will sing to the Lord” in six verses. Locate the hinge, and discuss whether it is honest to end a prayer that way when nothing outward has improved yet.
3. Psalm 15 describes the person who may dwell with God: he speaks truth in his heart, keeps his word even when keeping it hurts him, and will not take money to harm the innocent. Which of those costs the most in the work you actually do, and why?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Write out the qualities listed in Psalm 15:2–5. How many of them concern what a person does with his mouth, and what does that proportion suggest?
2. Psalm 12:6 compares the words of the Lord to silver refined seven times. Read Proverbs 30:5–6 and 2 Timothy 3:16–17 beside it, and state in your own words what all three claim about Scripture.
3. Psalm 14:1–3 says there is none who does good, and Paul quotes it in Romans 3:10–12. Is David saying that no human being is capable of any good act, or is he describing something else? Look at Psalm 14:5 before you answer.
4. Trace what God is said to do in Psalm 11:4–7. Where is He, what is He watching, and what does He love?
5. Psalm 15:4 honors the man who swears to his own hurt and does not change. Name one promise you have made that has become expensive, and settle this week whether you are going to keep it.

GOSPELS Mark 1:35–2:28

He Came for the Sick

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Jesus gets up long before daylight to pray alone, and when the crowd comes looking He moves on to the next towns instead. A leper kneels and says, “If You are willing.” Four men tear open a roof to lower a paralyzed friend, and Jesus forgives him before He heals him. Levi leaves a tax booth and throws a dinner party full of the wrong sort of people. Then come two collisions with the religious authorities, one about fasting and one about grain picked on the Sabbath.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Mark 1:35 finds Jesus praying alone in a dark, deserted place while a whole town is hunting for Him, and verse 38 has Him leaving anyway. What pressure was He under, and what does His answer teach about knowing your own assignment?
2. Jesus forgives the paralytic before He heals him, and the scribes are entirely right that only God can forgive sins (2:7). Walk through the argument He makes in 2:8–11 and name exactly what He is claiming about Himself.
3. Levi threw a party and filled it with tax collectors and sinners, and Jesus went. Who in your week would feel out of place at a table with your friends from church, and what would it take for you to invite him anyway?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List every person in this reading whom Jesus touches or who touches Him. What did the law require of a leper (Leviticus 13:45–46), and what happens instead when Jesus puts out His hand?
2. Compare Mark 2:1–12 with Matthew 9:1–8 and Luke 5:17–26. Which details does each writer keep, and what does Mark tell you about those four friends that you would miss otherwise?
3. Read Mark 2:17 slowly. Who exactly are the “righteous” Jesus says He did not come to call, and why is that the most dangerous group in any town?
4. Jesus answers the fasting question with a bridegroom, a piece of unshrunk cloth, and new wine in old wineskins (2:19–22). Explain what each picture says about the old covenant and the new.
5. Four men ruined a man’s roof to get their friend to Jesus. Name the friend you would carry, and take one concrete step toward him before Sunday.

GENERAL NEW TESTAMENT Romans 9–10

The Word Has Not Failed

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Paul turns from the heights of Romans 8 to the deepest grief of his life: his own countrymen have largely refused their Messiah. He insists God’s word has not failed, and walks through Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau, Pharaoh, the potter and the clay, and a preserved remnant. Then he names the real problem. Israel pursued

righteousness by law and stumbled at the stumbling stone, while Gentiles who were not pursuing it found it by faith. The reading ends with a chain from calling to hearing to preaching.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Paul says he could wish himself accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of his countrymen (9:1–3). What does that kind of grief for lost people actually look like in a week, and when did you last feel any of it?
2. Romans 9:10–13 says God chose Jacob and not Esau before either had done anything. Read it with Genesis 25:23 and Malachi 1:2–3. Is Paul discussing the eternal destiny of two individuals, or which line the promise would travel through? Give your reasons from the text.
3. Romans 10:14–17 runs a chain backward: calling, believing, hearing, preaching, sending. Trace each link, then talk honestly about the weakest link in our congregation right now.

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List the privileges Paul names for Israel in Romans 9:4–5. Which of them did Israel misread, and how does 9:6 explain that having the privileges was never enough?
2. Romans 9:6 says that not all who are of Israel are Israel. Compare Romans 2:28–29 and Galatians 3:26–29. Who, in Paul's definition, are Abraham's real children today?
3. Read the potter passage (9:19–24) carefully, and note the difference in wording between verse 22 and verse 23. Who is said to have prepared the vessels of mercy, and what does the text stop short of saying about the vessels of wrath?
4. Romans 10:2–3 says Israel had zeal without knowledge and set about establishing a righteousness of their own. Give one current example of religious zeal that runs ahead of what Scripture actually authorizes.
5. Romans 10:14 asks how they shall hear without a preacher. Write down the name of one person you know who has not heard, and decide the specific thing you will say or do this week so that he does.

NEXT WEEK'S READING: 1 Samuel 1–8 • Psalm 16–17 • Mark 3 • Romans 11–12

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