

Through the Bible in 24 Months, Teacher's Guide



WEEK 35 OF 104

Known by Name

THIS WEEK'S READINGS	
General Old Testament	1 Samuel 16-23
Wisdom Literature	Psalms 19
Gospels	Mark 5
General New Testament	Romans 15:8-16:27

TEACHING AIM AND ORIENTATION

Your aim this week is to convince the class that God notices. He noticed the eighth son who was not invited to the sacrifice. He noticed one woman's fingers on the hem of a garment in a crowd that was pressing Him on every side. He noticed Mary, who labored much, and Persis the beloved, and Rufus' mother, and He had their names written into Scripture. And He notices the secret faults nobody else can see, which is both the most uncomfortable and the most hopeful thing in the week's readings.

Doctrinally, guard two things. First, teach David and Goliath as the faithfulness of God rather than as a story about finding courage. 1 Samuel 17:47 states the lesson; let David set the terms. Second, use Psalm 19 to distinguish what creation reveals from what only Scripture reveals, because a great many sincere people believe that admiring God in a sunset is the same as knowing Him. Romans 15 and 16 then show what God does with people who take that difference seriously: He sends them to Spain, or to a neighbor, with a message that has to be spoken out loud.

Formationally, the thread is hiddenness. David waited years between the anointing and the throne, doing nothing visible. The woman wanted to be healed without being seen. The demoniac was sent home rather than into public ministry. The Romans 16 saints are unknown to us and known to God. Put this question to the class before they leave: name one thing you do for the Lord that no one thanks you for, and one person in this congregation who deserves the same recognition and has never received it from you.

SUGGESTED PLAN FOR THE TWO SESSIONS

First session: Take up 1 Samuel 16-23. Spend the first twenty minutes on Bethlehem and 16:7, then the middle of the hour on the Valley of Elah taught as God's faithfulness rather than a lesson in confidence, and close with Jonathan strengthening David's hand in God at Horesh.

Second session: Take up Mark 5. It is vivid, it reads aloud well, and the two interwoven accounts in the second half will hold a class for an hour. Focus on what Jesus gave the woman beyond her healing, and on the man who wanted to go and was sent home instead.

The other two readings: Psalm 19 and Romans 15:8-16:27 are strong private readings. Suggest that the class read Psalm 19 outdoors if they can, and encourage them to read Romans 16 slowly, out loud, name by name. Mention that Romans 15:9 quotes last week's Psalm 18, so the readings keep tying themselves together.

The Lord Looks at the Heart

PASSAGE OVERVIEW

The Bethlehem scene is one of the great turning points in the Old Testament, and it happens in a back field. Samuel is still grieving over Saul, and God sends him to anoint a replacement. Then God lets the old prophet get it wrong seven times in a row. Eliab is tall and looks like a king, and Samuel thinks, surely this is the one. God says no. Verse 7 is the sentence that rearranges everything: the Lord does not see as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart. The eighth son is not even at the meeting.

The Valley of Elah follows, and the way we teach it matters enormously. This is not a story about believing in yourself. David is not the underdog who found his inner courage; he is the one man in the army who took seriously what God had already said about Israel. Listen to what he says: the battle is the Lord's, and He will give you into our hands, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. He does not say God will help him be brave. He says God will win, and He will win in such a way that the whole world learns something about Him.

The rest of the reading is the long descent into the wilderness. Saul's admiration turns to jealousy the moment the women sing a better number for David than for him, and jealousy becomes obsession. David loses his place at court, his wife, his home, his access to the sanctuary, and very nearly his dignity when he pretends to be insane in Gath. He collects four hundred men who are in distress, in debt, and discontented. And at Nob, because of David's lie, Doeg the Edomite kills eighty-five priests. David says so himself in 22:22. These chapters make a hero without whitewashing him.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- David is anointed privately here, years before he reigns. He is anointed again over Judah in 2 Samuel 2 and over all Israel in 2 Samuel 5, so the waiting between promise and throne runs more than a decade.
- Goliath is described as roughly nine and a half feet tall with armor weighing about one hundred twenty-five pounds. The Philistines proposed single combat between champions, a known practice, in which the outcome settled the battle.
- Jonathan is Saul's heir and the man with most to lose. His covenant with David in 18:3–4, handing over his robe, armor, sword, bow, and belt, is a deliberate surrender of his own claim.
- The showbread David eats at Nob was reserved for priests (Leviticus 24:5–9). Jesus cites the incident in Mark 2:25–26 to show that human need is not overridden by ceremonial regulation.
- Several psalms carry headings tying them to this period, including Psalm 34 (Gath), Psalm 52 (Doeg), Psalm 56, Psalm 57, and Psalm 142 (the cave). They let you hear David's inner life while reading the narrative.
- 1 Samuel 16:14 says a distressing spirit from the Lord troubled Saul after the Spirit of the Lord departed from him. The text reports it without explanation; God permitted what Saul's rebellion invited.

NOTES ON THE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Question 1. *1 Samuel 16:7 says man looks at the outward appearance but the Lord looks at the heart. Where do our congregations, and our own eyes, still measure people by the outside, and what would actually change if we believed that verse on a Sunday morning?*

Samuel is the last person you would expect to misjudge a man, and he does it seven times in a row. That is the warning. If the prophet who anointed Saul can still be impressed by height and bearing, so can we. God's correction is not that appearance is irrelevant but that it is not the measure. The heart, meaning the whole inner life of thought, desire, and loyalty, is what God is reading, and it is the one thing we cannot see.

Take it into the building. We notice the family that dresses well, the man with the confident voice, the couple with the successful children. We less often notice the woman who has quietly cared for a dying parent for three years, or the teenager who keeps coming alone. Ask who in the congregation the class has underestimated. Then ask a harder question: if God is reading hearts rather than resumes, what is He currently reading in yours?

Question 2. *David's speech to Goliath in 17:45–47 never once mentions his own ability. Read it aloud and list what David says the battle is really about. How should that shape the way this account gets taught, to children and to us?*

Have someone read 17:45–47 out loud, slowly. David names his weapon, and it is not the sling: I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. He says the Lord will deliver Goliath into his hand, that all the earth may know there is a God in Israel, and that all this assembly may know the Lord does not save with sword and spear, for the battle is the Lord's.

So the lesson is not that you are braver than you think. The lesson is that God is faithful to His covenant and His purposes, and that He is not impressed by size. Teach children the same thing you teach adults: the point is God, not the boy. The self-help version of this account leaves a person alone with his own courage in front of the next giant, which is exactly where David refused to stand. Ask the class what they have been told this passage means, and let them hear the difference.

Question 3. *Jonathan had every earthly reason to resent David, and instead he went to him at Horesh and strengthened his hand in God (23:16). Talk about what it costs to help someone who is receiving what might have been yours, and where that is being asked of you right now.*

Put the situation in front of the class plainly. Jonathan is the crown prince. He is also a genuinely capable soldier, the hero of Michmash, and the most likable man in the book. He has watched his father unravel, he knows David will be king (23:17), and he says so out loud without bitterness: you shall be king over Israel, and I shall be next to you. Then he goes into a forest to find a hunted man and strengthens his hand in God.

That last phrase is the model. Jonathan did not fix David's circumstances, and he could not. He helped him hold on to God. Ask the class who has done that for them, and then ask the costly question: who is currently getting the promotion, the recognition, the ministry, or the family you wanted, and what would it look like to go find that person and strengthen his hand in God? Most of us handle the loss. Fewer of us go to the forest.

NOTES ON THE EXTENDED QUESTIONS

1. *Trace David's movements from 1 Samuel 19 through 23. List each place he goes and who helps him there, and notice how quickly he runs out of safe places.*

David flees from Saul's house with Michal's help (19:11–17), to Samuel at Ramah (19:18), briefly back to Jonathan (20), to Ahimelech at Nob where he receives bread and Goliath's sword (21:1–9), to Achish at Gath where he feigns madness (21:10–15), to the cave of Adullam where his family and four hundred men join him (22:1–2), to Mizpah of Moab to shelter his parents (22:3–4), back to the forest of Hereth, to Keilah where he rescues the city and then learns they would hand him over (23:1–13), and into the wilderness of Ziph and Maon and En Gedi. He runs out of safe places entirely, which is the point of 23:14: Saul sought him every day, but God did not deliver him into his hand.

2. *Read 1 Samuel 17:34–37. What had God already done in David's life before he ever saw the Valley of Elah, and why does he bring it up to Saul?*

God had already delivered him from a lion and a bear while he was keeping his father's sheep, and he says so. He brings it up because it is evidence, not bravado. The uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, he says, seeing he has defied the armies of the living God. David reasons from what God has already done in private to what God will do in public. That is a pattern worth teaching: the faith that shows up in the valley was built in a pasture where nobody was watching.

3. *1 Samuel 21:1–6 records David eating the showbread at Nob. Read how Jesus uses the incident in Mark 2:23–28 and explain the point He draws from it.*

Jesus uses it to answer the charge that His disciples broke the Sabbath by plucking grain. David and his men ate bread reserved for priests because they were hungry and in need, and Scripture records no condemnation of him for it. The point Jesus draws is that God never intended ceremonial regulation to be used against the people it was given to serve: the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. Mercy and human need are not the enemies of God's law; the Pharisees had made them so.

4. *Compare 1 Samuel 18:7 with 18:8–9, 18:12, and 18:29. Name the stages by which Saul's jealousy grew, and mark the point where it became murderous.*

The women sing that Saul has slain his thousands and David his ten thousands (18:7). Saul is very angry and the saying displeases him, and he eyes David from that day forward (18:8–9). He is afraid of David because the Lord is with him and has departed from Saul (18:12). He becomes David's enemy continually (18:29). The stages run from wounded pride, to suspicion, to fear, to settled hatred. It turns murderous when he throws the spear (18:11) and again in 19:10, and it ends with a father hurling a spear at his own son (20:33).

5. *Psalm 34 and Psalm 52 were written out of these chapters; read their headings. Choose one, read it beside the narrative, then write a short prayer of your own about the hardest place you are in, and pray it out loud with one other person this week.*

Answers will vary. Psalm 34, written after the humiliation at Gath, begins with "I will bless the Lord at all times," which is remarkable given what had just happened to him. Psalm 52 is the answer to Doeg. Listen for prayers that are honest rather than decorative, and make the point that praying out loud with one other person is itself part of the assignment. David had Jonathan, and he needed him.

HANDLE WITH CARE

- David and Goliath is not a lesson about facing the giants in your life. Teach it as 17:47 teaches it: the battle is the Lord's, and He saves without sword or spear so that the earth may know there is a God in Israel. The self-help version is popular, memorable, and empty.
- 1 Samuel 16:14 speaks of a distressing spirit from the Lord. Report what the text says, note that God permitted it after Saul's persistent rebellion, and do not speculate further or use it to build a doctrine about mental illness.
- David's lie at Nob leads directly to the slaughter of eighty-five priests, and David acknowledges his responsibility (22:22). Scripture records his failures without approving them. Do not smooth this over; it is part of why he is believable.
- Saul's offer of Michal for two hundred Philistines, and David's later multiple wives, are reported without approval. God's design for marriage is one man and one woman for life (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:4–6).

The Heavens and the Word

PASSAGE OVERVIEW

Psalm 19 is built in two panels with a hinge, and the hinge is the point. The first six verses describe what theologians call general revelation: the heavens declare the glory of God, day after day pours out speech, night after night reveals knowledge, and though there is no audible language, the message reaches everywhere. Paul quotes verse 4 in Romans 10:18. The sun gets its own paragraph, coming out of its chamber like a bridegroom and running its course like a strong man, with nothing hidden from its heat.

Then verse 7 turns, and the subject changes without a transition. The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul. The testimony is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes are right, rejoicing the heart. The commandment is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever. The judgments are true and righteous altogether. Six names, six qualities, six effects, and then the valuation: more to be desired than gold, sweeter than honey and the honeycomb. The sky tells you there is a God. The word tells you what He is like and what He wants.

And then the third movement, which is the one most people skip. Once a man has really looked into God's word, he cannot help looking at himself. Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from secret faults. Keep back Your servant from presumptuous sins. Verse 14 is the prayer of a man who wants his speech and even his private thinking to be acceptable to the Lord, his strength and his redeemer. Notice what happened: he began looking at stars and ended looking at his own heart. That is what Scripture does to an honest reader.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- Psalm 19 is a psalm of David, combining creation praise with a wisdom meditation on the law. It is one of the clearest statements in Scripture of the two ways God makes Himself known.
- General revelation is what creation shows to everyone (Psalm 19:1–6; Romans 1:20; Acts 14:17). Special revelation is what God has spoken in His word and finally in His Son (Psalm 19:7–11; Hebrews 1:1–2).
- Paul quotes Psalm 19:4 in Romans 10:18, applying the universal reach of creation's voice to the spread of the gospel message.
- The six terms for Scripture in verses 7 through 9 are near synonyms, a common Hebrew method of covering a subject from every side rather than distinguishing six separate things.
- The law David praises is the Law of Moses under which he lived. Christians live under the new covenant (Hebrews 8:6–13), but everything David says about the character and worth of God's word applies with more force to the completed Scriptures we hold.
- "Presumptuous sins" in verse 13 translates a term for deliberate, high-handed sin, contrasted in Numbers 15 with sin committed unintentionally.

NOTES ON THE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Question 1. *Psalm 19 has two halves, the sky and the Scripture. Discuss what the created world can tell a person about God, and what it cannot tell him, using Romans 1:20 and 2 Timothy 3:15–17 to sharpen the answer.*

Creation makes a real and sufficient case for a Creator. Romans 1:20 says His invisible attributes, His eternal power and Godhead, are clearly seen from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. Acts 14:17 says God did not leave Himself without witness, giving rain and fruitful seasons and filling hearts with food and gladness. Anyone who looks at a sky, a cell, or a newborn has been told something true.

But creation cannot tell you that God is holy in the way Leviticus says, that Christ died for your sins, or what you must do to be saved. It has no gospel in it. 2 Timothy 3:15 says the Scriptures are able to make one wise for

salvation through faith in Christ Jesus, and Romans 10:17 says faith comes by hearing the word. Press the practical result: nobody is saved by a sunset. The man who admires the stars still needs somebody to open a Bible with him.

Question 2. *David piles up six statements about God's word in verses 7 through 9 and then values it above gold. Which of those six do you have the hardest time believing on an ordinary Monday, and why that one?*

The six statements are enormous claims: the word converts the soul, makes wise the simple, rejoices the heart, enlightens the eyes, endures forever, and is entirely true and righteous. On a bad Monday, the ones people quietly doubt are usually rejoicing the heart, because duty feels like duty, and making wise the simple, because we assume expertise is what we need and Scripture feels too plain for a complicated problem.

Do not argue people out of the honest answer. Ask instead what would have to happen for them to find out. David is not describing a book he has heard about; he is describing something he has tasted, which is why the honey image is there. Ask each person to test one of the six this month by actually reading, and report back. Claims about food are settled at the table.

Question 3. *Verse 12 asks, "Who can understand his errors?" and prays for cleansing from secret faults. Which sins are hardest to see in ourselves, and who in your life currently has permission to point one out to you?*

The hardest sins to see are the ones our personality or our position makes respectable: a sharp tongue we call honesty, control we call responsibility, greed we call providing for our family, pride we call standards, laziness we call being easygoing. David does not say he has no secret faults. He assumes he does and asks God to deal with them, which is the only sane posture for someone reading verses 7 through 11.

Then ask the second question, which is where the discussion earns its keep. Most adults have carefully arranged their lives so that no one has standing to say a hard thing to them. Who does? A spouse whose warnings you actually receive? An elder? A friend who has watched you for twenty years? If no name comes to mind, that is the finding. Ask the class to give one person that permission this week, by name, out loud.

NOTES ON THE EXTENDED QUESTIONS

1. *List the six names David gives God's word in 19:7–9 along with the six things he says it does. Which of those pairs speaks most directly to what you need this month?*

The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. Answers on which pair meets a present need will vary; listen for people choosing honestly rather than choosing the most impressive-sounding one.

2. *Compare Psalm 19:1–4 with Romans 1:18–20 and Acts 14:15–17. According to these passages, what does creation prove about God, and what does it leave undone?*

Creation proves God's existence, His eternal power, and His divine nature, and Romans 1:20 says it leaves men without excuse. Acts 14 says it testifies to His goodness in rain and harvest. What it cannot do is tell anyone about sin, the cross, forgiveness, or what to do in response. For that, someone has to preach (Romans 10:14–17), and the Scriptures have to be opened (2 Timothy 3:15). General revelation makes a person responsible; special revelation makes him a Christian.

3. *Trace the movement of Psalm 19 from verse 1 to verse 14. Why do you think a psalm that begins with the glory of the heavens ends with a personal confession?*

The psalm moves from the vast and impersonal to the intimate and personal: from the sky, to the word, to the man. That order is not accidental. Looking at the heavens can leave a person admiring God from a safe distance. Looking into God's word leaves no distance at all; it converts the soul, enlightens the eyes, and warns the servant, and a warned man immediately notices his own condition. The psalm ends in confession because that is what happens when revelation gets specific.

4. *Psalm 19:13 distinguishes secret faults from presumptuous sins. Read Numbers 15:27–31 and explain the difference the law of Moses made between the two.*

Numbers 15:27–29 provides a sacrifice for the person who sins unintentionally, through ignorance, and says he shall be forgiven. Numbers 15:30–31 says the person who sins presumptuously, literally with a high hand, despises the word of the Lord, and that soul shall be cut off, with no sacrifice appointed. The distinction is not between big sins and small ones but between a heart that stumbles and a heart that defies. That is why David prays to be kept back from presumptuous sins before they gain dominion over him.

5. *Verse 14 asks that the words of his mouth and the meditation of his heart be acceptable to God. Pick one conversation you regularly handle badly, and decide now, in writing, what you will say differently the next time it comes around.*

Answers will vary. The value of this exercise is the writing. Most of us lose the same argument the same way every time because we have never decided in advance what we will say. Look for a specific sentence, not a general intention, and note that David asks about the meditation of his heart as well as the words of his mouth. The conversation is usually lost internally before it is lost out loud.

HANDLE WITH CARE

- Do not press Psalm 19:1 into service as a settlement of every scientific question. The psalm claims that creation testifies to the Creator, which is true and powerful. Let it say what it says.
- Guard against the idea that a sincere person can be saved by creation alone, apart from the gospel. Cornelius was devout and still had to send for Peter to hear words by which he would be saved (Acts 11:14).
- The distinction between sins of ignorance and presumptuous sins is not a license. Christians are responsible to learn (2 Peter 3:18), and Paul, who sinned in ignorance and obtained mercy (1 Timothy 1:13), still had to arise and be baptized (Acts 22:16).
- David praises the Law of Moses. Affirm everything he says about the excellence of God's word while making clear that Christians are under Christ's covenant, not the old law (Colossians 2:14–17; Hebrews 8:13).

Three People Beyond Help

PASSAGE OVERVIEW

Mark 5 is three rescues, and each one is further past hope than the last. First a man so violent that chains and shackles could not hold him, living among the tombs, crying out and cutting himself night and day. Then a woman with a twelve-year hemorrhage who had suffered many things from many physicians, spent everything she had, and grown worse. Then a twelve-year-old girl who dies while Jesus is on His way to her. Mark is arranging his material: possession, chronic illness, and death, which is to say everything that ruins a human life.

Watch what happens to the demoniac. He is found sitting, clothed, and in his right mind, which is such a normal sentence that it is easy to miss what it means. The man has his mind back, his dignity back, and a place among people again. And when he asks to go with Jesus, he is sent home to his own family to tell what great things the Lord has done. He becomes the first preacher to the Decapolis, ten Gentile cities, and Mark says everyone marveled.

The two stories in the second half are threaded together on purpose. Jairus is a synagogue ruler, a man of standing, asking publicly. The woman is anonymous, ceremonially unclean, and reaching from behind. Both involve the number twelve. And Jesus deliberately stops the urgent errand to attend to the interruption, which must have been agonizing for the father. Then the messengers arrive with the worst sentence in the chapter: your daughter is dead, why trouble the Teacher any further? Jesus overhears it and says, do not be afraid, only believe. The chapter ends with Him taking a dead girl by the hand and saying, little girl, arise.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- The country of the Gadarenes or Gerasenes lies on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee, largely Gentile territory, which explains the herd of pigs, animals no observant Jewish community would raise.
- Matthew mentions two demoniacs; Mark and Luke focus on one, presumably the one who became known because he preached. Reporting one of two is not a contradiction.
- A woman with a flow of blood was ceremonially unclean under Leviticus 15:25–27, and so was anything and anyone she touched. Twelve years of that meant twelve years outside normal worship and ordinary human contact.
- The hem or border of the garment refers to the tassels an Israelite man wore on the corners of his outer garment (Numbers 15:38–39), a visible mark of covenant obedience.
- Jairus was a ruler of the synagogue, an administrative leader responsible for the building and the services, which makes his public appeal at Jesus' feet a costly act given the growing hostility of the religious establishment.
- "Talitha, cumi" is Aramaic, the everyday language Jesus spoke. Mark preserves the actual words and translates them, one of several places where Peter's memory seems to stand behind the account.

NOTES ON THE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Question 1. *Mark 5 puts three hopeless cases in one chapter: a man no one could chain, a woman who had spent everything, and a father whose child was dying. What did their approaches to Jesus have in common, and how were they different?*

All three came to Jesus in person, all three came with nothing to offer, and all three came at the end of other options. The differences are just as instructive. Jairus came publicly and by name and asked out loud. The woman came secretly, from behind, in a crowd, hoping to take her healing without being noticed. The demoniac did not come asking at all; he ran and fell down and the demons within him begged Jesus to leave him alone. Jesus did not require a uniform approach.

That is worth saying to a class that assumes there is a correct posture for approaching God. One came bold, one came hidden, one came unable to want it. Ask which of the three is most like the way people in the room come to God, and note that the chapter does not rank them. What it does insist on is that they came.

Question 2. *The healed man begs to go with Jesus and is told instead to go home to his own people and tell them (5:18–20). Why would Jesus refuse that request, and where might He be asking you to stay rather than go?*

Two reasons stand out. First, the region had just asked Jesus to leave, so the only witness they were going to get was one of their own. A local man who had terrorized that coastline, now dressed and sane, was an argument nobody could dismiss. Second, the man had a home and a family who had watched him destroy himself, and Jesus sent him where the testimony would cost the most and mean the most.

Bring it into the room gently. Many Christians would rather serve anywhere except at home. It is easier to teach a class than to talk to a brother, easier to support a mission point than to sit down with your own son. Ask who has been given a house, a workplace, or a family to stay in and tell. Note also that the man obeyed: he went and began to proclaim, and all marveled.

Question 3. *Jesus stops a moving crowd to find one woman who had already been healed and could have slipped away (5:30–34). Discuss why He would not let the miracle remain anonymous, and what He gave her that the healing by itself did not.*

She had every reason to disappear. Under Leviticus 15 her condition made her unclean, and in that crowd she had just made a good many people unclean by contact, including, as everyone would have assumed, the Teacher. Slipping away healed would have been the safe play. Jesus will not let her. He looks around, He keeps looking, and He waits until she comes trembling and tells the whole truth.

What He gave her is in verse 34, and the healing was already done before He said a word of it: Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your affliction. He gave her a name, a public restoration, and peace. A secret healing would have left her well and still hiding. Ask the class what it costs to come out of hiding with the truth about ourselves, and what we forfeit when we will not. Confession is not God gathering information. It is God restoring a person in the open.

NOTES ON THE EXTENDED QUESTIONS

1. *List everything Mark tells you about the man in the tombs before Jesus arrives, then everything he is afterward. Which detail in verse 15 strikes you hardest?*

Before: he lives among the tombs, no one can bind him, not even with chains, he has broken shackles and chains to pieces, no one can tame him, and night and day he is in the mountains and the tombs crying out and cutting himself with stones. After: he is sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind, and he wants to stay with Him. The most striking detail in verse 15 is usually the last one, that the people who saw it were afraid. A restored man frightened them more than a violent one had.

2. *Compare Mark 5:1–20 with Luke 8:26–39 and Matthew 8:28–34. Note what each writer includes, and work out how you would answer someone who claims the accounts contradict each other.*

Matthew reports two men; Mark and Luke center on one. Mark alone gives the name Legion and the detail about the chains and stones; Luke alone notes that the man had worn no clothes for a long time and lived in the tombs, and that the demons begged not to be sent into the abyss. None of the three denies what the others report. A witness who describes one of two men is not contradicting a witness who counts both, especially when one of the two became a known preacher in the region. Independent accounts that agree in every detail suggest collusion; accounts like these read like real testimony.

3. *Trace the interruption in 5:21–43. What is happening to Jairus while Jesus is attending to the woman, and what does Jesus say to him at the worst possible moment?*

While Jesus stops for the woman, Jairus stands there losing time he does not have, and then the messengers arrive to say his daughter has died and there is no point troubling the Teacher further. Jesus ignores, or overhears and disregards, what was said, and tells him, do not be afraid, only believe. Note that Jesus then limits the witnesses to

Peter, James, John, and the parents, and that He puts out the professional mourners who laughed at Him. The delay that must have looked like abandonment turned out to be the setting for a greater display of power.

4. Read Mark 5:34 and notice what Jesus calls the woman. Set it beside Luke 13:16 and Mark 3:34–35, and explain why the word He chose mattered after twelve years of being ceremonially unclean.

He calls her Daughter, the only time in the gospels He addresses a woman that way. After twelve years in which every person and every object she touched became unclean, and in which she had been shut out of the worship of Israel, she is publicly given a place in the family. Luke 13:16 shows the same instinct when Jesus calls a bent woman a daughter of Abraham, and Mark 3:34–35 defines His family as whoever does the will of God. Jesus does not simply repair bodies; He restores people to belonging.

5. The people of that region asked Jesus to leave (5:17), most likely because He had cost them money. Name what you are quietly afraid Jesus would cost you if He had His way, and say it to Him specifically in prayer this week.

Answers will vary, and the honest ones will be uncomfortable. The Gadarenes were not hostile to Jesus in principle; He had simply turned out to be expensive. Listen for the modern equivalents: a business practice, a relationship, a Saturday, a level of comfort, a plan for retirement, a child's ambitions. The assignment is to name it to God rather than to the class, which makes it more likely to be told truthfully.

HANDLE WITH CARE

- Demon possession belongs to the record of the gospels and Acts. Teach it as historical fact and resist speculation about the present, which usually generates fear rather than faith. The point of the account is Christ's authority.
- The woman is commended for her faith, but the power was in Christ, not in the fabric of His clothing (5:30). Guard against anything that drifts toward relics, prayer cloths, or the notion that sufficient faith guarantees physical healing today.
- The raising of Jairus' daughter is a bodily resurrection, not a figure of speech. Jesus' statement that she is sleeping is His way of describing death in the presence of the One who can wake her (compare John 11:11–14).
- The loss of the herd will raise questions about the pigs and the owners' rights. Say what the text says: Jesus values one man more than two thousand animals, and He does not explain Himself further.

The Names God Remembers

PASSAGE OVERVIEW

The closing of Romans is not filler. Paul first drives home the argument he has been making since chapter 9, that God always intended to gather the nations, and he proves it with four quotations from the law, the prophets, and the psalms, including Psalm 18:49, which your class read last week. Christ became a servant to the circumcision, he says, to confirm the promises made to the fathers, and so that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy. Jew and Gentile praising together is not a compromise; it is the plan.

Then he tells them his plans, and the plans reveal the man. He has preached from Jerusalem around to Illyricum, and his ambition has been to build on no other man's foundation but to go where Christ has not been named. He is on his way to Jerusalem with money collected in Macedonia and Achaia for poor saints, then to Rome, then to Spain. He asks them to strive together with him in prayer, and he is frank that he is not sure he will survive Judea. Romans 15 is the resume of a man who spent his life on other people's salvation.

And then chapter 16, the part most people skim. Phoebe is commended as she carries the letter. Priscilla and Aquila risked their necks for him. Mary labored much. Andronicus and Junia were in Christ before he was. Rufus' mother had mothered Paul too. Twenty-six names, and the only reason we know any of them is that Paul stopped to say thank you. Then a sharp warning about divisive people and their smooth words, and finally a doxology about the mystery kept secret since the world began and now made known to all nations for obedience to the faith.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- Paul writes from Corinth around A.D. 57, about to carry the Gentile churches' contribution to the needy saints in Jerusalem (15:25–27; compare 1 Corinthians 16:1–4; 2 Corinthians 8–9).
- Illyricum lay along the Adriatic coast northwest of Greece. Paul is describing an arc of preaching that already spanned the eastern empire, and he intends to push west to Spain.
- Phoebe is called a servant of the church at Cenchrea and a helper of many, including Paul. She most likely carried the letter to Rome. Scripture honors the labor of women highly while reserving the offices of elder and deacon to qualified men (1 Timothy 3:1–13; Titus 1:5–9).
- The holy kiss (16:16) was the ordinary greeting of that culture. The command binds the warmth and sincerity, not the cultural form.
- “The churches of Christ greet you” (16:16) is a simple description of congregations belonging to Christ. The New Testament names God's people by relationship to Him, never by a human founder or party.
- The doxology of 16:25–27 speaks of a mystery kept secret since the world began but now made manifest and made known by the prophetic Scriptures to all nations for obedience to the faith. The mystery is not something still hidden; it is revealed and written down.

NOTES ON THE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Question 1. *Romans 16 greets twenty-six people by name, and about most of them we know nothing else at all. Why would the Holy Spirit preserve a list like that in Scripture, and what does it tell us about how God regards ordinary Christians?*

Start by reading the list out loud, slowly, and letting the class feel how little we know about these people. Mary, who labored much for us. Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labored in the Lord. Persis the beloved. The household of Narcissus. These are not celebrities. They are the sort of people who set up chairs, opened their homes, fed a

traveling preacher, and went to work on Monday. And their names are in Scripture forever because Paul thought to mention them.

The pastoral point is that God keeps a different ledger than we do. Nobody in that list preached at Athens or wrote an epistle. Ask the class to name the people in this congregation who function like Romans 16: the ones who do the unphotographed work. Then have somebody actually tell them this week. Paul did not merely feel grateful; he wrote it down where everyone could hear it.

Question 2. *Romans 16:17–18 tells Christians to note and avoid those who cause divisions contrary to the doctrine they had learned. Talk about how a congregation obeys that without becoming suspicious, harsh, or quick to label.*

Notice precisely what Paul says to watch for: those who cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which you learned, who serve their own appetites and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple. The standard is doctrinal and behavioral, not personal. The man who disagrees with you about the fellowship meal is not a divisive man. The man who quietly builds a following around a teaching contrary to what the apostles delivered is.

Then hold this beside Romans 14, which the class read last week. Same letter, same author, two chapters apart. Romans 14 says receive the one who is weak in faith and stop judging over opinions. Romans 16 says mark and avoid those who divide over doctrine. A congregation that cannot tell the difference will either tolerate everything or fight about everything. Ask the class how our elders and members can practice both at once, and what warning signs in verse 18 are worth remembering: appetite, smooth words, and flattery.

Question 3. *Paul says he made it his aim to preach where Christ had not been named (15:20). Where is Christ not named in the circle you actually move in every week, and what would have to change for that to be different by Christmas?*

Paul's ambition is stated plainly, and it is unusual: not to build on another man's foundation. He wanted the places where nobody had gone. Most of us have the reverse instinct; we prefer to work where the ground is already prepared. Begin by admiring what that cost him, and then turn the question toward the ordinary Christian, because most people in the room are not going to Spain.

The circle they move in every week almost certainly contains people who have never had a serious conversation about Christ with anyone: a coworker, a neighbor two doors down, a daughter-in-law, the man at the shop. Ask them to name one, and then ask what would have to change, practically, for that name to hear the gospel before Christmas. Usually the honest answer is a meal, a question, and the willingness to be thought odd.

NOTES ON THE EXTENDED QUESTIONS

1. *List the four Old Testament passages Paul quotes in Romans 15:9–12. What single point is he making with all four, and why does he need four?*

Paul quotes Psalm 18:49 (I will confess to You among the Gentiles), Deuteronomy 32:43 (Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people), Psalm 117:1 (Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles), and Isaiah 11:10 (the root of Jesse, in Him the Gentiles shall hope). The single point is that the inclusion of the nations was never an afterthought or an emergency adjustment; it was promised in the law, the psalms, and the prophets. He needs four because he is writing to a mixed congregation with a Jewish minority who would want the claim established from every part of their Scriptures, exactly as a careful Bible student would want it established today.

2. *Trace what Paul asks the Roman Christians to do for him in 15:24–32. How many separate requests can you count, and what does he expect to receive from them?*

He asks them to send him on his way to Spain after he has enjoyed their company (15:24), to strive together with him in prayer (15:30), and within that prayer he names three things: that he be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe, that his service for Jerusalem be accepted by the saints, and that he may come to them with joy by God's will and be refreshed together with them. He expects fellowship, material help for the next stage of the work, and prayer, and he asks for all three without embarrassment.

3. Romans 16:16 says, “The churches of Christ greet you.” Compare Acts 20:28, 1 Corinthians 1:2, and Ephesians 1:22–23, and write down what the New Testament calls the Lord’s people and why the names we use should be drawn from those pages.

Acts 20:28 calls it the church of God, which He purchased with His own blood. 1 Corinthians 1:2 addresses the church of God which is at Corinth, those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints. Ephesians 1:22–23 calls the church His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. Romans 16:16 speaks of the churches of Christ. Every one of these names describes a relationship to God and to Christ. None of them honors a man, a doctrine, or a movement, and that is the reason to use Scriptural language: the church belongs to Christ, and its name should say so.

4. Read the descriptions attached to the names in Romans 16:1–15 and write down what Paul commends each person for. Which of those commendations could honestly be written about you?

Paul commends Phoebe as a servant of the church and a helper of many; Priscilla and Aquila as fellow workers who risked their own necks; Epaphroditus as the first convert in Achaia; Mary, who labored much; Andronicus and Junia, his kinsmen and fellow prisoners who were in Christ before him; Urbanus, a fellow worker; Apelles, approved in Christ; Tryphena, Tryphosa, and Persis, who labored in the Lord; the mother of Rufus, who had been a mother to Paul as well. The commendations are for labor, risk, hospitality, endurance, and faithfulness over time. Answers to the last question will vary, and the honest ones tend to be quiet.

5. Romans 16:20 promises that the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly. Read Genesis 3:15 beside it, then name the specific battle in which you most need that promise, and pray it back to God every day this week.

Genesis 3:15 promised that the Seed of the woman would crush the serpent’s head. Romans 16:20 tells ordinary Christians in Rome that the God of peace will crush Satan under their feet shortly, which means the victory won at the cross is worked out in the lives of the Lord’s people. Answers on the specific battle will vary. Look for a real front line: a temptation, a fear, a bitterness, a habit. Note that the promise is not that they will crush him, but that God will do it under their feet.

HANDLE WITH CARE

- Romans 16:16 is a Scriptural description of congregations belonging to Christ, and it is the right kind of language to use. Be careful that it never becomes a party slogan or a claim of trademark. The point is that the church is Christ’s, not that we own a name.
- Phoebe and the women named in Romans 16 will raise the question of women’s roles. Honor what Scripture honors: these women labored, risked, taught in the ways Scripture describes (Acts 18:26; Titus 2:3–5), and are praised by name. At the same time, the New Testament assigns the offices of elder and deacon and the public teaching of assemblies that include men to qualified men (1 Timothy 2:11–12; 3:1–13). Teach both plainly and warmly, without apology and without diminishing the women in your class.
- The reference to Junia in 16:7 as “of note among the apostles” can mean well known to the apostles or outstanding among the messengers. The phrase is genuinely ambiguous in the original, and no doctrine should be built on it either way.
- Romans 16:17–18 is about doctrinal division, not personality conflict or personal offense. Pair it with Romans 14 so the class does not leave with a license to separate over preferences.
- The holy kiss is a cultural form. Do not bind the greeting; do teach the affection behind it, which most congregations need more than they need a new custom.

NEXT WEEK’S READING: 1 Samuel 24–31 · Psalm 20–21 · Mark 6:1–29 · 1 Corinthians 1

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