

Through the Bible in 24 Months



WEEK 36 OF 104

Some Trust in Chariots

Week 36 of 104 • 35% of the way through the Bible

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

General Old Testament	1 Samuel 24-31
Wisdom Literature	Psalms 20-21
Gospels	Mark 6:1-29
General New Testament	1 Corinthians 1

THIS WEEK AT A GLANCE

Twice this week a hunted man stands over a sleeping king with everything he has wanted for a decade lying within reach, and twice he walks away empty-handed because the throne is not his to take. Israel sings about it before the battle: some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we will remember the name of the Lord our God. Then Nazareth looks at the carpenter's son and decides there is nothing there, and a drunk king on a birthday couch has a prophet beheaded to protect his own reputation in front of his friends. And Paul tells a proud, quarreling church in a proud, clever city that God saved the world by a cross, which is exactly the sort of thing no impressive person would ever have planned.

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 1 Samuel 24-31

The Lord's Anointed

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Twice David has Saul at the end of a blade, and twice he refuses. In a cave at En Gedi he cuts off a corner of a robe and his conscience troubles him. On the hill of Hachilah he takes a spear and a jug of water instead of a life. In between, a wealthy fool named Nabal insults him and a wise woman prevents a massacre. Then Samuel dies, David hides among the Philistines, Saul consults a medium at Endor, Ziklag burns, and Israel's first king dies at Gilboa.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Twice David spares Saul, and both times he gives the same reason (24:6; 26:9-11). Why does he keep calling the man hunting him "the Lord's anointed," and what does that tell you about who David believed was actually running his life?

2. In 1 Samuel 30:6, with Ziklag burned, the families gone, and his own men talking about stoning him, David strengthened himself in the Lord his God. Describe what that looks like in practice for someone who has no one left to call.
3. Abigail talks David out of a massacre in 1 Samuel 25:23–35. Read her speech and name what she does well. Who has done that for you, and whose anger might you be the one asked to stand in front of?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Compare the two occasions when David spared Saul, chapter 24 and chapter 26. List what is identical, what is different, and how Saul responds each time.
2. Read 1 Samuel 27:8–12 with 29:6–11. What is David actually doing while he lives in Philistine territory, and how does the writer report it?
3. 1 Samuel 28 records Saul consulting a medium at Endor. Read Deuteronomy 18:9–14, Leviticus 19:31, and Isaiah 8:19–20, and write down what God had already said about seeking the dead.
4. Trace what 1 Samuel 28:6 says Saul tried before he went to Endor. Why was heaven silent, and what should he have done instead of finding another door?
5. Saul's life ends on Mount Gilboa. Read 1 Chronicles 10:13–14 for the inspired summary of that life, then write one sentence you would hate to have as the summary of yours, and name the one thing you will change this week.

WISDOM LITERATURE Psalm 20–21

Chariots or the Name

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Two royal psalms that belong together, one sung before a battle and one after it. In Psalm 20 the congregation prays for its king: may the Lord answer you in the day of trouble, send help from the sanctuary, and grant you your heart's desire. Then comes the line the whole week turns on, about chariots and horses and the name of the Lord. Psalm 21 is the answer on the other side, a thanksgiving in which every good thing the king has is traced back to God.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Psalm 20:7 sets chariots and horses against the name of the Lord our God. Which chariots do people in our congregation actually trust, and what makes those so believable when God can seem so quiet?
2. Psalm 20 is a congregation praying for its leader out loud before he goes out to fight. When did we last pray for our elders, our preacher, and our teachers with that kind of specificity, and what would change here if we did?
3. Psalm 21:1–2 says the king rejoices in God's strength and has been given his heart's desire. Discuss the difference between getting what you want and rejoicing in God's strength, and how a person can tell which one he is actually pursuing.

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List everything the people ask God to do for the king in Psalm 20:1–5, then list everything Psalm 21:2–6 says God did. Lay the two lists side by side and note the overlap.
2. Compare Psalm 20:7 with Deuteronomy 17:16, 1 Samuel 17:45, and Zechariah 4:6. What is the consistent testimony of Scripture about where real strength comes from?
3. Psalm 21:8–12 turns toward the king's enemies. Read it as an appeal to God's justice rather than a license for personal revenge, and compare Romans 12:19–21. How do the two passages fit together?
4. Both of these are royal psalms about Israel's anointed king. Read Psalm 21:4 and ask how much of it was ever true of David himself. Whom do these psalms finally describe? See Acts 2:29–36.
5. Name the chariot you personally trust: a bank balance, a title, a network of contacts, a skill, a reputation. Decide on one concrete step this week that would make no sense at all unless you trusted the name of the Lord instead.

GOSPELS Mark 6:1–29

A Prophet Without Honor

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Jesus goes home to Nazareth and teaches in the synagogue, and the people who watched Him grow up are offended by Him. He marvels at their unbelief and does almost nothing there. Then He sends the twelve out two

by two with authority over unclean spirits and instructions to travel light. The reading ends with Mark stepping back to tell how Herod arrested John the Baptist, listened to him gladly, and then had him beheaded at a birthday party to save face in front of his guests.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Mark 6:5 says Jesus could do no mighty work in Nazareth except lay hands on a few sick people. Read the whole scene and discuss what kept them from receiving Him, and whether familiarity is doing something similar to us.
2. Jesus sends the twelve out with a staff, sandals, and one tunic, and nothing else (6:8–9). Why would He deliberately make them dependent on other people's hospitality, and where is He asking you to work without a safety net?
3. Herod protected John, listened to him gladly, and still had him killed to keep face at a party (6:20, 26). Talk about how a man travels from enjoying the preaching to executing the preacher, and what the small steps look like.

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List the objections the people of Nazareth raise in 6:2–3. What did they think disqualified Him, and what were they unable to explain away?
2. Compare Mark 6:7–13 with Luke 9:1–6 and Matthew 10:5–15. Write down the instructions given to the twelve, and note which of them clearly belonged to that particular mission rather than to all preaching everywhere.
3. Trace Herod's decisions in 6:17–28 from the arrest to the platter. At how many separate points could he have stopped, and what kept him from stopping at any of them?
4. Read Mark 6:6, where Jesus marveled because of their unbelief, then find the only other place He is said to marvel (Luke 7:9). What do the two scenes together teach about faith?
5. Nazareth knew Jesus better than any town on earth and believed less than most. Name a person or a truth you have stopped really hearing because it has become too familiar, and do one specific thing this week to hear it fresh.

The Foolishness of God

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Paul writes to a congregation that lacks no spiritual gift and is falling apart anyway. Word has come from Chloe's household that they are quarreling, with members lining up behind favorite preachers: I am of Paul, I am of Apollos, I am of Cephas, I am of Christ. Paul answers with three questions and then digs to the root. The message of the cross is foolishness to those perishing, God has made the world's wisdom foolish, and He deliberately chose the unimpressive so that nobody could boast in His presence.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. The Corinthians were dividing over preachers they admired (1:11–13). Paul answers with three questions in verse 13. Work through them one at a time, and then name the modern version of “I am of Paul.”
2. 1 Corinthians 1:17 says Christ sent Paul not to baptize but to preach the gospel. Read it alongside Acts 18:8, Acts 2:38, and Romans 6:3–4. What is Paul saying here, and what is he plainly not saying?
3. 1 Corinthians 1:26–29 says God chose the foolish, the weak, and the lowly so that no one could boast before Him. Where does a congregation still quietly prefer the impressive, and what would actually change if we stopped?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List everything Paul says about the Corinthians in 1:4–9 before he says a single word of correction. What does that order teach about how to confront people you love?
2. Trace the words wise, wisdom, foolish, and foolishness through 1:17–31. Count them, then state in one sentence the argument Paul is building.
3. Read 1 Corinthians 1:2 and note carefully what Paul calls these Christians. Compare Acts 20:28 and 1 Peter 2:9–10, and write down the names Scripture uses for God's people.
4. 1 Corinthians 1:18 says the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing. Read Acts 17:32 and Acts 26:24 for two reactions Paul actually received. Why is a crucified Savior so offensive to human pride?
5. Paul refused to preach with wisdom of words, so that the cross would not be emptied of its power. Name one place where you have softened the gospel to make it easier to hear, and say the harder, truer thing to that person this week.

NEXT WEEK'S READING: 2 Samuel 1-10 · Psalm 22-23 · Mark 6:30-7:13 · 1 Corinthians 2-3

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