

Through the Bible in 24 Months



WEEK 38 OF 104

What Defiles a Man

Week 38 of 104 • 37% of the way through the Bible

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

General Old Testament	2 Samuel 11-17
Wisdom Literature	Psalms 24-25
Gospels	Mark 7:14-8:10
General New Testament	1 Corinthians 4-5

THIS WEEK AT A GLANCE

A rooftop in Jerusalem, a hillside in Galilee, and a church in Corinth are separated by centuries and by miles, and this week all three ask the same question: what actually makes a person unclean? David keeps every outward form of religion and wrecks a family from his balcony. Jesus tells a crowd preoccupied with washed hands that nothing going into a man defiles him, because the trouble is already inside. Paul tells a congregation proud of its own broad-mindedness that a little leaven leavens the whole lump. And in between, David climbs the hill of the Lord in Psalm 24 asking who may stand there, then answers in Psalm 25 by asking God to remember mercy instead of the sins of his youth. Read them together and the week begins to read you.

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 2 Samuel 11-17

From the Rooftop to Ruin

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Spring comes, the army marches, and the king stays home. David sees Bathsheba, sends for her, and then spends a chapter trying to bury what he has done, first with deception and finally with Uriah's blood. Nathan arrives with a story about a poor man's lamb and four words that break David open. The child dies. Then the sword God promised begins its work inside the family: Amnon violates Tamar, Absalom kills Amnon, and Absalom steals the hearts of Israel while his father weeps barefoot up the Mount of Olives.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

- Chapter 11 opens with David at home at the time when kings go out to battle. Trace the small steps between that idle evening and Uriah's death, and name the places where this still could have been stopped.
- Nathan could have walked in and accused the king outright. Why does he begin with a story about a lamb instead, and what did the story accomplish in David that a direct charge might not have?

3. God forgives David in 12:13, and yet the sword never leaves his house. How do we hold forgiveness and consequence together without treating forgiveness as a loophole or treating consequences as proof we were never really forgiven?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Read 2 Samuel 11:1–5 again and list, in order, every separate decision David makes before Bathsheba ever arrives at the palace.
2. Read Psalm 51, written after Nathan came, alongside David’s silence in 2 Samuel 11. What has to happen inside a man to move him from “the thing that David had done displeased the Lord” to “I have sinned against the Lord”?
3. Uriah the Hittite is a foreigner keeping Israel’s covenant better than Israel’s king. Note everything Uriah says and does in 11:6–13, and write down what each detail exposes about David by contrast.
4. Absalom waits two full years before he kills Amnon (13:23). Trace what David does about Tamar, about Amnon, and about Absalom, and consider what unconforted sin does to a household over time.
5. Name one thing you are presently keeping hidden from your spouse, your elders, or a brother in Christ. Who will you tell before next Sunday, and what has hiding it already cost you that confessing it would not?

WISDOM LITERATURE Psalm 24–25

Clean Hands and a Pure Heart

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Psalm 24 begins with a claim that covers everything you own: the earth is the Lord’s, and everyone in it. Then it asks who may climb the Lord’s hill and stand in His holy place, answers with clean hands and a pure heart, and ends with ancient gates commanded to lift their heads for the King of glory. Psalm 25 turns inward, an alphabet prayer, orderly outside and desperate underneath, in which David begs God not to remember the sins of his youth.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Psalm 24:1 says the earth and everyone in it belong to God. If you took that seriously for seven days, how would it change the way you hold your paycheck, your calendar, and your house?

2. Verses 3 and 4 name two requirements, clean hands and a pure heart. Talk about the difference between them, and about which of the two we are usually more willing to settle for.
3. In Psalm 25:7 David asks God not to remember the sins of his youth. What is he actually asking for, and how does the rest of the psalm show a man living as forgiven rather than living haunted?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List every request David makes of God in Psalm 25 and count how many of them ask to be taught rather than to be rescued. What does that proportion suggest about his priorities?
2. Paul quotes Psalm 24:1 in 1 Corinthians 10:26. Read the surrounding paragraph there and describe the practical use he makes of the verse.
3. Psalm 25 is an acrostic, built line by line on the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Consider what that deliberate structure suggests about how to pray when you are distressed and your thoughts will not sit still.
4. Trace the words teach, show, lead, and guide through Psalm 25. What sort of guidance is David asking for, and on what condition does verse 14 say it comes?
5. Psalm 24:4 puts hands and heart together. Name one action this week that would clean your hands, and one habit of thought that would have to change for your heart to match it.

GOSPELS Mark 7:14–8:10

The Trouble Is Inside

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Jesus calls the crowd in and says what would have stopped every conversation: nothing entering a man from outside can defile him. Privately He explains where defilement actually comes from, and lists thirteen things that climb out of the human heart. He leaves Jewish territory for Tyre, where a Gentile mother refuses to be turned away, heals a deaf man in the Decapolis, and feeds four thousand in a wilderness while His disciples wonder where bread could come from.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Jesus names thirteen evils that come out of the heart in Mark 7:21–22. Read the list slowly together and discuss why He locates the problem there instead of in the hands or the diet.

2. The Syrophoenician woman answers Jesus with wit and humility rather than offense. What does her reply reveal about her view of Him, and what would it take for us to keep asking when heaven seems to have said no?
3. In 8:4 the disciples ask where anyone could get bread in this wilderness, not long after watching Him feed five thousand. Where do we do the same thing, forgetting last year's provision in this month's panic?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Mark 7:19 notes that in saying this Jesus declared all foods clean. Read Acts 10:9–16 and Colossians 2:16–17, then explain what that means for how Christians relate to the Old Testament dietary laws.
2. Write out the evils Jesus lists in 7:21–22, and mark the ones a respectable church member could commit all week without anyone noticing.
3. Compare the feeding of the five thousand in Mark 6:35–44 with the feeding of the four thousand in 8:1–9. Note every difference you can find: the crowd, the region, the number of loaves, and the baskets.
4. In 7:37 the people say He has done all things well. Trace exactly what Jesus did in 7:31–37, step by step, and notice how much of it He did away from the crowd.
5. Jesus said defilement starts inside. Identify one appetite you have been managing on the surface, and name the specific step you will take this week to deal with its root instead.

GENERAL NEW TESTAMENT 1 Corinthians 4–5

Stewards and a Little Leaven

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Paul closes his answer to the party spirit by redefining what a preacher is: a servant and a steward whose one requirement is faithfulness, and whose verdict comes from the Lord rather than from a congregation's applause. He sets their sense of having arrived against the apostles' hunger and homelessness. Then chapter 5 lands hard. A man in the church has his father's wife, the congregation is proud rather than grieved, and Paul tells them to purge out the old leaven.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Paul says the one thing required of a steward is that he be found faithful (4:2). If faithfulness rather than visible results were the measure, what would change about how you serve this congregation?
2. The Corinthians were puffed up over the very situation they should have mourned. How does Paul reframe what love actually requires here, and what does he say in 5:5 the goal of the action is?
3. In 5:9–13 Paul draws a sharp line between the immoral man outside the church and the man who wears the name of brother. Why do we find that distinction so easy to reverse, treating outsiders harshly and insiders as untouchable?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Read 1 Corinthians 4:6–7 and write out the three questions of verse 7. How would honest answers to those three cure a congregation of party spirit?
2. Trace the description of apostolic life in 4:9–13. Count the hardships, and note what Paul says they do in response to reviling, persecution, and slander.
3. Compare 1 Corinthians 5:5 with 2 Corinthians 2:6–8. What seems to have happened to the disciplined man later, and what does that tell you about the purpose of the whole procedure?
4. Paul uses Passover language in 5:6–8. Read Exodus 12:15 and explain what the leaven pictured then and what Paul says it pictures in a congregation now.
5. Withdrawal is the congregation's work under its elders, not one member's private project. Name one thing you can do this week that supports that work rather than substitutes for it: a prayer, a conversation with an elder, or a silence you will keep.

NEXT WEEK'S READING: 2 Samuel 18–24 · Psalm 26–28 · Mark 8:11–9:13 · 1 Corinthians 6:1–7:16

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