

Through the Bible in 24 Months, Teacher's Guide



WEEK 39 OF 104

Bought With a Price

THIS WEEK'S READINGS	
General Old Testament	2 Samuel 18-24
Wisdom Literature	Psalms 26-28
Gospels	Mark 8:11-9:13
General New Testament	1 Corinthians 6:1-7:16

TEACHING AIM AND ORIENTATION

Your aim this week is to put a price tag on discipleship without turning grace into a purchase. Every reading names a cost. David pays for a threshing floor he could have had for free. Jesus tells a crowd that following Him means carrying the instrument of their own execution. Paul tells a church that their bodies were bought and therefore are not theirs to spend. And David, surrounded by enemies, says he wants one thing. If the class leaves understanding that salvation is free and discipleship is expensive, the hour has done its work.

Doctrinally, the weight falls in two places. Mark 9:1 is one of the clearest statements in the New Testament that the kingdom came with power in the first century, and this is your opportunity to settle it: Christ reigns now, His kingdom is His church, and no earthly political kingdom awaits establishment. Then 1 Corinthians 6:11 sets out how a person moves from the list in verses 9 and 10 to the assembly of the saved: washed, sanctified, justified in the name of the Lord Jesus. Let the class see baptism where the New Testament puts it, as the point at which a penitent believer is united with Christ.

Formationally, the thread is the exchange rate. Jesus asks what a man would take in trade for his soul, and most of us answer that question a dollar at a time without ever hearing ourselves. Ask your class this, directly: what have you given up in the last year that you cannot get back, and what did you get for it? Then ask what you are about to trade next, and whether the price is one Christ ever asked you to pay.

SUGGESTED PLAN FOR THE TWO SESSIONS

First session: Take up Mark 8:11-9:13 first. It is the pivot of Mark's Gospel and it carries the week's theme most sharply, from Peter's confession to the cross to the mountain. Give real time to 8:34-38 and settle the kingdom question in 9:1 before you leave the chapter.

Second session: Take up 1 Corinthians 6:1-7:16 second. It brings the same theme into the body, the marriage, and the household, and it needs a teacher present for the questions it raises. Announce at the start that individual marriage situations will be handled privately with the elders, not in class.

The other two readings: Second Samuel 18-24 and Psalms 26-28 read well alone. Before dismissal, read 2 Samuel 24:24 aloud and ask the class to carry that sentence through the week. Suggest they read Psalm 27 slowly on a hard day and notice how the psalm both shouts and pleads.

Grief, Mercy, and Costly Worship

PASSAGE OVERVIEW

These chapters are the long aftermath. Absalom dies caught in a tree, killed by Joab against the king's explicit order, and David's grief is so total that his own army has to be protected from it. Read 18:33 aloud in class and then stop for a moment. This is the same man who arranged Uriah's death, now holding the consequence in his arms, and Scripture gives us his sobbing without comment because no comment is needed.

The middle chapters show a kingdom being stitched back together and a king who is not what he was. He pardons Shimei, splits the land with Mephibosheth without much investigating, sends Barzillai home with a blessing, and lets Joab go on running things by murder. Chapters 21 through 24 are an appendix, arranged deliberately: two accounts of trouble, two lists of heroes, and in the center two songs, the great deliverance psalm of chapter 22 and the last words of chapter 23.

The census closes the book and closes David's life at the place where the story turns toward the temple. Whatever else was wrong with counting the army, David knew the moment it was finished. He chooses to fall into the hand of the Lord rather than into the hand of man, and when Araunah offers him the site and the oxen for nothing, David answers with the sentence the whole chapter exists to preserve. Worship that costs nothing is not worship; it is decoration.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- Second Samuel ends around 970 B.C. The last four chapters are an appendix arranged by theme rather than by chronology; the census, for example, probably occurred earlier in David's reign.
- Joab is David's nephew, his commander, and a man who repeatedly solves the king's problems with murder (Abner in chapter 3, Absalom here, Amasa in chapter 20).
- The famine of chapter 21 traces back to Saul's violation of the oath Israel swore to the Gibeonites in Joshua 9. Ancient covenants were sworn before God and taken with deadly seriousness.
- Araunah's threshing floor on Mount Moriah is where Solomon later built the temple (2 Chronicles 3:1), the same region as Genesis 22.
- First Chronicles 21 covers the census in parallel and supplies details 2 Samuel omits, including Joab's objection and the angel with a drawn sword.

NOTES ON THE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Question 1. *Joab confronts David in 19:5–7 for mourning Absalom while his soldiers slip back into the city like men ashamed of a victory. Was Joab right, and how do you weigh a father's grief against a king's public responsibility?*

Joab is blunt to the point of brutality, and he is also largely correct. A king's public grief over the man who tried to kill him and his men reads to the army as a verdict on their loyalty. Joab's threat in 19:7 is not kindness, but his diagnosis is accurate: David is indulging private sorrow at the cost of public duty, and the men who risked their lives are being made to feel like criminals.

Let the class sit in the tension rather than resolving it too fast. Grief is not sin, and a father weeping over a lost son is not weakness. But leadership carries obligations that do not pause for pain, and there are seasons when a man must stand up, wash his face, and go to the gate. Ask where each of them has a duty they have been avoiding under the cover of a real hurt.

Question 2. *David numbers the people, and afterward his heart strikes him (24:10). Scripture never says counting is sinful in itself, so talk through what David was actually reaching for and why it offended God.*

The text does not condemn counting as such; God Himself commanded a census in Numbers 1 and 26. What condemns this one is that Joab, of all people, objects on principle (24:3), that David's conscience convicts him

immediately afterward, and that what he counted was fighting men. This looks like a king measuring his security by the size of his army rather than by the God who had handed him Goliath with a sling.

Ask the class what their own census is. For one person it is the retirement account balance checked twice a day; for another it is the number of people who approve of him. Numbers are not evil. Trusting them is. Deuteronomy 17:16–17 warned Israel's kings about exactly this drift, and Psalm 20:7 answers it in one line.

Question 3. *David will not offer to the Lord that which costs him nothing (24:24). Name the places where our worship, our giving, and our service cost us nothing, and discuss what it would take to change that this month.*

Araunah's offer is generous and sincere, and David's refusal is one of the great sentences of the Old Testament. He understood that a gift someone else paid for is not an offering; it is a transaction with his name stamped on another man's sacrifice. Real worship involves loss. That is why the widow's two mites outweighed the large sums in Mark 12:41–44.

Get uncomfortably practical. Does anyone's giving change what they can do for themselves that month? Does anyone's service cost an evening they wanted, a Saturday they had plans for, a conversation they dreaded? Do not scold. Simply ask each person to name the one thing that would move their worship from convenient to costly, and then let the silence work.

NOTES ON THE EXTENDED QUESTIONS

1. *Second Samuel 22 appears again, with slight differences, as Psalm 18. Read both and list every image David uses for God in the opening verses. Which of them would you never have thought to use?*

David piles up images: rock, fortress, deliverer, God of my strength, shield, horn of my salvation, high tower, refuge, Savior. Every one of them is a picture of safety, and most are taken from the wilderness years when he was hiding in caves from Saul. Psalm 18 carries almost the identical text with a superscription tying it to the day the Lord delivered him from Saul's hand. The images a man uses for God usually come from where God actually met him.

2. *Trace Shimei through 16:5–13, 19:16–23, and 1 Kings 2:8–9. How does David handle a man who cursed him on the worst day of his life, and what does Solomon finally do about it?*

Shimei curses David and throws stones as the king flees, and Abishai wants to take his head. David refuses, saying the Lord may have told him to curse. When David returns in triumph, Shimei rushes to meet him and David swears he will not die. Years later David tells Solomon to deal with him, and Solomon confines him to Jerusalem; Shimei breaks the terms and is executed. David shows restraint in the moment of his own humiliation, which is the hardest moment to show it.

3. *Compare 2 Samuel 24:1 with 1 Chronicles 21:1. Each names a different source for the census. Read Job 1:6–12 and explain how the two statements fit together.*

Second Samuel says the anger of the Lord moved David to number Israel; First Chronicles says Satan stood up against Israel and moved David. Both are true at once, in the same way both are true in Job 1: Satan is the immediate tempter, and God, who is over all, permits it for His own purposes within His own anger against the nation. Scripture is comfortable saying that God allowed what Satan intended, without making God the author of anyone's sin (James 1:13).

4. *David's last words in 23:1–7 describe a ruler who is just and rules in the fear of God. List the images he uses, then read 2 Samuel 7:12–16 and consider which Son of David finally matches the description.*

David describes such a ruler as the light of morning at sunrise, a cloudless morning, and the tender grass springing out of the earth after rain. Then he immediately admits that his own house is not like that (23:5), and rests instead on the everlasting covenant God made with him. That covenant is fulfilled not in Solomon but in Jesus, the Son of David whose throne is established forever and whose reign began at His resurrection and ascension (Acts 2:29–36).

5. *The threshing floor David paid for became the place where the temple was built (2 Chronicles 3:1). Name one specific sacrifice of money, time, or comfort you will make this week that you would ordinarily talk yourself out of, and set the day you will do it.*

Answers will vary. Listen for a real number, a real date, and a real cost. A member who says he will give more is not yet where David is; a member who says he will give a specific amount out of a specific fund on a specific Sunday is.

Follow up privately in two weeks rather than publicly next Sunday.

HANDLE WITH CARE

- Chapter 21 records the execution of seven of Saul's descendants at the Gibeonites' demand. Teach it inside its own setting: a sworn national covenant violated by a king, an ancient world in which a house bore responsibility for its head, and a narrative that reports rather than commends. Do not draw modern applications about punishing children for a father's crimes; Deuteronomy 24:16 and Ezekiel 18:20 stand.
- The census judgment took seventy thousand lives. Do not soften it and do not explain it away. God's dealings with the nation of Israel under that covenant are not a template for how He deals with individuals now, and Luke 13:1-5 guards the class against drawing a straight line from calamity to personal guilt.
- Keep 2 Samuel 24:1 and 1 Chronicles 21:1 together and explain the relationship rather than letting a class member discover the difference alone later and conclude the Bible contradicts itself.
- Do not let admiration for David's mighty men turn the hour into hero stories. The point of the list is that God gave this kingdom its victories through ordinary men with names.

One Thing I Have Desired

PASSAGE OVERVIEW

Psalm 26 is uncomfortable for modern readers because David keeps insisting on his own integrity. Read in context, it is not a claim to sinlessness. It is a courtroom appeal by a man under specific false accusation, asking God, who alone knows the heart, to render the verdict. The same David wrote Psalm 51. A believer may honestly say he is not guilty of what he is charged with while knowing he is guilty of much else.

Psalm 27 is the jewel of the three. The first six verses are sung by a man who has been in genuine danger and has learned that fear has only one legitimate object. Then verse 4 narrows everything down. Of all the things a king might ask, he asks for nearness, to dwell in God's house and behold His beauty and inquire in His temple. If your class carries one verse out of this week, make it that one.

But notice what happens at verse 7. The voice changes. Hide not Thy face, leave me not, forsake me not. This is not a different psalm awkwardly attached; it is what faith actually sounds like from the inside. Confidence and pleading live in the same heart on the same day. Psalm 28 does the same in miniature, opening with a fear of God's silence and ending with a shout that He heard.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- All three carry Davidic superscriptions. Psalm 26 is a protestation of innocence, Psalm 27 blends confidence and lament, Psalm 28 is an individual lament closing in thanksgiving.
- “The house of the Lord” in David's lifetime was the tent that housed the ark; the temple was not yet built. David is speaking of God's presence, not a building program.
- Washing hands and going about the altar (26:6) refers to the ritual purity required of a worshiper approaching the tabernacle.
- “Lifting up the hands toward Thy holy oracle” (28:2) describes the ordinary posture of Israelite prayer, facing the most holy place.
- Imprecatory language such as 28:4 is an appeal to God as judge, not permission for personal retaliation. It belongs in the same Bible as Romans 12:19 because both hand vengeance to God.

NOTES ON THE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Question 1. *Psalm 26 begins with David inviting God to examine him and test his heart and mind. When did you last invite that kind of scrutiny, and what makes the invitation so uncomfortable to offer?*

Most of us pray in the opposite direction. We ask God to bless, to help, to provide, and to fix, and rather less often to examine. Psalm 139:23–24 makes the same request and adds the reason: so that anything wicked in him can be found and led out. That is an invitation to surgery, and nobody schedules surgery casually.

The discomfort comes from the fact that we already suspect what the examination would turn up. Ask the class to name one area they have quietly kept off the table in prayer. Then note that God's examination is never for the purpose of humiliation. He searches in order to heal, which is why David can ask for it and still say, in the same psalm, that his foot stands in an even place.

Question 2. *Psalm 27:4 names one thing David wants more than anything else a king could have. Read the verse in context and talk about what it would look like for someone in this room to genuinely have one thing.*

Verse 4 is not a wish for a religious career. It is a desire to be where God is, all his days, looking at Him and asking of Him. Everything David asks in the rest of the psalm grows out of that single root. A person with one thing has a settled center, and the hundred smaller decisions of a week arrange themselves around it almost automatically.

Press the honest question: what is our actual one thing? For most people it is security, or the approval of someone specific, or the success of a child. None of those are evil, and all of them make poor centers. Ask each person to finish the sentence, "One thing I have desired," with what his calendar and bank statement would say, then with what he wishes it said, and ask what would have to change between the two.

Question 3. *Psalm 27 moves from unshakable confidence in verses 1 through 6 to something far more anxious in verses 7 through 12. Why would the Spirit preserve a prayer that swings like that, and what does that permit us to bring to God?*

Because that is how faith actually lives. The Psalms are God's gift of honest language to people whose feelings will not stay in a straight line. If Scripture contained only verses 1 through 6, a struggling believer would conclude that his fear disqualifies him. Instead the same psalm holds the shout and the plea together and closes by commanding courage, which is a word you only need when you are afraid.

Tell your class what this permits. It permits them to pray honestly rather than performing for God, to say the fear out loud instead of pretending it is not there, and to end where David ends: wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart. The command in verse 14 is addressed to himself, which is one of the most useful habits in the Psalms.

NOTES ON THE EXTENDED QUESTIONS

1. *List everything David says he has refused to do in Psalm 26:4–5. Which of those choices about company is hardest for you to make?*

He has not sat with idolatrous people, will not go in with hypocrites, has hated the assembly of evildoers, and will not sit with the wicked. Three of the four verbs are about where he sits, that is, about sustained, comfortable company rather than an occasional encounter. Answers will vary on which is hardest; listen for honesty about friendships, media, and the rooms where a person laughs at what he should not laugh at. Compare 1 Corinthians 15:33.

2. *Psalm 27:10 imagines father and mother forsaking him. Read Hebrews 13:5–6 and describe what God promises the person nobody else is holding on to.*

Hebrews 13:5 quotes God's promise never to leave or forsake, and verse 6 turns it into a confession: the Lord is my helper, I will not fear what man shall do to me. The promise is not that family never fails. It is that God's faithfulness does not depend on theirs. For a member who has been abandoned by a parent or a spouse, this is one of the most important verses in the Bible, and it belongs to him personally.

3. *The word wait closes Psalm 27. Compare verse 14 with Isaiah 40:31 and explain the difference between waiting on God and merely waiting for something to change.*

Isaiah 40:31 says those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength. Biblical waiting is active and directed: it is expectancy toward a Person, not passivity toward a calendar. It includes prayer, obedience in the meantime, and refusal to force God's hand by grabbing what He has not given. Merely waiting drains a man; waiting on the Lord renews him, because the waiting itself is a form of trust.

4. *In Psalm 28:3–5 David asks God to repay the wicked according to their deeds. Read Romans 12:19 and explain how a Christian may pray honestly about injustice without praying for personal revenge.*

David hands the matter to God rather than taking it up himself, which is exactly what Romans 12:19 commands: do not avenge yourselves, but give place to wrath, for vengeance belongs to God. The psalm is a prayer, not a plan. A Christian may say plainly to God that a wrong is a wrong and ask Him to judge it rightly, while refusing to repay evil for evil and while praying for the offender's repentance (Matthew 5:44). The difference is who holds the sword.

5. *David asked for one thing. Write down the one thing you have actually been asking God for lately, and name the single change that would move your real desire closer to his.*

Answers will vary, and the gap between the two answers is the lesson. Listen for people who name something good but small, and help them see that Psalm 27:4 does not forbid other requests; it orders them. If a class member

cannot name any single desire, that is worth a gentle private conversation, because a life with no center will be organized by whatever shouts loudest that week.

HANDLE WITH CARE

- Psalm 26 is not a claim of sinless perfection and must not be taught as one. It is a plea of innocence against particular accusations, offered by a man who elsewhere confesses deeply.
- Handle the imprecatory line in 28:4 honestly. It is an appeal to God's justice by a man under attack, preserved for our instruction, not a model for personal vengeance.
- Do not transfer Old Testament temple language directly to a church building. The house of God today is the people (1 Timothy 3:15; 1 Corinthians 3:16), and Psalm 27:4 is about God's presence, not architecture.
- Name the genre out loud. Two of these three psalms swing between confidence and distress, and a class that expects a psalm to hold one mood will misread them.

Confession, Cross, and Glory

PASSAGE OVERVIEW

Mark 8 is the turning point of the Gospel. Everything before it asks who this man is; everything after it explains what He came to do. The hinge is Caesarea Philippi. Jesus asks two questions, one about public opinion and one that admits no spectators: “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answers, “You are the Christ,” and the Gospel pivots on the spot.

Watch how fast the correction comes. Jesus begins teaching plainly that the Son of Man must suffer, be rejected, be killed, and rise again, and Peter takes Him aside to rebuke Him. The answer, “Get behind Me, Satan,” is startling until you remember where Peter’s suggestion first came from in Matthew 4. A Christ without a cross is the oldest temptation there is, and it is still offered today in gentler language.

Then 8:34 opens the invitation to everyone, not just the Twelve: deny yourself, take up your cross, follow Me. A cross was not an inconvenience, it was an instrument of execution, and everyone in that crowd had seen men carrying one down a road. Six days later the Father confirms the Son on the mountain, and the order matters. The cross is announced first; the glory is shown second. Mark will not let a reader have one without the other.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- Caesarea Philippi lay at the foot of Mount Hermon in the far north, a center of pagan worship, which makes the location of Peter’s confession striking.
- Mark’s Gospel is structured around this confession; from 8:31 onward Jesus predicts His death three times (8:31; 9:31; 10:33–34), and each prediction is followed by a failure of the disciples and a lesson on servanthood.
- The transfiguration presents Moses (the Law) and Elijah (the Prophets) with Jesus, and both step aside at the Father’s word.
- “Son of Man” is Jesus’ favorite self-designation and reaches back to Daniel 7:13–14, where one like a Son of Man receives an everlasting dominion.
- The discussion about Elijah in 9:11–13 refers to Malachi 4:5–6, which Jesus applies to John the Baptist (compare Matthew 17:12–13; Luke 1:17).

NOTES ON THE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Question 1. *Jesus refuses the sign the Pharisees demand (8:11–12) though He had already done many. What were they really asking for, and why would one more miracle not have moved them?*

They asked for a sign from heaven, which means a spectacle on their terms, something cosmic and unambiguous that would settle the matter without requiring anything of them. Jesus had been healing lepers and raising the dead in front of them for months. The problem was never evidence. Luke 16:31 says it exactly: if they will not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.

Take this into the present carefully. People still say they would believe if God did something dramatic. Ask the class what evidence they were given before they obeyed the gospel, and whether more would have made obedience easier or simply postponed it. Faith comes by hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17), which is precisely why God chose that method rather than fireworks.

Question 2. *Peter gets the confession exactly right in 8:29 and earns the sharpest rebuke in the Gospel a few verses later. How can a man be right about who Jesus is and badly wrong about what He came to do?*

Peter had the title right and the content wrong. His Messiah conquered; he had no place for a Messiah who was killed. That is why the confession and the rebuke sit side by side, and why Jesus answers so sharply: Peter is voicing the very suggestion Satan made in the wilderness, a crown without a cross.

The same mistake is available now. A person can be doctrinally correct about the deity of Christ and still resent everything the cross asks of him. Ask the class where they want Jesus to be Lord of the outcome without being Lord of the cost: in a marriage they want fixed on their terms, in a career they want blessed but not surrendered. Being right about Him is the beginning, not the end.

Question 3. *In 9:1 Jesus promises that some standing there would not taste death before they saw the kingdom of God come with power. Read Acts 1:8 and Acts 2:1–4, and talk through when that promise was kept.*

Jesus said some standing there would live to see it, which rules out any event still in the future. The kingdom came with power at Pentecost: the Spirit came as promised, the gospel was preached, three thousand were baptized, and the Lord added to the church daily (Acts 2). Colossians 1:13 says Christians have already been translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son, and Revelation 1:9 has John already a companion in it.

Be clear and be kind. Daniel 2:44 said the kingdom would be established in the days of those kings and would never be destroyed. Christ reigns now at the right hand of God (Acts 2:33–36; 1 Corinthians 15:24–25), and His kingdom is entered by the new birth (John 3:3–5). There is no earthly political kingdom still waiting to be set up. Many in your community have been taught otherwise; teach the text and let it do the work.

NOTES ON THE EXTENDED QUESTIONS

1. *The blind man of Bethsaida is healed in two stages (8:22–26). Given where Mark places this story, just before disciples who half see who Jesus is, explain why he may have put it exactly here.*

Mark is a careful writer, and this two-stage healing sits between disciples who have eyes and do not see (8:18) and Peter's confession, which is genuine sight that is still blurry. The man first sees men like trees walking, then sees everything clearly. That is exactly the disciples' condition: they now recognize who Jesus is, but their understanding of what that means will not come into focus until after the resurrection. The placement is almost certainly deliberate.

2. *Write out the conditions Jesus gives for following Him in 8:34–38, then read Luke 9:23 and note the single word Luke adds to the second condition.*

Jesus says: let him deny himself, let him take up his cross, and let him follow Me. Then He gives the reasoning, that whoever would save his life will lose it, and asks what profit there is in gaining the whole world and losing one's soul. Luke 9:23 adds the word "daily" to taking up the cross, which turns a heroic moment into a way of life. Both are needed. The cross is carried once for all in commitment and every morning in practice.

3. *Compare Mark 9:1 with Daniel 2:44 and Colossians 1:13. When was the kingdom established, who reigns in it, and where does that leave the idea of a future earthly kingdom?*

The kingdom was established in the first century, on Pentecost, as Daniel 2:44 predicted and Mark 9:1 promised. Christ reigns now, seated at God's right hand, and His kingdom is the church over which He is head (Colossians 1:13, 18; Ephesians 1:20–23). A future earthly political kingdom centered in Jerusalem has no place in this framework; the promises to Abraham and to David are fulfilled in Christ (Galatians 3:16; Acts 2:29–36).

4. *At the transfiguration the Father says of Jesus, "This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!" Read Hebrews 1:1–2 and explain why the voice ends with those two words while Moses and Elijah are standing right there.*

Moses represents the Law and Elijah the Prophets, and Peter wants to build three shelters as if all three men were on the same level. The Father corrects him mid-sentence. Hebrews 1:1–2 says God formerly spoke through prophets in many portions and manners, but has in these last days spoken to us by His Son. The Law and the Prophets did their work and pointed forward; now the authority rests with Christ alone, and the instruction is simply to hear Him.

5. *Jesus asks what a man would take in exchange for his own soul (8:37). Name one thing you have been trading pieces of your soul for, and the concrete step you will take this week to stop paying.*

Answers will vary and will often be uncomfortable. Common trades include time sold to work that no amount of money buys back, integrity traded for advancement, and purity traded for a screen. Listen for one concrete step with a deadline. General resolutions about doing better are exactly the sort of thing Jesus was cutting through when He put the question in terms of a transaction.

HANDLE WITH CARE

- Mark 9:1 is a strong text on the kingdom. Teach it plainly: the kingdom came with power at Pentecost. Do not let the class drift into speculation about a millennium, and do not be harsh with members who have heard premillennial teaching all their lives.
- The transfiguration gives no warrant for praying to Moses, Elijah, or any other departed saint. The Father's instruction is to hear the Son, and there is one mediator between God and men (1 Timothy 2:5).
- Denying self is not self-punishment or earning merit. It is the surrender of the right to run your own life, and it is answered by grace, not wages.
- Skeptics use Mark 9:1 to argue that Jesus predicted His return within a generation and failed. Answer it directly: the promise was about the kingdom coming with power, and Acts 2 records its arrival.

Your Body Is Not Your Own

PASSAGE OVERVIEW

Chapter 6 opens with an embarrassment. Members of the church in Corinth were hauling each other before pagan magistrates over property disputes, in a city where such lawsuits were a form of public entertainment. Paul's argument is not merely that they are losing; it is that going to court at all is already a defeat (6:7). He then asks two questions that shame them: are you not competent to judge such trifles, and would it not be better simply to be wronged?

Verses 9 through 11 are among the most hopeful in Paul's letters. He gives a hard list, states plainly that people who live that way will not inherit the kingdom of God, and then says such were some of you. Not all. Some. The church at Corinth had former idolaters, thieves, drunkards, and people who had practiced homosexuality sitting in the assembly, and every one of them had been washed, sanctified, and justified. The gospel's power is not that it excuses sin but that it changes people.

The rest of the reading works out the implications for the body. All things may be lawful, but not all are helpful, and nothing is permitted to master a Christian. Fornication is uniquely serious because it joins to another what belongs to Christ, and because the Christian's body is the Spirit's dwelling and was bought at a price. Chapter 7 then moves from prohibition to positive instruction, teaching mutual obligation in marriage, the goodness of singleness for those who can receive it, and the believer's duty in a spiritually divided home.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- Corinth's civil courts handled small claims in public, and the outcome often turned on the social standing of the parties rather than the merits of the case.
- Paul is answering a series of questions the Corinthians wrote to him; 7:1 begins that section with "Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me."
- First Corinthians 7 was written with some present pressure in view (7:26 mentions the present distress), which shapes Paul's counsel about remaining as one is.
- In 7:10–11 Paul distinguishes what the Lord commanded during His ministry from what he himself writes by inspiration in 7:12; the distinction is about source, not authority. All of it is the commandment of the Lord (14:37).
- The washing of 6:11 connects naturally with Acts 22:16 and Titus 3:5, where washing language describes baptism into Christ.

NOTES ON THE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Question 1. *Paul is stunned that brothers drag one another before unbelieving judges (6:1–8). What is at stake for the church's reputation, and what do you make of his question, why not rather accept the wrong?*

Two things are at stake. First, the watching city: Corinthians already expected Christians to be different, and a public lawsuit between brothers advertised that they were not. Second, the church's own competence: Paul says a congregation that expects to share in judgment ought to be able to settle a dispute about money among its own members. His question in verse 7 cuts deepest. Why not just be wronged? Why not absorb the loss?

Modern application requires care. Paul is not forbidding a Christian from ever using the legal system, and he is not telling an abused member to stay silent or a defrauded widow to accept theft. He is addressing brothers in dispute who could resolve it inside the family. Ask the class what they would lose by absorbing a wrong, and then ask what Jesus lost (1 Peter 2:21–23).

Question 2. *First Corinthians 6:9–11 names people who will not inherit the kingdom and then says, “And such were some of you.” Talk about what changed for them, and about the three things Paul says happened in verse 11.*

What changed was not their background, their temperament, or their history. Verse 11 names three things, all passive, all done to them: they were washed, they were sanctified, they were justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. The washing points naturally to baptism, where a penitent believer is united with Christ’s death and raised to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:3–4; Acts 22:16).

Two applications, and both matter. First, no one is beyond the reach of the gospel; this church included people from every item on the list. Second, the change is real and is expected to show. Paul does not say such are some of you. He says such were. Hold both the hope and the standard together, gently, because someone in the room is probably fighting a battle he has told nobody about.

Question 3. *In 7:3–5 Paul says neither husband nor wife has authority over his or her own body. That is startling language. How does that mutual claim actually protect a marriage rather than diminish it?*

Paul’s language is deliberately mutual and, for its day, remarkable. The husband is to render to his wife what he owes her, and the wife to the husband, and each says of his own body that it belongs to the other. In a culture where a husband’s rights were assumed and a wife’s were not, Paul assigns the identical obligation in both directions.

The protection is real. A marriage in which each partner is responsible to give rather than entitled to take is a marriage with far less room for resentment or for temptation, which is exactly the danger Paul names in verse 5. Keep the discussion at the level of principle and kindness. The class does not need details, and married couples in the room will apply it themselves on the drive home.

NOTES ON THE EXTENDED QUESTIONS

1. *List the sins named in 6:9–10, then read Galatians 5:19–21 and note how much overlaps. Why would Paul keep putting the same list in front of churches?*

The list includes the sexually immoral, idolaters, adulterers, the effeminate, men who practice homosexuality, thieves, the covetous, drunkards, revilers, and swindlers. Galatians 5:19–21 overlaps heavily, adding hatred, strife, jealousy, outbursts of wrath, and envy, and closing with the same warning about not inheriting the kingdom. Paul repeats the list because congregations drift, because the culture around them treated most of these as normal, and because Christians need to know what actually endangers a soul, as opposed to what merely embarrasses a church.

2. *Paul gives several reasons in 6:13–20 why sexual sin is unlike other sins. Trace them and state each one in a single sentence of your own.*

Paul argues, first, that the body is not for immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body (6:13). Second, that God raised the Lord and will raise us, so bodies have an eternal future (6:14). Third, that our bodies are members of Christ, so joining them elsewhere is unthinkable (6:15–17). Fourth, that this sin is against one’s own body in a way others are not (6:18). Fifth, that the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (6:19). Sixth, that we were bought with a price and are not our own (6:20).

3. *Read 6:19–20 beside Romans 12:1. If your body was purchased and is now a temple of the Holy Spirit, what claims does that make on your sleep, your appetite, your eyes, and your work?*

Romans 12:1 calls for presenting the body as a living sacrifice, which is called reasonable service. Put the two together and ownership is settled. That touches rest, since a body run to exhaustion serves no one well; appetite, since what masters me contradicts 6:12; the eyes, since what a Christian looks at is not a private matter; and work, since labor done in the body can be offered to God. Answers will vary in emphasis, but the principle should not: a purchased body is a stewardship.

4. *In 7:12–16 Paul instructs a Christian married to an unbeliever. Trace exactly what he tells that believer to do, and explain what he means by saying the unbelieving spouse is sanctified by the believing one.*

Paul tells the believer not to leave. If the unbelieving spouse is content to live with the Christian, the Christian is to stay in the marriage, because the unbeliever is sanctified, that is, set apart in relation to God through the believing

partner, and the children are likewise in a favored position rather than an unclean one. This is not a statement that the unbeliever is saved without obedience. If the unbeliever departs, the Christian is not under bondage in such cases, and God has called us to peace. Verse 16 holds out the hope that the believer's life may yet win the spouse (compare 1 Peter 3:1-2).

5. *Paul writes that you are not your own. Name one habit involving your body that would change this week if you actually believed that sentence, and tell one person you are changing it.*

Answers will vary. Listen for specificity and for accountability, since the question deliberately asks them to tell someone. Good answers tend to be unglamorous: a bedtime, a filtering program with the password held by a spouse, a decision about alcohol, an end to a private correspondence. Follow up in a month, not in a week.

HANDLE WITH CARE

- Divorce and remarriage surfaces at 7:10-15. Teach the standard plainly from the words of Jesus (Matthew 19:3-9; Mark 10:2-12): God's design is one man and one woman for life, and the single stated exception is fornication. Then say clearly that the classroom is not the place to settle any individual's situation. Invite anyone with a personal question to speak with the elders privately, and do not let the hour become a case study.
- The phrase "not under bondage" in 7:15 is understood differently by sincere brethren. State what the text says, note the range of understanding honestly, refuse to build doctrine on an inference, and keep the class from arguing over hypotheticals.
- First Corinthians 6:9 names homosexual practice. Teach it as Scripture states it, without cruelty and without apology, and be certain the class hears verse 11 in the same breath. Some were, and were washed. That is the point of the paragraph.
- Do not let 6:1-8 become a rule that a Christian may never use a court for anything, nor a reason to tell a victim of abuse or fraud to keep silent. Paul is addressing brothers in a dispute the church could settle.

NEXT WEEK'S READING: 1 Kings 1-5 · Psalm 29-30 · Mark 9:14-50 · 1 Corinthians 7:17-8:13

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