

Through the Bible in 24 Months



WEEK 44 OF 104

Open His Eyes

Week 44 of 104 • 42% of the way through the Bible

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

General Old Testament	2 Kings 1-8
Wisdom Literature	Psalms 35-36
Gospels	Mark 12:18-13:13
General New Testament	1 Corinthians 14

THIS WEEK AT A GLANCE

A servant wakes up, looks over the wall, and sees an army that has come for his master. He panics, and who would not. Then Elisha prays a strange prayer, "Lord, open his eyes," and the young man discovers that the hills have been full of fire the whole time. That is this week. David asks God to see what is being done to him. Jesus tells the Sadducees they are wrong about the resurrection because they know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God, and then He sits down across from the offering box and notices a widow nobody else noticed. And Paul tells a noisy church to order its assembly so plainly that a stranger walks in, hears the word, and says out loud that God is really among them.

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 Kings 1-8

The Prophet's Double Portion

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Ahaziah falls through a lattice and sends messengers to a Philistine god, and Elijah meets them on the road. Then a whirlwind, a chariot of fire, and a mantle falling to the ground. From there Elisha moves through eight chapters of ordinary desperation: a widow with one jar of oil and two sons about to be sold, a woman who builds a guest room, poison in a stew pot, a borrowed axe head at the bottom of the Jordan, a Syrian general with leprosy, a besieged city, and four lepers who find an empty camp.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Elisha asks for a double portion of Elijah's spirit and is told it is a hard thing (2:9-10). Read what he is actually asking for, the portion of the firstborn heir, and talk about what it cost him to receive it and to carry it for the next fifty years.

2. Naaman comes with horses, chariots, silver, and a letter, and is told to go wash in a muddy river seven times (5:9–14). Why did that enrage him, and where do we still prefer a religion with more dignity in it than simple obedience to what God actually said?
3. In 6:15–17 the servant sees an army and Elisha sees the same hillside filled with horses and chariots of fire. Both men were looking at the same view. Discuss what the servant was missing, and name the fears in your own week that come from counting only what can be counted.

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Make a list of every person Elisha helps in these chapters. Note how many of them are poor, foreign, female, or otherwise powerless, and write down what that pattern says about the God who sent him.
2. Read 2 Kings 2:11 alongside Genesis 5:24 and Hebrews 11:5. Only two men in Scripture are said to have left this life without dying; note what each account emphasizes and what it does not tell us.
3. Trace Gehazi through 2 Kings 4:12–37 and 5:20–27. Write down what he says out loud and what he says in his heart, and mark the moment his usefulness turned into appetite.
4. In Luke 4:25–27 Jesus deliberately reminds a synagogue of the widow of Zarephath and of Naaman the Syrian, and they try to throw Him off a cliff. Explain, from these chapters, why those two examples were so offensive.
5. The woman of Shunem looked at a traveling preacher and said, “Let us make a small upper room” (4:8–10). Name one person God has put on your road, and do one specific, inconvenient thing for that person before the week is out.

WISDOM LITERATURE Psalm 35–36

Plead My Cause, O Lord

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Two psalms about what people do in the dark. In Psalm 35 David is under attack by men he had prayed and fasted for, and he asks God to take up shield and spear on his behalf. He is not quiet about it. Psalm 36 steps back and paints two portraits side by side: a man with no fear of God before his eyes, plotting on his bed, and a God whose mercy reaches to the heavens and whose people drink from a river of delights.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Psalm 35 asks God to fight, to bring shame on the attackers, and to let their net catch them. How can a Christian pray this psalm honestly, and what keeps it from becoming permission for personal revenge (Romans 12:19)?
2. Read 35:11–16, where David describes mourning and fasting for people who later gathered to tear at him. Talk about the particular sting of being repaid evil for good, and about what that memory does to a person over the following years if he does not hand it to God.
3. Psalm 36 hangs two pictures on the same wall: verses 1 through 4, and verses 5 through 9. Compare the size of each world. Which of the two do your thoughts actually live in on a hard day, and what changes that?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Write out David's requests in 35:1–8 and notice who is being asked to act in every single one of them. Then state what that fact alone teaches about the difference between prayer and plotting.
2. Romans 3:10–18 strings together several Old Testament passages and ends with Psalm 36:1, "There is no fear of God before their eyes." Read Paul's argument and describe how he is using it and what he concludes in Romans 3:23.
3. Trace the images in 36:5–9: heavens, clouds, mountains, the great deep, the shadow of wings, a house, a river, a fountain, light. List them in order and describe the movement from the largest picture to the most personal one.
4. Psalm 35:13–14 says David fasted and bowed down in mourning for the very people who turned on him, behaving as though he grieved for a friend or a brother. Compare Matthew 5:44 and Luke 6:27–28, and write down what the two passages share.
5. Name one person who has genuinely wronged you. Pray for that person by name every day this week, and do one concrete good thing for him or her that costs you something before Sunday.

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

The Sadducees arrive with a trick question about a woman who buried seven husbands, and Jesus takes their own Scriptures and turns them into an argument for the resurrection. A scribe asks which commandment is first, and gets an answer he agrees with out loud. Jesus asks His own question about David's Son, warns about scribes who devour widows' houses, and then watches a widow put in two small coins. Leaving the temple, He tells the disciples that not one stone will be left on another.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Jesus tells the Sadducees they are mistaken because they know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God (12:24). Discuss the two different ways that sentence describes of going wrong, and give an example of each that you have actually seen.
2. The scribe in 12:28–34 gives a fine answer about loving God and neighbor, and Jesus tells him he is not far from the kingdom of God. Talk about what “not far” means, and about what a person in that position still lacks.
3. Jesus sat down opposite the treasury and watched how people gave (12:41–44). What did He see in the widow that the accountants could not see, and how would it change your week to live as though He is still sitting there?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Write out the argument Jesus makes from Exodus 3:6 in Mark 12:26–27. Pay attention to the verb tense, and state in your own words why “I am the God of Abraham” proves that Abraham is not finished.
 2. List the four things in 12:30 with which we are told to love God. For each one, name a specific place in an ordinary week where that particular love is contested.
 3. Jesus quotes Psalm 110:1 in 12:35–37. Read that psalm, then read Acts 2:34–36, and write down what Peter says happened to the promise on the day of Pentecost.
 4. Notice the order of 12:38–40 and 12:41–44: scribes who devour widows' houses, and then a widow giving everything she had. Describe what Mark is doing by placing those two paragraphs side by side.
 5. In 13:9–13 Jesus warns that following Him will cost His disciples standing, family, and safety. Name the place where fear of what people will say has kept you quiet, and have one specific conversation this week that you have been avoiding.
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Order in the Assembly**WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE**

Paul takes a church that loved the spectacular and gives it a single measuring stick: does this build anybody up? He compares tongues with prophecy at length, points out that an uninterpreted language leaves the church no better off than a bugle with no recognizable call, and describes what happens when an outsider walks into a room where everyone is talking at once. Then he gives specific instructions about who speaks, how many, in what order, and when to be silent.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Trace the word edify, or build up, through this chapter (14:3, 4, 5, 12, 17, 26). Paul makes it the test for everything done in the assembly. How would applying that one test reorder our own preferences about what happens when the church comes together?
2. In 14:6–19 Paul argues that a language nobody understands does the hearers no good, and he says he would rather speak five understandable words than ten thousand in a tongue. Discuss what this tells us about the actual purpose God gave the gift for, and about why so much modern practice looks nothing like it.
3. Paul concludes in 14:33–40 with instructions about order and about the silence of women in the assemblies, and he says in 14:37 that what he is writing is the commandment of the Lord. Read those verses alongside 1 Timothy 2:11–12 and discuss what is actually being regulated and what is not.

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List every reason Paul gives in this chapter that prophecy is more useful in the assembly than speaking in a tongue. Then state in one sentence the principle that all of them serve.
2. Read 1 Corinthians 13:8–10 immediately before 14:1–5. Write down what Paul says would happen to tongues, prophecy, and knowledge, and identify from the text what event he says would bring that about.
3. Paul quotes Isaiah 28:11–12 in 14:21 and then draws a conclusion in 14:22. Look up the original setting in Isaiah and explain how hearing a foreign language was a sign, and to whom.
4. In 14:23–25 an unbeliever walks into the assembly. Note carefully what the text says convicts him, what he learns about himself, and what he finally says out loud.
5. Verse 26 says, “Let all things be done for edification.” Identify one thing you want at the assembly mainly because you like it, and one specific thing you will do this Sunday aimed entirely at building up somebody else. Then do it.

NEXT WEEK'S READING: 2 Kings 9-17 · Psalm 37 · Mark 13:14-14:11 · 1 Corinthians 15:1-34

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