

Through the Bible in 24 Months, Teacher's Guide



WEEK 46 OF 104

Numbered Days

THIS WEEK'S READINGS	
General Old Testament	2 Kings 18-25
Wisdom Literature	Psalms 38-39
Gospels	Mark 14:12-50
General New Testament	1 Corinthians 15:35-16:24

TEACHING AIM AND ORIENTATION

Your aim this week is to help a class of busy adults take the length of their own lives seriously without becoming morbid about it. Hezekiah is handed fifteen extra years and spends the end of them relieved that the bill comes due after he is gone. Josiah gets a late start and gives everything he has left. A psalmist asks God to tell him the number. Jesus spends His last free hours arranging a room, giving a memorial, and praying in a garden. And Paul says that the reason a life spent on God is not wasted is that this mortal will put on immortality.

Doctrinally, several things are at stake. The Lord's Supper is instituted in Mark 14, so say clearly what it is, a memorial and a communion observed on the first day of every week, and what it is not. First Corinthians 15:35-58 is the plainest passage in the New Testament on the resurrection body, and it rules out both a secret rapture and any separate later resurrection: one coming, one resurrection of the just and the unjust, one judgment. First Corinthians 16:2 gives the pattern for giving, which is proportional rather than a bound tithe. And 2 Kings 22 and 23 give you a striking picture of what happens when Scripture is read aloud to people who have not heard it.

Formationally, the thread is what a person does with the time he has left, especially when he knows it is short. Josiah tore his clothes and got to work. Hezekiah relaxed. The woman in last week's reading broke the jar. The disciples fell asleep. Ask your class this, and give them a full minute of silence before anyone answers: if you were told on Friday that you had five years, name the first thing you would stop doing and the first thing you would start, and then say why you are waiting for the announcement.

SUGGESTED PLAN FOR THE TWO SESSIONS

First session: Take up Mark 14:12-50. Give the first half of the hour to the institution of the Lord's Supper, since it deserves a full and unhurried treatment, and the second half to Gethsemane. End with 14:50, "they all forsook Him and fled," and let the class sit with it rather than resolving it.

Second session: Take up 1 Corinthians 15:35-16:24. Build the lesson on the seed, walk through the four contrasts of verses 42 through 44, and read 15:54-58 aloud without stopping. Then spend the last fifteen minutes on 16:1-2, which is the practical application the chapter itself makes.

The other two readings: Second Kings 18-25 and Psalms 38 and 39 carry the extended questions. Encourage the class to read the Hezekiah and Josiah chapters in one sitting and to notice how the book ends. Warn them that Psalms 38 and 39 are written from inside a hard season, and tell them that the Bible's willingness to print such prayers is itself a kindness.

Reform, Ruin, and Exile

PASSAGE OVERVIEW

Chapters 18 and 19 are one of the great deliverance accounts in Scripture, and they are built on a contrast of voices. The Rabshakeh stands outside the wall and speaks in Hebrew so the men on the wall can hear him, and his speech is a masterpiece of intimidation: do not let Hezekiah deceive you, no god of any nation has delivered its land, your God is no different. Hezekiah's answer is not a counter-speech. He tears his clothes, goes into the house of the Lord, spreads the letter out, and prays. That night the angel of the Lord goes through the Assyrian camp, and Sennacherib goes home and is murdered by his own sons in the temple of his god.

Then the same king who prayed so well prays again, is given fifteen more years, and uses some of them badly. Envoys arrive from Babylon, and Hezekiah shows them everything: the silver, the gold, the spices, the armory, all his treasures. Isaiah asks what they saw and then tells him what it will cost: all of it, and his own sons, carried to Babylon. Hezekiah's reply is one of the saddest sentences in Kings. The word is good, he says, if there will be peace and truth in my days.

The last chapters run downhill fast. Manasseh reigns fifty-five years, the longest reign in Judah's history and the worst, rebuilding everything his father tore down and shedding innocent blood until Jerusalem was full of it. Then Josiah, eight years old at his accession, and a discovery in the temple during a repair project: the book of the law. He hears it read and tears his clothes, because the reading tells him what has been true all along. His reform is exhaustive and his Passover is unequaled since the days of the judges. And yet 23:26 says the Lord did not turn from the fierceness of His wrath because of Manasseh. Josiah dies at Megiddo, four kings stumble through twenty-two years, and Nebuchadnezzar burns the house of the Lord.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- Hezekiah reigned roughly 715 to 686 B.C.; Sennacherib's campaign against Judah in 701 B.C. is recorded in Assyrian sources as well, including Sennacherib's own account, which notably never claims to have taken Jerusalem.
- Isaiah the prophet is the same man whose book your class will read later; Isaiah 36 through 39 records these same events almost word for word.
- The book found in the temple in 622 B.C. was most likely Deuteronomy or the whole law of Moses; that it had to be found at all says a great deal about the preceding decades.
- Jerusalem fell to Babylon in 586 B.C. The temple was burned, the walls broken down, and the people carried away in three deportations (605, 597, and 586 B.C.).
- Second Kings ends with an odd, quiet paragraph: Jehoiachin released from prison in Babylon and eating at the king's table. The line of David is humiliated but not extinguished.
- These chapters overlap with the ministries of Isaiah, Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Habakkuk, and Jeremiah, all of whom your class will read in the coming year.

NOTES ON THE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Question 1. *When Sennacherib's letter arrives, Hezekiah goes into the house of the Lord and spreads it out before God (19:14–19). Read his prayer carefully and notice what he finally asks for. How is that different from the way most of us pray when a crisis letter shows up?*

Read the prayer slowly, because the structure of it is the lesson. Hezekiah begins with who God is: the God of Israel, who dwells between the cherubim, who alone is God of all the kingdoms of the earth, who made heaven and earth. Then he states the facts honestly, including the fact that Assyria really has destroyed those other

nations, and he names why: they were the work of men's hands, wood and stone. Then the request. And when it comes, it is not, first of all, about survival. Save us, he says, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You are the Lord God, You alone.

Most of us pray the crisis and stop there. Hezekiah prays the crisis into a larger frame in which God's reputation matters more than his own comfort, and then he asks for deliverance inside that frame. Ask the class what would change in their praying if they added that clause honestly to the thing they are most worried about right now. It is not a formula for getting more; it is a way of remembering, in the middle of fear, whose story we are actually in. Note also the physical act: he took the letter and spread it before the Lord. Some people in your class need permission to do exactly that with a diagnosis or a bank statement.

Question 2. *The book of the law is found, read aloud, and Josiah tears his clothes (22:8–13), and what follows is the most thorough reform in Judah's history. Yet 23:26–27 says the Lord did not turn from His anger. Discuss what that combination teaches about genuine repentance and about consequences that still have to be lived through.*

Josiah's response to the reading is the model. He did not debate the book, form a committee, or ask whether the standard was realistic after so many years. He tore his clothes. Then he acted on every line of it: the vessels made for Baal carried out and burned, the idolatrous priests put down, the Asherah taken from the house of the Lord, the high places from Geba to Beersheba broken, the altar at Bethel that Jeroboam built pulled down, mediums and household idols cleared out, and a Passover kept as it had not been kept since the days of the judges. Verse 25 says there was no king before or after him who turned to the Lord with all his heart, soul, and might.

And then 23:26. The reform was real and it was not undone, but it did not erase what Manasseh had spent fifty-five years building into the nation. Teach this carefully, because your class contains people living with the aftermath of years they cannot get back. Repentance is genuine and God receives it, and consequences frequently remain: the marriage still bears the scar, the body still carries the damage, the child still remembers. Forgiveness is not the same as the reversal of history. Say so plainly, and then say the other half: Josiah's obedience was not wasted. He died in peace with God, which 22:20 promised him, and the nation had a generation of truth before the end.

Question 3. *Isaiah tells Hezekiah his sons will be carried to Babylon, and the king answers, "Is it not good, if peace and truth be in my days?" (20:19). Name the decisions people make on that principle today, and name what it costs the generation that comes after.*

Hezekiah heard that everything he owned and everyone he fathered would end up in Babylon, and he called the word good. The reasoning is in the second half of the sentence: if there will be peace and truth in my days. It is the calculation of a man who has quietly decided that the future is somebody else's problem, and it comes from a good king at the end of an extended life. Comfort does this to people. Fifteen extra years, and he spends the last of them relieved that the bill comes due after he is gone.

Now make it current, and be specific rather than political. It is the man who spends what his children will have to repay. The couple who will not deal with a problem because avoiding it works well enough for now. The church that stops teaching something difficult because the present members already agree. The elder or preacher who leaves a hard decision for whoever comes next. Ask each person to name the thing he is postponing because he personally will not be there when it lands, and then read 2 Timothy 2:2 as the opposite instinct: commit it to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

NOTES ON THE EXTENDED QUESTIONS

1. *Hezekiah broke the bronze serpent Moses had made, because Israel had been burning incense to it (18:4). Read Numbers 21:8–9 and John 3:14–15, then describe how a God-given memorial turned into an idol and what that warns us about.*

Numbers 21:8–9 records God commanding Moses to make a bronze serpent and set it on a pole, so that anyone bitten who looked at it would live. It was a genuine act of God through a physical object, and Jesus Himself uses it in John 3:14–15 as a picture of His own lifting up. Yet by Hezekiah's day the people were burning incense to it, and it

had a name, Nehushtan. Hezekiah broke it in pieces. The warning is direct: anything, however genuinely from God, can be turned into an object of trust in its own right. Buildings, translations, traditions, and even the memory of a great preacher can quietly become Nehushtan.

2. *Make a list of everything Josiah removes, breaks, burns, or defiles in chapter 23. Count the items, and note how many of them had been standing since Solomon.*

Chapter 23 lists roughly two dozen actions: burning the vessels made for Baal and Asherah in the fields of Kidron, removing the idolatrous priests, bringing out the wooden image and burning it and beating it to dust, tearing down the ritual booths, defiling the high places from Geba to Beersheba, breaking the high places at the gates, defiling Topheth so no one could sacrifice a child there, removing the horses dedicated to the sun, breaking the altars Ahaz and Manasseh had made, defiling the high places Solomon had built for Ashtoreth, Chemosh, and Milcom, pulling down the altar at Bethel, putting away mediums and spiritists, and keeping the Passover. Solomon's high places had stood for roughly three hundred years. Some things that have been there a long time are not therefore right.

3. *Read 2 Kings 21:1–16 about Manasseh, then read 2 Chronicles 33:10–13. Write down what the Chronicles account adds, and explain how both accounts can be true at once.*

Second Kings 21 records Manasseh's sins without a word about repentance, and it holds him responsible for the exile. Second Chronicles 33:10–13 adds that Assyria took him with hooks and bronze fetters to Babylon, that he humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, that he prayed, and that God was entreated by him and brought him back to Jerusalem. Both are true. A man can genuinely repent late and be received by God, and the damage his earlier decades did to a nation can still stand. Kings is telling the story of the nation; Chronicles adds the story of the man.

4. *Gather the stated reasons Judah fell from 21:11–15, 23:26–27, and 24:3–4. Sort them, and note which sin the writer names as the one God would not pardon.*

The writer lists idolatry, the abominations of the Amorites, making Judah sin with idols, the provocation of Manasseh, and finally, twice, the innocent blood that Manasseh shed, filling Jerusalem from one end to another, which the Lord would not pardon. Bloodshed is singled out. Note that the sins named are both religious and social: false worship and the destruction of human life are treated as one indictment, which is exactly the pattern in the prophets (Isaiah 1:11–17; Micah 6:6–8).

5. *Hezekiah accepted a future disaster because it would not arrive in his lifetime. Name one decision you are currently making for your own comfort whose cost will land on your children, your congregation, or the person who takes your place, and change it this week.*

Answers will vary, and the discomfort is the point. Listen for specifics rather than generalities: debt taken on that somebody else services, a hard conversation shelved, a physical or financial mess left for a spouse, a ministry no one is being trained to take over, a child's spiritual instruction postponed until a season that never arrives. Press for one change this week, however small, that begins to move the cost back onto the person making the decision.

HANDLE WITH CARE

- Josiah is told in 22:20 that he will be gathered to his grave in peace and will not see the disaster, and in 23:29–30 he dies in battle at Megiddo. The promise concerned the coming destruction of Jerusalem, which he did not live to see; he died at peace with God and was buried in his own tomb before the calamity fell. Handle it honestly if a class member raises it, and do not pretend the question is not there.
- Do not use the deliverance of Jerusalem in chapter 19 to promise that God will always rescue the faithful from disaster. The same book records the city burning a century later. Teach God's power and God's freedom together.
- Resist applying the fall of Judah directly to any modern nation. Israel and Judah stood in a specific covenant that has been fulfilled and taken away in Christ (Colossians 2:14–17; Hebrews 8:13). What carries over is God's unchanging character, not a nation's covenant status.
- Manasseh will raise the question of whether anyone can go too far. Second Chronicles 33 says he did not, and 1 Timothy 1:13–16 says the same about Paul. Use the passage to give hope rather than to minimize sin.

My Days Are a Handbreadth

PASSAGE OVERVIEW

Psalm 38 is one of the penitential psalms, and it holds nothing back. The writer is under God's discipline, and he says so: there is no soundness in my flesh because of Your anger, nor any health in my bones because of my sin. The physical description is relentless, festering wounds, a bowed body, mourning all day long, a burning in the loins, a pounding heart, failing eyes. Then the social loss: loved ones and friends stand aloof from my plague, and my relatives stand afar off. And then, in the middle of it, the turn at verse 18: I will declare my iniquity; I will be in anguish over my sin.

That turn is the whole point of the psalm, and it is worth building the lesson on it. Everything before verse 18 is a man describing the weight. Verse 18 is the man putting the weight down where it can actually be dealt with. He does not explain the sin, excuse it, or compare himself favorably to anyone. He declares it. And then he prays the only prayer left, which is the last verse: do not forsake me, do not be far from me, make haste to help me, O Lord, my salvation.

Psalm 39 is different in tone and, for many people, more modern. It opens with a man managing himself: I will guard my ways, I will restrain my mouth with a muzzle while the wicked are before me. He succeeds and it makes things worse. My heart was hot within me; while I was musing, the fire burned. Then I spoke with my tongue. What comes out is not a complaint about his enemies but a request about himself: Lord, make me to know my end and what is the measure of my days, that I may know how frail I am. He calls his lifetime a handbreadth and every man at his best state a vapor, and then he lands where the psalm has been heading all along: and now, Lord, what do I wait for? My hope is in You.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- Both psalms carry Davidic headings; Psalm 38 is titled "to bring to remembrance," and Psalm 39 is addressed to Jeduthun, one of the chief musicians appointed by David (1 Chronicles 16:41–42).
- Psalm 38 is traditionally counted among the seven penitential psalms, alongside Psalms 6, 32, 51, 102, 130, and 143.
- Psalm 39 belongs with the wisdom meditations on human frailty, close in spirit to Psalm 90 and to Ecclesiastes.
- In this particular psalm the writer links his suffering directly to his own sin. That is his situation, not a general rule; Job, the prophets, and John 9:1–3 forbid us from treating all suffering that way.
- Old Testament believers lived with limited light on what lies beyond death. Life and immortality were brought to light through the gospel (2 Timothy 1:10), which is why the closing lines of Psalm 39 sound bleaker than a Christian's hope should.
- "Handbreadth" is the width of four fingers, the smallest common unit of measure in the ancient world. The psalmist is saying that a whole life fits in the shortest ruler he owns.

NOTES ON THE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Question 1. *Psalm 38 describes guilt in bodily terms: no soundness in the flesh, wounds that fester, a heart that pounds, eyes that have lost their light. Discuss why unconfessed sin so often shows up in the body and in the sleep before it ever shows up in a confession.*

Sin is not only a legal problem; it is a weight, and human beings are not built to carry it. The psalm describes what everyone who has done it recognizes: the appetite that goes, the sleep that will not come, the fatigue that rest does not touch, the irritability, the pounding heart at two in the morning. Psalm 32:3–4 says the same thing in

fewer words: when I kept silent, my bones grew old through my groaning all the day long, and my vitality was turned into the drought of summer. God has made us so that hiding costs something.

Be careful in class not to turn this into a doctrine that every illness indicates sin, because Scripture flatly denies that (John 9:1–3; Job 1:8; 2:3). What you can say is that unconfessed sin has a physical price and that a great deal of what people treat as stress is actually guilt with no outlet. Then point at the escape hatch in verse 18, which costs nothing but honesty. Ask the class why we will do almost anything, including getting sick, before we will simply say the sentence out loud to God.

Question 2. *Psalm 39:1–3 describes a man who kept quiet while his heart grew hot inside him until at last he spoke. When is holding your tongue wisdom, and when is it simply avoidance? Give an example of each from your own experience.*

Both are in the Bible, which is why the question is worth an honest ten minutes. Proverbs 17:28 and James 1:19 commend restraint, and the psalmist's original motive is good: he does not want to sin with his tongue, particularly in front of the wicked, who would be glad to hear a believer say something bitter about God. There are rooms where a Christian should not say what he is thinking, and there are griefs that should not be broadcast. That is wisdom.

Avoidance looks different. Avoidance is silence toward the one person who needs to hear it, usually God, and it is not peaceful. Verse 3 gives the diagnostic: my heart was hot within me, while I was musing the fire burned. If your silence is producing heat rather than rest, it is not wisdom. Ask the class for the two examples, and listen for the marriage where nothing is said and everything is felt, or the prayer life where a person has stopped telling God the true thing because he suspects it is not allowed. Note that when the psalmist finally speaks, he speaks to God, not to the wicked. The place he opens his mouth is the right place.

Question 3. *In 39:4 the psalmist asks God to make him know his end and the measure of his days, so that he may know how frail he is. That is not a prayer most of us have ever prayed. What would honestly praying it change about next month's calendar?*

Nobody prays this because we spend most of our energy not thinking about it. The psalmist asks God to do to him what a doctor does with a chart: tell me the number. Make me know my end, the measure of my days, how frail I am. And then he answers his own request with three images: You have made my days as handbreadths, my age is as nothing before You, every man at his best state is but vapor. Not at his worst. At his best. Note that the word translated vapor is the same word running through Ecclesiastes.

Ask what would actually change. Most people say something about priorities, which is too vague to be useful, so push for the calendar. Which appointment would come off? Which conversation would happen this month instead of eventually? Which grudge is simply too expensive to keep at handbreadth scale? Moses prays the same thing in Psalm 90:12, teach us to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom, and James 4:14 says you are a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. This is not morbid; it is clarifying. The people who live best are the ones who have made peace with the arithmetic.

NOTES ON THE EXTENDED QUESTIONS

1. *Work through Psalm 38 and list what the writer says sin has cost him in three areas: his body, his relationships, and his inner life. Note which of the three he mentions most often.*

The body: no soundness in the flesh, no health in the bones, wounds foul and festering, bowed down and brought low, full of inflammation, feeble and severely broken, a pounding heart, failing strength, the light of the eyes gone. Relationships: loved ones and friends stand aloof, relatives stand far off, enemies lay snares and speak destruction, and he hears their words while behaving as a deaf man with no reply. Inner life: groaning all day, iniquities gone over his head like a heavy burden, foolishness, anxiety over sin. The body gets the most space, which is why this psalm is so useful to anyone who has ever felt a sin physically before he admitted it spiritually.

2. Compare Psalm 38:18 with Psalm 32:3–5 and 1 John 1:8–9. Write down what each passage says about the turning point between carrying sin and being free of it.

Psalm 38:18 says, “I will declare my iniquity; I will be in anguish over my sin.” Psalm 32:3–5 describes the silence and the wasting, and then, “I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, I will confess my transgressions to the Lord, and You forgave the iniquity of my sin.” First John 1:8–9 says that if we claim to have no sin we deceive ourselves, but if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. The turning point in all three is the same: naming it to God rather than managing it privately. The relief is not in feeling worse; it is in telling the truth.

3. Trace the sequence in 39:1–3 step by step, from the resolution, to the muzzle, to the silence, to the burning, to the words. Then identify where in that sequence you usually are.

The sequence is: a resolution not to sin with the tongue, a deliberate muzzle while the wicked are present, silence so complete he held his peace even from good, a stirring of sorrow, a heart growing hot, a fire burning while he mused, and finally speech. Answers about personal location will vary, and that is useful diagnostic material for the teacher. Some people in your class live permanently at the muzzle, others erupt at the fire, and a few have learned to take the burning to God before it becomes words in front of somebody else.

4. Psalm 39:12 says, “I am a stranger with You, a sojourner, as all my fathers were.” Read Hebrews 11:13–16 and 1 Peter 2:11, and describe what it means to live somewhere without belonging to it.

It means living in a place you do not own and are not staying in. Hebrews 11:13–16 says the patriarchs confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth, that they sought a homeland, and that God is not ashamed to be called their God because He has prepared a city for them. First Peter 2:11 urges believers as sojourners and pilgrims to abstain from fleshly lusts that war against the soul. The practical effect is a loosened grip. A traveler uses a hotel room well and does not remodel it. Christians are meant to be fully engaged here and not finally attached here, and Psalm 39 is a man feeling the difference.

5. Name one specific sin, not a category, that you have been carrying without ever putting into words before God. Confess it by name this week, and if another person was wronged by it, go and make it right (Matthew 5:23–24).

Answers will vary and this one stays private. Look for the shift from category to name: not “I have been impatient” but the specific words said to a specific person on a specific night. The psalm models declaring, and Matthew 5:23–24 adds the horizontal half when someone has a real grievance. Be clear in class that confession belongs to God (1 John 1:9) and, where a person was wronged, to that person (James 5:16), and that no human being stands between a Christian and God for the forgiveness of sins (1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 4:14–16).

HANDLE WITH CARE

- This writer connects his suffering to his own sin, and in his case that connection is correct. Do not generalize it. Job, Jeremiah, Paul, and the Lord Himself suffered without such a cause, and John 9:1–3 forbids the assumption outright.
- The bleakness of 39:13 reflects the limited light Old Testament believers had about what lies beyond death. Teach the psalm honestly and then point to 2 Timothy 1:10, where life and immortality are brought to light through the gospel.
- Confession in Scripture is made to God, and to those we have wronged. Do not let this psalm be read as support for confession to a priest or for any human mediator; there is one Mediator (1 Timothy 2:5).
- Psalm 38:1 asks God not to rebuke in wrath. Discipline here is fatherly, not vindictive. Pair it with Hebrews 12:5–11 so the class hears correction as love rather than as rejection.

Not What I Will

PASSAGE OVERVIEW

The reading opens with quiet, deliberate preparation. Jesus sends two disciples into the city with instructions that sound like a password: a man carrying a pitcher of water, a house, a question for the master of the house, a large upper room furnished and prepared. They found it just as He had said to them. Mark wants us to see that nothing in this week is happening to Jesus by accident. He has arranged the room where He will announce His own betrayal.

At the table two things happen that must not be run together too quickly. First, the announcement that one of the twelve, one who dips with Him in the dish, will hand Him over, and the terrible sentence about it being good for that man if he had never been born. Then, in the middle of a Passover meal that had commemorated deliverance for fifteen centuries, He takes bread, blesses, breaks, and gives: take, eat, this is My body. And the cup: this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many. He gives His disciples a memorial before there is anything to remember, and the church has kept it every first day of the week ever since.

Then Gethsemane, which is the most exposed passage in Mark's Gospel. He began to be troubled and deeply distressed, and said, My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. He falls on the ground. He prays that if it were possible the hour might pass. Abba, Father, all things are possible for You; take away this cup from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will. Three times He prays; three times He finds them sleeping. Then the torches arrive, Judas gives the agreed signal with a kiss, somebody swings a sword, and Mark records the collapse without comment: they all forsook Him and fled.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- Passover commemorated the deliverance from Egypt (Exodus 12). Jesus institutes the Lord's Supper within that meal, on the night before He dies, which is why the covenant language in 14:24 would have struck the disciples so forcefully (Exodus 24:8; Jeremiah 31:31-34).
- The hymn they sang before leaving (14:26) was almost certainly part of the Hallel, Psalms 113 through 118, traditionally sung at Passover.
- Gethsemane, meaning oil press, was an olive grove on the Mount of Olives, a place Jesus went often, which is how Judas knew where to find Him (John 18:2).
- "Abba" is the Aramaic word a child used for his father. Paul uses the same word twice for the Christian's relationship to God (Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6).
- The Lord's Supper is observed by Christians on the first day of every week (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; 16:2), as a memorial and a communion, not a repeated sacrifice (Hebrews 9:25-28; 10:10-14).
- Mark's account is widely understood to preserve Peter's own preaching, which may explain why Peter's failures are recorded so unsparingly.

NOTES ON THE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Question 1. *At the table Jesus takes bread and a cup and gives them meaning that His disciples will carry for the rest of their lives (14:22-25). Read 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 and Acts 20:7 alongside this, and talk about what we are actually doing on the first day of each week and how easily it becomes routine.*

Start with what the actions themselves say. He took bread, which means He chose it; He blessed and gave thanks; He broke it, and the breaking is part of the sign; He gave it, which means it comes to us from His hand, not ours. This is My body. Then the cup: this is My blood of the new covenant, shed for many. Every Passover in Israel's

history had pointed backward to a lamb, a doorpost, and a nation walking out of Egypt. Now, in the same room and with the same bread, He points forward twelve hours and makes Himself the meal.

Then deal honestly with the routine. First Corinthians 11:23–26 says we proclaim the Lord's death till He comes, and it warns about eating unworthily, which in context means eating without discerning what is on the table. Acts 20:7 shows the disciples coming together on the first day of the week to break bread, which is the pattern we keep. Ask the class the uncomfortable question: what are you actually thinking about during those four minutes? Then offer a practical remedy, which is to come to the assembly having already read the crucifixion account that morning. Familiarity is not the enemy; inattention is.

Question 2. *In Gethsemane Jesus asks plainly for the cup to be taken away and then says, "Nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will" (14:36). Discuss how a person prays both halves of that honestly, without the first half becoming demand or the second half becoming resignation.*

The first half is real. He asks. He does not phrase it as resignation, and He does not spiritualize the request: take away this cup from Me. He even prefaces it with a statement of God's power, all things are possible for You, which removes every excuse for a small prayer. Hebrews 5:7 says He offered up prayers and supplications with vehement cries and tears. Whatever else Christians learn about prayer, they should learn from Gethsemane that God is not offended by the honest request, however large.

The second half is equally real, and it is what keeps the first half from becoming a demand. Nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will. The order matters. He asks first and submits second, which means submission here is not a failure to hope; it is a decision made with the desire fully in view. Ask the class where they have collapsed one half into the other. Some have stopped asking for anything specific, calling it maturity when it is really a hedge against disappointment. Others ask and ask and never get to the nevertheless. Point out that the answer to this prayer was no, and that we are saved because it was.

Question 3. *Peter says he will die before he denies, the disciples all say the same, and an hour later they are asleep and then gone (14:29–31, 37–50). Where has your confidence in yourself outrun your actual preparation, and what would watching and praying have looked like in advance?*

Peter's problem was not insincerity. He meant every word, and a few hours later he drew a sword against an armed crowd, which is not the act of a coward. His problem was that he was confident where he was untested and asleep where he was told to prepare. Jesus does not argue with his self-assessment; He simply tells him what will happen, and then He gives all three of them the instruction that would have made the difference: watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

Now bring it forward. Nobody falls at the point where he is watching. We fall where we assumed we were strong, which is why the preparation always has to happen before the pressure. Ask each person to name the specific hour and setting where he is regularly overtaken: the drive home, the empty house, the second drink, the phone at midnight, the conversation about a person who is not present. Then ask what watching and praying would look like in advance for that particular hour. A concrete plan made on Tuesday at noon is worth more than a hundred good intentions at ten on Friday night.

NOTES ON THE EXTENDED QUESTIONS

1. *Trace how the Passover room was located in 14:12–16, step by step. List the details Jesus specified in advance and what actually happened, and describe what that says about the week He was walking into.*

Jesus sends two disciples into the city and tells them a man carrying a pitcher of water will meet them, that they are to follow him, that they are to say to the master of that house, "The Teacher says, Where is the guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?" and that he will show them a large upper room, furnished and prepared. And so they went, and found it just as He had said to them. A man carrying water was unusual enough to be a reliable sign, since that was ordinarily a woman's task. The whole account shows a Lord walking into this week with His eyes open, arranging details rather than being swept along by events.

2. Write out exactly what Jesus says over the bread and over the cup in 14:22–24. Compare Matthew 26:26–29 and 1 Corinthians 11:23–26, and note what each account adds.

Mark 14:22–24: He took bread, blessed and broke it, and said, “Take, eat; this is My body,” and He took the cup, gave thanks, gave it to them, and said, “This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many.” Matthew 26:28 adds “for the remission of sins,” and 26:29 adds “with you in My Father’s kingdom.” First Corinthians 11:24–25 adds “do this in remembrance of Me” for both the bread and the cup, and 11:26 adds that as often as we eat and drink we proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes. Together they give the memorial, the purpose, and the practice.

3. In 14:25 Jesus says He will not drink of the fruit of the vine again until He drinks it new in the kingdom of God. Read Mark 9:1 and Acts 2 alongside it, and write down when Scripture says that kingdom came.

Mark 9:1 records Jesus saying that some standing there would not taste death till they saw the kingdom of God present with power, and Acts 2 records the coming of that power at Pentecost, the preaching of the enthroned Christ, and three thousand entering by repentance and baptism. Colossians 1:13 says Christians have already been conveyed into the kingdom. So the kingdom came in that generation, exactly as promised, and Christians share the Lord’s table in it now (1 Corinthians 10:16). Whatever fullness still awaits at His coming, 14:25 gives no support for a future earthly kingdom yet to be established.

4. Read Hebrews 5:7–9 next to the Gethsemane account. List what Hebrews says about His prayers, His hearing, and what He learned, and explain how that helps you read Mark 14:33–36.

Hebrews 5:7–9 says that in the days of His flesh He offered up prayers and supplications with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, that He was heard because of His godly fear, and that though He was a Son, He learned obedience by the things which He suffered, and having been perfected became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him. That He was heard, and still drank the cup, tells us that being heard is not the same as being spared. It also tells us that the sorrow in Gethsemane was genuine and that obedience there cost Him something real, which is exactly why Hebrews 4:15 can say He sympathizes with our weaknesses.

5. Jesus told them to watch and pray so they would not enter into temptation (14:38). Identify the temptation you regularly walk into unprepared, and set one specific, concrete watch this week before it arrives rather than after.

Answers will vary. The important word in the assignment is “before.” Listen for a specific hour, place, or trigger rather than a general vice, and for a watch that is actually concrete: a route changed, a device left in another room, a standing call with a brother, a psalm read before walking in the door, an agreement with a spouse. Note for the class that Jesus gave this instruction to men who were about to fail, which means the warning was mercy and not prediction for its own sake.

HANDLE WITH CARE

- The Lord’s Supper is a memorial and a communion (1 Corinthians 10:16; 11:23–26), not a re-offering of Christ and not a change of the elements into His literal body and blood. He was sitting at the table holding the bread when He said it. Hebrews 9:25–28 and 10:10–14 settle the once-for-all nature of the sacrifice.
- Establish the weekly first-day observance from Acts 20:7 and the apostolic pattern, without turning the hour into a controversy. Say what we do and why we do it.
- Gethsemane shows the full humanity of Christ under real anguish. Do not explain away the distress, and do not let it be used to suggest reluctance to obey or any imperfection in Him. He was tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15).
- Mark 14:38, “the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak,” is a call to preparation, not an excuse for failure. Guard against a class using it to explain away sin; 1 Corinthians 10:13 promises a way of escape.

This Mortal Must Put On

PASSAGE OVERVIEW

The question in verse 35 is asked in the tone of an objection, and Paul answers it with agriculture. What you sow is not made alive unless it dies. What you sow is not the body that shall be, but mere grain. God gives it a body as He pleases. The point is continuity with transformation: the wheat that comes up is genuinely related to the kernel that went into the ground and looks nothing like it. Then he widens the lens, noting that God already makes many kinds of bodies, human, animal, fish, bird, heavenly and earthly, each with its own glory. A God with that much variety in stock is not stumped by the question.

The four contrasts in verses 42 through 44 are the heart of it. Sown in corruption, raised in incorruption. Sown in dishonor, raised in glory. Sown in weakness, raised in power. Sown a natural body, raised a spiritual body. Then Adam and Christ: the first man a living being, the last Adam a life-giving spirit, and as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man. The chapter climbs to the trumpet, the change, the swallowing up of death in victory, and the taunt borrowed from Hosea: O Death, where is your sting?

And then verse 58, which is where the chapter has been going all along. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. Chapter 16 follows immediately with a collection, an itinerary, and greetings, and the ordinariness is not a letdown. It is the application. A man who believes in the resurrection sets money aside on the first day of the week, sends Timothy without making him afraid, notices the household of Stephanas, and closes a hard letter with, “My love be with you all in Christ Jesus.”

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- The objection in 15:35 reflects a Greek assumption that physical existence was inferior; the resurrection of the body sounded to such hearers like a step backward rather than a hope.
- “Spiritual body” in 15:44 does not mean immaterial. It means a body suited to the realm of the Spirit, as “natural body” means one suited to this present life. The risen Christ is the pattern (Philippians 3:20–21; 1 John 3:2).
- The collection of 16:1–4 was for poor saints in Jerusalem, and Paul writes about it at length elsewhere (Romans 15:25–27; 2 Corinthians 8 and 9).
- “On the first day of the week” places the church’s gathering on Sunday, the same day the disciples met to break bread in Acts 20:7 and the day of the Lord’s resurrection.
- The tithe belonged to the Law of Moses and is not bound on Christians. The New Testament pattern is purposeful, proportional, cheerful, and regular giving (2 Corinthians 9:6–8).
- “Maranatha” in 16:22 is Aramaic, most likely meaning “O Lord, come,” an early Christian expression of longing for His return.

NOTES ON THE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Question 1. *Paul answers the question about the resurrection body with a seed (15:35–44). Work through the comparison together. What stays the same between the seed and the plant, what changes, and how does that help with the objection that a body long dead cannot possibly be raised?*

Work the seed comparison patiently, because it answers the objection completely. What stays the same is identity and continuity: this plant came from this seed, and no other. What changes is form, scale, and glory. Nobody looking at a bare kernel of wheat would guess the stalk, and nobody digging up the kernel a month later would

find it. Paul even insists on the death: what you sow is not made alive unless it dies. The burial is not the failure of the plan; it is the plan.

The objection assumed that resurrection meant reassembling the same particles into the same arrangement, which is what makes it sound absurd for a body that has been gone for centuries. Paul never claims that. He says God gives it a body as He pleases, and the body He gives is incorruptible, glorious, powerful, and spiritual. Ask the class what fears this answers. For most people the fear is either about the condition of a body they watched decline, or about whether they will still be themselves. The seed answers both: genuinely you, and nothing like this.

Question 2. *After the trumpet, the change, and the taunt at death, verse 58 begins with “Therefore.” Read 15:54–58 as one thought and discuss how the resurrection makes ordinary, unglamorous work for the Lord something other than wasted effort.*

Read verses 54 through 58 without stopping, because Paul wrote them as one breath. Death is swallowed up in victory. O Death, where is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law, but thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. The great doctrinal chapter in the New Testament on the resurrection ends by telling people to get to work.

The connection is simple and worth stating plainly. If death is the end, then everything done for the Lord eventually evaporates, and the sensible course is to get what you can now, which is exactly what Paul says in verse 32. If the dead are raised, then nothing done for Him is lost, including the parts nobody saw. Ask the class to name the labor they suspect is pointless: the class of restless children, the meals taken to the same shut-in for eleven years, the son who is not listening yet, the invitation refused again. Then read the last four words of the chapter to them: not in vain in the Lord.

Question 3. *First Corinthians 16:1–2 gives the church a plain pattern for giving: on the first day of the week, each one, laying something aside, as he has prospered. Take the four elements one at a time and talk about what each one would change about how most of us actually give.*

Take the four elements one at a time, because each of them corrects something. “On the first day of the week” makes giving regular rather than occasional and ties it to the assembly of the saints. “Let each one of you” makes it universal; there is no income bracket exempted, and the widow in Mark 12 already settled the question of small amounts. “Lay something aside, storing up” makes it planned rather than impulsive; the money is decided before it is needed elsewhere. “As he may prosper” makes it proportional, which means it rises and falls with income and is never a flat, comfortable habit.

Then say clearly what the New Testament does and does not bind. The tithe belonged to the Law of Moses, which has been fulfilled and taken away in Christ (Colossians 2:14–17; Hebrews 8:13), so ten percent is neither a floor nor a ceiling for a Christian. What is bound is purposeful, proportional, cheerful, regular giving (2 Corinthians 9:6–8), and Paul is plain in 2 Corinthians 8:12 that it is accepted according to what a man has. Ask the class the question most of us avoid: is your giving a decision or a leftover? Then let 16:2 answer it.

NOTES ON THE EXTENDED QUESTIONS

1. *Write out the four “sown and raised” contrasts in 15:42–44. Beside each one, note what it says about the body you will have and what it says about the body you have now.*

Sown in corruption, raised in incorruption: this body is decaying from the start, and the next one cannot decay. Sown in dishonor, raised in glory: whatever dignity we manage now, a corpse has none, and what is raised is glorious.

Sown in weakness, raised in power: we are limited, tired, and breakable, and what is raised is not. Sown a natural body, raised a spiritual body: this one is fitted for life in the present order, and that one for life in the presence of God. Each contrast says something honest about the present body without despising it; God made it, Christ took one, and He intends to raise it.

2. Read 15:45–49 with Genesis 2:7. List what Paul says about the first Adam and the last Adam, and explain what it means to bear the image of the heavenly Man.

Genesis 2:7 says God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being. Paul quotes it and then sets Christ beside it: the first man Adam became a living being, the last Adam a life-giving spirit. Adam was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven. As is the man of dust, so are those who are made of dust, and as is the heavenly Man, so are those who are heavenly. To bear the image of the heavenly Man is to be raised like Him and to be conformed to Him (Romans 8:29; Philippians 3:20–21; 1 John 3:2), which begins now in character and is completed then in body.

3. Compare 15:51–52 with 1 Thessalonians 4:13–17 and John 5:28–29. Note how many comings, how many resurrections, and how many judgments these passages describe when read together.

First Corinthians 15:51–52 describes one trumpet, one moment, and one change, at which the dead are raised incorruptible and the living are changed. First Thessalonians 4:13–17 describes one descent of the Lord with a shout, the dead in Christ rising first, and the living caught up together with them. John 5:28–29 says the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth, those who have done good to the resurrection of life and those who have done evil to the resurrection of condemnation. Read together: one coming, one resurrection of the righteous and the wicked, one judgment. There is no room here for a secret removal of the church, a separate later resurrection, or an earthly reign in between.

4. First Corinthians 16:13–14 gives five short commands in a row. Write them out and describe what each one would look like in a specific situation you are facing this month.

Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong, and let all that you do be done with love. The five run in a deliberate order: alertness, footing, courage, strength, and then the manner of all of it. Answers about specific situations will vary. Note for the class that the fifth command governs the first four, which is Paul's safeguard against a congregation that becomes vigilant and immovable and unbearable.

5. Set up your giving this week the way 16:2 describes: decided in advance, proportional to income, and set aside first rather than last. Write down the figure before Sunday rather than deciding in the pew.

Answers will vary, and the assignment is the practice rather than the amount. Listen the following week for what changed when the figure was decided in advance: most people discover that planned giving is both larger and less painful than impulsive giving. If someone is in genuine financial trouble, 2 Corinthians 8:12 is the word for him, and a private conversation may be more useful than a public answer.

HANDLE WITH CARE

- First Corinthians 15:50, “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God,” does not deny the bodily resurrection. Paul is contrasting the present perishable body with the imperishable body God will give, as the whole passage makes clear.
- Verses 51 and 52 are sometimes used for a secret rapture. Read them with 1 Thessalonians 4:16–17 and John 5:28–29: a shout, a trumpet, all the dead raised, one judgment, and the end. Nothing here is secret and nothing is partial.
- Do not bind the tithe. Teach 16:2 as the New Testament pattern, purposeful, proportional, regular, and cheerful (2 Corinthians 9:6–8), and be careful not to shame the poor while comforting the comfortable.
- The holy kiss of 16:20 was the ordinary greeting of that culture. The command is to greet one another warmly and genuinely; the form is cultural, and the affection is not.

NEXT WEEK'S READING: 1 Chronicles 1–5 · Psalm 40–41 · Mark 14:51–15:20 · 2 Corinthians 1:1–2:4

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