

# Through the Bible in 24 Months



WEEK 47 OF 104

*A Paper Trail of Grace*

Week 47 of 104 • 45% of the way through the Bible

## THIS WEEK'S READINGS

|                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| General Old Testament | 1 Chronicles 1-5      |
| Wisdom Literature     | Psalms 40-41          |
| Gospels               | Mark 14:51-15:20      |
| General New Testament | 2 Corinthians 1:1-2:4 |

## THIS WEEK AT A GLANCE

You are about to read five chapters that are mostly names, and it will be tempting to skim. Do not. Those lists were compiled for people who had just come home from Babylon to a ruined city, and every name in them was proof that God had not lost the thread. Then a psalmist who has been hauled out of a pit says the line that holds the whole week together: "I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinks upon me." In a courtyard, a man warming his hands at a fire says three times that he does not know the name of his best friend. And Paul opens a letter to a congregation that had wounded him by blessing the God who comforts us in all our trouble.

**How to use this guide:** Read all four passages during the week. Your teacher will take up two of them in class, one in each session. For the other two, work through the "Extended Class Discussion or Self-Study" questions on your own and write your answers in the space provided.

## GENERAL OLD TESTAMENT 1 Chronicles 1-5

### The Book of Names

#### WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

The Chronicler begins with one word, Adam, and then walks the whole human family down to his own generation. You will pass Noah and his sons, Abraham and Ishmael, Esau and the chiefs of Edom, then the sons of Israel, then Judah in detail all the way to David, then the royal line straight through the exile and out the other side. Tucked into the lists are small, startling notes: Er who was wicked, Achar who troubled Israel, Jabez who prayed, and two and a half tribes who cried out to God in the middle of a battle.

#### FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. God gave His people nine chapters of names, and these five are the beginning of them. Consider who first read this book, families who had come home from Babylon to a ruined city, and discuss what a list of names would have done for people trying to believe they were still the people of the promise.
2. Jabez prays in 4:9-10 and God grants what he asked. Read the prayer closely, notice what he actually requests and what he does not, and talk about the difference between this prayer and the way it is often sold as a formula for getting more.

3. In 5:18–22 the eastern tribes cry out to God in battle and are helped, because they put their trust in Him. In 5:25–26 the same tribes are carried away by Assyria, and the reason is stated just as plainly. What do those two paragraphs, sitting in the same chapter, teach about the difference between a people God helps and a people God hands over?

#### EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Trace the line from Judah to David in 2:3–15. Then find the same names in Ruth 4:18–22 and Matthew 1:3–6, and write down what it means that three different books preserve the identical sequence.
2. First Chronicles 2:7 calls Achar “the troubler of Israel, who transgressed in the accursed thing.” Read Joshua 7 and then read that verse again. Describe what it is like to have one sentence in the record and that be the sentence.
3. Go through chapter 1 and list every name whose story you already know. Beside each one, write the book and chapter where you met him, and notice how much of Genesis is compressed into a single page here.
4. Read 3:17–24, the royal line continuing after the exile through Jeconiah and Zerubbabel. Explain what those verses proved to a family reading them in a half-rebuilt Jerusalem, and what they still prove when you read Matthew 1:12.
5. Write down the names of the people who actually handed you the faith: the parent, the grandmother, the preacher, the neighbor, the friend who would not give up. Then write to one of them this week and tell that person specifically what he or she did.

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#### WISDOM LITERATURE Psalm 40–41

#### He Inclined and Heard Me

##### WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Psalm 40 opens with one of the great rescue images in Scripture: a man hauled out of a pit of mud, his feet set on a rock, a new song in his mouth. Then it turns to something better than sacrifice, an opened ear and a willing heart, and then, without warning, back into trouble. Psalm 41 blesses the person who pays attention to the poor, describes sickness and whispering visitors, and lands on a line that Jesus Himself would quote in an upper room about a friend who ate His bread.

### FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Psalm 40:1–3 moves from a pit, to a rock, to a new song, to many who see it and trust in the Lord. Walk through that sequence and discuss why God so often makes a rescued person's testimony the means of somebody else's faith.
2. In 40:6–8 the psalmist says that sacrifice and offering were not what God desired, but an opened ear and a heart delighting in His law. Read Hebrews 10:5–10, where these verses are placed in the mouth of Christ. How should that change the way you hear the words "I delight to do Your will, O my God"?
3. Psalm 41:9 speaks of a familiar friend who ate his bread and lifted up his heel against him, and Jesus quotes it about Judas in John 13:18. Talk about what it means that the Lord had a psalm ready for that particular wound, and what that offers to someone in the room who has been betrayed by a friend.

### EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Trace the verbs of 40:1–3 in order: waited, inclined, heard, brought up, set, established, put. List them, note who does each one, and write a sentence about what the psalmist himself contributed.
2. Compare Psalm 40:6–8 with 1 Samuel 15:22 and Hebrews 10:5–10. Write down what all three say about the relationship between obedience and offering, and how the writer of Hebrews applies it to the sacrifice of Christ.
3. Psalm 40:12 follows the praise with a confession that his own iniquities have overtaken him and are more than the hairs of his head. Describe what it does to the credibility of the psalm that praise and confession sit two verses apart.
4. Read Psalm 41:1–3 with Proverbs 19:17 and Matthew 25:40. Note what each passage says God does in response to the care of the poor, and to whom the kindness is finally reckoned.
5. Psalm 41:1 says, "Blessed is he who considers the poor." The word means to pay careful attention to a person, not merely to donate. Pick one specific person in need whom you have never actually considered, learn something real about that person's situation this week, and act on what you learn.

## WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

A young man runs off leaving his linen cloth behind, and Mark puts the detail in without explanation. Then the trial: witnesses who cannot agree, a high priest who finally asks the only question that matters, and one sentence from Jesus that ends the proceedings. Outside, Peter warms his hands at a fire and is recognized three times. Morning comes, Jesus is handed to Pilate, and a crowd chooses a murderer named Barabbas. Then a scourging, a purple robe, a crown of thorns, and soldiers bowing in mockery.

## FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Jesus says nothing while the false witnesses contradict each other, and then answers the high priest's direct question with, "I am" (14:60–62). Discuss why He was silent through everything else and why He would not be silent about that, and what it cost Him to answer.
2. Peter follows at a distance, sits down with the servants, warms himself at the fire, and denies three times before the rooster finishes (14:54, 66–72). Trace how he got from the boast in 14:29 to the curse in 14:71, and name the places where a Christian today makes that same slow walk.
3. Barabbas was a real man, guilty of murder in a rebellion, and he walked out free because Jesus took his place (15:6–15). Talk about what it would have been like to be Barabbas that morning, and about why Mark tells us that Pilate released Him "wanting to gratify the crowd."

## EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List the points at which this trial violated Israel's own standards of justice. Read Deuteronomy 19:15–19 on witnesses and Exodus 23:1–2 on following a crowd, and note how many of the failures the text itself reports.
2. Follow Peter from 14:29 through 14:72 and write down every step: the boast, the sleep, the sword, the distance, the fire, the first denial, the second, the curse, the rooster, the remembering, the weeping. Mark where you think the fall actually began.
3. In 14:62 Jesus answers with words drawn from Daniel 7:13–14 and Psalm 110:1. Look up both passages and explain what claim the high priest heard, and why he tore his clothes.
4. Compare Judas in Matthew 27:3–5 with Peter in Mark 14:72 and John 21:15–17. Read 2 Corinthians 7:10 and describe the difference between the two men's sorrow.
5. Peter kept quiet because of who was standing around the fire. Name the fire you stand near, the setting where it costs something to be known as a Christian, and say one true thing there this week that you have been leaving unsaid.

## The God of All Comfort

### WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Paul opens the most personal letter he ever wrote by blessing God, not for deliverance, but for comfort in trouble. He tells them about something that happened in Asia that nearly killed him, when he despaired even of life and felt he had already received a death sentence. He says their prayers were part of the rescue. Then he answers a charge that he is unreliable because his travel plans changed, insists that God's promises in Christ are always yes, and admits that he wrote his last letter in tears.

### FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. In 1:3-7 Paul says God comforts us in all our tribulation so that we may be able to comfort others with the comfort we ourselves received. Talk about how that changes the meaning of a hard season you have already been through, and name someone who is currently in the trouble you already know.
2. Paul admits in 1:8-9 that he was burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that he despaired even of life, and that he had the sentence of death in himself. Why would an apostle write that down, and what does he say the purpose of it was?
3. Paul explains in 1:23-2:4 that he stayed away to spare them, and that he wrote out of much affliction and anguish of heart, with many tears. Discuss what it looks like to confront someone you genuinely love, and why most of us either avoid it or do it badly.

### EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Count how many times the words comfort, consolation, or comforted appear in 1:3-7. Then write out the chain Paul describes, beginning with God and ending with the person you are supposed to reach.
2. Paul says in 1:11 that the Corinthians were helping together in prayer for him. Describe, from the verse, what he says their praying accomplished and what he expected to result from it.
3. Read 1:20 with Galatians 3:16 and Acts 13:32-33. Write down what it means that all the promises of God are "Yes" in Christ, and name two specific Old Testament promises that find their answer in Him.
4. Work backward through 1:12-2:4 and list the accusations being made against Paul that he is answering. Then note how he defends himself, and what he refuses to claim in 1:24.

5. Second Corinthians 1:4 says we comfort others with the comfort we received. Identify the hardest thing God has brought you through, find one person now in that same place, and go to that person this week rather than waiting to be asked.

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**NEXT WEEK'S READING:** 1 Chronicles 6-11 · Psalm 42-44 · Mark 15:21-16:20 · 2 Corinthians 2:5-3:18

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