

Through the Bible in 24 Months



WEEK 52 OF 104

Hearts Laid Bare

Week 52 of 104 • 50% of the way through the Bible

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

General Old Testament	2 Chronicles 10–20
Wisdom Literature	Psalms 51–52
Gospels	Luke 2:22–52
General New Testament	2 Corinthians 10–11

THIS WEEK AT A GLANCE

You have reached the halfway mark, a full year of reading behind you, and this week Scripture turns the conversation toward what has been happening on the inside. Rehoboam looks like a king and answers like a fool. Asa begins magnificently and finishes badly. Jehoshaphat stands in front of an army and admits he has no idea what to do. David, finally caught, stops defending himself and asks God for a clean heart instead of a better reputation. An old man in the temple warns a young mother that her Son will make the thoughts of many hearts visible. And Paul refuses to compete with men who hand out their own credentials, offering scars instead. A year of reading has been doing something in you. This week asks what.

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 Chronicles 10–20

A Kingdom Torn in Two

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Solomon dies and his son throws the kingdom away in an afternoon by listening to the wrong advisers. Ten tribes go north with Jeroboam. Shishak of Egypt invades. Abijah preaches a sermon in the middle of a battlefield. Asa tears down idols, wins an impossible victory, and then, late in life, buys an alliance instead of trusting God and jails the prophet who tells him so. Jehoshaphat sends teachers through Judah, makes a disastrous friendship with Ahab, and prays one of the great prayers of the Old Testament.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Rehoboam asks the old men and then asks his friends, and takes the answer he liked better (10:6–11). Where in your life do you keep shopping for counsel until somebody tells you what you had already decided to do?
2. Asa smashed the idols, removed his own grandmother from her position, and led the nation back to God, and then in his old age he bought Syria's help and imprisoned the prophet who rebuked him (16:1–12). What does that ending say to a Christian who assumes that a strong beginning guarantees a safe finish?

3. Jehoshaphat stands before the assembly and says he has no might against this great company and does not know what to do, but his eyes are on God (20:12). When was the last time you prayed a sentence that honest, and what keeps most of us from praying that way?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Trace what Rehoboam does in 11:1–4 after the kingdom splits, and then in 12:1–12. Where does he obey, where does he forsake the law, and what finally brings him to say the Lord is righteous?
2. List every reform Asa carries out in chapters 14 and 15, and then list what he does in chapter 16. Put the two lists side by side and write one sentence about what changed.
3. In 17:7–9 Jehoshaphat sends princes, Levites, and priests through the cities of Judah with the book of the Law. Read Nehemiah 8:1–8 and describe what a teaching program does for a nation, and what it would do for a congregation.
4. Read 2 Chronicles 18 alongside 1 Kings 22. Why does the Chronicler include Jehoshaphat's alliance with Ahab, and what does 19:2 say about befriending those who hate the Lord? Compare 2 Corinthians 6:14.
5. Jehoshaphat's response to terrifying news was to set himself to seek the Lord and to proclaim a fast (20:3). Name the situation that currently frightens you most, and set aside one specific, scheduled block of time this week to pray about it rather than to worry about it.

WISDOM LITERATURE Psalm 51–52

Create in Me a Clean Heart

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Psalm 51 is what David said after Nathan confronted him about Bathsheba and Uriah. There is no excuse in it, no blaming of circumstance, no bargaining. He asks to be washed, to be given a clean heart, to have his joy restored, and he promises to teach transgressors God's ways. Psalm 52 is aimed at Doeg the Edomite, whose report to Saul led to the slaughter of the priests at Nob, and it contrasts a man boasting in mischief with a green olive tree in the house of God.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Read Psalm 51:3–4, where David says he has sinned against God and God only, even though he had wronged Bathsheba, Uriah, and the nation. In what sense is every sin first a sin against God, and why does seeing that change how a person repents?
2. David asks for a clean heart, a steadfast spirit, restored joy, and a willing spirit (51:10–12). Notice what he does not ask for. Why is it significant that he never asks to keep his throne, his reputation, or the consequences at bay?
3. Psalm 52 describes a man who loved evil more than good and trusted in the abundance of his riches. Set that beside the picture of the olive tree in 52:8. What actually makes the difference between the two lives, and which picture would people who know you best say fits you?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Read 2 Samuel 11 and 12 to get the setting, then list every request David makes in Psalm 51. Which of them concern the record of his sin and which concern the state of his heart?
2. Psalm 51:16–17 says God does not delight in sacrifice but in a broken and contrite heart. Compare 1 Samuel 15:22, Hosea 6:6, and Hebrews 10:4–10. Is God against sacrifice, and if not, what is He after?
3. In 51:12–13 David ties restored joy to teaching transgressors. Trace that connection. Why is a person who has been forgiven often the best teacher of the person who has not yet repented?
4. Read 1 Samuel 21:1–9 and 22:6–23 for the background of Psalm 52. List what Doeg did, and then note how Psalm 52:1–7 describes both his tongue and his end.
5. David says a broken and contrite heart God will not despise. Name one sin you have been managing rather than confessing, and this week take the specific step you have been avoiding, whether that is confession to God alone, a conversation with the person you wronged, or asking a brother to help you carry it.

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Joseph and Mary bring the baby to Jerusalem to do what the Law required, and their offering of two birds tells you they were poor. An old man named Simeon, promised he would not die before seeing the Lord's Christ, takes the child in his arms and sings, then turns to Mary with a warning about a sword. Anna, a widow of eighty four who never left the temple, tells everyone. Twelve years later the boy is missing for three days and turns up asking questions in the temple.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Simeon calls the child a light to the Gentiles and then tells Mary that He is set for the fall and rising of many, a sign spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed (2:32–35). How does Jesus still expose what is really in people, and where has He exposed something in you?
2. Anna was eighty four, widowed after seven years of marriage, and served God with fastings and prayers night and day for decades before this moment. What does her life say to someone who feels that his own faithfulness is unnoticed and unimportant?
3. At twelve Jesus says He must be about His Father's business, and then goes home to Nazareth and is subject to His parents (2:49–51). How do those two verses belong together, and what does that pattern suggest about how a young person honors God and parents at the same time?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Read Leviticus 12:1–8 and note the offering required and the concession made for the poor. What does Luke 2:24 tell you about Joseph and Mary's circumstances?
2. Write out Simeon's song in 2:29–32 in your own words. How many nations are included, and what has he been waiting for all these years?
3. Count the references to the Law of the Lord or the custom of the Law in 2:22–39. Why does Luke emphasize that this family kept the Law, and how does Galatians 4:4–5 explain it?
4. Luke 2:52 says Jesus increased in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and men. Read Philippians 2:5–8 and Hebrews 4:15, and describe what this verse tells you about His real humanity without diminishing His deity.
5. Simeon and Anna both spent years waiting on a promise, and both recognized Him immediately when He came. Name one promise of God you have grown tired of waiting on, and decide on one practice this week, in prayer, in Scripture, or in service, that will keep you recognizable as someone who is still watching.

Boasting in Weakness**WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE**

The tone of the letter changes here. Paul answers people who said his letters were weighty but his presence unimpressive and his speech contemptible. He describes weapons that are not carnal but mighty through God for pulling down strongholds and taking every thought captive. He refuses to play the comparison game, warns the church against being seduced from the simplicity that is in Christ, identifies the false apostles as ministers of Satan in disguise, and then gives his own credentials: beatings, shipwrecks, hunger, and danger.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Second Corinthians 10:4–5 talks about casting down arguments and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. What does that look like on an ordinary Tuesday, in your own head, with your own recurring thoughts?
2. In 10:12 Paul says that those who measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves among themselves are not wise. Where does comparison do the most damage in your life, and what does 10:17–18 offer instead?
3. Paul says Satan transforms himself into an angel of light and his ministers into ministers of righteousness (11:13–15). If false teaching often looks good and sounds spiritual, how is an ordinary Christian supposed to recognize it?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List the criticisms of Paul that you can identify in chapters 10 and 11, and note how he answers each one. Which criticisms does he take seriously and which does he simply set aside?
2. Paul says he betrothed the church to one husband, to present her as a chaste virgin to Christ (11:2). Read Ephesians 5:25–27 and Revelation 19:7–8. What does this image say about a congregation's first loyalty?
3. Trace Paul's catalog of sufferings in 11:23–28. Count the categories, and then notice what he places last and calls a daily pressure. Why might that one have been the heaviest?
4. Compare Paul's boasting in 11:30 with Jeremiah 9:23–24 and 2 Corinthians 10:17. What is the only kind of boasting Scripture permits?

5. Paul refused support from Corinth so that no one could accuse him of preaching for money (11:7–12). Name one place where you should be willing to give up a legitimate right this week for the sake of someone else's conscience or the reputation of the gospel.

NEXT WEEK'S READING: 2 Chronicles 21–29 · Psalm 53–55 · Luke 3 · 2 Corinthians 12–13

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