

Through the Bible in 24 Months



WEEK 54 OF 104

It Is Written

Week 54 of 104 • 52% of the way through the Bible

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

General Old Testament	2 Chronicles 30–36
Wisdom Literature	Psalms 56–57
Gospels	Luke 4:1–30
General New Testament	Galatians 1–2

THIS WEEK AT A GLANCE

A young king's workmen find a scroll in a temple nobody had cleaned in decades, and when it is read aloud the king tears his clothes, because he finally knows what he has been missing. A hunted man in a Philistine city writes that he will praise God's word and refuse to be afraid of what flesh can do to him. Jesus, forty days hungry and alone, answers every offer the devil makes with four words: it is written. And Paul tells a congregation that if he himself, or an angel out of heaven, ever brings them a different gospel, they are to refuse it. The word of God is not one voice among the voices this week. It is the voice that settles things.

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 30–36

The Book They Had Lost

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Hezekiah sends couriers through the whole land inviting everyone to a Passover, and some of them laugh at the messengers. Manasseh reigns longer than any king of Judah, does more evil than the nations God drove out, and then repents in a Babylonian prison. Josiah becomes king at eight, seeks God at sixteen, and while repairing the temple his high priest finds the Book of the Law. Then the last kings fall in quick succession, the city burns, and a Persian decree closes the book.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Manasseh shed innocent blood, set an idol in the house of God, and seduced the nation into worse evil than the Canaanites, and when he humbled himself in captivity God was moved by his prayer and brought him home (33:9–13). Who have you quietly written off as beyond reach, and what does Manasseh's story ask you to do about that?

2. The Book of the Law was found in the temple, which means it had been in the building all along while the nation drifted (34:14–19). What are we in danger of possessing without reading, and what did Josiah do the moment he heard it?
3. Second Chronicles 36:15–16 says God sent His messengers, rising up early, until there was no remedy. How does a person, or a congregation, get to a place where there is no remedy, and what are the early warning signs?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Read Hezekiah's prayer in 30:18–20 for people who ate the Passover without being ceremonially cleansed. What does it show about God's mercy, and what does it not authorize us to conclude about obeying His instructions?
2. Build a timeline of Josiah from 34:1–8: what he did at eight, at sixteen, at twenty, and at twenty six. What does that sequence say about how reform actually happens?
3. Second Chronicles 36:21 says the land kept its sabbaths until seventy years were fulfilled. Read Leviticus 26:34–35 and Jeremiah 25:11–12, and explain what God was collecting.
4. The book closes with Cyrus issuing a decree. Read Isaiah 44:28 and 45:1–4 and note when those words were spoken relative to Cyrus. What does that tell you about God's control of history?
5. Josiah heard the word read and tore his clothes because he realized how far the nation had drifted (34:19). Name one command of Scripture you have known about for years and never obeyed, and obey it this week.

WISDOM LITERATURE Psalm 56–57

Afraid and Trusting

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Two psalms written while David was running for his life. Psalm 56 comes from the time the Philistines seized him in Gath, the hometown of the giant he had killed, where he survived by pretending to be insane. Psalm 57 comes from a cave, hiding from Saul. Both admit fear openly, and both turn on a decision to trust anyway. In one, David asks God to keep his tears in a bottle; in the other he tells his own soul to wake up and sing.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Psalm 56:3 says, whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You. Notice that it does not say the fear went away. How do fear and faith live in the same person at the same time, and where is that happening in you right now?
2. Psalm 56:8 pictures God counting David's wanderings and putting his tears in a bottle. What does that image say about how God regards suffering that nobody else noticed, and how would believing it change a hard week?
3. Psalm 57:7–8 has David saying his heart is steadfast and telling his own soul to awake and sing, while he is still hiding in a cave. What is the difference between pretending to feel better and deliberately choosing to praise before the trouble ends?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Read 1 Samuel 21:10–15 for the setting of Psalm 56. What did David actually do to survive, and what does that add to your reading of a psalm about trusting God?
2. Twice in Psalm 56 David says, in God I will praise His word (56:4, 10). List everything the psalm says he will not fear and everything he says God will do. What is the relationship between the word he praises and the fear he refuses?
3. Psalm 57 has a repeated refrain in verses 5 and 11. Write it out, and note where it falls in the psalm. What does it mean that the same sentence closes both the section about lions and the section about singing?
4. Psalm 56:7 asks God to cast the peoples down in anger. Read Romans 12:17–21 and 1 Peter 2:23, and explain how a Christian should pray about people who are genuinely trying to harm him.
5. David says, in God I have put my trust, I will not be afraid, what can flesh do to me (56:4). Identify the person or situation whose opinion or power you are most afraid of this week, write that sentence out with the person's name in it, and act accordingly the next time it comes up.

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Full of the Holy Spirit, Jesus is led into the wilderness for forty days and eats nothing. The devil makes three offers, one for bread, one for the kingdoms of the world, one for a spectacular rescue off the temple, and each time Jesus answers with a line from Deuteronomy. Then He returns to Galilee, walks into the synagogue in His hometown, reads from Isaiah, and says the Scripture has been fulfilled today. Minutes later the same room tries to throw Him off a cliff.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Every answer Jesus gives the devil begins with, it is written, and every one comes from Deuteronomy (4:4, 8, 12). What would it take for Scripture to be that available to you in a moment of pressure, and what is your current plan for getting there?
2. The devil quotes Psalm 91 in 4:10–11 and leaves out part of it. Since Scripture can be quoted accurately and used falsely, how does an ordinary Christian protect himself from a persuasive misuse of a Bible verse?
3. Nazareth marveled at His gracious words until He brought up a widow in Sidon and a leper in Syria, and then they wanted to kill Him (4:22–29). Why does God's kindness to outsiders offend insiders so much, and where does that instinct still show up in us?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List the three temptations in order, and beside each one write the passage Jesus quotes. Look up Deuteronomy 8:3, 6:13, and 6:16 and note what Israel had done in each of those settings.
 2. Read Psalm 91:11–12 in full and compare it with the devil's quotation in Luke 4:10–11. What did he leave out, and how does the omission change the meaning?
 3. Jesus read Isaiah 61:1–2 and stopped in the middle of a sentence, before the day of vengeance of our God. Read the whole passage in Isaiah and explain why He stopped where He did.
 4. Trace the Holy Spirit through 4:1, 4:14, and 4:18. What is Luke establishing about the ministry Jesus is beginning?
 5. Hebrews 4:15 says He was tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin, and 1 Corinthians 10:13 promises a way of escape. Name the temptation you most reliably lose to, identify the specific way of escape God has already provided, and take it the next time.
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No Other Gospel

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Paul skips the thanksgiving he normally writes and goes straight to alarm: he marvels that they are so quickly turning to a different gospel, and twice curses anyone who preaches one, including an angel. He then tells his own story to prove his message did not come from men: his brief visits to Jerusalem, and the day he withstood Peter to his face at Antioch for withdrawing from Gentile Christians. It ends with the great sentence: a man is not justified by the works of the law.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Paul says that if he himself, or an angel from heaven, preached a different gospel, let him be accursed (1:8–9). How do we tell the difference between another gospel and a difference of judgment or opinion, and why does that distinction matter so much?
2. Peter ate with Gentile Christians until certain men arrived, and then withdrew out of fear, and even Barnabas was carried away (2:11–13). Where does the fear of what other people will think still bend a Christian's behavior, and what did Paul do about it?
3. Galatians 2:20 says, I have been crucified with Christ. Read Romans 6:3–6 and describe when that crucifixion happened and what it means for how you live on an ordinary Thursday.

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List every statement in chapter 1 about where Paul's gospel came from and where it did not come from. Why does he spend so much space on this before arguing a single point of doctrine?
2. Trace Paul's movements in 1:15–2:1: Arabia, Damascus, Jerusalem after three years, Syria and Cilicia, Jerusalem again after fourteen years. What is he proving by the chronology?
3. Galatians 2:16 says a man is not justified by the works of the law. Read Romans 3:20–28 and Ephesians 2:8–10, and write out what Paul is denying. Then read Galatians 3:26–27, James 2:24, and Hebrews 5:9, and write out what he is not denying.
4. Compare Galatians 2:1–10 with Acts 15. What was the issue, who was present, and what was decided? Note especially what they did not require of Titus.
5. Paul says he does not set aside the grace of God, because if righteousness came through the law, then Christ died in vain (2:21). Name one place where you have been trying to earn what God has already given, and write out what it would look like to stop.

NEXT WEEK'S READING: Ezra 1-10 · Psalm 58-59 · Luke 4:31-5:26 · Galatians 3:1-4:20

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