

Through the Bible in 24 Months



WEEK 56 OF 104

Building and Freedom

Week 56 of 104 • 54% of the way through the Bible

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

General Old Testament	Nehemiah 1-7
Wisdom Literature	Psalms 60-62
Gospels	Luke 5:27-6:19
General New Testament	Galatians 4:21-6:18

THIS WEEK AT A GLANCE

Some weeks Scripture hands you a trowel. Nehemiah hears that the wall of Jerusalem is still rubble, and he weeps, fasts, prays, asks a pagan king for timber, and then builds while men on the ridge above him laugh at every stone. Psalms 60 through 62 are sung by people whose walls have already come down, and they arrive at the only sentence worth saying: God alone is my rock. Luke shows you a tax collector leaving a full cash drawer, and a Savior who will not patch an old garment with new cloth. Paul tells the Galatians that Christ did not cut their chains off so they could pick them back up. Building, waiting, following, standing fast. Four pictures of one stubborn trust.

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 Nehemiah 1-7

Rebuilding the Broken Wall

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

A traveler brings Nehemiah bad news in the Persian palace at Susa: the wall of Jerusalem is broken down and its gates are burned. Nehemiah mourns, prays, and then asks the king for leave, letters, and lumber. He rides around the ruins by night, calls the people to build, and faces mockery, threats, a plot to kill him, and a crisis inside his own camp when wealthy Jews are found squeezing their poorer brothers. Fifty two days later the wall stands.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Nehemiah hears the report in 1:3 and spends days mourning and praying before he ever acts. Walk through his prayer in 1:5-11 and notice where he puts himself in the confession. Why does he say "I and my father's house have sinned" rather than "they"?

2. Trace the opposition through chapters 2, 4, and 6. Sanballat and Tobiah try ridicule, then threat, then conspiracy, then a friendly invitation, then slander. How does Nehemiah answer each one, and which of those five is hardest to resist in your own life?
3. Chapter 5 interrupts the building with a problem the enemy did not cause. Brothers were charging brothers interest and taking their children as collateral. Why is an injustice inside the family of God more dangerous to the work than the men shouting from the hill?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Find every prayer of Nehemiah in these seven chapters (1:5–11; 2:4; 4:4–5; 4:9; 5:19; 6:9; 6:14). Write out what each one asks for. What pattern shows up in a man who prays that often and that briefly?
2. Compare Nehemiah 1:8–9 with Deuteronomy 30:1–5. Nehemiah is praying God’s own words back to Him. How would your praying change if you did the same thing this week?
3. Read chapter 3 slowly and list the kinds of people who built: priests, goldsmiths, perfumers, rulers, daughters, and men who repaired the section in front of their own houses. Then notice 3:5. What does Nehemiah quietly record about the nobles of Tekoa?
4. In 6:2–4 Nehemiah refuses four invitations to meet on the plain of Ono with the same answer: “I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down.” Name the Ono invitations in your calendar right now, the good and harmless things that would pull you off the wall.
5. Somewhere in your life there is a gap in the wall you have learned to live with: a relationship left broken, a habit left unaddressed, a duty quietly dropped. Name it, and name the first stone you will set back in place before next Sunday.

WISDOM LITERATURE Psalm 60–62

He Only Is My Rock

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Three psalms of David, and the ground shifts under all three. Psalm 60 is a national lament after a military disaster, and it opens by telling God bluntly that He has cast His people off and broken their defenses. Psalm 61

is the prayer of a man at the end of the earth asking to be led to a rock higher than himself. Psalm 62 settles into quiet: the soul waiting silently for God, twice repeating that He alone is rock, salvation, and defense.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Psalm 60 begins by telling God that He has cast off His people and made them drink wine of confusion. How does it change your own praying to know that Scripture preserves a prayer this blunt, and where is the line between honest lament and accusing God?
2. Read Psalm 62 aloud and mark every time the psalmist says God alone, or God only. Then list the rivals he names in verses 9 and 10. Which of those competitors quietly has your confidence right now?
3. Psalm 62:8 says to trust in Him at all times and pour out your heart before Him. Most of us pour our hearts out somewhere. Where do we actually take our fear and disappointment first, and what does that habit cost us?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Write down every image these three psalms use for God: refuge, strong tower, rock, shelter, defense, salvation, glory. Which image do you most need this month, and why that one?
2. Psalm 60:11–12 says the help of man is useless and that through God we will do valiantly. Compare Psalm 20:7 and Isaiah 31:1. What is the one temptation all three passages are fighting?
3. In Psalm 61:6–7 David prays that the king's years be prolonged through many generations. Read 2 Samuel 7:16 and Luke 1:32–33 together. Whose throne actually turned out to be the everlasting one, and where does He reign now?
4. Psalm 62:9–10 warns about trusting oppression, robbery, and increasing riches. Set it beside 1 Timothy 6:17–19. Trace exactly what Paul tells the rich to do instead, and count how many of those things you did last month.
5. Psalm 62:1 begins with the soul silently waiting. Take five minutes each morning this week and ask God for nothing at all; simply wait before Him. Write down on Saturday what changed and what did not.

New Wine, Old Wineskins

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Jesus walks past a tax booth, says two words to the man sitting in it, and Levi leaves everything and follows. Then Levi throws a banquet and fills it with his old friends, which scandalizes the religious leaders. Jesus answers with a doctor, a bridegroom, a torn garment, and new wine bursting old skins. Two Sabbath confrontations follow, one in a grainfield and one over a withered hand, and then Jesus prays all night and names twelve apostles.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Levi left a profitable booth and then immediately used his house and his money to get his old crowd in front of Jesus. What did following cost him, and what did his banquet accomplish that a sermon could not?
2. Jesus says no one puts new wine into old wineskins. In context He is talking about the arrival of something the old system could not contain. Which parts of the old order was He refusing to patch, and why does that matter for how we read the Old Testament today?
3. In the grainfield and in the synagogue, Jesus collides with men who had built extra rules around God's commands. Where do we do the same thing, and how do you tell the difference between a conviction God gave and a tradition we inherited?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Set Luke 5:27–32 beside Luke 19:1–10. Both men collected taxes for Rome and both met Jesus. List everything the two accounts have in common and the one thing Luke tells us about Zacchaeus that he does not tell us about Levi.
2. Jesus says He came to call not the righteous but sinners to repentance. Read Luke 18:9–14 and then Romans 3:23. Who exactly are the righteous He is not calling, and why is that the most dangerous group to belong to?
3. Trace Luke's references to Jesus praying: 3:21; 5:16; 6:12; 9:18; 9:28; 11:1; 22:41. What happens right after the all night prayer in 6:12, and what does the timing suggest about how He made decisions?
4. Jesus calls Himself Lord of the Sabbath in 6:5. Read Colossians 2:16–17 and Hebrews 8:13, then Acts 20:7 and 1 Corinthians 16:1–2. Is the Sabbath binding on Christians, and on which day does the New Testament show the church assembling?
5. Name the person you have quietly decided is too far gone for the gospel. Levi's answer was a table. Invite that person to a meal this week, and go with no agenda except friendship and honesty.

Stand Fast in Liberty

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Paul closes his hardest letter with a warning and a portrait. He contrasts Hagar and Sarah as two covenants, one producing slaves and one producing free children, then tells the Galatians to stand fast and not be entangled again. He says plainly that those seeking justification by law have fallen from grace. Then come the two lists, the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit, followed by instructions on restoring the fallen, bearing burdens, and sowing toward eternal life.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Galatians 5:4 says those seeking to be justified by law have become estranged from Christ and have fallen from grace. Read 5:1–6 carefully. What were these people doing, and what does Paul's warning mean for the idea that a saved person can never be lost?
2. In 5:6 Paul says what counts is faith working through love. Set that phrase beside Ephesians 2:8–9 and James 2:17–24. How do those three passages together answer the claim that a person is saved by faith alone?
3. Paul calls the nine qualities in 5:22–23 fruit, singular, not fruits. Which one of them is thinnest in you right now, and what would it actually take for that one to grow, given that fruit grows from a root and not from effort alone?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Make two columns and copy out the works of the flesh (5:19–21) and the fruit of the Spirit (5:22–23). Circle the sins in the first list that our culture no longer regards as sins. Then read the last line of verse 21 aloud.
2. In 4:21–31 Paul reads the story of Hagar and Sarah as a picture of two covenants. Which covenant does each woman represent, and how does his reading line up with Hebrews 8:6–13?
3. Galatians 6:2 says to bear one another's burdens, and 6:5 says each will bear his own load. Look at both verses in context. What kind of weight is shared, and what kind is never transferable?
4. Read 6:7–9 with 2 Corinthians 9:6 and Hosea 8:7. Trace the law of sowing and reaping through all three. Where in the last five years have you seen a harvest you can trace back to a specific seed?

5. Galatians 6:1 tells the spiritual to restore one overtaken in a trespass, in a spirit of gentleness, watching themselves. Think of someone who has drifted from the Lord. Write down what you will say, and go this week.

NEXT WEEK'S READING: Nehemiah 8-13 · Psalm 63-64 · Luke 6:20-7:10 · Ephesians 1:1-2:10

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