

Through the Bible in 24 Months



WEEK 57 OF 104

Hearing and Building

Week 57 of 104 • 55% of the way through the Bible

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

General Old Testament	Nehemiah 8-13
Wisdom Literature	Psalms 63-64
Gospels	Luke 6:20-7:10
General New Testament	Ephesians 1:1-2:10

THIS WEEK AT A GLANCE

Picture a wooden platform in an open square, a man holding a scroll, and a crowd standing from daybreak until noon because they want to hear. That is Nehemiah 8, and when the reading ends the people weep, and then they are told to go home and eat the fat and send portions to anyone who has nothing. David, out in a waterless place, says he has been awake at night thinking about God and that God's steadfast love is better than life itself. Jesus ends a long sermon with two men, two houses, and one flood, and the only difference between them is whether the words were acted on. Paul opens Ephesians by telling you that you came into an eternal purpose the day you heard and believed.

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 8-13

The Book Opened in the Square

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

With the wall finished, the people gather at the Water Gate and ask Ezra to bring out the Law. He reads from morning until midday while the Levites move through the crowd explaining the sense, and the people weep. They keep the Feast of Tabernacles as it had not been kept since Joshua, spend a day in confession, and sign a binding covenant. The wall is dedicated with two great choirs. Then Nehemiah leaves for a time, returns, and finds nearly everything slipping.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Nehemiah 8:8 says they read from the book distinctly, gave the sense, and helped the people understand. Walk through what actually happened in that square. Why is understanding, rather than mere exposure, the goal, and what does that require of a teacher and of a hearer?

2. The people weep when they hear the Law, and their leaders tell them to stop mourning, to eat and drink and share, because the joy of the Lord is their strength. Given that Scripture elsewhere commends godly sorrow, why was joy the right response on that particular day?
3. Chapter 13 shows Nehemiah returning after an absence to find Tobiah living in the temple storerooms, the Levites unpaid and back in their fields, and the Sabbath turned into market day. What in your own life reliably slides backward the moment you stop watching it?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Read the long prayer of Nehemiah 9 and mark two repeated movements: what God did, and what the people did in response. Write out the pattern in your own words, and note where the prayer finally lands in verses 32 through 38.
2. Nehemiah 8:10 tells the people to send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared. Compare that instruction with Acts 2:44–46. What do gladness and generosity keep doing together in Scripture?
3. List the specific commitments the people wrote and sealed in Nehemiah 10:28–39. Which single commitment in that list has an obvious equivalent in your own life, and are you keeping it?
4. Nehemiah 13:15–22 shows him shutting the gates to stop Sabbath trading. Read Colossians 2:16–17 and Hebrews 8:13 alongside it. What was binding on Israel that is not binding on us, and what does that leave unchanged about honoring God with our time?
5. The reading in chapter 8 was public and out loud, and it lasted hours. Put a specific block on your calendar this week to read Scripture aloud with your family or a friend, and keep it even if the week goes badly.

WISDOM LITERATURE Psalm 63–64

Thirsty in a Dry Land

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

David wrote Psalm 63 in the wilderness of Judah, and the imagery is not poetic decoration; he was genuinely in a dry and thirsty land where there was no water. He says his soul thirsts for God the same way, that God's lovingkindness is better than life, and that he remembers God on his bed through the night watches. Psalm 64

turns to a different danger: men who sharpen their tongues like swords and shoot their words from hiding at the innocent.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. David is in an actual desert, and he says his soul is thirsty the way his body is. Think about the dry seasons you have been through. Did the dryness make you thirstier for God, or did it make you numb, and what made the difference?
2. Psalm 63:3 says God's lovingkindness is better than life. That is an enormous claim to make out loud. What would have to be true of a person before he could say it and mean it?
3. Psalm 64 describes words sharpened like swords, aimed from ambush, and spoken in secret. Where does that kind of speech happen among people who would never consider themselves violent, and what is the remedy?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Go through Psalm 63 and note every physical word: soul, flesh, lips, mouth, hands, bed, night watches, the shadow of His wings. What picture of worship emerges when you put them all together?
2. Psalm 63:6 says David meditated on God during the night watches. Compare Psalm 1:2 and Joshua 1:8. Trace what all three passages say meditation is and what it is for.
3. Psalm 64:7–8 says God will shoot at the wicked with an arrow and their own tongue will turn against them. Read Romans 12:19 before you answer. How should a Christian pray about someone who is actively harming him?
4. Psalm 63:8 says the soul follows hard after God and God's right hand upholds him. Set that verse beside Philippians 2:12–13. How do pursuing and being upheld fit together in one sentence without contradicting each other?
5. David sought God early, before the day took him. Identify the one habit that currently occupies the first twenty minutes of your morning, and trade it this week for Scripture and prayer. Write down on Saturday whether you did it.

Two Houses, One Flood

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Jesus comes down to a level place and preaches. Luke gives four blessings and four matching woes, then a string of commands that sound impossible: love your enemies, bless those who curse you, lend expecting nothing back, be merciful as your Father is merciful. He warns about judging, about the plank in your own eye, and about trees and fruit. He closes with two men building houses and one flood. Then a Roman officer sends word that Jesus need not come; a word will do.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Luke pairs four blessings with four woes. Read 6:20–26 aloud and set each pair side by side. Which list would an outsider place most of us on, and what does the pairing say about how God measures a life?
2. Take 6:27–36 line by line: love, do good, bless, pray, give, lend, be merciful. Pick one enemy or difficult person in your life, do not name them out loud, and describe what obeying one of those verbs would look like for you before next Sunday.
3. Both men in 6:46–49 built houses, and from the outside the houses looked alike until the river hit them. The centurion in 7:1–10 understood something about authority that the religious crowd did not. What does it actually mean to call Jesus Lord?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List every command Jesus gives in 6:27–38 and count them. Then mark the ones that require you to do something rather than merely refrain from something.
2. Compare Luke 6:20–26 with Matthew 5:3–12. Note what Luke includes that Matthew does not and how Matthew phrases the first and fourth blessings. Why might Luke, who writes so often about the poor, record the woes?
3. Jesus says judge not, yet John 7:24 tells us to judge with righteous judgment and 1 Corinthians 5:12 has Paul judging those inside the church. Distinguish the kind of judging forbidden from the kind commanded, using all three passages.
4. Trace exactly what the centurion says in 7:6–8 about his own authority and about Jesus. Note what he never asks for and never claims. Then compare his words with the elders' argument in 7:4–5. Whose reasoning does Jesus commend?
5. Luke 6:35 says to do good and lend, hoping for nothing in return. This week do one concrete, costly good for someone who cannot repay you and who will probably never know it was you.

Every Blessing in Him

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Paul opens with one long sentence of praise that piles blessing on blessing: chosen in Him, adopted, accepted, redeemed, forgiven, made to know the mystery of God's will, sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. Then he prays that his readers would grasp the hope they have been given and the power that raised Christ from the dead and seated Him over everything, head over all things to the church. Chapter 2 turns personal: you were dead, but God, who is rich in mercy, made you alive.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Go through 1:3–14 and count the phrases “in Christ,” “in Him,” and “in the Beloved.” Every blessing in the paragraph is located somewhere. What does that tell you about what God chose, and about how a person comes to be included?
2. Ephesians 1:22–23 says God gave Christ to be head over all things to the church, which is His body. If that is true, what should change about how a Christian speaks about the church, thinks about missing an assembly, and treats other members?
3. Read 2:8–10 as one unit, not as two verses and a leftover. Paul says saved by grace through faith, not of works, and then says we are His workmanship created for good works. Which works does he exclude, which does he require, and why is the difference worth fighting over?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List every blessing named in 1:3–14 and write beside each one the phrase that tells you where it is located. Count how many times the location is the same.
2. Ephesians 1:4–5 says God chose us in Him before the foundation of the world and predestined us to adoption. Read 2 Thessalonians 2:13–14 and Romans 8:28–30 alongside it, and pay attention to the words “called you by our gospel.” What did God determine beforehand, and how does a person enter it?
3. Trace the sequence in 1:13: you heard the word of truth, you believed, you were sealed. Then read Acts 19:1–5, where Paul meets these very Ephesians, and Galatians 3:26–27. Write out the steps the New Testament shows between hearing and belonging.
4. Ephesians 2:1–3 says they were dead in trespasses and sins in which they once walked. Compare Ezekiel 18:20 and Isaiah 59:1–2. What made them dead, and what does that rule out about the condition of a newborn child?

5. Ephesians 2:10 says we are created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. Name the good work already sitting in front of you that you have been walking around, and do it this week.

NEXT WEEK'S READING: Esther 1-10; Job 1-3 · Psalm 65-66 · Luke 7:11-50 · Ephesians 2:11-3:21

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