

Through the Bible in 24 Months



WEEK 58 OF 104

The Unseen Hand

Week 58 of 104 • 56% of the way through the Bible

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

General Old Testament	Esther 1-10; Job 1-3
Wisdom Literature	Psalms 65-66
Gospels	Luke 7:11-50
General New Testament	Ephesians 2:11-3:21

THIS WEEK AT A GLANCE

This week God works without signing His name. Esther runs ten chapters without one mention of God, and yet a deposed queen, an overheard plot, and a king who cannot sleep all arrive at exactly the right moment to save a nation. Job, on the other side, is told nothing. We get to read the conversation in heaven; he never hears a word of it, and he loses everything in a single afternoon. The psalmist says plainly that God led His people through fire and water and brought them out to abundance. Jesus walks up on a funeral nobody invited Him to and gives a boy back to his mother. And Paul says the plan was there all along, hidden for ages, in Christ.

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 Esther 1-10; Job 1-3

When God Seems Absent

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

In the Persian capital a king deposes his queen at a drunken banquet, and a Jewish orphan named Esther takes her place. Her cousin Mordecai uncovers an assassination plot, refuses to bow to Haman, and Haman buys a decree to exterminate every Jew in the empire. Esther risks her life, the king cannot sleep, and everything reverses. Then Job: a blameless man, a conversation in heaven he never hears, four messengers in one afternoon, boils, a wife who has had enough, and three friends who sit silent for a week.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. God is never named in the book of Esther, and no miracle occurs. Trace the so called coincidences: Vashti deposed, Esther chosen, Mordecai overhearing the plot, the king's sleepless night, the reading of the chronicles. What does the absence of God's name in this book teach you about the way He usually works?
2. In Job 1 and 2 the reader is given information Job is never given. He suffers without ever learning why, and he dies in chapter 42 without being told about the conversation in chapter 1. How should that shape the way you read his complaints, and the way you think about your own unexplained losses?

3. Job's wife says to curse God and die; Job asks whether we shall accept good from God and not adversity. Both responses are human and understandable. What do the first forty eight hours after catastrophe usually reveal about what a person actually believes?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List every reversal in the book of Esther: the gallows, the decree, the robe, the honor, the feast. Then read Esther 9:1 and write down the exact phrase the writer uses to describe what happened.
2. Esther 4:13-14 has Mordecai say that if Esther stays silent, relief and deliverance will arise from another place. Compare Genesis 50:20 and Romans 8:28. Trace what all three passages assume about God without proving it.
3. Read Job 1:20-22 and 2:9-10 carefully and write down exactly what Job did, exactly what he said, and exactly what the writer says he did not do. The precision matters.
4. In Job 3 he curses the day of his birth and asks why he did not die at birth, yet he never curses God. Compare Jeremiah 20:14-18. Is lament a sin, and where is the line?
5. Job 2:13 says the friends sat with him seven days and nights and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw his grief was very great. Someone you know is in that week right now. Go sit with them before Sunday, and do not explain anything.

WISDOM LITERATURE Psalm 65-66

Through Fire and Water

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Psalm 65 begins in the temple with praise waiting silently for God, moves to atonement for transgressions, and then opens out into one of the most beautiful descriptions of God's provision in Scripture: He stills the roaring of the seas, He waters the ridges, He crowns the year with His goodness. Psalm 66 invites the whole earth to come and see what God has done, then admits something harder: You laid affliction on our backs, You brought us through fire and water, and You brought us out.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Psalm 66:10–12 says God tested His people, refined them like silver, laid affliction on their backs, and then brought them out to a place of abundance. How do you hold together the claim that God allowed the affliction and the claim that God is good?
2. Psalm 65:9–13 spends five verses on rain, rivers, furrows, grain, pastures, and hills. Most of us have not thought about the weather as an act of God in years. What would change in your week if you noticed ordinary provision the way this psalm does?
3. Psalm 66:18 says that if the psalmist had cherished iniquity in his heart, the Lord would not have heard him. What is the difference between a Christian who still struggles with sin and a Christian who is regarding iniquity in his heart, and why does that difference show up in his prayer life?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Go through Psalm 65 and list every verb with God as the subject: He hears, chooses, satisfies, answers, establishes, stills, waters, crowns. Which of those have you personally watched Him do?
2. Psalm 65:3 says iniquities prevail against us, but as for our transgressions, You will provide atonement. Read Hebrews 10:1–4 and 10:10–14. What could the Old Covenant sacrifices do, and what could they never do?
3. Set Psalm 66:10–12 beside 1 Peter 1:6–7 and Romans 5:3–5. Trace what each passage says testing produces. Then write down what your last hard season actually produced in you.
4. Psalm 66:16 says, Come and hear, all you who fear God, and I will declare what He has done for my soul. Write out your own four sentence version of that declaration, in plain words, with no religious vocabulary.
5. Now use it. Before next Sunday, tell one specific person, by name, what God has done for your soul. Not a lecture and not an argument; just the four sentences you wrote.

GOSPELS Luke 7:11–50

He Stopped the Funeral

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Jesus arrives at the gate of a town called Nain just as a funeral procession comes out. The dead man is the only son of a widow, which means she has lost everything. Nobody asks Jesus for anything. He sees her, has

compassion, stops the coffin, and gives the boy back to his mother. Later John the Baptist sends from prison to ask whether Jesus is really the One. Then a Pharisee invites Jesus to dinner, and a woman with a bad reputation ruins the meal with her tears.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Nobody asked Jesus to raise the widow's son. Walk slowly through 7:13–15 and note what He saw, what He felt, what He said, and what He touched. What does that sequence tell you about a compassion that moves before it is requested?
2. John the Baptist, who had announced Jesus and baptized Him, sends from prison to ask whether He is the Coming One. How does Jesus answer the question, and how does He then speak about John to the crowd? What does that model for handling a faithful person's honest doubt?
3. In 7:44–46 Jesus lists what Simon did not do and what the woman did. Read both lists aloud. Which of the two do our own habits of worship most resemble, and what would it look like this week to be the other one?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Jesus answers John by pointing to what is happening: the blind see, the lame walk, the dead are raised, the poor have the gospel preached to them. Look up Isaiah 35:5–6 and 61:1. What is Jesus claiming about Himself without ever stating it directly?
 2. Luke 7:28 says no one born of women is greater than John, yet he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he. Read Mark 9:1, Acts 2, and Colossians 1:13. When did the kingdom begin, and why does that make John's position what it is?
 3. Trace the parable of the two debtors in 7:41–43 and then read 7:47 twice. Does the woman love because she has been forgiven, or is she forgiven because she loved? Notice what Jesus actually says to her in 7:50.
 4. Compare the raising at Nain with 1 Kings 17:17–24 and 2 Kings 4:32–37. List what Elijah and Elisha each did, and then list what Jesus did. What is different about the manner, and what does that difference say about who He is?
 5. Grief in your congregation this week has a name and an address. Do what Jesus did at Nain: go to the person, say something true, and do something concrete. Then write down what it cost you in time.
-

The Wall Torn Down**WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE**

Paul tells his Gentile readers to remember what they used to be: without Christ, strangers to the covenants, having no hope and without God in the world. Then comes the turn. You who were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. He broke down the dividing wall and made one new man out of two. Chapter 3 explains the mystery Paul was given to preach, and closes with a prayer for inner strength and a doxology that gives glory to God in the church.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Ephesians 2:12 lists five things the Gentiles were without. Find all five and read them aloud, then read verse 13. What did the blood of Christ change about each item on that list?
2. Paul says in 2:14–16 that Christ abolished in His flesh the law of commandments contained in ordinances, in order to make one new man and one body. Why did the Old Law itself have to be taken out of the way before Jew and Gentile could be one, and what does that settle about binding Old Covenant practice on Christians today?
3. Ephesians 3:10 says the manifold wisdom of God is now made known through the church to principalities and powers. The church is the exhibit. If that is true, how should it change what we expect from Sunday morning and what we expect from each other on Tuesday?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List the three pictures of the church in 2:19–22: citizens, family, and building. Trace the cornerstone idea through Isaiah 28:16 and 1 Peter 2:4–8. What does a cornerstone determine about everything built after it?
2. Ephesians 3:3–5 says the mystery was made known to Paul by revelation and has now been revealed to God's holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. Read 1 Corinthians 13:8–10 and Jude 3 alongside it. Is God still giving new revelation today, and how do you know?
3. Ephesians 3:11 speaks of the eternal purpose which God accomplished in Christ Jesus. Compare 1:9–10. In your own words, what was God planning all along, and at what point did it stop being a secret?
4. Write out every request in Paul's prayer in 3:14–19. There are at least five. Which one would you most want someone to pray over you this month, and why that one?

5. Paul says Christ Himself is our peace and that He tore down a wall. Name the divide you have quietly allowed to stand in your own heart toward a brother or sister in Christ, whether it is money, politics, background, or an old offense. Take one concrete step toward that person this week.

NEXT WEEK'S READING: Job 4–11 · Psalm 67–68 · Luke 8:1–39 · Ephesians 4

More studies available on ChurchOfChristBibleStudies.com