

Through the Bible in 24 Months, Teacher's Guide



WEEK 60 OF 104

My Redeemer Lives

THIS WEEK'S READINGS	
General Old Testament	Job 12-19
Wisdom Literature	Psalms 69
Gospels	Luke 8:40-9:17
General New Testament	Ephesians 5-6

TEACHING AIM AND ORIENTATION

Your aim this week is to put a name on Christian hope. Job, with nothing left and no explanation coming, says he knows his Redeemer lives. Psalm 69 gives us the voice of a man in over his head, and it turns out to be the voice the Lord Jesus would borrow on the way to a cross. Luke shows a father who watched the clock run out and a Savior who was not late. And Ephesians closes by telling a church under attack to stand, which is only sane advice if the One they belong to has already won.

Doctrinally, Ephesians 5 and 6 carry the load. Marriage is the lifelong union of one man and one woman, and it is a picture of Christ and the church, which means the husband's command is to give himself rather than to assert himself. Ephesians 5:19 tells the church what its music is, and that deserves a clear, calm, unpolemical explanation rather than an argument. And Job 12 through 19 keeps giving you the chance to teach your class a habit they will use forever: notice who is speaking before you quote a verse as doctrine.

Formationally, the thread is what we do in the delay. Job has no answer and holds on. Jairus stands in the road while the minutes cost him everything. The psalmist sinks in deep water and still ends the psalm praising. Paul says stand, and says it three times. Ask your class a question with a name attached: what is the one thing you have been waiting on God for, and what will faithfulness look like this week if the answer does not come by Sunday?

SUGGESTED PLAN FOR THE TWO SESSIONS

First session: Take up Ephesians 5-6. It is long, so plan the hour: fifteen minutes on 5:1-20 including the singing, twenty five on marriage and the household, and the rest on the armor. End by reading 6:10-18 aloud with the class standing if that suits your congregation.

Second session: Take up Luke 8:40-9:17. The interwoven stories of the two daughters are the heart of the hour. Let the class sit in Jairus' delay rather than rushing to the resurrection, and close with the five loaves and the twelve baskets.

The other two readings: Assign Job 12-19 and Psalm 69. Tell the class to read Job 19:23-27 twice and to mark it. For the psalm, give them the New Testament references in advance (John 2:17; John 15:25; Matthew 27:34, 48; Acts 1:20; Romans 15:3) and ask them to read it knowing whose words these became.

Though He Slay Me

PASSAGE OVERVIEW

The second cycle of speeches begins, and Job's patience with his friends is gone. Chapter 12 opens with sarcasm sharp enough to sting: no doubt you are the people, and wisdom will die with you. He then delivers a description of God's absolute power over nature and over human institutions that is as high a view of divine sovereignty as anything the friends have said, which is his point. He is not ignorant of their theology. He simply knows that it does not explain his case.

What follows in chapters 13 and 14 is remarkable. Job turns from the men to God Himself, demanding a hearing, asking God to stop terrifying him long enough for him to speak, and then falling into one of the saddest meditations in Scripture on how short and fragile a human life is. A tree cut down has hope of sprouting again, he says, but a man lies down and does not rise. And then the question that hangs over the whole Old Testament: if a man dies, shall he live again?

Eliphaz and Bildad return with harsher versions of the same argument, and Job's answers grow more desperate and more daring at once. He says his witness is in heaven. He asks for his words to be engraved in rock with an iron pen so they would outlast him. And then, in 19:25–27, without any explanation having been offered him, he says he knows his Redeemer lives and that he will see God with his own eyes. It is the highest point in the book so far, and it comes from the lowest place in Job's life.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- This reading covers the second cycle of speeches: Job answers Zophar (12–14), Eliphaz speaks again (15), Job replies (16–17), Bildad speaks again (18), and Job replies (19).
- The Hebrew word behind "Redeemer" in 19:25 is *goel*, the kinsman redeemer: a near relative obligated to buy back property, avenge blood, or rescue a family member from ruin (Leviticus 25:25; Ruth 3:9–13).
- Job lives before the Law of Moses and before the full revelation of resurrection. His hope is real but partial, which is exactly what makes his confession so striking.
- Job 13:15 has a well known textual question. One reading is "though He slay me, yet will I trust Him," another is "though He slay me, I will not wait," or "I have no hope." Either way the next line stands: "I will defend my own ways before Him."
- The friends never introduce new evidence. Each cycle simply raises the volume, which is itself a lesson about arguments driven by a fixed conclusion.
- Job speaks to God more than the friends do. They talk about God; he talks to Him. That difference is part of why God vindicates him in 42:7.

NOTES ON THE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Question 1. *Job says in 13:15 that though God slay him, yet will he trust Him, and three verses earlier he demands the right to argue his case before God. How do those two live in the same man, and is arguing with God a failure of faith or an act of it?*

They live in the same man because trust and honesty are not opposites. Job refuses to lie about God and refuses to lie about himself. He will not say, as his friends want, that he brought this on himself, and he will not curse God, as his wife suggested. So he does the only remaining thing: he holds on to God while telling God exactly how it looks from where he sits. That is not unbelief; unbelief walks away.

Distinguish carefully for the class. Arguing with God as Job does, in His presence, still addressing Him as the only hope, is faith under pressure. Sullen withdrawal, refusing to pray at all, or concluding that God is unjust and moving on, is something else. Point them to the Psalms, where roughly a third of the collection is lament. God

gave His people words for the days when they cannot find their own, and He was not embarrassed to put them in the book.

Question 2. *Job calls his friends forgers of lies and worthless physicians in 13:4, and miserable comforters in 16:2. They had traveled a long way, sat with him a week, and said a great many true things. What exactly made them worthless?*

Their words were often true and always misapplied. They diagnosed without listening, they defended God as though He needed their help, and they had settled the verdict before the first speech. Worst of all, they needed Job to be guilty, because if a righteous man could suffer like this, then their tidy world could collapse on any of them. Their comfort was really self protection.

The practical lesson is worth stating twice. A physician of value takes a history before writing a prescription. The friends offered theology where Job needed presence, certainty where he needed questions, and explanation where he needed company. Ask the class what they do when a friend's trouble has no solution, and whether they can sit in a room without filling it.

Question 3. *Read Job 19:23–27 aloud, slowly. What does Job claim to know, and what does he still not know? How can a man hold a hope that firm while holding no explanation at all?*

Job claims to know three things: that his Redeemer lives, that He will stand at last upon the earth, and that Job himself will see God, in his flesh, with his own eyes and not another's. He does not claim to know why any of this happened, whether he will be healed, how long he must wait, or what the accusation against him even is. He has traded explanation for a Person, which is the trade the book keeps asking its readers to make.

Be careful not to load the verse with more than Job could have known. He did not have the resurrection of Christ, the empty tomb, or 1 Corinthians 15. What he had was a conviction that a Kinsman would finally stand up for him and that death would not be the last word, and the New Testament shows Who that Kinsman is (Hebrews 2:14–17; 1 Timothy 2:5). Ask the class what they would still know about God if every explanation were withdrawn tomorrow.

NOTES ON THE EXTENDED QUESTIONS

1. *Read Job 12:13–25 and list what Job says God does with judges, kings, priests, counselors, and nations. He is answering a specific accusation from his friends. What is he proving to them, and why is it not the comfort they expected?*

Job says God leads counselors away plundered, makes judges fools, loosens the bonds of kings, leads princes away, overthrows the mighty, removes the speech of the trusted, pours contempt on nobles, uncovers deep things out of darkness, makes nations great and destroys them. He is proving that he knows God's sovereignty at least as well as they do. The friends expected that doctrine to comfort; Job shows that raw power, all by itself, explains nothing about justice, which is exactly his complaint.

2. *Trace Job's picture of human life in 14:1–12: few days, full of trouble, like a flower, like a shadow. Compare Psalm 90:10 and James 4:14. Then read his question in 14:14 and find where the New Testament finally answers it (John 11:25–26; 1 Corinthians 15:20–22).*

Man born of woman is of few days and full of trouble; he comes forth like a flower and is cut down; he flees like a shadow; a tree has more hope than he does. Psalm 90:10 counts our years at seventy or eighty and says they are soon cut off; James 4:14 calls life a vapor. Job's question in 14:14 gets no answer in his lifetime. Jesus answers it in John 11:25–26, and Paul answers it in 1 Corinthians 15:20–22: Christ is risen, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

3. *In 16:19–21 Job says his witness is in heaven and his advocate is on high, and he wishes someone could plead for a man with God. Compare 1 John 2:1 and Hebrews 7:25. Write down what Job wanted and what Christians actually have.*

Job wanted a witness in heaven who would testify for him and someone who would plead for a man with God as a man pleads for his neighbor. Christians have exactly that: an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous,

who always lives to make intercession for those who come to God through Him. The ache of the oldest book in the Bible is answered by name in the New.

4. *Go through chapter 19 and count everyone who has turned away from Job: relatives, acquaintances, close friends, household servants, his wife, even young children. How many separate relationships does he list, and what does that tell you about the weight he is carrying beyond the physical pain?*

He names his relatives, close friends, those who dwell in his house, his maidservants, his servant who will not answer, his wife who finds his breath offensive, his brothers, young children who despise him, and those he loved who have turned against him. That is nine or ten relationships listed in a dozen verses. Job is not only in pain; he is alone in it, which is a different and heavier thing.

5. *Somebody near you is being treated to a great deal of true advice and very little presence. Go be a physician of value this week: listen for thirty minutes and prescribe nothing at all.*

Answers will vary. The thirty minute limit and the ban on prescribing are both deliberate, since most of us reach for advice within a minute. Ask the following week what the person said in the last ten minutes, because that is usually when the real thing surfaces.

HANDLE WITH CARE

- Remind the class each session that the friends' speeches are recorded without being endorsed (42:7), and that Job's own words include charges he later retracts (42:3–6). Neither man is a doctrinal authority in these chapters.
- Job 13:15 is translated several ways. Mention it honestly rather than building an entire lesson on one rendering. The man's determination to hold on to God is clear either way.
- Job 14:4, "who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean," is sometimes used to teach inherited depravity. In context it is a poetic statement about human frailty and mortality, not a doctrine of inherited guilt. Each person becomes guilty when he himself sins (Ezekiel 18:20).
- Job 19:25–27 points forward to Christ and to resurrection, and it should be taught that way, but do not turn Job into a New Testament Christian. He saw the shape of a hope whose fulfillment was still far off.

Deep Waters and Gall

PASSAGE OVERVIEW

Psalm 69 is the second most quoted psalm in the New Testament after Psalm 22, and a class should be told that before reading a line of it. David writes out of real and specific suffering: he is drowning in trouble, exhausted from crying out, hated without cause, mocked by drunkards, and estranged from his own family. His enemies give him gall for food and vinegar for thirst. The details are his, and the reader who knows the crucifixion accounts feels the ground shift while reading them.

The hinge is verse 9: because zeal for Your house has eaten me up, and the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me. That is the key to the whole psalm. The suffering is not random; it comes precisely from caring about God's honor in a setting where nobody else does. John records that the disciples remembered this line when Jesus cleansed the temple, and Paul quotes the second half of it in Romans 15:3 to explain why Christ did not please Himself.

Verses 22 through 28 are among the hardest imprecations in the Psalter, and they should not be skipped. They are appeals to God as judge, laid at His feet rather than taken into the psalmist's own hands, and Acts 1:20 applies one of them to Judas. Then the psalm turns. The last eight verses praise God, promise thanksgiving, and assure the humble that the Lord hears the prisoners and does not despise them. Lament in Scripture almost always ends facing upward.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- Psalm 69 is attributed to David and is an individual lament with strong imprecatory and messianic elements.
- It is quoted or alluded to in John 2:17, John 15:25, John 19:28–30, Matthew 27:34 and 27:48, Acts 1:20, Romans 11:9–10, and Romans 15:3.
- Messianic psalms work in different ways. Some are directly predictive; many, like this one, describe the psalmist's own experience in language the Spirit shaped so that it finds its fullest expression in Christ.
- Not every line applies to Jesus. Verse 5 confesses sin and folly, which belongs to David, not to the sinless Son of God (Hebrews 4:15; 1 Peter 2:22).
- Imprecatory prayers appeal to God's justice under the Old Covenant and are never permission for personal revenge (Deuteronomy 32:35; Romans 12:19).
- The closing reference to God saving Zion and rebuilding the cities of Judah belongs to Israel's historical hope and finds its fulfillment in Christ and His church (Galatians 4:26; Hebrews 12:22–23).

NOTES ON THE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Question 1. *The New Testament quotes Psalm 69 about Jesus more often than almost any other psalm. Find the lines used in John 2:17, John 15:25, Matthew 27:34 and 27:48, Romans 15:3, and Acts 1:20. How does it change your reading of this psalm to know that Jesus lived these very words?*

Lay them out one at a time. John 2:17 applies verse 9a to the temple cleansing. Romans 15:3 applies verse 9b to Christ bearing reproaches. John 15:25 applies verse 4, hated without a cause. Matthew 27:34 and 27:48 report gall and vinegar, the very items of verse 21. Acts 1:20 applies verse 25 to Judas. Romans 11:9–10 applies verses 22 and 23 to hardened Israel. Six New Testament passages, one psalm.

What changes is the company. The psalm stops being an old poem about somebody else's bad week and becomes the shared language of the Lord Himself. Hebrews 4:15 says we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses. Psalm 69 shows what that sympathy is made of: He has been in the deep water. Ask the class which line they most need to know Jesus has prayed.

Question 2. *In verse 8 the psalmist says he has become a stranger to his brothers and an alien to his mother's children, and verse 9 gives the reason: zeal for God's house has consumed him. When has taking God seriously cost you standing with people who should have been closest to you?*

Verse 8 is one of the loneliest sentences in the Psalter, and it is worth sitting on. The alienation is not caused by rudeness or by a bad personality; it is caused by zeal. When one member of a family starts taking God seriously, the family often experiences it as an accusation, whether or not any accusation is made. Jesus said as much in Luke 12:51–53 and experienced it Himself (John 7:5; Mark 3:21).

Give the class room to be honest here, because many will have a story: a parent who stopped calling, a friend group that thinned out, a spouse who resents the time. Then name the danger on the other side, which is that some of us provoke reproach by being obnoxious and then congratulate ourselves for suffering. First Peter 4:14–16 makes exactly that distinction. Ask which kind of cost they are actually paying.

Question 3. *Verses 22 through 28 ask God to bring real and terrible things on the psalmist's enemies. Read them honestly rather than skipping them. Given Luke 23:34 and Romans 12:19, how should a Christian pray about people doing genuine evil?*

Do not soften these verses and do not pretend they are not there. The psalmist asks that his enemies' table become a snare, that their eyes be darkened, that their dwelling be desolate, that they be blotted out of the book of the living. He is not planning revenge; he is asking the Judge of all the earth to do right, which is exactly where vengeance belongs (Romans 12:19). Everything he wants done, he wants God to do.

For a Christian the model is Jesus, who prayed for His executioners (Luke 23:34) and who, when reviled, did not revile in return but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously (1 Peter 2:23). We may and should ask God to stop evil, protect the innocent, and bring justice. We may not ask permission to hate. Point the class to Revelation 6:10, where the martyrs cry how long, and note that even there the answer is left with God.

NOTES ON THE EXTENDED QUESTIONS

1. *List every water image in the psalm: the flood, the mire, the deep, the pit. Then describe in your own words the specific kind of trouble each image is meant to capture.*

The deep waters that reach the neck picture being overwhelmed, with no ability to breathe or control anything. The deep mire with no footing pictures the loss of any solid ground to stand on or push against. The flood overflowing pictures trouble arriving faster than it can be handled. The pit closing its mouth pictures the finality of death or ruin. Together they describe a person who is not merely uncomfortable but sinking.

2. *Verse 5 says, O God, You know my foolishness, and my sins are not hidden from You. Jesus had no sin, yet this psalm is applied to Him repeatedly. Explain how a psalm can describe the psalmist truthfully and still point forward to Christ in particular lines.*

The psalm is David's own experience, honestly recorded, including his sin. Certain lines within it, shaped by the Spirit, describe the righteous sufferer in a way that finds its complete and final expression in Christ. The New Testament writers, guided by that same Spirit, apply those particular lines to Him. That is how typology works: the type is a real person with real flaws, and the fulfillment exceeds him.

3. *Compare Psalm 69:9 with John 2:13–17 and Romans 15:3. Trace how the same verse is used two different ways in the New Testament, and what each use teaches.*

John 2:17 applies the first half of the verse to Jesus cleansing the temple, showing the consuming zeal that drove Him. Romans 15:3 applies the second half, the reproaches falling on Him, to show that Christ did not please Himself and therefore neither should we. One verse teaches both His passion for God's house and His willingness to absorb the cost of it.

4. *Read 69:30–31, where the psalmist says praise will please the Lord better than an ox or a bull. Compare Psalm 51:16–17 and Hebrews 13:15. What has God always wanted more than the ritual He Himself commanded?*

God has always wanted the person before the offering. Psalm 51:16–17 says He does not desire sacrifice but a broken and contrite heart. Hebrews 13:15 calls for the sacrifice of praise, the fruit of our lips. This never meant the

commanded sacrifices were optional under the Old Covenant; it meant they were worthless without the heart they were supposed to express (1 Samuel 15:22; Isaiah 1:11–17).

5. *Name the reproach you have quietly avoided because it would cost you standing with family, coworkers, or friends: a conviction unspoken, an invitation never given, a stand never taken. Take it this week, and expect it to cost something.*

Answers will vary. Watch for two things: whether the reproach is genuinely for Christ rather than for being difficult, and whether the student names a specific person and occasion rather than a general resolve to be bolder.

HANDLE WITH CARE

- Handle the imprecations honestly. They are appeals to God's justice, not models for personal vengeance, and a class that is never taught this will simply skip a third of the Psalter.
- Not every verse of a messianic psalm applies to Christ. Verse 5 confesses sin, which is David's. Teach the class how typology works, or they will be confused by it for the rest of the Psalms.
- The closing lines about Zion and Judah belong to Israel's historical setting and find their fulfillment in Christ and His church. Do not let them be read as a promise about a modern political nation.

Interrupted on the Way

PASSAGE OVERVIEW

Luke gives us two daughters in one account. Jairus is a ruler of the synagogue, a respected man, and his twelve year old daughter is dying. The woman in the crowd has been bleeding for twelve years, which under the Law left her ceremonially unclean the entire time, cut off from the temple, from normal social life, and probably from her family. One of them approaches openly at the front of a crowd; the other sneaks up from behind. Jesus deals with both.

The delay is the heart of the story. Jesus stops for the woman, and the stopping costs Jairus everything, or so it seems. The servant arrives with the worst sentence a father can hear: your daughter is dead, do not trouble the Teacher. Jesus answers with seven words that carry the whole passage: do not be afraid; only believe. At the house He puts out the mourners, takes the girl by the hand, and calls her. Then, in a detail only a careful observer would record, He tells them to give her something to eat.

The second half of the reading widens the frame. Jesus sends the Twelve out with power and authority over demons and disease, to preach the kingdom and heal, traveling with no supplies at all. Herod hears the reports and is perplexed, asking who this is. And then the one miracle recorded in all four Gospels: five thousand men, five loaves, two fish, twelve baskets of fragments. Jesus hands the food to the disciples and makes them distribute it, which is a lesson the apostles would need for the rest of their lives.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- A ruler of the synagogue was a respected lay leader responsible for arrangements and order. For such a man to fall at Jesus' feet publicly was a considerable risk.
- A woman with a continual flow of blood was ceremonially unclean under Leviticus 15:25–27, and anything she touched became unclean. Her approach from behind is explained by twelve years of that.
- The hem or border of the garment refers to the tassels an Israelite man wore on the corners of his outer garment as a reminder of the commandments (Numbers 15:38–39).
- The mission of the Twelve in 9:1–6 is a limited sending during Jesus' earthly ministry, with miraculous power given to confirm the message (compare Mark 16:20; Hebrews 2:3–4).
- Herod Antipas had already beheaded John, which explains his uneasy curiosity in 9:7–9. He finally sees Jesus only at the trial (Luke 23:8–11).
- The feeding of the five thousand is the only miracle besides the resurrection recorded in all four Gospels (Matthew 14; Mark 6; Luke 9; John 6).

NOTES ON THE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Question 1. *Jairus has to stand there while Jesus stops for someone else, and in that delay his daughter dies. Put yourself in his place during those minutes. Where has God's timing in your life looked exactly like indifference, and what did you learn afterward, if anything?*

Give the class a minute to feel it. Jairus is a father watching the only person who can help stop walking, turn around, and begin asking questions in a crowd about who touched Him. Every second is the most expensive second of his life. Then the servant arrives, and the delay appears to have been fatal. What Jairus could not know is that the delay changed the miracle: he was going to get more than a healing.

Do not resolve this too quickly, and do not hand the class a formula. Some in the room prayed for a delay to end and the person died anyway. The passage does not promise that every delay ends in resurrection; it shows that

the Lord is never late by His own reckoning and that the interruption was itself a mercy to another desperate person. Ask what they would have wanted a friend to say to them during their own worst wait.

Question 2. *Jesus already knew who touched Him, yet He would not move until the woman came forward and told her story in front of everyone. Why would He require that of a woman who had every reason to stay hidden?*

He required it for her sake, not for His. She had planned an anonymous healing: touch, get well, disappear. What she got instead was a public word from the Lord calling her daughter, telling her that her faith had made her well, and sending her in peace. That word turned a furtive touch into a relationship, and it told everyone watching that she was not unclean anymore. In that culture, the public declaration was as necessary as the healing.

Also notice what Jesus corrects. If the story had ended at the touch, the crowd would have learned that the fabric had power, which is exactly the superstition that grows up around relics in every century. Jesus names faith, not cloth. Ask the class where their own trust attaches to a practice, a place, or a routine rather than to the Lord Himself.

Question 3. *In 9:13 Jesus tells the apostles to give the crowd something to eat when they have five loaves and two fish. Where has God handed you an assignment plainly larger than your resources, and what do you usually do with that gap?*

The gap is the point. Five loaves divided by five thousand men, plus women and children, is not a shortage; it is an absurdity. And Jesus does not remove the gap. He has them seat the people in groups of fifty, He blesses what little there is, and then He hands it back to the disciples and makes them do the distributing. They carried the impossibility in their own hands and watched it not run out.

Most Christians respond to the gap in one of two ways: they refuse the assignment, or they shrink it to something manageable. The third option is what the text shows, bringing the five loaves and starting to serve. Ask each person to name the assignment they have already turned down because of the math, and what the first act of obedience would be if they stopped doing arithmetic.

NOTES ON THE EXTENDED QUESTIONS

1. *Luke tells two stories at once. List the parallels between the woman and the girl: the twelve years, the word daughter, the touch, the faith, the impossibility. Why do you think Luke wove them together rather than telling them separately?*

Twelve years of bleeding and a twelve year old girl; both are called daughter; both cases were hopeless by human means, one incurable and one already dead; both involve touch, hers of Him and His of the girl; both center on faith, hers active and Jairus' tested. Luke interleaves them so that the woman's healing becomes the very thing that tests and then strengthens the father's faith. The delay for one is the lesson for the other.

2. *Read Luke 9:1–6 and list exactly what Jesus gave the Twelve and exactly what He told them not to take. Then read Luke 22:35–36, where He changes the instruction. Was the first set of orders a permanent rule for all preachers, and how do you know?*

He gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and sent them to preach the kingdom of God and heal. They were to take nothing: no staff, bag, bread, money, or extra tunic. In Luke 22:35–36 Jesus explicitly reverses the instruction, telling them now to take a money bag and a knapsack. That proves the first orders were for that specific mission and not a permanent rule, which is why Paul later took support and worked with his hands (Philippians 4:15–18; Acts 18:3).

3. *Trace the question “Who is this?” through Luke 8:25, 9:9, and 9:20. Write down who asks it each time and what answer, if any, is given. How is Luke building his case?*

In 8:25 the disciples ask it after the storm, with no answer given. In 9:9 Herod asks it out of guilty curiosity and seeks to see Him. In 9:20 Jesus asks the disciples directly and Peter answers, the Christ of God. Luke builds the question across three scenes and then puts the answer in the mouth of an apostle, immediately before the first prediction of the cross.

4. Compare the feeding of the five thousand in 9:12–17 with 2 Kings 4:42–44 and John 6:1–14. Note who provided the food, what the servants objected, and how much was left over. What is the point of the twelve baskets?

In 2 Kings a man brings twenty loaves for a hundred men, the servant objects, Elisha says they will eat and have some left, and they do. In the Gospels five loaves feed five thousand men besides women and children, and twelve baskets of fragments remain. John adds that the loaves came from a boy. The twelve baskets are not decoration: there is one for each apostle who said it could not be done, and the abundance shows that the supply was never the issue.

5. The apostles were sent out with no bag, no bread, no money, and no spare tunic. Name the one thing you rely on more than you rely on God, and go without it for one full week beginning today.

Answers will vary. Expect phones, television, a second income, a particular person's approval, or control over a schedule. The one week limit makes the exercise possible; ask for a report, and expect the honest students to say the first three days exposed more than they wanted to know.

HANDLE WITH CARE

- When Jesus says the girl is sleeping, He is not denying that she died. The mourners laughed because they knew she was dead, and Luke says her spirit returned. Sleep is the New Testament's ordinary way of speaking about the death of one who will be raised (John 11:11–14; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–14).
- Guard against superstition about the garment. Luke is careful to record that Jesus credited her faith, not the fabric.
- The miraculous power given to the Twelve in 9:1–2 confirmed the message they preached. Those signs served their purpose and ceased when revelation was complete (Mark 16:20; Hebrews 2:3–4; 1 Corinthians 13:8–10). Teach this plainly and kindly.
- The feeding of the multitude shows who Jesus is. It is not a promise that following Him guarantees material abundance; the same chapter has Him saying that the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.

Love, Sing, Stand

PASSAGE OVERVIEW

Chapter 5 begins with the highest possible standard and the plainest possible motive: be imitators of God as dear children, and walk in love as Christ also loved us and gave Himself for us. Everything that follows is the shape of that walk. Sexual immorality and covetousness are not even to be named among saints; coarse joking is replaced with thanksgiving; the works of darkness are exposed rather than shared. Then comes a call to walk carefully, to redeem the time, and to understand what the will of the Lord is.

Verses 18 through 21 form the hinge of the whole section. Do not be drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit, and then four participles describe what a Spirit filled congregation looks like: speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in the heart to the Lord, giving thanks always, and submitting to one another in the fear of God. Note that the singing is horizontal and vertical at once, teaching one another while praising God, exactly as Colossians 3:16 says.

The household instructions follow, and Paul gives the longest and hardest assignment to husbands. Three times he tells them to love, and the standard is Christ giving Himself for the church. Children obey and honor; fathers are told not to provoke but to bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord. Servants serve as to Christ, masters treat them knowing they have a Master in heaven. Then the letter closes where a letter about spiritual powers must close: put on the whole armor of God, stand, and pray always for all saints, including a prisoner who wants boldness to keep speaking.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- The household code of 5:22–6:9 addresses three pairs of relationships in the ancient household, and in each pair Paul speaks to the person with less power first, which was itself remarkable.
- Ephesians 5:21, submitting to one another in the fear of God, governs the whole section. The specific instructions that follow are applications of it, not exceptions to it.
- The New Testament specifies singing as the music of the church, and the passages that mention it name no instrument (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 2:12; 1 Corinthians 14:15; James 5:13).
- Roman slavery was widespread and legally total, though not identical to later race based chattel slavery. The New Testament regulates the conduct of Christians inside that system, forbids manstealing (1 Timothy 1:10), and in Philemon undermines it entirely by making a slave a beloved brother.
- The armor imagery draws on Isaiah 59:17, where God Himself wears righteousness as a breastplate and a helmet of salvation, and on the equipment of a Roman soldier Paul could see from prison.
- The struggle in 6:12 is explicitly not against flesh and blood. Ephesians began by seating Christ far above all principality and power (1:21); it ends by arming the church that belongs to Him.

NOTES ON THE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Question 1. *Read 5:22–33 aloud, and read the husband’s assignment in verses 25 through 33 before you discuss the wife’s in verses 22 through 24. What is the husband actually commanded to do, and how does Christ’s example rule out both harshness and passivity in him?*

Read the husband’s verses first and the entire tone of the passage changes. He is commanded to love his wife as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her, to nourish and cherish her as his own body, to sanctify rather than exploit. Christ’s headship is defined by self giving, not self service, so a husband who uses this passage to demand anything has misread it at the first verb. There is no command here for a husband to make his wife submit; there is a command for him to die.

Then the wife's instruction can be heard rightly. Submission is voluntary, it is offered as to the Lord, and it is the response of an equal, since both are heirs together of the grace of life (1 Peter 3:7) and both are one in Christ (Galatians 3:28). Paul calls the whole thing a great mystery concerning Christ and the church, which means every Christian marriage is a picture other people read. Ask the class what their marriage is teaching their children about how Christ treats His church, and be ready for honest answers.

Question 2. *Ephesians 5:19 describes Christians speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in the heart to the Lord. Put it beside Colossians 3:16. According to those two verses, what is the singing meant to accomplish, and who is it aimed at?*

The singing has two directions in one sentence. It is aimed at God, singing and making melody in the heart to the Lord, and it is aimed at each other, speaking to one another, which Colossians 3:16 calls teaching and admonishing one another. That means the assembly's singing is not a performance to be evaluated and not a warm up for the sermon. It is worship offered to God and instruction given to the person in the next seat.

Say the plain thing plainly and without heat. What the New Testament authorizes for the church's music is singing, and every passage that speaks to it names singing and nothing else. That is why the Lord's church sings without instruments: not because instruments are ugly, and not to be different, but because we have no word from Christ authorizing them in the worship of the church, and we would rather do what He has said than add to it. Then move directly to application, since most congregations need help singing well more than they need another argument: know the words, sing to your brother, and stop treating the song service as preliminaries.

Question 3. *Work through the armor in 6:13–17 piece by piece. Which piece is missing or loose in your life right now, and what would putting it on look like on an ordinary Wednesday?*

Go piece by piece. The belt of truth holds everything else in place, and it starts with honesty about ourselves. The breastplate of righteousness is a life actually lived rightly, which is what protects the heart from accusation. Feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace means being ready to move and to speak. The shield of faith is what is raised deliberately when the fiery darts come. The helmet of salvation guards the mind with the certainty of where we stand. The sword of the Spirit, the word of God, is the only offensive piece, and it is the weapon Jesus used in the wilderness.

Ask for specifics, and expect the honest answer to be either the shield or the sword. A Christian who cannot find a verse when he is tempted is fighting with an empty hand. The Wednesday application is usually one of three things: a text memorized, a lie renounced, or a conversation where truth is finally told. Have each person name theirs before the class ends.

NOTES ON THE EXTENDED QUESTIONS

1. *List each piece of armor in 6:14–17 and write beside it the reality it stands for. Notice how many pieces are defensive and how many are for attack, and what that proportion suggests about the Christian life.*

The belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God, with prayer surrounding all of it. Five pieces are defensive and one is offensive. The proportion suggests that most of the Christian life is standing rather than charging; Paul says stand three times in five verses.

2. *Ephesians 5:15–16 says to walk circumspectly, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Track your actual hours for one week on paper. Where did the time go, and what would redeeming it require you to stop?*

Answers will vary, and the written record is the point, because almost everyone guesses wrong about where their time goes. Redeeming the time does not mean filling every hour with activity; it means buying back hours currently spent on nothing for something that lasts. Listen for students who discover a specific recurring block, most often an evening, that they had never counted.

3. Read 6:1–4 with Deuteronomy 6:6–7 and Colossians 3:21. Fathers are given one prohibition and one assignment. Name both, and describe what each one looks like in a home with a teenager in it.

Fathers are told not to provoke their children to wrath, which Colossians 3:21 explains as discouraging them, and they are told to bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord. With a teenager the first usually means fewer sarcastic remarks, fewer moving targets, and apologizing when wrong; the second means the deliberate, repeated, ordinary conversation of Deuteronomy 6:7, at home, on the road, at bedtime, rather than outsourcing it to a class on Sunday.

4. Ephesians 6:5–9 addresses servants and masters in a Roman world where slavery was everywhere. Compare Colossians 3:22–4:1, 1 Timothy 6:1–2, and the letter to Philemon. How does the New Testament transform that relationship from the inside, and what does it never call good?

The New Testament tells servants to serve honestly and heartily as to the Lord and tells masters to give up threatening, reminding them that they have a Master in heaven who shows no partiality. It never calls slavery good; it lists manstealers among the lawless in 1 Timothy 1:10, and in Philemon Paul sends a runaway back as a beloved brother, which destroys the institution at its root. Applied to employment today, it means honest work when no one is watching and employers who remember they will answer to God for how they treat people.

5. Ephesians 6:18 says to pray always with all prayer and supplication for all the saints. Take the congregation's directory this week and pray by name through a portion of it every day until you have prayed for every member.

Answers will vary. This assignment is one of the most consistently transforming things a class can do, because it is very difficult to pray for someone by name every day and remain indifferent to them. Ask the following week who they prayed for and whether anything changed in how they greeted that person on Sunday.

HANDLE WITH CARE

- Teach 5:22–33 as a unit and always under 5:21. Headship is a responsibility to love sacrificially, never a license to dominate, and submission is voluntary and mutual in spirit. Marriage here is the lifelong union of one man and one woman, and it pictures Christ and the church.
- Ephesians 5:19 deserves a plain, calm note about the singing of the church. State what the New Testament authorizes, give the reason, and do not turn the class into an argument. Many visitors have never heard this explained kindly.
- Ephesians 6:5–9 addresses a real institution in the Roman world. Be clear that the New Testament regulates the Christian's conduct within it and never commends the institution itself, and that manstealing is condemned outright (1 Timothy 1:10).
- The warfare of Ephesians 6 is spiritual and defensive, fought with truth, righteousness, faith, and the word. Do not let the imagery be pressed into political or physical conflict (2 Corinthians 10:3–5).
- Being filled with the Spirit in 5:18 is described by its results in the verses that follow: singing, thanksgiving, and submission. Do not let it be redefined as a private ecstatic experience or as evidence of miraculous gifts.

NEXT WEEK'S READING: Job 20–30 · Psalm 70 · Luke 9:18–62 · Philippians 1

More studies available on ChurchOfChristBibleStudies.com