

Through the Bible in 24 Months



WEEK 61 OF 104

Counting the Cost

Week 61 of 104 • 59% of the way through the Bible

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

General Old Testament	Job 20–30
Wisdom Literature	Psalms 70
Gospels	Luke 9:18–62
General New Testament	Philippians 1

THIS WEEK AT A GLANCE

Everything you read this week has a price tag on it. Job has lost the argument, the friends, the health, and the reputation, and he still says that until he dies he will not let go of his integrity, and then he asks where on earth a man finds wisdom. Psalm 70 is five verses long because the man praying it does not have time for eloquence. Jesus asks His disciples who they say He is, and the moment Peter gets it right He starts talking about a cross, and about a daily one for everybody else. Then He sets His face toward Jerusalem. And Paul, writing with a chain on his wrist, says his imprisonment has actually helped the gospel along.

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 Job 20–30

Where Is Wisdom Found

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

The argument runs out of road. Zophar insists that the joy of the wicked is brief, and Job answers with what everyone can see: the wicked often live long, grow rich, bury their parents peacefully, and are carried to the grave with honor. Eliphaz abandons all restraint and simply invents a list of Job’s crimes. Job wishes he could find God’s courtroom and argue his case. Bildad manages six verses. Then Job speaks at length, holding his integrity, asking where wisdom can be found, and remembering better days.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. In chapter 21 Job describes wicked men who prosper, raise families, enjoy music, and die without suffering. How does that plain observation demolish the friends’ formula, and how do you handle the same observation when you see it at work today?
2. Job 23:8–10 says he goes forward and backward and to the left and right and cannot perceive God anywhere, and then says God knows the way that he takes and that he will come forth as gold. How does a person keep walking the right road during a season when God seems completely absent?

3. Chapters 29 and 30 set Job's honored past beside his humiliated present in painful detail. When is remembering better days healthy, and when does it become the thing that keeps a person from living in the days he actually has?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Read Job 28 as a single poem. Trace what men will do to find silver, gold, and sapphires, and then note the question in verses 12 and 20 and the answer in verse 28. Compare Proverbs 9:10 and Colossians 2:3.
2. List the specific things Job says he did in 29:12–17 for the poor, the fatherless, the widow, the blind, the lame, and the stranger. Compare James 1:27. How many of those categories exist within ten miles of your house?
3. In 27:2–6 Job swears he will not let go of his integrity or speak wickedness while he lives. Compare Acts 24:16. Is claiming a clear conscience the same thing as claiming to be without sin, and how do you know from the text?
4. Job says in 23:10 that when God has tested him he will come forth as gold. Read Malachi 3:2–3 and 1 Peter 1:6–7. Trace the refining image through all three, paying attention to who does the work and who watches the fire.
5. Choose one item from Job's list in chapter 29, the poor, the fatherless, the widow, the blind, or the stranger, and do that one thing this week for a specific person whose name you can write down now.

WISDOM LITERATURE Psalm 70

Make Haste to Help Me

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Five verses, and not one wasted word. The psalmist asks God to hurry, twice at the start and twice at the end. He asks that those hunting him be turned back in shame and that those who love God's salvation keep saying that God is great. Then the last line tells you who is praying and why the psalm is so short: I am poor and needy, make haste to me, O God; You are my help and my deliverer; O Lord, do not delay.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Three times in five verses the psalmist tells God to hurry. Is it right to pray that way, and what does the urgency reveal about how well he knows the One he is talking to?
2. In verse 4 the psalmist stops praying about himself long enough to ask that everyone who seeks God rejoice and say continually that God is great. What does that look like in practice, praying for the whole congregation while you are the one going under?
3. The last verse is a plain confession: I am poor and needy. When was the last time you prayed like that, with no accomplishments, no explanations, and no résumé attached to the request?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Set Psalm 70 beside Psalm 40:13–17 and mark every difference, including the name used for God. Why might the same words be lifted out and given their own place in the songbook?
2. Divide the psalm in two columns: what the psalmist asks God to do about his enemies, and what he asks God to do for those who love Him. Which column is longer, and what does the balance suggest about his priorities?
3. Verse 4 says, let God be magnified. Compare Philippians 1:20, where Paul says Christ will be magnified in his body whether by life or by death. What does it mean to magnify something that is already infinitely great?
4. Look up four short prayers: Nehemiah 2:4, Matthew 14:30, Luke 18:13, and Luke 23:42. Write each one out. What do all four have in common besides brevity?
5. Learn Psalm 70 by heart this week. It takes about ten minutes. Then pray it, word for word, the next time you feel panic rising, and write down afterward what happened to the panic.

GOSPELS Luke 9:18–62

Set Toward Jerusalem

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Jesus asks the disciples who the crowds say He is, and then who they say He is, and Peter answers: the Christ of God. Immediately Jesus begins speaking of suffering, rejection, and death, and tells everyone that following Him means a daily cross. Eight days later three of them see Him transfigured with Moses and Elijah, and a voice from

the cloud tells them to hear Him. Then a boy is healed, the disciples argue about greatness, a Samaritan village refuses Him, and three men meet Him on the road.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. In 9:23 Jesus says that anyone who follows Him must deny himself and take up his cross daily. A cross was an instrument of execution, not an inconvenience. What does daily cross bearing look like in an ordinary week, and what does it emphatically not mean?
2. On the mountain Moses and Elijah appear and speak with Jesus, and Peter proposes three equal shelters. The voice from the cloud says, This is My beloved Son, hear Him. Why does the Father say hear Him rather than hear them, and what does that settle about the Law and the Prophets?
3. Three men encounter Jesus on the road in 9:57–62, and two of them have entirely reasonable reasons to wait. Which of the three sounds most like you, and what is the specific thing you are waiting on before you follow all the way?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Luke 9:27 says some standing there would not taste death till they saw the kingdom of God. Read Mark 9:1, Daniel 2:44, Acts 2:1–4 and 2:47, and Colossians 1:13. When did the kingdom come, who is in it, and where does Christ reign now?
2. Trace the transfiguration in 9:28–36: who is present, what Moses and Elijah discuss with Jesus, what Peter proposes, what the cloud does, and what the voice says. Then read 2 Peter 1:16–18 and note what Peter says he learned there.
3. Luke records two failures of the disciples back to back in 9:46–50: a dispute about who is greatest, and an attempt to stop a man casting out demons because he was not one of their group. Compare Philippians 2:3–4. What single attitude lies underneath both failures?
4. Luke 9:51 says Jesus steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem. Compare Isaiah 50:7 and Hebrews 12:2. What did He know was waiting there, and what does that tell you about the nature of His obedience?
5. Jesus says in 9:62 that no one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God. Name what you keep looking back at, and take one concrete, irreversible step this week to stop.

To Live Is Christ

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Paul writes from custody to a church he loves, and the letter opens with thanksgiving rather than complaint. He is grateful for their partnership in the gospel from the first day, confident about the work God began in them, and praying that their love would grow in knowledge and discernment. Then he explains his situation: the chains have actually spread the gospel, some are preaching Christ from bad motives, and he rejoices anyway. He would rather depart and be with Christ, but staying is better for them.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. In 1:12–18 Paul says his imprisonment advanced the gospel and that he rejoices even when Christ is preached from envy and selfish ambition. Given that he condemns a different gospel in the strongest terms in Galatians 1:8–9, where exactly is the line between a wrong motive and a wrong message?
2. Philippians 1:21 says, for to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. Finish the sentence honestly for yourself: for to me to live is what? Then ask what would have to change for Paul's version to be true of you.
3. In 1:27–30 Paul asks them to stand fast in one spirit, striving together for the faith of the gospel, and then says suffering has been granted to them as a gift. What does striving together actually require of a congregation, and what most often breaks it?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Philippians 1:1 greets the saints with the bishops and deacons. Read Acts 20:17 and 20:28, 1 Timothy 3:1–13, and Titus 1:5–9. How many elders did a New Testament congregation have, what are they called, and who is qualified to serve?
2. Philippians 1:6 says He who began a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ. Read it beside Philippians 2:12–13 and 3:12–14, and beside Hebrews 3:12–14. Is this an unconditional guarantee about every individual, and how does the rest of the letter answer that?
3. List everything Paul actually prays for in 1:9–11. Notice that he asks for love to abound in knowledge and discernment rather than for comfort or release. How would your prayer list change if it matched his?
4. Trace Paul's situation in 1:12–14: where he is, what happened to the palace guard, and what the brethren did as a result. What does that suggest about God using circumstances no one would have chosen?
5. The Philippians partnered financially in gospel work from the first day (1:5; 4:15–16). This week give, sacrificially and specifically, to a work whose results you will never personally see, and tell no one you did it.

NEXT WEEK'S READING: Job 31–37 · Psalm 71–72 · Luke 10 · Philippians 2

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