

Through the Bible in 24 Months



WEEK 64 OF 104

Inside the Cup

Week 64 of 104 • 62% of the way through the Bible

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

General Old Testament	Isaiah 1-5
Wisdom Literature	Psalms 74-76
Gospels	Luke 11:33-12:21
General New Testament	Colossians 1:1-2:5

THIS WEEK AT A GLANCE

God is not impressed by the part of us that shows. This week Isaiah opens with the Lord telling His own people to stop bringing offerings He Himself commanded, because their hands are full of blood, and then He sings a love song about a vineyard that got every advantage and produced sour fruit. Jesus sits down at a Pharisee's table and says the cups are spotless on the outside and the men are full of greed, and then He tells about a farmer with a bumper crop who talked to nobody but himself. Asaph stands in a burned sanctuary and remembers who actually runs the world. And Paul, writing to a young church, prays not that they will look right but that they will bear fruit, because Christ is first in everything and holds all of it together.

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 Isaiah 1-5

The Vineyard That Disappointed

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Isaiah opens like a courtroom, summoning heaven and earth to hear a charge against a nation that knows less about its owner than an ox does. God says He is weary of their incense and feast days while their hands are full of blood, then offers to make scarlet sins white as snow. Chapter 2 lifts your eyes to the mountain of the Lord's house in the last days. Chapters 3 and 4 strip the proud. Chapter 5 sings a love song about a vineyard, and ends in six woes.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. In Isaiah 1:11-17 God says He cannot endure worship that He Himself commanded. How does worship become something God hates, and where is that danger for a congregation like ours?
2. Isaiah 2:2-4 promises that in the last days the mountain of the Lord's house will be established and all nations will flow to it. When was that fulfilled, and what difference does your answer make to how you read the rest of the prophets?

3. In Isaiah 5:1–7 God lists everything He did for His vineyard and then shows what it produced. Take inventory out loud: what has God invested in us, and what is He looking for in return?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List the six woes of Isaiah 5:8–23 and put each one into a sentence of your own. Which of the six lands closest to your own life?
2. Isaiah 1:18 offers to make scarlet sins white as snow. Read 1:16–20 and write down the commands that come immediately before and after that offer.
3. Compare Isaiah 2:2–4 with Micah 4:1–3, Acts 2:16–17, and Hebrews 12:22–23. Where did the mountain of the Lord’s house finally come to stand, and who flows to it?
4. Trace what Isaiah 3:1–15 says God will remove from a nation and what He will put in its place. According to the text, what brings that judgment on?
5. Isaiah 1:17 gives five commands about the oppressed, the fatherless, and the widow. Pick the one you have most neglected and do something about it this week with an actual name attached.

WISDOM LITERATURE Psalm 74–76

When the Sanctuary Burns

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Psalm 74 is written in the smoke. Enemies have roared in the meeting place, smashed the carved work with axes and hammers, burned the sanctuary, with no prophet left and nobody who knows how long. The psalmist argues with God by remembering the Red Sea. Psalm 75 answers in God’s own voice: I will judge uprightly, there is a cup in My hand, and I am the one who puts down one and lifts up another. Psalm 76 celebrates a God known in Judah who breaks the weapons of war.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Psalm 74:9 says, “We do not see our signs; there is no longer any prophet; nor is there any among us who knows how long.” Talk honestly about what praying feels like in a season like that, and watch what the psalmist does next in verses 12 through 17.

2. Psalm 75:6–7 says exaltation comes neither from the east nor the west but from God, who puts down one and lifts up another. How would actually believing that change the way you handle being passed over, overlooked, or replaced?
3. Psalm 76 says God is known in Judah and that His name is great in Israel. What does it mean for God to be known in a particular place, and what are people in our town currently learning about God from this congregation?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List everything Psalm 74:3–8 says the enemy did inside the sanctuary. Then note in verse 1 and verse 10 what troubles the psalmist even more than the damage.
2. Psalm 74:12–17 turns from complaint to memory. Write down each of God's past acts named there, and explain why he rehearses them at this particular moment.
3. Psalm 75:8 describes a cup of foaming wine in the Lord's hand. Compare Jeremiah 25:15–17 and Revelation 14:10, and describe what the cup stands for.
4. Trace the requests in Psalm 74:18–23 and identify the psalmist's main argument for why God should act. Notice whose reputation he appeals to.
5. Psalm 76:11 says to make vows to the Lord your God and pay them. Identify one promise you made to God and quietly let go of, and do what is needed this week to keep it.

GOSPELS Luke 11:33–12:21

The Outside of the Cup

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Jesus talks about a lamp and the eye that lets light into the body. Then He accepts a Pharisee's dinner invitation, skips the ceremonial washing, and delivers six woes: clean cups with greedy insides, careful tithing of garden herbs while justice is ignored, the best seats, unmarked graves that defile people who walk over them, burdens nobody will lift a finger to carry, and the key of knowledge taken away. Then He warns the crowd about hypocrisy, about whom to fear, and about a farmer with a very good year.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. In Luke 11:39–41 Jesus says the Pharisees wash the outside of the cup while the inside is full of greed. Where does that pattern show up in a faithful, church-attending person, and what would cleaning the inside actually involve?
2. Jesus calls hypocrisy leaven and says nothing covered will remain hidden (12:1–3). Why does hypocrisy spread through a person and through a congregation the way yeast spreads through dough, and what stops it?
3. The rich man in 12:15–21 does nothing illegal, cruel, or lazy. Why then does God call him a fool, and how would you know if you were living the same way?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List the six woes of Luke 11:42–52 and write one sentence for each saying what is actually being condemned. Note which ones concern religious leaders specifically.
2. Read Luke 11:34–36 about the lamp of the body. Compare Matthew 6:22–23, where the same saying sits beside teaching about money, and describe what a good eye and a bad eye meant to a Jewish hearer.
3. Jesus says to fear the One who has power to cast into hell (12:4–5). Read Matthew 10:28 and Hebrews 10:31, then explain how that fear fits together with 1 John 4:18.
4. Count the times the rich man says “I” or “my” in 12:17–19. Who is missing from the conversation entirely, and what does the arithmetic of his speech reveal?
5. Jesus names the alternative in 12:21: being rich toward God. Decide on one specific thing you will do this month with money you had planned to store, and do it before the month ends.

GENERAL NEW TESTAMENT Colossians 1:1–2:5

First in Everything

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Paul thanks God for a church he has never met, then prays that they be filled with the knowledge of God’s will, walk worthy, and bear fruit. He says the Father has delivered us out of the power of darkness and moved us into

the kingdom of His beloved Son. Then comes the towering passage: Christ is the image of the invisible God, the maker of all things, the head of the body which is the church, the firstborn from the dead, first in everything.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Colossians 1:13 says God has already delivered us and conveyed us into the kingdom of His Son. Talk about what that past tense settles, and what it means for a Christian to be living inside the kingdom right now.
2. Read 1:15–20 aloud and list every claim it makes about Christ. Which of those claims most collides with the way people around us think about Jesus?
3. Colossians 1:21–23 says we are reconciled and presented holy, “if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast.” What does that “if” do to the way we think and talk about being secure?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List every request in Paul’s prayer in 1:9–12. How many of them concern knowledge, how many concern conduct, and how do the two relate?
2. Christ is called “firstborn over all creation” in 1:15 and “firstborn from the dead” in 1:18. Compare Psalm 89:27 and Revelation 1:5, then read 1:16–17 and John 1:3 and explain whether firstborn can mean that Christ was created.
3. Trace every occurrence of “all” and “every” in 1:15–20 and again in 1:28. Write down what the repetition is doing to Paul’s argument against the Colossian error.
4. Colossians 1:26–27 says the mystery now revealed is “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” Read Ephesians 3:3–6 and state in your own words what the mystery was and why it had been hidden.
5. Paul prays in 1:10 that they walk worthy, fully pleasing Him, fruitful in every good work. Name the one good work you have been meaning to start for a year, and begin it this week.

NEXT WEEK’S READING: Isaiah 6–10 • Psalm 77 • Luke 12:22–59 • Colossians 2:6–4:18

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