

Through the Bible in 24 Months



WEEK 71 OF 104

The God Who Carries

Week 71 of 104 • 68% of the way through the Bible

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

General Old Testament	Isaiah 44-49
Wisdom Literature	Psalms 89
Gospels	Luke 18
General New Testament	1 Timothy 3-4

THIS WEEK AT A GLANCE

Picture a road out of a falling city. The gods of Babylon are strapped to carts, and the oxen are staggering under them, because a god who has to be hauled is a burden before he is anything else. Into that scene God says something startling: I have carried you since you were born, and I will carry you when your hair is gray. Everything you read this week sorts people by what they are holding. A widow holds nothing but her case and keeps coming back. A tax collector will not lift his eyes. A wealthy young man cannot put down what he owns. And a young preacher is handed the truth itself and told to guard it and to live like it.

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 44-49

The God Who Carries You

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

God pours water on the thirsty and dares the idols to predict anything at all. Isaiah walks you through a carpenter's shop where a man burns half a log to bake bread and bows to the other half. God names Cyrus a century and a half before his birth, topples Bel and Nebo onto the backs of weary animals, and says that unlike those gods He has carried His people since the womb. Then the Servant speaks, sent to bring Israel back and to be a light to the nations.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Isaiah 44:9-20 is a sustained piece of satire about a man who cooks his dinner over half a log and worships the other half. What is the prophet trying to make us feel, and where does the same absurdity show up in an ordinary American week?
2. Set Isaiah 46:1-2 beside 46:3-4. Babylon's gods have to be loaded onto carts, while the Lord says He has carried His people from birth and will carry them to their gray hair. Which of the two arrangements does your daily life actually resemble?

3. God names Cyrus generations before he was born and calls him “My shepherd” and “His anointed” (44:28–45:1), though Cyrus did not know Him. How should that shape the way we think and talk about political powers that have no interest in God?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Go through Isaiah 44 through 46 and list every place God says something like “I am the Lord, and there is no other.” Count them, and note what He offers as proof each time.
2. Isaiah 45:7 says God forms light and creates darkness, makes peace and creates calamity. Read Amos 3:6 and Lamentations 3:37–38, then explain in what sense that is true and what it does not mean about God and moral evil.
3. Trace the Servant’s mission in Isaiah 49:1–7. Then read Acts 13:46–47 and note which verse Paul and Barnabas apply to their own work, and why they could do that.
4. Isaiah 48:10 says God refined His people in the furnace of affliction. Compare 1 Peter 1:6–7 and Hebrews 12:7–11. What purpose does Scripture consistently assign to the fire?
5. Isaiah 49:15–16 says God has inscribed you on the palms of His hands. Copy the verse out by hand, name the specific fear it speaks to in you, and decide one thing you will stop doing about that fear this week.

WISDOM LITERATURE Psalm 89

The Covenant That Looked Broken

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Ethan begins by singing of God’s mercy forever and His faithfulness to all generations. For thirty-seven verses he recites God’s oath to David: a throne established forever, a seed that will endure, sons who will be chastened with the rod but never cut off from God’s covenant love. Then at verse 38 the psalm turns hard. You have cast off, You have renounced, You have thrown his crown to the ground. The song that began with mercy ends with an unanswered question: how long?

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Psalm 89 spends thirty-seven verses celebrating a promise and then thirteen verses saying it appears to be in ruins. Why is it good for us that the Holy Spirit did not stop this psalm at verse 37?

2. God swore that David's throne would endure as long as the sun (89:35–37). Read Acts 2:29–36 and Luke 1:32–33. How was that promise actually kept, and what does it teach us about the shape of God's answers?
3. Verses 30 through 34 say that if David's sons forsake God's law they will feel the rod, and that God still will not take His lovingkindness from them. How do discipline and covenant love work together in a household or a congregation without either one canceling the other?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List everything God promises David in 89:19–37, then read 2 Samuel 7:12–16 and mark which items appear in both passages.
2. Find the turn at verse 38 and write down each thing the psalmist says God has done. Notice the change in pronouns and in tone, and ask why the psalm keeps addressing God directly.
3. Psalm 89 ends with “How long, Lord?” Find that question in Psalm 13:1, Habakkuk 1:2, and Revelation 6:10. What does it tell you that God preserved so many prayers with that question in them?
4. Compare Psalm 89:27, where God calls David His firstborn and highest of the kings of the earth, with Colossians 1:15–18 and Hebrews 1:5–6. In what sense is Christ the firstborn, and how does that clarify what God promised David?
5. Name the promise of God you have privately begun to doubt because of how long it has taken. Pray it this week the way Ethan does: recite what God has said, tell Him honestly how it looks from where you stand, and then ask.

GOSPELS Luke 18

Persistent Prayer, Empty Hands

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Jesus tells of a widow who will not stop coming to a judge who fears neither God nor man, and then of two men praying in the temple, one listing his virtues and the other unable to lift his eyes. Parents bring infants to Him and the disciples try to stop them. A wealthy ruler asks what he must do and walks away sorrowful. Jesus predicts His death a third time, and nobody understands a word of it. Then a blind beggar outside Jericho refuses to be quieted.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. The parable of the widow argues from the lesser to the greater: if an unjust judge finally acts, how much more will God. Why, then, does Jesus end it by asking whether He will find faith on the earth when He comes?
2. Everything the Pharisee says in his prayer is true. He really did fast and tithe. So what exactly is wrong with it, and where do we pray that way without ever hearing ourselves?
3. Jesus told this ruler to sell everything, but He never said that to Zacchaeus or to Nicodemus. What was He after in this particular man, and what do you think He would put His finger on in you?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Read the two prayers in 18:10–14 side by side. Count how many times the Pharisee says “I,” and write down exactly what the tax collector asks for and what Jesus says he received.
2. Jesus says the kingdom must be received as a little child (18:16–17). Read Matthew 18:3–4 and 19:14 as well. What is it about a child that He is pointing to, and what does that settle about the spiritual condition of children?
3. List everything the rich ruler had in his favor in 18:18–21, and then what Jesus said he still lacked. Compare 1 Timothy 6:17–19 and Matthew 6:19–21.
4. In 18:31–34 Jesus foretells His death and resurrection in unmistakable detail, and the apostles understand none of it. Read Isaiah 53:3–6 and consider why the plainest prophecy in the Bible was the hardest thing for them to accept.
5. The blind man would not be quiet, even when the crowd told him to hush (18:38–39). Name the request you have quietly stopped bringing to God because you got tired of asking, and bring it to Him every day this week.

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Paul sets out in detail who may serve as an elder and who may serve as a deacon, and almost every item concerns character and household rather than ability. He tells Timothy why it matters: this is how people ought to behave in the house of God, the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. Then he warns that some will depart from the faith, and charges his young preacher to be an example and to watch both his life and his doctrine.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Read 3:1–7 slowly, item by item. Nearly every qualification concerns character and home rather than talent or education. Why would God qualify shepherds that way, and what does that tell us about the actual work of an elder?
2. First Timothy 3:15 calls the church the pillar and ground of the truth. What does that make a congregation responsible for, and where should that responsibility be visible on an ordinary Sunday morning?
3. Paul tells Timothy to be an example in word, conduct, love, spirit, faith, and purity (4:12). Which of those six is hardest for a young Christian to hold onto in our setting, and what support from this congregation would actually help?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Write out the qualifications for elders in 3:1–7 and set them beside Titus 1:5–9. Which items appear in one list and not the other, and what do the two together emphasize most?
2. Compare the qualifications for deacons in 3:8–13 with those for elders. What is shared, what is different, and who are the women of verse 11 most likely to be?
3. First Timothy 4:1–3 describes a falling away marked by forbidding marriage and commanding abstinence from certain foods. Read Colossians 2:20–23 and Hebrews 13:4, then explain why man-made restrictions feel so spiritual while accomplishing nothing.
4. Paul says bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things (4:8). Track your hours honestly this week: how many go to your body, and how many to your soul? Write down both numbers before you draw a conclusion.
5. Paul tells Timothy to take heed to himself and to the doctrine and to continue in them (4:16). Choose one thing you will read, memorize, or study every day for the next thirty days, then tell someone so they will ask you about it.

NEXT WEEK'S READING: Isaiah 50-59 · Psalm 90-91 · Luke 19:1-27 · 1 Timothy 5-6

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