

Through the Bible in 24 Months



WEEK 72 OF 104

Ransom and Riches

Week 72 of 104 • 69% of the way through the Bible

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

General Old Testament	Isaiah 50-59
Wisdom Literature	Psalms 90-91
Gospels	Luke 19:1-27
General New Testament	1 Timothy 5-6

THIS WEEK AT A GLANCE

Add up what things cost you this week and you will have written a kind of autobiography. Isaiah shows you a price no one expected: a Servant with no beauty that we should desire Him, wounded for our transgressions, and then an invitation to come and buy wine and milk without money and without price. Moses asks God to teach him to number his days, because life is short and he wants to spend it on something that lasts. A tax collector with more money than anyone in Jericho climbs a tree and comes down giving half of it away. And Paul tells a young preacher that godliness with contentment is great gain, which is either the most obvious sentence in the Bible or the hardest.

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 50-59

The Servant Who Was Pierced

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

The Servant gives His back to those who strike Him and His cheeks to those who pull out the beard. Zion is told to wake up, and a messenger comes over the mountains with beautiful feet. Then, at 52:13, the center of the book opens: a man despised and rejected, wounded for our transgressions, silent before His shearers, buried with the rich, and satisfied afterward. Then come an invitation to the thirsty, a house of prayer for all peoples, a rebuke of hollow fasting, and a Redeemer promised.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Read Isaiah 53:4-6 aloud twice, slowly. Count the words "our," "we," and "us," and notice what sits next to each one. What is being claimed about who did what, and to whom?
2. Isaiah 55:1-3 invites the thirsty to come and buy with no money. If salvation costs the sinner nothing, why does Jesus tell people to count the cost (Luke 14:28-33), and how do those two hold together without contradiction?

3. In Isaiah 58 people fast and then complain that God did not notice, and God describes the fast He actually chooses. Where is our own religious practice most in danger of becoming something God never asked for?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Work through Isaiah 52:13–53:12 with two columns. In the first, list every statement of what the Servant suffered. In the second, list every statement of why He suffered. Then read the second column out loud.
2. Read Acts 8:26–39. Identify which verses of Isaiah 53 the Ethiopian was reading, what Philip preached from them, and what the man did as a result of that preaching.
3. Trace God's claim in Isaiah 55:10–11 that His word will not return to Him empty. Set it beside Romans 10:17 and Hebrews 4:12, and write out in one sentence what is being claimed about Scripture.
4. Isaiah 59:1–2 explains why prayers can seem to go unheard. Read it with 1 Peter 3:12 and Psalm 66:18, and write down carefully what those verses do and do not say about God's ability and willingness.
5. Isaiah 55:7 tells the wicked to forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts. Name the thought pattern, not merely the act, that you need to forsake, and write one sentence of Scripture you will preach to yourself every time it starts.

WISDOM LITERATURE Psalm 90–91

Teach Us to Number Our Days

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Moses writes the oldest psalm in the book, and it begins with God as the dwelling place of every generation before it turns to how brief we are: grass in the morning, cut down by evening, seventy years or eighty if we are strong. He asks God to teach him to count his days. Psalm 91 then answers with a picture of shelter, the one who dwells in the secret place of the Most High, kept under wings, with angels charged to bear him up.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Psalm 90 asks God to teach us to number our days so we may gain a heart of wisdom. What actually changes in a person who has honestly faced how short his life is, and what changes in a person who refuses to?
2. Psalm 91 says no evil shall befall you, and yet faithful Christians are injured, sick, and killed. How do we read a psalm like this so that it neither becomes a guarantee of immunity nor gets quietly emptied of its comfort?

3. Satan quoted Psalm 91:11–12 to Jesus on the temple pinnacle (Matthew 4:5–7). What was wrong with the way he used the verse, and where do we make the same mistake with promises we like?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List everything Psalm 90 says about God, then everything it says about man. Note where the two lists touch, especially in verses 1, 12, and 17.
2. Psalm 90:12 asks for a heart of wisdom. Read James 4:13–15 and Ephesians 5:15–16, and identify the practical habit those passages recommend for someone who has counted his days.
3. Trace the four names for God in Psalm 91:1–2: Most High, Almighty, Lord, and my God. Look up what each one emphasizes, and consider why the psalmist stacks them at the opening.
4. Compare Psalm 91:14–16 with Romans 8:35–39. What is promised to the one who loves God, and what is specifically not promised?
5. Psalm 90:17 asks God to establish the work of our hands. Name the one piece of work you most want to outlast you, and identify the single change this week that would actually serve it.

GOSPELS Luke 19:1–27

Zacchaeus and the Minas

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Jericho is crowded, and a wealthy chief tax collector who is too short to see over the heads of the crowd runs ahead and climbs a sycamore tree. Jesus stops under it, calls him by name, and invites Himself to dinner, and everyone in town murmurs. By the end of the meal Zacchaeus is standing up and giving half of everything away. Then, because the crowd expects the kingdom to appear any moment, Jesus tells a parable about a nobleman, ten servants, ten minas, and a return.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Zacchaeus's repentance shows up in his account books within minutes. Why does Jesus point to that as the evidence that salvation had come to this house, and what would equivalent evidence look like in your life?

2. Luke tells us plainly why Jesus told the parable of the minas: the crowd thought the kingdom of God would appear immediately (19:11). How does the parable correct their expectation, and what does it correct in ours?
3. The servant who hid his mina explained that he was afraid, because he believed his master was a hard man. Where does a wrong picture of God make people cautious and unfruitful rather than bold?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Trace Zacchaeus's actions step by step in 19:3–8. Then read Exodus 22:1 and Numbers 5:6–7, and compare his restitution with what the law actually required of him.
2. Set the rich ruler of Luke 18:18–23 beside Zacchaeus in Luke 19:1–10. What did the two men have in common, and what made the difference between them?
3. List what the nobleman gives, what he expects on his return, and what he says to each of the three servants. What is the mina most likely to represent, and what does the differing reward suggest?
4. Jesus says the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost (19:10). Read Luke 15:4, Ezekiel 34:11–16, and 1 Timothy 1:15, and describe the picture of God that emerges from all four passages together.
5. Name one thing God has entrusted to you that you are currently protecting rather than investing. Decide what putting it to work would look like this month, and write down the first step with a date.

GENERAL NEW TESTAMENT 1 Timothy 5–6

Widows, Elders, and Contentment

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Paul tells Timothy how to speak to people of every age and then works through hard practical matters: which widows the church supports and which ones families must care for, how elders are to be honored, how an accusation against an elder must be handled, and how not to appoint men in a hurry. Then he turns to money, warning that the love of it has pierced people through with many sorrows, and charges the rich to be rich in good works.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. First Timothy 5:8 says a man who does not provide for his own household has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. That is severe language. Why is caring for family treated as a matter of faith rather than of personal preference?
2. Paul builds protections around accusations against elders (5:19–21) and then requires public rebuke of those who go on sinning. Why the extra protection first, and what does the passage require once a charge is actually established?
3. Paul says godliness with contentment is great gain, and that the love of money has caused people to wander from the faith (6:6–10). Where does discontent operate in our lives without ever being named, and what would twelve months of genuine contentment change?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List the qualifications for a widow to be enrolled in 5:9–10. Then note from 5:4 and 5:16 who bears responsibility before the congregation does, and why Paul arranges it that way.
2. First Timothy 5:17–18 says elders who rule well are worthy of double honor, and quotes both the law and the words of Jesus. Read 1 Corinthians 9:7–14 and Galatians 6:6, and summarize what is being taught about supporting those who labor in the word.
3. Paul warns Timothy not to lay hands on anyone hastily, or he will share in other people's sins (5:22). Why would hurrying to appoint a man make Timothy a participant in what that man later does?
4. Read 6:17–19 slowly. What is Paul's instruction to those who are rich in this present age, and what does he say such living lays up for them? Then decide honestly whether that paragraph is addressed to you.
5. Paul charges Timothy to guard what was committed to his trust (6:20). Name what has been committed to you, name the one thing most likely to erode it this year, and decide now what you will do about that.

NEXT WEEK'S READING: Isaiah 60–66 • Psalm 92–94 • Luke 19:28–20:8 • 2 Timothy 1–2

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