

Through the Bible in 24 Months



WEEK 76 OF 104

Mercy at the Table

Week 76 of 104 • 73% of the way through the Bible

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

General Old Testament	Jeremiah 10–15
Wisdom Literature	Psalms 102–103
Gospels	Luke 22:1–30
General New Testament	Philemon

THIS WEEK AT A GLANCE

Some weeks the Bible reads like a courtroom, and some weeks it reads like a kitchen table. This one is the table. Jeremiah argues with God out loud, asks why the wicked prosper, and gets an answer he did not want, and yet God keeps talking to him. A psalm written by a man too sick to eat gives way to the most tender paragraph in the Old Testament, where God pities us like a father and remembers we are dust. Jesus sits down for a final Passover with twelve men, one of whom has already taken the money, and the rest of whom are arguing about rank while He hands them bread. And Paul writes a short, warm, awkward letter asking a slave owner to take back a runaway, not as property, but as a brother.

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 Jeremiah 10–15

Confessions of a Weeping Prophet

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Jeremiah mocks idols that have to be nailed down so they will not tip over, then turns to a covenant Judah has broken and a plot against his own life hatched by men from his home village. He asks God straight out why the wicked prosper, and gets an answer about running with horses. He buries a linen sash until it rots, asks whether a leopard can change its spots, watches a drought scorch the land, and finally tells God his pain is unending and is told to return.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. In Jeremiah 12:1–4 the prophet asks God why the way of the wicked prospers, and God answers in 12:5 with a question about running with horses. Why does God answer that way instead of explaining Himself, and what is He preparing Jeremiah for?

2. Jeremiah 13:23 asks whether an Ethiopian can change his skin or a leopard his spots, and says that is how hard it is for people accustomed to evil to do good. How much can a person change himself, and where does real change come from?
3. God tells Jeremiah in 15:19 that if he returns, he will stand before God again and be His mouth. What is the difference between complaining to God honestly and drifting away from Him, and how do you tell which one you are doing?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Jeremiah 10:1–16 contrasts idols with the living God. Make two columns and list what each is said to be and to do. Which contrast is sharpest?
2. Read Jeremiah 11:18–23 about the plot by the men of Anathoth, Jeremiah's own village. Compare Luke 4:24 and John 1:11. What do the two passages have in common?
3. Jeremiah 15:16 says he found God's words and ate them, and they were the joy of his heart. Look up Ezekiel 3:1–3 and Psalm 119:103. What picture do these three passages share, and what would it take for Scripture to be food rather than duty?
4. Trace how God exposes the false prophets in Jeremiah 14:13–16. What were they promising, and what test does the passage give for distinguishing a true message from a comfortable one?
5. Name one situation where you have been complaining to God for months. Write out what returning to Him would look like in that situation this week, and then do the first thing on your list.

WISDOM LITERATURE Psalm 102–103

He Remembers We Are Dust

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Psalm 102 is labeled a prayer of the afflicted, poured out before the Lord. He cannot eat, cannot sleep, and feels like a lone bird on a roof. Then he lifts his eyes: God endures, God will have mercy on Zion, and the heavens will wear out like a coat while God remains. Psalm 103 answers with David telling his own soul to bless the Lord and not to forget a single benefit, and it contains the tenderest line in Scripture about our weakness.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Psalm 102 spends eleven verses describing misery before it says anything hopeful. Why does God put prayers like that in the Bible, and what does its presence permit for a Christian having a terrible year?
2. Psalm 103:12 says our transgressions have been removed as far as the east is from the west. Talk about what that removal actually means, and why forgiven people keep digging up what God has carried away.
3. Psalm 103:13–14 says God pities us as a father pities his children because He knows our frame and remembers we are dust. How does that tenderness differ from God excusing our sin?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List the benefits David tells his soul not to forget in Psalm 103:3–5. Which one have you experienced most clearly in the past year?
2. Hebrews 1:10–12 quotes Psalm 102:25–27 and applies it to Jesus. Read the two passages together and state what the writer of Hebrews is proving about the Son.
3. Trace the three comparisons of Psalm 103:11–13: as high as, as far as, and like as. What is each one measuring, and what would be lost if any of them were removed?
4. Psalm 103:17–18 says God's mercy is on those who fear Him, to such as keep His covenant and remember to do His commandments. What conditions does the psalm attach to the promises of the verses before it?
5. Write down three specific benefits from the last twelve months that you had already forgotten. Then tell one person about one of them this week, out loud.

GOSPELS Luke 22:1–30

The Supper and the Strife

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

The chief priests are looking for a way to kill Jesus quietly when Judas comes to them with an offer. Jesus sends Peter and John to prepare a Passover in a room He has already arranged, and at that table He takes bread and a cup and gives them a meaning the apostles will keep for the rest of their lives. He says the hand of His betrayer is on the table. Then they fall into an argument about which of them is greatest.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Read Luke 22:19–20 slowly. What did Jesus say the bread and the cup mean, and what is a Christian actually doing when he eats and drinks on the first day of the week?
2. Jesus says the hand of the one betraying Him is with Him on the table (22:21). How can a person be that close to Christ and still be lost, and what does that warn about proximity to the church?
3. The argument about who would be greatest breaks out at the Last Supper, of all places (22:24–27). Where does the hunger for rank show up in a congregation today, and what would Jesus' answer look like if we actually took it?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Trace the steps in Luke 22:1–6 from Satan entering Judas to the search for an opportunity. How many separate decisions does Judas make?
2. Compare Luke 22:19–20 with 1 Corinthians 11:23–26 and Acts 20:7. When did the early church eat this supper, how often, and what did Paul say the eating proclaims?
3. Jesus says in 22:20 that the cup is the new covenant in His blood. Read Hebrews 9:15–17 and Colossians 2:14. When does a covenant take effect, and what happened to the old one?
4. Read Luke 22:28–30 next to Daniel 7:13–14 and Acts 2:29–36. What kind of kingdom is Jesus appointing, and when did it begin?
5. Jesus says He is among them as the one who serves. Name one act of service you can do this week that nobody will find out about, and do it without telling anyone afterward.

GENERAL NEW TESTAMENT **Philemon**

Receive Him as Myself

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Paul writes from prison to a man whose house hosts a church, and the letter is about one person. Onesimus, a slave, had run away from Philemon and somehow ended up with Paul in Rome, where he became a Christian. Now Paul is sending him back, carrying the letter in his own hand. Paul says he could command but would rather

ask. He plays on the man's name, which means useful. He offers to pay whatever is owed. And he asks Philemon to receive a runaway as a beloved brother.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Paul says in verses 8 and 9 that he could be bold to command but for love's sake prefers to appeal. When should Christians use authority, and when is persuasion the better instrument even if you hold the authority?
2. Onesimus had to go back. Paul does not simply keep a useful convert in Rome. Why was returning necessary, and what does it say about how repentance and restitution fit together?
3. The New Testament regulates the master and slave relationship rather than calling for revolt, and here Paul quietly dissolves it by calling a slave a beloved brother. How would you explain to an honest unbeliever why the Bible handles slavery this way?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List everything Paul says about Philemon in verses 4 through 7. How many of those statements are about what Philemon has done for other people?
2. Paul plays on the name Onesimus, which means useful or profitable (verse 11), and then in verse 18 says to charge anything Onesimus owes to Paul's account. Compare 2 Corinthians 5:21. What does Paul's offer picture?
3. Read Galatians 3:28, Ephesians 6:5-9, Colossians 4:1, and 1 Timothy 6:1-2. Write down what the New Testament requires of masters, which few people expect to find there.
4. In verse 21 Paul says he is confident Philemon will do even more than he asks. What might that more have been, and why would Paul leave it unstated rather than command it?
5. Name one relationship where you are the one who took something, walked away, or left a debt unpaid. Write the letter, make the call, or return the money this week, and name the day you will do it.

NEXT WEEK'S READING: Jeremiah 16-22 · Psalm 104 · Luke 22:31-71 · Hebrews 1-3

More studies available on ChurchOfChristBibleStudies.com