

Through the Bible in 24 Months



WEEK 87 OF 104

Nothing to Bring

Week 87 of 104 • 84% of the way through the Bible

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

General Old Testament	Ezekiel 12-16
Wisdom Literature	Psalms 119:97-136
Gospels	John 6:1-21
General New Testament	1 Peter 2:13-3:22

THIS WEEK AT A GLANCE

Bring what you have. That is the week. Ezekiel is shown a nation that thought of itself as a fine vine and is told the truth: a vine is good for fruit or for firewood, and nothing in between. Then God tells the story of a newborn nobody wanted, washed and clothed and married by Him, who later forgot where she came from. The psalmist walks through a dangerous week carrying a lamp that lights only the next step. A boy hands over five barley loaves and watches thousands eat. And Peter writes to servants, wives, husbands, and hunted Christians that the life which answers a hostile world with kindness was purchased at the cross, and that eight souls once came through water into safety.

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 Ezekiel 12-16

The Vine and the Foundling

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Ezekiel packs his bags in the daylight and digs through a wall at dusk while the exiles watch, acting out the flight of a king who will never see Babylon with his own eyes. God answers the popular sayings that prophecy always fails, exposes prophets who whitewash a flimsy wall, and warns elders who carry idols in their hearts into the prophet's house. Then two pictures: Jerusalem as a vine branch fit only for fuel, and Jerusalem as an abandoned baby whom God rescued, raised, clothed, and married.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Ezekiel carries his baggage out in broad daylight and digs through a wall at evening (12:1-16). Why does God keep asking this prophet to act out his sermons instead of simply preaching them, and what would it cost you to live a message rather than say one?

2. In 13:10–16 the false prophets build a flimsy wall and then whitewash it. Describe exactly what the whitewash does and does not accomplish, and name where we are tempted to reach for a brush in our own teaching and in our own hearts.
3. Ezekiel 15 compares Jerusalem to the wood of a vine, useless for anything but burning, because a vine exists for one purpose. Read John 15:1–8 beside it and talk honestly about what that says about the point of belonging to God.

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. In 14:12–20 God names Noah, Daniel, and Job. Why those three men, and what does He say their righteousness could and could not accomplish for others?
2. List the three popular sayings the people were leaning on in 12:22, 12:27, and 13:10. Write beside each one what made it attractive.
3. Ezekiel 14:3 describes elders who set up idols in their hearts and then come to inquire of God. Compare James 1:5–8 and describe the kind of asking God refuses to answer.
4. Trace God's actions toward the abandoned child in 16:6–14, every verb in order. Then read Titus 3:3–7 and mark the places where the two passages overlap.
5. Chapter 16 ends with God remembering His covenant and providing atonement for all that had been done (16:60–63). Name one thing you have quietly assumed God could not forgive, and bring it to Him this week by name.

WISDOM LITERATURE Psalm 119:97–136

A Lamp for the Next Step

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

The middle of the psalm rises to its warmest lines. The writer says outright that he loves God's law and thinks about it all day, that it has made him wiser than his enemies and his teachers, and that it tastes sweeter than honey. He calls it a lamp for his feet, admits that his life is constantly at risk, and asks God to hold him up. The section ends with him weeping over people who will not keep the word he loves.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Verse 105 promises a lamp for the feet and a light for the path, which is enough for the next step and not much more. Why would God give guidance in that measure, and how should it change what you expect from Him this month?
2. Read verses 97 through 104 and notice the three groups this man says he has surpassed: his enemies, his teachers, and the aged. What accounts for the difference, and is the same thing available to the people sitting in this room?
3. Verse 136 says rivers of water ran down his eyes because men do not keep God's law. Where does a love for Scripture turn into grief for people, and what would that look like in the town you actually live in?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Verses 103 and 127 compare God's words to honey and to fine gold. Read Psalm 19:7–11 and list every comparison and every benefit named there.
2. Trace what the psalmist says he does with the word in verses 97, 99, 101, 102, 104, and 112. Write down the six verbs and see whether any of them is passive.
3. Verse 109 says his life is continually in his hand and verse 110 says the wicked have set a snare for him. Given that pressure, what holds him steady? Give his own answer from verses 111 and 112.
4. Compare verse 130 with 2 Timothy 3:14–17. What is Scripture said to do for the simple, and who exactly qualifies as simple?
5. Verse 133 asks God to order his steps in the word and to let no iniquity have dominion over him. Name the one sin most likely to trip you this week, write out the passage you will use against it, and put it where you will see it.

GOSPELS John 6:1–21

Five Loaves and a Rough Sea

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

A crowd of five thousand men, plus women and children, has followed Jesus across the sea of Galilee because of the signs. He asks Philip an impossible question, Andrew produces a boy with five barley loaves and two small

fish, and everyone eats until they are full, with twelve baskets left over. The crowd decides to take Him by force and make Him king, so He withdraws alone. That night the disciples row into a rising storm and see Him walking toward them on the water.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Jesus asks Philip where they will buy bread, and John tells us He already knew what He would do (6:5–6). Why test him at all, and where in your own life has God let you reach the end of your resources before He moved?
2. The crowd's response in 6:14–15 is to seize Him and make Him king, and His response is to disappear. What kind of king were they after, and in what ways do we still try to conscript Jesus for an agenda of our own?
3. Read 6:16–21 slowly. The disciples were doing exactly what they had been told when the storm came up. Talk about what it means that Jesus came to them in the middle of the sea instead of sparing them the crossing.

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Write down what was available at the start (6:9) and what was left at the end (6:13). Why do you think Jesus ordered the fragments gathered so that nothing would be lost?
2. Compare this feeding with the manna in Exodus 16:14–21. List three points of contact, and keep the list; you will need it for next week's reading in John 6:22–71.
3. Andrew brings the boy's lunch forward with an apology attached (6:9). Read 1 Corinthians 1:26–29 and describe God's settled pattern for what He chooses to use.
4. In 6:20 Jesus says, "It is I; do not be afraid." Look up Exodus 3:14 and John 8:58, and consider what else those words may be carrying.
5. Name the small and clearly inadequate thing you actually have (an hour, a skill, a spare room, one paycheck) and hand it to Jesus this week in a specific way, without waiting until it feels like enough.

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Peter turns to how Christians live inside structures they did not choose. Submit to governing authorities. Servants, submit even to unreasonable masters, because Christ suffered unjustly and left you an example. Wives, win an unbelieving husband without a word. Husbands, live with understanding and honor, or your prayers will be hindered. Then the great summary: bless instead of retaliating, be ready to give an answer for your hope, and remember that Christ suffered once for sins, and that eight souls came through water into safety, a picture of baptism.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Peter tells servants to submit even to harsh masters and immediately points to Christ (2:18–23). Walk through what Jesus did and did not do in verses 22 and 23. Where does that pattern cut hardest against your instincts?
2. 3:15 tells us to set apart Christ as Lord in our hearts and to be ready always to give a defense, with meekness and fear. Which half of that verse do we neglect more often, the readiness or the meekness, and what does the neglected half cost us?
3. First Peter 3:21 says that baptism now saves us. Work carefully through what Peter says baptism is, what he says it is not, and how Noah's ark serves as the picture. Why do you think so many people are uncomfortable with a verse this plain?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List everyone Peter asks to submit in 2:13–3:7, and write beside each one the reason he gives for it. Note which reasons are about God rather than about the person in authority.
2. Read 2:21–25 beside Isaiah 53:4–9 and mark every phrase Peter has taken from the prophet. What is he arguing by quoting Isaiah to suffering servants?
3. In 3:1–6 Peter speaks to wives married to men who do not obey the word. Identify the approach he recommends and the adorning he commends, and compare 1 Timothy 2:9–10.
4. Verse 3:7 tells husbands to dwell with understanding and to give honor, "that your prayers may not be hindered." Explain the connection Peter draws between how a man treats his wife and his own access to God.
5. Peter says to be ready always to give a defense. Write out in four sentences why you are a Christian, in words a coworker would understand, and say it out loud to one person before the week ends.

NEXT WEEK'S READING: Ezekiel 17-21 · Psalm 119:137-120:7 · John 6:22-71 · 1 Peter 4-5

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