

Through the Bible in 24 Months



WEEK 88 OF 104

Each Gives Account

Week 88 of 104 • 85% of the way through the Bible

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

General Old Testament	Ezekiel 17-21
Wisdom Literature	Psalms 119:137-120:7
Gospels	John 6:22-71
General New Testament	1 Peter 4-5

THIS WEEK AT A GLANCE

Sooner or later every one of us stands on his own feet. The exiles had a proverb that blamed their fathers for everything, and God takes it away from them in the plainest chapter in all of Scripture on personal responsibility: the soul that sins shall die, and the wicked man who turns shall live. The psalmist finishes one hundred and seventy-six verses about loving God's word by admitting he has wandered off like a lost sheep. A crowd that ate free bread the day before walks away from Jesus the moment the teaching gets hard, and He turns to the Twelve and asks whether they are leaving too. Then Peter tells scattered Christians to live ready to give account to the One who judges the living and the dead.

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 17-21

The Soul That Sins Shall Die

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

A riddle about two great eagles and a transplanted vine turns out to be about a king who broke his oath, and it ends with God planting a tender twig that becomes a great tree. Then comes chapter 18, where God takes away the nation's favorite excuse and insists that each person answers for himself. A funeral song for Israel's princes follows, then a long rehearsal of the nation's history from Egypt forward, and finally the sword of the Lord, drawn and polished and coming.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Ezekiel 18:2 quotes a proverb the exiles loved: the fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge. What were they really claiming with it, and how do God's words in 18:3-4 and 18:20 settle the question of inherited guilt?

2. In 18:21–24 a wicked man turns and lives, and a righteous man turns away and dies. Take both cases together and talk about how God actually evaluates a life, and what that says to anyone in the room who thinks it is too late, or too settled, to change.
3. Twice God says He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked (18:23, 32) and asks, “Why should you die, O house of Israel?” How should that change the picture of God a person carries away from these judgment chapters?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Trace the three generations in 18:5–18. Write down what each man does and what God says happens to him, and then state the rule in your own words.
2. Ezekiel 17 opens with a riddle about two eagles and a vine and explains it in 17:11–21. Identify each figure, then read 17:22–24 and say who the tender twig finally turns out to be.
3. Ezekiel 20 walks through Israel’s history in stages: Egypt, the wilderness, the second generation, and the land. List what God says He did at each stage, and why He says He did it.
4. Set Ezekiel 18:31, “make yourselves a new heart,” beside 11:19, “I will give them a new heart.” How do both statements stand together without contradiction? See Philipians 2:12–13.
5. Ezekiel 18:30–32 calls for repentance in three verbs: repent, turn, and cast away. Name the one thing you will cast away this week, and tell one person who will ask you about it on Sunday.

WISDOM LITERATURE Psalm 119:137–120:7

A Lost Sheep and a Long Exile

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

The last five stanzas of the long psalm bring it home. God is righteous, His word is pure, the writer is small and despised, and still he prays before dawn and through the night watches. He says the sum of God’s word is truth and that those who love it have great peace. Then the psalm ends with a confession rather than a trophy. And Psalm 120 opens the pilgrim songs with a man far from home, surrounded by liars, worn out by people who want war.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Psalm 119 ends at verse 176 with a confession you would not expect after one hundred and seventy-five verses about loving God's word. Read it aloud. Why is that the right ending for this psalm, and what does it protect us from?
2. Verse 165 promises great peace to those who love God's law and says nothing shall cause them to stumble. Given the trouble described in verses 143, 157, and 161, what kind of peace is he describing, and what kind is he not promising?
3. Psalm 120 begins the Songs of Ascents with a man surrounded by lying lips who says, "I am for peace; but when I speak, they are for war." Where do you live like that, and notice what this man did first about it.

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Count the references to crying out, rising early, and waking through the night watches in 119:145–152. What sort of praying does that describe, and how does it compare with yours?
2. Verse 160 says the entirety of God's word is truth and every one of His righteous judgments endures forever. Compare John 17:17 and 2 Timothy 3:16–17, and write out what the three passages claim together.
3. Read 119:153–160 and make two columns: every request he makes, and every reason he gives God for granting it.
4. Psalm 120:5 speaks of dwelling in Meshech and among the tents of Kedar, two places at opposite ends of the known world. Look up where each one was, and explain why he names both.
5. Verse 176 asks God to seek His servant. Is there an area of your life where you have drifted without ever deciding to? Name it, tell one person, and take one concrete step back this week.

GOSPELS John 6:22–71

The Bread of Life

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

The crowd tracks Jesus down next morning, and He tells them why they came: not for the sign but for the meal. What follows is the longest sustained teaching in this Gospel so far. He is the bread of life. He came down from heaven. Whoever comes to Him will never hunger. Then the language grows harder, about eating His flesh and

drinking His blood, and by the end of the chapter most of His disciples have walked away and He is asking the Twelve whether they will go too.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. In 6:28 the crowd asks what works they must do, and Jesus gives a single answer in 6:29. Talk about what He means by it, and about why believing on Him is called a work at all.
2. Jesus says in 6:44 that no one can come to Him unless the Father draws him, and then explains the drawing in 6:45. Read the two verses together as a class. How does God actually draw a person, and what does that rule out?
3. 6:53 says they must eat His flesh and drink His blood, and 6:63 says the flesh profits nothing and His words are spirit and life. Hold those two verses together and describe what Jesus was really asking of the people in front of Him.

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Trace the crowd's four questions in 6:25, 6:28, 6:30, and 6:42. Write beside each one what it reveals about what they actually wanted from Him.
2. Find the four places where Jesus promises to raise someone up at the last day (6:39, 40, 44, 54). Note in each verse who is raised and on what condition.
3. Compare 6:31–33 with Exodus 16:13–15. According to Jesus in 6:49–51, in what specific ways is He better than the manna their fathers ate?
4. 6:66 says many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. Read Hebrews 3:12–14 and 1 John 2:19, and describe how the New Testament accounts for people who leave.
5. Peter's answer in 6:68 is conviction, not enthusiasm: "Lord, to whom shall we go?" Write out your own answer to that question in your own words, and name the cost that has most tempted you to walk away.

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Peter tells Christians to arm themselves with the mind of Christ, to be done with the life they used to live, and to stop being surprised when old friends think them strange. He asks for serious prayer, fervent love, ungrudging hospitality, and the use of every gift for others. Then he turns to suffering that comes specifically for the name of Christ, charges elders to shepherd the flock willingly and by example, tells everyone to clothe themselves with humility, and warns that the adversary is prowling.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Peter says the fiery trial should not seem strange (4:12) and then draws a sharp line in 4:15–16. Talk through the difference between suffering because you are a Christian and suffering because you are difficult, and why he bothers to make that distinction.
2. In 5:1–4 elders are told to shepherd the flock of God with three contrasts: not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly, not as lords but as examples. Describe what a congregation feels like when those are true, and name what the rest of us do to make that possible.
3. 5:6–7 puts humbling ourselves under God's hand and casting our care on Him in a single sentence. Why do you think Peter joins those two, and what does our anxiety usually reveal about where we have placed ourselves?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List every command in 4:7–11 and mark the ones that cannot be obeyed alone. What does that tell you about how God intends Christians to live?
 2. 4:17 says judgment begins at the house of God. Read Ezekiel 9:5–6, which you studied two weeks ago, and explain what Peter is drawing on and what he means by it.
 3. Write out everything Peter charges elders to do and to avoid in 5:1–4, then compare his list with 1 Timothy 3:1–7 and Titus 1:5–9 and note what all three have in common.
 4. In 5:8 the devil is a prowling lion and in 5:9 we are told how to answer him. Read James 4:7 and Ephesians 6:10–13, and describe in practical terms what resisting actually consists of.
 5. 4:10 says each one has received a gift and is to minister it to others. Name yours, name one person who would be served by it this month, and put an actual date on your calendar before you close this page.
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NEXT WEEK'S READING: Ezekiel 22-24 · Psalm 121-125 · John 7:1-36 · 2 Peter 1

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