

Through the Bible in 24 Months



WEEK 89 OF 104

Who Will Stand

Week 89 of 104 • 86% of the way through the Bible

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

General Old Testament	Ezekiel 22–24
Wisdom Literature	Psalms 121–125
Gospels	John 7:1–36
General New Testament	2 Peter 1

THIS WEEK AT A GLANCE

God goes looking for one man. Ezekiel 22:30 is among the saddest verses in Scripture: I sought for a man among them who would make a wall and stand in the gap before Me for the land, but I found no one. That search hangs over the whole week. The pilgrim songs answer it from the other side, with a Keeper who never dozes and a people as unmovable as Mount Zion because God Himself surrounds them. In John 7 a crowd argues about Jesus in the temple courts while He quietly says that anyone willing to do God's will can settle the question for himself. And Peter, writing within months of his own death, lists seven things to add to your faith so that you will never stumble.

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 22–24

No One to Stand in the Gap

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

God reads Jerusalem her charges: blood in her streets, contempt for parents, oppression of the stranger, bribery, extortion, and a leadership rotten at every level. She is silver gone to dross, and God will melt her. Chapter 23 tells the long story of two sisters, Samaria and Jerusalem, who both sold themselves to foreign powers. Then chapter 24 dates the very day the siege of Jerusalem began, pictures the city as a pot boiled dry, and takes the prophet's own wife from him as a sign to the exiles.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Ezekiel 22:23–29 goes through the nation group by group: princes, prophets, priests, and the people of the land. Identify what each one did, and talk about what happens to a community when every layer fails at the same time.

2. In 22:30 God says He sought for a man to make a wall and stand in the gap, and found no one. Describe what standing in the gap would have looked like in Ezekiel's day, and name the places where an ordinary Christian could stand in one now.
3. In 24:15–24 God takes the prophet's wife, the desire of his eyes, and tells him not to mourn publicly, so that his silence becomes a sign. This is one of the hardest passages in the book. How do you understand what God asked of Ezekiel, and what does it say about the cost of carrying God's message?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Work through 22:6–12 and list the specific sins named there. Then count how many of them concern the way powerful people treated the weak.
2. 22:18–22 pictures Jerusalem as metal thrown into a furnace. Read Isaiah 1:25 and Malachi 3:2–3, and describe the two different things fire can accomplish.
3. Ezekiel 23 tells of two sisters. Identify who each one stands for, and note from 23:11 what Judah was supposed to have learned from watching her sister.
4. Compare the boiling pot of 24:3–14 with the slogan the leaders had been quoting back in 11:3. How does God take their own proverb and turn it against them?
5. Standing in the gap begins with praying for people who are not praying for themselves. Write down three names before you close this page, and pray for each of them by name every day this week.

WISDOM LITERATURE Psalm 121–125

The Keeper Who Never Sleeps

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Five short pilgrim songs, sung by people walking up to Jerusalem. The first lifts its eyes to the hills and finds help higher up, in a Keeper who neither slumbers nor sleeps. The second is the joy of arriving at the house of the Lord with everyone else. The third is a servant watching his master's hand, worn down by the contempt of the proud. The fourth is a congregation remembering a near disaster together. The fifth says that people who trust the Lord are as immovable as Mount Zion.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Psalm 121 asks a question in verse 1 and answers it in verse 2. Read both lines slowly. Why does it matter that the answer is not the hills themselves, and what do people lift their eyes to today when they need help?
2. Six times in eight verses God is called a keeper or is said to keep. Since faithful people still get sick, lose jobs, and bury parents, what exactly is Psalm 121 promising, and what is it not promising?
3. Psalm 124 is a whole congregation remembering a near disaster out loud: if it had not been the Lord who was on our side. Why does that need to be said together rather than privately, and what would your congregation's version of Psalm 124 include?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Go through Psalm 121 and write down every occurrence of the word keep or keeper, along with what is being kept in each line.
2. Psalm 122 is the joy of going to God's house with other people. Read Hebrews 10:24–25 and describe what assembling with the saints is actually for.
3. Psalm 123 compares looking to God with a servant watching his master's hand. What does that image suggest about attentiveness, about waiting, and about who sets the pace?
4. Psalm 125:1–2 uses two mountain pictures, Zion that cannot be moved and the hills that surround Jerusalem. Explain what each one claims, then read Romans 8:38–39 and note the overlap.
5. Psalm 122:6 tells pilgrims to pray for the peace of Jerusalem. Write out a specific prayer for the peace of the congregation you belong to, naming real issues, and pray it every day this week.

GOSPELS John 7:1–36

The Argument at the Feast

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Jesus stays in Galilee because Judea has become dangerous. His own brothers, who do not believe in Him, urge Him to go to the feast and make a name for Himself. He goes quietly, and halfway through the week He begins teaching in the temple. The crowd is divided, the leaders are alarmed, and the whole city argues about where

He came from and whether the Christ could possibly come from Galilee. Officers are sent to arrest Him, and He tells them He will be here only a little longer.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. John 7:5 says that even Jesus' brothers did not believe in Him, and the advice they give in verses 3 and 4 sounds like sensible strategy. What is wrong with their counsel, and where are we tempted to offer God the same kind of advice?
2. In 7:17 Jesus makes a promise: if anyone wills to do His will, he shall know whether the teaching is from God. Talk carefully about the order of that sentence. What changes when willingness comes before certainty rather than after it?
3. Read 7:12, 7:25–27, and 7:31 together. The city has settled on several different opinions about Jesus. Walk through the options they considered, and discuss why the same evidence did not persuade everyone.

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Trace every reference to time in this passage: “My time has not yet come,” “about the middle of the feast,” “a little while longer I am with you.” What is John drawing your attention to?
2. In 7:21–24 Jesus argues from the practice of circumcision on the Sabbath. Read Leviticus 12:3 and lay out His reasoning step by step.
3. Look up the Feast of Tabernacles in Leviticus 23:33–43. What were the Israelites remembering during that week, and why is it fitting that Jesus taught there?
4. 7:16 says His doctrine is not His own but belongs to Him who sent Him. Compare John 12:49–50 and John 14:10, and write out what Jesus claims about the source of everything He taught.
5. Jesus ties knowing to willing. Is there a question you have kept conveniently open because settling it would require you to change something? Name it, settle it from Scripture, and act on it this week.

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Peter knows he is about to die, and this chapter reads like a man leaving instructions. God's divine power, he says, has already given us everything that pertains to life and godliness. So add to your faith, and he lists seven qualities stacked on one another. Do this, he says, and you will never stumble. Why trust him? He was on the mountain and heard the voice, and he holds something even more certain, the prophetic word, spoken by men carried along by the Holy Spirit.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. 2 Peter 1:3 says God's divine power has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness. If that is actually true, what excuse does it remove, and how does it change the way you approach the habit you cannot seem to break?
2. Work through the seven qualities of 1:5–7 one at a time, in the order Peter gives them. Why do you think he arranged them this way, and which one is the current bottleneck in your own growth?
3. 1:10 tells Christians to be diligent to make their call and election sure. Discuss what that instruction assumes about assurance, and what it does to the idea that a saved person cannot possibly fall away.

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List the seven qualities in 1:5–7 and write a one-sentence definition of each one in your own words.
2. 1:9 describes the Christian who lacks these qualities as shortsighted and forgetful. What exactly has he forgotten, and what happens to a person who forgets it?
3. Peter recalls the mountain in 1:16–18. Read Matthew 17:1–8 and note precisely what Peter says he heard and saw, and why he brings it up here.
4. 1:19–21 says no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, and that holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. Compare 2 Timothy 3:16–17 and describe what these passages claim about where the Bible came from.
5. Choose one of the seven qualities in 1:5–7 and name a specific practice that would actually add it this month. Write down the practice, not the quality, and start it this week.