

Through the Bible in 24 Months



WEEK 91 OF 104

Continue in My Word

Week 91 of 104 • 88% of the way through the Bible

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

General Old Testament	Ezekiel 31–35
Wisdom Literature	Psalms 132–135
Gospels	John 8:31–59
General New Testament	1 John 1:1–2:27

THIS WEEK AT A GLANCE

A word is only as good as what you do with it. Ezekiel is made a watchman a second time and told that the exiles will crowd in to hear him the way people come to hear a fine singer, and then go home and change nothing. The pilgrims sing about an oath God swore to David and kept, and about idols with mouths that cannot speak and the people who become like them. Jesus tells men who had just believed in Him that if they continue in His word they will know the truth and the truth will set them free, and within a few minutes they are reaching for stones. And John, who once leaned on His chest, writes that anyone who claims to know Him and does not keep His commandments is a liar.

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 31–35

Watchman and Shepherd

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Assyria is remembered as a cedar taller than every tree in the garden, and cut down, a warning aimed at Egypt. A funeral song takes Pharaoh down to the pit where the other great powers already lie. Then the book turns. Ezekiel is reappointed as a watchman, a fugitive arrives with the news that Jerusalem has fallen, and the prophet's long silence ends. God indicts the shepherds who fed themselves instead of the flock, announces that He will search for His sheep Himself, and promises one Shepherd over them.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. In 33:1–9 God explains the watchman's job in the bluntest language in the book, including blood required at the watchman's hand. Work through what a watchman owes and what he does not owe, and talk about where that responsibility rests on ordinary Christians.

2. In 33:30–33 the exiles come to hear Ezekiel the way people come to hear a beautiful singer, and then go home and do nothing. Describe what that looks like in a congregation today, and what would actually have to change in us for it to stop.
3. Read Ezekiel 34:1–16. Go through the charges against the shepherds, then through what God says He will do Himself. What does that contrast ask of the people who lead, and what does it ask of the people who are led?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Compare the watchman charge of 33:1–9 with the first one in 3:16–21. Note what is repeated word for word and what is new, and consider why this charge is renewed at this particular moment in the book.
2. In 33:12–20 God repeats the teaching of chapter 18. Write out the two cases He gives, then state the governing principle in one sentence of your own.
3. Ezekiel 34:23–24 promises one shepherd, “My servant David.” Read John 10:11–16 and Hebrews 13:20, and explain who this shepherd is and when the promise was kept.
4. Trace how the flock was scattered in 34:1–6 and how it is gathered in 34:11–16. Write down every verb God uses of His own action in those verses.
5. Being a watchman begins with one honest conversation. Name the person God has already put in front of you, decide what you will say, and set the day you will say it.

WISDOM LITERATURE Psalm 132–135

The Oath God Kept

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

The pilgrim songs move toward their close. The first remembers David swearing he would not rest until he found a dwelling for the Lord, and then records the far greater oath God swore back to him about a son on his throne. The second is three verses on brothers dwelling together in unity, pictured as oil running down a beard and dew falling on mountains. The third is a blessing exchanged with men who served in the house at night. The fourth praises the living God and laughs at idols.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Psalm 132 records David's vow to find a place for the Lord and then God's oath in return. Read verses 11 and 12, then read Acts 2:29–36. According to Peter, when and how was that oath kept?
2. Psalm 133 pictures unity among brethren as oil running down and dew coming down. Both images fall from above. Talk about what that says about where real unity comes from, and about what our own part in it is.
3. Psalm 135:15–18 says that those who make idols become like them. Work out how that actually happens to a person, and name what someone becomes like who gives himself to something that cannot speak, see, or hear.

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Write out the two oaths in Psalm 132: David's in verses 2 through 5 and the Lord's in verses 11 through 18. Note carefully which one has a condition attached and which one does not.
2. Psalm 133 uses two pictures. Look up Exodus 30:22–33 for the first, and note how much oil was involved and which direction it ran.
3. Psalm 134 is three verses and is addressed to those who serve by night in the house of the Lord. Read 1 Chronicles 9:27 and 9:33, and describe who these people were and what their nights were like.
4. Make two columns from Psalm 135:5–7 and 135:15–18: what the living God does, and what idols cannot do. Then read Isaiah 44:14–20 and add to the second column.
5. Psalm 133 calls unity good and pleasant. Name the relationship in your congregation or family that is not at peace right now, and take the first step toward it this week rather than waiting for the other person to move.

GOSPELS John 8:31–59

The Truth That Sets Free

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Jesus turns to the people who had just believed in Him and adds a condition: if you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed, and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. The word “free” offends them immediately, and the conversation grows sharper by the verse, moving from Abraham to slavery to sin,

then to the question of who their father really is. It ends with the most direct claim Jesus ever made about Himself, and with men reaching for stones.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Jesus speaks 8:31–32 to people who had just believed Him, and He attaches a condition: “If you abide in My word.” Why is that condition there, and how does it change the way this verse is usually quoted?
2. The moment freedom is mentioned, they insist they have never been in bondage to anyone (8:33), and Jesus answers in 8:34. Describe the bondage He is naming, and talk about why people who are in it are usually the last to admit it.
3. Read 8:56–59. Jesus says that before Abraham was, I AM, and they immediately pick up stones. What is He claiming, and why did they understand Him instantly when so many people today manage not to?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Trace the word “father” through this passage. Whom do they claim, whom does Jesus claim, and what does He say actually identifies a person’s real father?
2. 8:44 describes the devil in three ways. List them, then read Genesis 3:1–5 and show where each one appears in that scene.
3. Compare 8:31–32 with 1 John 2:24 and Colossians 1:22–23. Write out what all three passages say about continuing, and what each attaches to it.
4. In 8:46 Jesus asks, “Which of you convicts Me of sin?” and no one answers. Read Hebrews 7:26 and 2 Corinthians 5:21, and describe why that silence matters so much.
5. 8:31 makes discipleship a matter of remaining. Identify the point where you are most tempted to stop abiding, and put one specific safeguard in place this week.

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

John writes as a man who was there: what we heard, what we saw, what our hands handled. He says God is light, that walking in the light brings fellowship and continual cleansing, and that anyone claiming to have no sin deceives himself. Then come the plain tests. If we say we know Him and do not keep His commandments, we lie. Whoever keeps His word has God's love perfected in him. Do not love the world. And what you heard from the beginning must stay in you.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. 1 John 1:7 says that if we walk in the light we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus goes on cleansing us. Read verses 8 through 10 immediately after. What does walking in the light actually involve, and what does it clearly not mean?
2. In 2:1 John says he writes these things so that we will not sin, and in the same breath says that if anyone sins we have an Advocate with the Father. Talk about how those two statements belong together, and what goes wrong in a Christian who keeps only one of them.
3. 2:15–17 names three things the world offers. Identify each one from the verse, and then name a place where each one showed up in your own week.

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List everything in 1:1–4 that John says the apostles heard, saw, looked at, and handled. Why would he open a letter that way, and what were people evidently denying?
2. 1:9 is a promise with a condition. Write out what we do and what God does, and note the two words John uses to describe God in that verse.
3. In 2:3–6 John gives tests of whether we really know God. List them, and write out the standard he sets in verse 6.
4. 2:19 says of those who left, “they went out from us, but they were not of us.” Compare Hebrews 3:12–14 and 2 Peter 2:20–22, and explain how these passages fit together.
5. 1:7 makes fellowship with one another part of walking in the light. Name one relationship in the church where you are keeping something in the dark, and bring it into the light before next Sunday.

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