

Through the Bible in 24 Months



WEEK 92 OF 104

Hearts of Flesh

Week 92 of 104 • 88% of the way through the Bible

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

General Old Testament	Ezekiel 36-40
Wisdom Literature	Psalms 136-137
Gospels	John 9
General New Testament	1 John 2:28-5:21

THIS WEEK AT A GLANCE

Not one of this week's readings is about a person improving himself. Ezekiel stands in a valley of bones so dry the wind whistles through them, and God asks him whether they can live. A man who has never seen a face sits in his usual begging place in Jerusalem. Exiles sit down by a canal in Babylon, hang their harps in the willows, and find they cannot sing. And John writes to Christians about being born of God, a birth nobody arranges for himself. Water sprinkled clean, a heart of flesh where the stone was, mud on sightless eyes, a mercy that endures forever, a love we did not start. Read them together and you may finally stop trying to be the hero of your own story.

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 36-40

New Hearts, Living Bones

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

God speaks first to the mountains of Israel, then to the people, promising clean water, a new heart, a new spirit, and a restored land, all of it done for the sake of His own holy name rather than for anything Israel deserved. Then comes the valley of dry bones, the two sticks joined into one, the defeat of Gog before he can do what he came to do, and finally a man with a measuring line beginning a long vision of a temple.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Ezekiel 36:22 says plainly that God is not doing this for Israel's sake but for His holy name. How does that sentence change the way you hear the promise of a new heart in verses 25 through 27?
2. In Ezekiel 37:3 God asks the prophet whether the bones can live, and in verses 11 through 14 He tells us what the vision means. Walk through the explanation God Himself gives, and discuss why that meaning was better news to an exile than a general statement about life after death would have been.

3. Ezekiel 38 and 39 announce an invader's defeat before he has even set out. Where are you living as though some threat in your own life has never once been taken into account by God?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List every promise God makes in Ezekiel 36:24–30. Which of them could Israel have produced for herself, and which could only come from God?
2. Read Ezekiel 37:15–23 and note what the two sticks stand for. Then read John 10:16 and note how Jesus speaks of the same gathering.
3. Hebrews 8:8–12 quotes Jeremiah on a covenant written inside people rather than on stone. Set it beside Ezekiel 36:26–27 and write down everything the two passages have in common.
4. Ezekiel 38:1–6 and 39:6 name specific peoples. Using the text alone, explain why those names belong to the world Ezekiel knew rather than to a modern map.
5. God promises to put His Spirit within His people and cause them to walk in His statutes. Name one statute you already know and have not been walking in, and count out loud what obeying it this week will cost you.

WISDOM LITERATURE Psalm 136–137

The Song and the Silence

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Psalm 136 is a call and response, twenty six verses long, each one answered by the congregation with the same line: for His mercy endures forever. It walks from creation through the exodus, the Red Sea, the wilderness, the conquest, the inheritance, and finally the food on the table. Psalm 137 is its opposite. Exiles sit by Babylon's canals, hang up their harps, refuse to perform Zion's songs for their captors, and end with a prayer no reader forgets.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Psalm 136 repeats one line twenty six times. Read it aloud as Israel likely sang it, one person reading each first line and the class answering. What does that kind of repetition accomplish that a single clear statement cannot?

2. Psalm 137 closes with words about Babylon's little ones and the rock. How should a Christian read a prayer like that, and where does Romans 12:19 put the business of vengeance?
3. The exiles say they cannot sing the Lord's song in a foreign land. When has grief made worship feel impossible for you, and what did you finally do with that silence?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Trace the story Psalm 136 tells, verse by verse, from creation to the gift of the land. Which kinds of events does the psalmist count as evidence of mercy?
2. Psalm 136:25 moves from defeated kings to giving food to all flesh. Why would the psalmist set an ordinary meal in the same list as the Red Sea?
3. Read Psalm 137:1–4 alongside Jeremiah 29:4–7, which was written to the same exiles. How do the grief of the one and the instructions of the other fit together?
4. The psalmist asks that Babylon receive exactly what Babylon had done (137:8). Look up Jeremiah 51:24 and Obadiah 10–14. Is he inventing a wish of his own, or asking God to keep a word already spoken?
5. Psalm 136 thanks God for particular acts, never for blessings in general. Write out twelve specific things God has done for you, add the refrain to each one, and read the whole list aloud to another person before Sunday.

GOSPELS John 9

One Thing I Know

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

The disciples see a man blind from birth and want to know whose sin caused it. Jesus refuses the question, makes clay with spittle, and sends him to wash in the pool of Siloam. He comes back seeing, and the rest of the chapter is one long argument about it: neighbors who cannot agree it is the same man, Pharisees who interrogate him twice, parents who are afraid to answer, and a man who keeps telling the truth until he is thrown out and Jesus finds him.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. The disciples assume somebody's sin caused the blindness (9:2). How does Jesus answer that assumption, and where does the same assumption still surface when we hear that someone is suffering?
2. Follow what the healed man calls Jesus in verses 11, 17, 33, and 38. What moves him from one answer to the next, and what does that suggest about how conviction actually grows in a person?
3. In 9:22 the parents are afraid of being put out of the synagogue, and in 9:34 the man is put out. What did that fear cost each of them, and what would the equivalent cost be for you this year?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List every question the officials ask in John 9 and every answer the man gives. By the end of the chapter, who is really being examined?
2. Jesus says in 9:3 that the man was born blind so that the works of God should be revealed in him. Compare Luke 13:1–5 and John 11:4, and write down what these passages teach about drawing a straight line from suffering back to sin.
3. The man was told to go and wash, and he came back seeing (9:7). Why involve his obedience at all, and what parallel do you see in 2 Kings 5:10–14?
4. Read John 9:39–41 carefully. In what sense does the Pharisees' claim "We see" leave them holding their guilt?
5. This man kept telling what he knew when it cost him his place in the community. Name one place this week where saying what you know about Jesus will cost you something, and decide now what words you will use.

GENERAL NEW TESTAMENT 1 John 2:28–5:21

That You May Know

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

John marvels that God calls us His children, then insists that children resemble their Father: the one born of God does not go on practicing sin, and the one who does not love his brother is not of God. He warns about false prophets and gives a test for them, declares that God is love and that love casts out fear, and closes with the

reason he wrote: so that you may know that you have eternal life. The final verses run through what Christians can know for certain.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. 1 John 3:6–9 says the one born of God does not sin, while 1:8–10 says anyone claiming to have no sin is a liar. How do you hold both statements honestly, and what exactly is John describing in chapter 3?
2. Work through 1 John 4:1–6. On what basis does John tell Christians to test a teacher, and how do we practice that today without becoming suspicious of every person who opens a Bible?
3. 1 John 5:13 says John wrote so that you may know you have eternal life. Trace what he says that knowledge rests on, and discuss the difference between assurance grounded in obedience and a confidence that no behavior could ever disturb.

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Count the times the phrase “we know” appears from 1 John 3:2 through 5:20, and list what John says a Christian is able to know.
2. 1 John 3:16–18 defines love by what a person does, not by what he feels. Set it beside James 2:15–17 and write down the standard the two passages share.
3. Read 1 John 5:1–5 with Galatians 5:6 and Hebrews 5:8–9. How do faith, love, and obedience relate to one another in these three passages?
4. 1 John 4:18 says perfect love casts out fear. Which fear is John talking about (look at the second half of the verse), and which kind of fear does 2 Corinthians 5:10–11 still commend?
5. John says a man who shuts up his heart against a brother in need cannot claim God’s love lives in him. Name the brother or sister whose need you already know about, and do something measurable about it before this week is out.

NEXT WEEK’S READING: Ezekiel 41–45 · Psalm 138–140 · John 10 · 2 John

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