

Through the Bible in 24 Months



WEEK 97 OF 104

Redeeming Love

Week 97 of 104 • 93% of the way through the Bible

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

General Old Testament	Hosea 1-8
Wisdom Literature	Ecclesiastes 1-2
Gospels	John 13
General New Testament	Revelation 5-7

THIS WEEK AT A GLANCE

Four readings, one question: what is love worth when the beloved will not stay? God tells Hosea to marry a woman who will break his heart, and then, after she has been sold, to go buy her back with silver and barley. Solomon, with every resource a man could want, tries pleasure, building, money, and wisdom, and finds each one a vapor he cannot hold. In an upstairs room Jesus, knowing exactly who will betray Him, kneels with a towel and washes twenty-four feet, Judas among them. And in heaven a Lamb still bearing the marks of slaughter takes the scroll no one else was worthy to open. Under the sun nothing lasts. Above it, Someone has already paid to keep you.

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 Hosea 1-8

Love for an Unfaithful People

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

God tells a young prophet to marry Gomer, and every child born into that house carries a sermon in his name: Jezreel, No Mercy, Not My People. When she is gone, God sends Hosea to find her and buy her back for silver and barley. Around that broken marriage the book piles its charges: no truth, no mercy, no knowledge of God in the land, priests who quit teaching, a nation sowing wind and reaping whirlwind, and underneath it all a God who will not stop loving.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Hosea 1:2 records a command no man would volunteer for. Why did God have His prophet live this message instead of simply preaching it, and what does that show you about how God experiences unfaithfulness?
2. Read Hosea 4:1-10 and then read 4:6 as a whole sentence rather than as a slogan. Whose failure produced that ignorance, and where does the same failure quietly show up in a congregation today?

3. In Hosea 6:4 God compares Israel's loyalty to a morning cloud that burns off before nine o'clock. Where does that kind of short-lived devotion show up in your own week, and what would actually steady it?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List the three children of Hosea 1:3-9 and what each name announces. Then read 1:10-11 and 2:23 and note what God does with those same three names.
2. Read Hosea 3:1-5 and write down exactly what Hosea pays and what he asks of her afterward. Compare the price with Exodus 21:32. What is God saying about His own dealings with Israel?
3. Romans 9:25-26 and 1 Peter 2:10 both quote Hosea. To whom do the apostles apply "not My people" and "My people," and what does that settle about who receives the promise?
4. Trace where Israel runs for help in Hosea 5:13, 7:11, and 8:9. Name the modern equivalents of running to Assyria, and be specific about the ones you have used.
5. Hosea 6:6 says God wants mercy and the knowledge of Him more than offerings. Name one person this week to whom you will show mercy that costs you time, money, or pride, and then go do it.

WISDOM LITERATURE Ecclesiastes 1-2

Chasing the Wind

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

The Preacher, son of David and king in Jerusalem, opens with a verdict before he offers any evidence: vapor of vapors, everything is vapor. Generations come and go, the sun runs its circuit, rivers pour into a sea that never fills. Then he tells you about the experiment he ran with his own life: wisdom, laughter, wine, houses, vineyards, pools, servants, silver, singers, anything his eyes wanted. He got it all, looked at it, and called it grasping for the wind.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. The phrase "under the sun" runs through these two chapters like a drumbeat. Find several of them, then talk about what the Preacher is deliberately leaving out of the picture and why that changes how we read every verse in this book.

2. Ecclesiastes 2:1–11 is the most expensive experiment ever run, and it failed. Which of Solomon's substitutes for God does our own time believe in most, and why is the emptiness so hard to see until afterward?
3. In 2:24–26 the Preacher says there is nothing better than to eat, drink, and find good in your labor, and that this comes from God's hand. How is that different from "eat and drink, for tomorrow we die," and what would it change about your Monday?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Read Ecclesiastes 1:1–11 and list the four pictures of sameness the Preacher uses (generations, sun, wind, rivers). What is he seeing accurately, and what has he not yet said about God?
2. The Hebrew word behind "vanity" is hebel, meaning vapor or breath. Read James 4:14 and then read Ecclesiastes 1:2 again. How does the picture of a breath change the tone of the verse?
3. Trace everything Solomon built, planted, bought, and collected in 2:4–10. Write his verdict from 2:11 beside your list, and note what he says he did not withhold from himself.
4. Compare Ecclesiastes 1:16–18 with 1 Kings 3:12 and 1 Kings 11:1–8. What appears to have happened between the gift of wisdom and the writing of this book, and what should that teach a gifted person?
5. Name the one thing you are currently working hardest to get. Ask yourself honestly whether you expect it to satisfy you, then decide on one specific thing you will do this week to hold it loosely.

GOSPELS John 13

The Towel and the Basin

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

It is the night before the cross. John tells you what Jesus knew (that His hour had come, that the Father had given all things into His hands, that Judas was already sold) and then tells you what Jesus did with that knowledge: He got up, took off His outer garment, tied a towel around Himself, and washed His disciples' feet. Peter argues. Judas eats and leaves into the night. And Jesus gives a new commandment before predicting Peter's denial.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. John 13:1–5 stacks up everything Jesus knew before He picked up the towel, including who was about to betray Him. Why does John tell us all of that first, and what does the order of the sentences do to the meaning of the act?
2. Peter refuses, then swings to the opposite extreme in verses 6–10. Talk about what is really going on in him, and where you have seen both of those reactions in yourself when God moves to serve you.
3. Love for neighbor was already in the Law of Moses, yet Jesus calls this a new commandment in 13:34–35. What is new about it, and what would have to be true of this congregation for an outsider to identify us by it this month?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List every action of Jesus in 13:4–5, one verb at a time. What does the deliberateness of that list suggest about whether this was an impulse or a decision?
2. Read 13:10–11, where Jesus distinguishes the one who has been bathed from the one who needs his feet washed. Read 1 John 1:7–9 alongside it and describe the ongoing cleansing a Christian still needs.
3. Trace Judas through the chapter, from verse 2 to verse 30. Mark every point at which he was still being offered a way back, and note what that says about God's foreknowledge and a man's choice.
4. Compare John 13:3–5 and 13:16 with Philippians 2:5–8. Lay the two passages side by side and write down the pattern they share, in order.
5. Name the one person whose feet you would least like to wash, meaning the one you would least like to serve in a way nobody will notice. Decide what that service is and do it before next Sunday.

Worthy Is the Lamb

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

A sealed scroll rests in the right hand of the One on the throne, and a strong angel asks who is worthy to open it. Nobody is, and John weeps. Then an elder says the Lion of Judah has prevailed, and John turns to see a slaughtered Lamb standing. The Lamb takes the scroll, heaven erupts in song, and six seals are opened:

conquest, war, famine, death, martyrs crying how long, and the sky rolling back. Then, before the seventh, God stops to seal His own.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. John breaks down and weeps in 5:4 because no one can open the scroll. Why is that worth crying over, and what does the answer of 5:5–6 say about the way God actually wins?
2. The four horsemen bring conquest, war, scarcity, and death, and under the fifth seal the martyrs ask how long. How would this section have sounded to a Christian in Smyrna who had already buried friends, and what does it say to a believer under pressure now?
3. Revelation 7 gives two pictures of one people, 144,000 sealed and a crowd nobody could number. How do the two fit together, and what does the sealing actually promise a Christian and what does it not promise?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List every title and description given to Christ in 5:5–6 and 5:9–12. Note what the Lion contributes to the picture and what the Lamb contributes.
2. Read the new song of 5:9–10, then compare Exodus 19:5–6 and 1 Peter 2:9. Write down what the Lamb has made His people and where those people come from.
3. Work out the arithmetic behind 144,000 (twelve times twelve times a thousand), then read 7:9 immediately afterward. Why is a symbolic number a comfort here rather than a limit?
4. In 6:9–11 the souls of the martyrs are alive, aware, and speaking. Compare Luke 16:22–25, 2 Corinthians 5:8, and Philippians 1:23, and state what Scripture teaches about the dead in Christ.
5. Revelation 7:14 describes people who came out of great tribulation with robes washed in the blood of the Lamb. Name the cost your faith is asking of you right now, and write down one specific way you will not flinch from it this week.

NEXT WEEK'S READING: Hosea 9–14; Joel 1–3 · Ecclesiastes 3–4 · John 14 · Revelation 8–9

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