

Week 25: “Our God Who Goes Before Us”

Wk 25 - Day 1: Genesis 25

Explanation: Genesis 25 closes Abraham’s story and shows God’s covenant promise continuing into the next generation. Abraham dies, but the very next section reminds us that “God blessed his son Isaac.” God’s work was never dependent upon Abraham living forever.

While Abraham’s life ended, God’s promise did not. The promise continued because God remained faithful. Isaac and Rebekah then experience twenty years of infertility. Isaac prays for his wife, and God answers by giving them twins. Even before Jacob and Esau are born, God tells Rebekah that the older will serve the younger. God already saw how the covenant story would move forward before anyone else could. The chapter then shows how different the brothers are. Esau becomes a skilled hunter, while Jacob is described as a quieter man who stays home. One day Esau returns exhausted and sells his birthright to Jacob for a bowl of stew. The birthright normally involved family leadership and a larger inheritance, but Esau treats something valuable as though it were worth less than immediate satisfaction. Even worse, this birthright was his connection to the covenant promises given to Abraham. Esau trades something lasting for something he wants immediately. Through this chapter we see that God’s plan is moving forward, but we also see that man’s choices still matter. God is sovereign over the future, yet Jacob and Esau are still responsible for the decisions they make along the way.

Application: Genesis 25 reminds us that God’s purposes continue even when seasons and situations change. A chapter may close in our lives, but God has already gone ahead into the next one. At the same time, this chapter is very practical about our everyday choices. Esau lets what he feels in the moment become more important than what will matter later on. We make “Esau decisions” whenever we give up something important because something else feels urgent right now. We can trade financial wisdom for an impulse purchase, family time for another hour of work, integrity for an easier way out, or long-term spiritual health for short-term comfort. Growing in our faith means learning to perceive how our choices today could have potential future ramifications. However, Esau was not the only one who made unwise decisions. Jacob’s actions also warn us about trying to secure for ourselves what we think we need instead of trusting God’s timing. God had already spoken about his future, yet Jacob still tried to grab for himself what God had promised. Sometimes trusting God means resisting the urge to manipulate circumstances because we are afraid God will not come through.

- What valuable things can people slowly trade away for short-term comfort?
- When are you most likely to make an “Esau decision”—when you are tired, angry, lonely, stressed, or something else?
- If you believed God was already at work in your future, what would you be less tempted to stress and worry about today?
- How can believing God has your future help you make a better decision today?

Wk 25 - Day 2: Matthew 25

Explanation: Matthew 25 gives three pictures of what it means to be ready for Christ’s return. The ten virgins teach readiness through watchfulness. All ten anticipate the bridegroom arrival, but only five are prepared when he comes. Jesus’ point is not that believers should spend their lives trying to guess the date of His return. Rather, we should live prepared because we do not know when He will come. The parable of the talents moves from watching to working. A master entrusts his property to three servants according to their abilities. Two faithfully use what they receive; the third buries his because he is afraid. A “talent” was originally a large amount of money. The broader principle is stewardship: what we possess ultimately belongs to God and has been entrusted to us. The first parable calls us to watch, while the second calls us to work. Finally, Jesus describes the judgment of the sheep and goats. The way people respond to those who are hungry, hurting, overlooked, or in need reveals something genuine about their relationship to the King. Faithfulness to Jesus shows itself in ordinary acts of love.

Application: We may want to know exactly what is going to happen next, but Jesus keeps bringing the conversation back to how we are living right now. Our God who goes before us already holds tomorrow. That means we can stop trying to figure out every detail and concentrate on being faithful with what He has already put in front of us. We often can spend a lot of time wondering what God is going to do next while ignoring what He has already asked us to do today. This chapter reminds us that God has already given each of us something to steward. Whether that be our time, money, opportunities, relationships, abilities, influence, health, or knowledge. The question is not whether we have as much as someone else. The question is what are we doing with what we have? The servant who buried his talent was controlled by fear. Fear can make us sit on opportunities because we are afraid of failing, not being good enough, or making a mistake. Our God who goes before us already holds the future. That frees us to stop obsessing over tomorrow and be faithful today. God calls for us to stay ready, use what we been have given, notice people around us, and continue to do the next thing God has already made clear.

- If God asked you today, “What are you doing with what I gave you?” what area would immediately come to mind?
- What do you tend to compare with what someone else has been given?
- How would you describe the difference between being busy and being faithful?
- Who are some people in everyday life that are easy for us to overlook?
- What is one thing you could faithfully do this week without needing any more information about the future?

OUR MIGHTY God

2026 BIBLE READING GUIDE

Wk 25 - Day 3: Esther 2

Explanation: Esther 2 introduces Esther and Mordecai in the Persian capital of Susa. Esther is a Jewish orphan whom Mordecai has raised as his own daughter. Through circumstances largely outside her control, Esther is taken into the king's search for a new queen. She gains unusual favor with Hegai, the man responsible for the women, and eventually with the king himself. Esther becomes queen, although no one involved understands how important that position will soon become. One of the most important features of Esther is that God is never directly named, yet His providence is visible throughout the story. Esther is in the palace before Haman's plot exists from her perspective. God has positioned the person before revealing the problem. The chapter ends with another seemingly small detail. Mordecai overhears a plot to assassinate the king and reports it through Esther. His action is written in the royal records, but he receives no immediate reward. It appears forgotten, until that record becomes crucial later in the story.

Application: Esther 2 reminds us that we usually understand God's preparation afterward, not while it is happening. You may not know why you are in a certain job, why you met a particular person, why a season has lasted longer than expected, or why an opportunity opened. Not everything has an obvious explanation in the moment.

Now to be clear, that does not mean we need to turn every coincidence into a secret message from God. But what we can learn, is to faithfully do what is right even when we cannot see the bigger picture. Mordecai did the right thing even though no one rewarded him at the time. Esther handled the opportunity in front of her wisely even though she could not see what chapter 3 would bring. Our God goes before us and that means that sometimes the thing He is doing today only makes sense when we reach tomorrow.

- Have you ever had an experience that seemed unimportant at the time but later prepared you for something else?
- How do you respond when something you did faithfully goes unrecognized?
- Why should we be careful about assuming an ordinary season is an unimportant season?
- What would change if you viewed your current season as preparation rather than wasted time?

Wk 25 - Day 4: Acts 25

Explanation: Acts 25 begins with Paul still in prison after two years. Felix has been replaced by a new governor, Festus, and Paul's enemies immediately try again to get rid of him. They ask Festus to send Paul back to Jerusalem, but their real plan is to ambush and kill him along the way. Festus instead keeps the case in Caesarea.

At the hearing, Paul's opponents make serious accusations but cannot prove them. Festus then asks whether Paul would be willing to go to Jerusalem. Paul knows that he is unlikely to receive a fair hearing there and exercises one of his rights as a Roman citizen: "I appeal unto Caesar." Paul was trusting God, but he was also using wisdom and the legal protections available to him. This decision connects directly with something Jesus had already told Paul: he would testify in Rome. Paul knew his destination was Rome, and his appeal to Caesar became part of the way he would get there. What looked like a legal mess and a long imprisonment was actually moving him closer to God's stated purpose.

Later, Festus discusses Paul's case with King Agrippa. He admits that the dispute is largely about "a certain Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive." That small statement gets to the heart of Paul's message: Jesus really had risen from the dead. Paul's imprisonment was now giving him opportunities to speak about Christ before governors, kings, military leaders, and influential people which were exactly the kind of audience God had said he would one day reach. By the end of the chapter, Paul still looks like the prisoner, but God is steadily moving the story forward.

Application: Acts 25 reminds us not to decide too quickly whether something is a setback.

Paul had been sitting in prison for two years. Most of us would probably look at that and think, "Nothing is happening." But God was protecting Paul, opening doors to powerful people, and arranging the path that would eventually take him to Rome.

Sometimes we measure progress only by how quickly our circumstances improve. But God may be doing important work during the delay. Paul also shows us that trusting God does not mean refusing to use common sense. He prayed and trusted God, but he also knew his rights and made a wise appeal. Faith is not passive. Sometimes the next thing God wants us to do is simply use the opportunity, resource, advice, or option He has already placed in front of us.

Remember that when God goes before us, He sometimes uses roads we never would have chosen. Paul probably would not have picked prison as his route to Rome, but even prison could not keep God from getting him where He intended. So when life feels delayed or off-course, it may be worth asking: "Could God still be moving this forward in a way I cannot see yet?"

- What situation in your life currently feels like it is taking much longer than it should?
- Have you ever looked back and realized a delay actually protected or prepared you?
- What resource, relationship, skill, or opportunity has God already placed in your hands that you should use wisely?
- What does this chapter teach us about using legal rights and practical resources?

OUR MIGHTY

2026 BIBLE READING GUIDE

God

Wk 25 - Day 5: Psalm 68

Explanation: Psalm 68 celebrates God as the victorious King who goes before His people. Its opening language echoes Israel's wilderness journey, when the ark went ahead and Moses prayed, "Rise up, LORD, and let thine enemies be scattered." The picture is of God leading His people into territory they could not safely enter without Him. But this powerful King is also deeply personal. He is described as "a father of the fatherless" and a defender of widows. He places the lonely into families and cares for people who could easily be overlooked. His greatness is seen not only in defeating enemies but in caring for vulnerable people.

Verse 19 can be understood as praising the Lord who daily bears our burdens. The God who goes ahead of His people is also the God who carries what becomes too heavy for them along the journey. So the picture is not simply, "God shows us where to go." But rather, He leads, protects, provides, and strengthens His people as they follow Him.

Application: Psalm 68 is helpful because most of us worry about things that have not happened yet. We try to carry tomorrow's problems with today's strength. This psalm reminds us that God gets there before we do. Whatever unknown lies ahead, we move forward with peace and confidence knowing we are not entering a place where God is absent. That does not mean there will be no wilderness. Israel still had to walk through one. But they did not have to create the road or carry everything by themselves. And we know that God's care is deeply personal. He notices the lonely, the overwhelmed, and the people who feel like they have nobody in their corner. God does not simply point toward the road and say, "Good luck." He goes before us and gives us daily strength while we walk it. Sometimes the most practical faith is simply saying, "God, give me what I need for today, and I'll trust You with tomorrow when it gets here."

- What difficult season in your life has taught you the most about God?
- Why might God sometimes lead us through a hard road rather than around it?
- Why is it meaningful that the powerful King is also Father to the fatherless?
- What burden are you carrying right now that you need to stop treating as yours alone?



Week 26: “Our God Who Gives Us Courage”

Wk 26 - Day 1: Genesis 26

Explanation: Genesis 26 begins with another famine in Canaan. Isaac starts moving toward Gerar, but God specifically tells him not to go down to Egypt. Instead, he is to remain in the land, and God repeats the covenant promises first given to Abraham: “I will be with thee, and will bless thee.” Isaac obeys by staying, but then fear gets the better of him. Afraid that the men of Gerar might kill him because of Rebekah, he tells them she is his sister—the same basic mistake Abraham had made. Abimelech eventually discovers the truth and rebukes Isaac. God protects Isaac and Rebekah even though Isaac had tried to protect himself through deception. God then greatly blesses Isaac’s crops and livestock, which creates jealousy among the Philistines. They fill in the wells Abraham had previously dug, and Abimelech eventually tells Isaac to leave because he has become too powerful. The rest of the chapter revolves around wells, which were essential for survival in that dry region. Isaac reopens Abraham’s wells, but local herdsman repeatedly claim the water. He names one Esek, meaning “contention,” and another Sitnah, connected with hostility or opposition. Instead of fighting over them, Isaac keeps moving and digging until he comes to a well no one disputes. When Isaac reaches Beersheba, God appears again and tells him, “Fear not, for I am with thee.” Isaac builds an altar, worships, sets up his tent, and digs another well. Eventually even Abimelech comes seeking peace because he can clearly see that God is with Isaac.

Application: Genesis 26 gives us a very practical picture of courage. Isaac does not prove his strength by winning every argument. Sometimes his courage is seen in being willing to walk away from a fight and trust God to provide somewhere else. That can be difficult, because when we know we are right, we often feel like we have to prove it. Isaac had legitimate claims to those wells, but he refused to let every disagreement become a battle. He kept digging until God made room for him. There is a difference between being peaceful and being weak. Courage does not always mean standing your ground in an argument. Sometimes it means refusing to become bitter, refusing to retaliate, and trusting God enough to move forward. Isaac also reminds us that courage disappears quickly when fear becomes our guide. He lied about Rebekah because he was afraid. Later, however, God tells him, “Fear not, for I am with thee.” The foundation of biblical courage is not found in thinking that nothing bad can happen, but rather trusting that because God is with us, we don’t have to let fear control our decisions.

- Why do you think Isaac repeated the same kind of mistake his father Abraham had made?
- What decisions are people most likely to make poorly when they are afraid?
- Why is it sometimes harder to walk away from an argument than to keep fighting?
- Is there a “well” in your life you are spending too much energy fighting over?
- Where might fear currently be making decisions for you that faith should be making instead?

Wk 26 - Day 2: Matthew 26

Explanation: Matthew 26 moves rapidly through the final hours before Jesus’ crucifixion. Religious leaders are plotting His death while, in Bethany, a woman, identified elsewhere as Mary, pours expensive perfume on Jesus in an act of extravagant devotion. Judas responds very differently: he goes to the chief priests and agrees to betray Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. Jesus then celebrates Passover with His disciples. During the meal, He identifies the bread with His body and the cup with His blood of the new covenant, which would be shed for many for the forgiveness of sins. The Passover had remembered Israel’s deliverance from Egypt; Jesus now points His disciples toward the greater deliverance He is about to accomplish through His own death. The emotional center of the chapter is Gethsemane, a name meaning “oil press.” Jesus becomes deeply sorrowful and tells Peter, James, and John that His soul is “exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.” He prays three times, asking whether the cup might pass from Him, yet each time submits Himself to the Father: “Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.” In the Old Testament, the “cup” often pictured divine judgment. Jesus understood what He was about to bear for sinners. Soon Judas arrives, Jesus is arrested, the disciples flee, and Peter, who had confidently insisted he would never deny Jesus, ends up denying Him three times.

Application: Having courage does not mean everything should feel “easy” for us. Jesus was deeply distressed in Gethsemane. He demonstrates that feeling the weight of something does not mean you are failing spiritually. The key is what Jesus did with that weight: He prayed and surrendered. “Not as I will, but as You will” may be one of the hardest prayers we ever pray. Courage sometimes means obeying God when His way costs us something we would rather not give. Peter gives us the opposite lesson. He had plenty of confidence, but confidence in ourselves is fragile. When the pressure arrived, he fell apart. Jesus had told him to watch and pray, but Peter slept. There is something very practical here: the moment to prepare for temptation is before temptation arrives. Prayer, Scripture, and dependence on God may feel ordinary today, but they prepare us to stand when tomorrow becomes difficult. Our God gives us courage to stand, but that courage is found through dependence, not arrogance. We do not need to convince ourselves that we are strong enough. We need to stay close to the only One who is.

- Why can it be so hard to truly pray and seek God’s will and deny our own?
- Can you think of a time where you knew the right thing to do but still wished there were an easier option?
- What does Peter’s failure teach us about being overly confident in ourselves?
- Where do you need courage right now to say, “God, I may not prefer this, but I want Your will more than mine”?

OUR MIGHTY God

2026 BIBLE READING GUIDE

Wk 26 - Day 3: Esther 3

Explanation: Esther 3 introduces Haman, whom King Ahasuerus promotes above the other officials. The king commands his servants to bow before Haman, but Mordecai refuses. The text tells us Mordecai explained his refusal by identifying himself as a Jew, but it does not spell out every reason behind his decision. Bowing itself was not automatically forbidden to Jewish people, so we should be careful not to assume this was simply about refusing to worship a man. However, Haman is specifically identified as an Agagite, connecting him with the Amalekites who were long-standing enemies of Israel. That historical background adds weight to the confrontation. The king's servants question Mordecai day after day, but he continues refusing. When Haman learns of it, his anger goes far beyond Mordecai. Instead of punishing one man, Haman decides to destroy the entire Jewish population throughout the Persian Empire. Haman manipulates the king by describing the Jews as a scattered people whose laws are different and implying they are a threat to the empire. The king gives Haman authority to issue a decree calling for their destruction. One man's wounded pride has become a threat against an entire people.

Application: Esther 3 reminds us that standing by a conviction can have consequences.

Mordecai knew refusing to bow would attract attention, and the pressure did not disappear after the first conversation. People asked him about it every day. Most of us will probably never face anything this dramatic, but we understand smaller versions of the pressure: "Why won't you just go along with it?" "Everybody else does it." "Why make such a big deal about this?" That is where courage becomes practical. We need to know and be able to discern what is actually worth standing for. We shouldn't turn personal preferences into biblical convictions, but when something truly matters before God, we should not surrender it simply because standing becomes uncomfortable. Haman also gives us a warning from the opposite direction. A bruised ego can become incredibly destructive and consuming. Sometimes courage means standing against outside pressure. Other times it means refusing to let pride, anger, or the need for approval control us from the inside.

- What types of pressure make it hardest for people to stand by what they believe?
- How would you respond if doing what you believed was right began affecting other people around you?
- How can we stand firmly without becoming rude, arrogant, or unnecessarily combative?

Wk 26 - Day 4: Acts 26

Explanation: Acts 26 finds Paul standing before King Agrippa, Bernice, Governor Festus, and other leaders in Caesarea. Agrippa understood Jewish customs and the Old Testament prophets, so Paul uses the opportunity not only to defend himself, but to clearly explain what Christ had done in his life. Paul begins with his past. He had been a strict Pharisee and a fierce opponent of Christians, even helping imprison and punish believers. Then he tells how Jesus confronted him on the road to Damascus and called him to become a "minister and a witness." Jesus sent Paul to help turn people "from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God," so they could receive forgiveness and a place among God's people. Paul then summarizes his response with the simple statement, "I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision." Festus interrupts and says Paul is out of his mind, but Paul responds calmly and respectfully. He then turns directly to Agrippa and presses the truth personally. Agrippa avoids giving a clear response, but the hearing ends with the leaders agreeing that Paul has done nothing deserving death or imprisonment.

Application: Courage does not always mean giving a big speech to a hostile crowd.

Sometimes it simply means being willing to tell the truth about what Jesus has done in your life. Paul's testimony is very simple: this is who I was, this is how I met Christ, and this is how my life changed. Every Christian has some version of that story. You do not have to be a preacher or have a dramatic conversion story to tell someone why you follow Jesus. Paul also shows that courage and respect can exist together. Festus calls him crazy, but Paul does not become defensive or insulting. He answers calmly and keeps pointing people toward Christ. We can stand firmly for truth without becoming argumentative. And verse 22 may be the key to the whole chapter: "Having obtained help of God, I continue unto this day." Paul's courage was not self-made. Our God gives us courage to stand by helping us keep going when we would not be strong enough on our own.

- How would you summarize your own story in three parts: before Christ, meeting Christ, and since Christ?
- Where have you experienced God giving you strength simply to keep going?
- What can Paul teach us about responding when people mock or dismiss what we believe?
- Why is being 'almost persuaded' still not the same as genuine faith?
- If someone asked you, "Why do you follow Jesus?", what would you say in two or three sentences?

OUR MIGHTY

2026 BIBLE READING GUIDE

God

Wk 26 - Day 5: Psalm 27

Explanation: Psalm 27 begins with striking confidence: “The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?” David is facing enemies and danger, but he begins by reminding himself who God is before focusing on what threatens him. He describes God as his light, salvation, and strength or stronghold. Because of that, David can say that even if an army camps against him, his heart does not have to live in fear. Then the focus changes. David says the “one thing” he desires is to dwell in the Lord’s house and seek Him. His greatest desire is not simply for God to remove every enemy but to remain near God in the middle of the trouble. David then cries for God to hear him, asks not to be forsaken, speaks of false witnesses, and admits that he needs God to teach and lead him. The confident David of verse 1 is also the praying David of verse 7. Biblical courage and honest fear can exist in the same person. David closes with: “Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart.” The Hebrew verb often translated “wait,” carries the idea of waiting with hope or expectation rather than simply doing nothing. David believes he will still “see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.” Psalm 27 shows us that courage does not come from having an easy life or from being naturally fearless. It comes from knowing God is near, seeking Him in the middle of trouble, and trusting Him enough to keep going.

Application: Psalm 27 reminds us that courageous people can still have moments when they feel afraid. David goes from “Whom shall I fear?” to “Hear me...do not forsake me.” That is real life. Faith does not require us to pretend the problem is small. It reminds us that God is bigger than the problem. David also gives us a helpful order. Before staring at the enemy, he reminds himself who God is: my light, my salvation, my strength. Sometimes fear gets bigger because we spend hours thinking about what might happen and very little time reminding ourselves who God is. And when David does not know what will happen next, he waits. Waiting on God is not quitting. It is continuing to pray, obey, and trust while the answer is still unclear. Our God gives us courage to stand by strengthening our hearts. Courage is not something we have to manufacture before coming to Him. We bring Him the fear, uncertainty, and pressure and ask Him for enough strength to take the next faithful step.

- What is something that tends to become bigger in your mind the longer you think about it?
- When you are under stress, do you normally seek God first or mainly seek a solution? Why do you think that is?
- What is the difference between waiting on God and simply avoiding a decision?
- Where do you need God to “strengthen your heart” right now?

Week 27: "Our God Who Is Present In Crisis"

Wk 27 - Day 1: Genesis 27

Explanation: Genesis 27 is one of the messiest family chapters in Genesis. Isaac is old and nearly blind, and he decides to give the family blessing to his favorite son, Esau. The problem is that God had already revealed before the twins were born that the older would serve the younger. Isaac appears determined to move ahead with his own preference anyway. Rebekah overhears the conversation and decides to take matters into her own hands. Because she favors Jacob, she creates a plan for Jacob to disguise himself as Esau, bring Isaac the meal he wants, and receive the blessing first. Jacob initially worries about getting caught more than whether the plan is right, but he eventually goes along with it. The deception becomes increasingly complicated when Jacob wears Esau's clothing, covers his hands and neck with goatskins, lies repeatedly about his identity, and even brings God into his explanation for how he returned so quickly. Isaac is suspicious because the voice sounds like Jacob, but his other senses convince him that Esau is standing before him. He gives Jacob the blessing. When Esau returns, the truth comes out. Isaac trembles, Esau is devastated, and the family conflict explodes. Esau becomes so angry that he plans to kill Jacob. Rebekah sends Jacob away for what she thinks will be "a few days," but the separation will actually last about twenty years. The entire family experiences consequences from favoritism, secrecy, manipulation, and dishonesty. Yet even in this deeply dysfunctional situation, God's covenant purpose does not disappear.

Application: Genesis 27 is very down-to-earth because our relationships including family, can still become unhealthy in many of the same ways: favoritism, poor communication, secrets, resentment, manipulation, and people talking about each other instead of to each other. One important lesson is that we do not have to manipulate circumstances to help God accomplish His plan. Rebekah knew what God had promised concerning Jacob, but instead of trusting Him, she decided she needed to make it happen herself. We can do the same when we push, manipulate, hide information, or try to control people because we are afraid things will not work out otherwise. The chapter also shows how quickly one dishonest decision creates another. Jacob could not tell just one lie; he needed more lies to keep the first one alive. But we see that despite it all, God is still present even in crisis. That does not mean He approves of the mess. Everyone still experiences consequences. But It shows us that our failures do not put the situation beyond His ability to redeem. Even when people make a mess of things, God is still able to move His purposes forward.

- Why are we sometimes tempted to manipulate a situation when we already know what God has said?
- What does this chapter remind us about the long-term cost of short-term dishonesty?
- Is there a personal, relational or familial conflict where you need to stop trying to control the outcome and simply do what is right?
- How does it encourage you that God's purposes continued even through such a broken situation?

Wk 27 - Day 2: Matthew 27

Explanation: Matthew 27 records Jesus' trial, crucifixion, death, and burial. Pilate recognizes problems with the accusations against Jesus but gives in to pressure from the crowd. The Roman soldiers mock Him as a fake king with a robe, a crown of thorns, and a reed for a scepter before leading Him to Golgotha. Crucifixion was one of Rome's most degrading and painful forms of execution, normally reserved for slaves, rebels, and serious criminals. Jesus is nailed to the cross and mocked by religious leaders, soldiers, criminals, and people passing by. Their challenge is essentially, "If You really are God's Son, save Yourself." The irony is that if Jesus saved Himself from the cross, He could not accomplish the salvation He came to provide for others. From noon until three, darkness covers the land as Jesus bears the judgment of sin. When He dies, the temple veil is torn from top to bottom, showing that through His sacrifice the way into God's presence has been opened. Jesus is then buried in a sealed tomb guarded by soldiers. From a human perspective, everything looks like defeat. But in reality, God's redemptive plan is being accomplished through the darkest moment in the story.

Application: Matthew 27 reminds us that God can still be working when a situation looks completely hopeless. If you had stood near the cross that Friday, you might have thought evil had won, Jesus had failed, and God's plan had fallen apart. In reality, the exact opposite was happening. God's plan of redemption was being accomplished in the darkest moment. That is important when we walk through situations we cannot understand. We should be careful about deciding what God is doing based only on what we can see right now. Friday looked like defeat. Sunday would reveal something very different. The cross also reminds us that God's presence in crisis does not always mean He removes suffering. Sometimes His greatest work happens through suffering rather than around it. And the torn veil gives us something very personal: because of Jesus, we do not have to face our crises from a distance from God. We can come directly to Him with fear, pain, confusion, guilt, and grief.

- What does the torn temple veil communicate about our relationship with God?
- What would you say to someone who feels that the darkest chapter of their life must be the end of their story?
- Where do you need to remember that God may still be working even though you cannot see what He is doing?
- How does this painful moment in history help you to find hope in what is going on in your life now?

Wk 27 - Day 3: Esther 4

Explanation: Esther 4 begins after Haman's decree calling for the destruction of the Jewish people has been sent throughout the Persian Empire. Mordecai responds with public mourning, and wearing sackcloth and ashes. Jewish communities throughout the empire begin fasting and grieving. Esther is initially unaware of the full reason for Mordecai's distress because she is isolated within palace life. Through her servant, Mordecai sends her a copy of the decree and asks her to go before the king and plead for her people. That request puts Esther in a serious position. Persian law did not allow someone, including the queen, to simply walk into the king's presence uninvited. Esther also explains that the king has not called for her in thirty days. Her hesitation is not necessarily cowardice; the danger is real. Mordecai responds by reminding her that living in the palace will not ultimately protect her from Haman's decree. He also expresses confidence that deliverance for the Jewish people will come somehow, and then raises the possibility that Esther may have reached her royal position for exactly this moment. Esther makes her decision. She asks Mordecai to gather the Jewish people in Susa for a three-day fast. She and her attendants will do the same, and then she will go to the king despite the danger.

Application: Esther 4 shows that courage does not mean we feel no fear. Esther clearly understands what could happen to her. Courage is deciding that obedience matters more than protecting ourselves from every possible risk. Sometimes crisis reveals why God has placed us where we are. We may not have Esther's position, but we all have relationships, influence, opportunities, and responsibilities that someone else does not have. The question becomes: What can I do from where God has placed me? Esther also did not rush into the situation pretending she was fearless. She stopped, fasted, gathered people around her, and prepared herself before acting. That is a healthy picture of faith during crisis. We can pray, seek God, involve trusted people, and then take the step we know needs to be taken. Our God is present in crisis even when His presence feels hidden.

- Why is Esther's hesitation understandable rather than necessarily faithless?
- What do you think "for such a time as this" means practically for us and the situations God may have put us in?
- What opportunities do you have simply because of where God has placed you?
- Who are the people you turn to when you need prayer and support before doing something difficult?

Wk 27 - Day 4: Acts 27

Explanation: Acts 27 follows Paul as a prisoner being transported by ship toward Rome. Sailing has already become dangerous because the season is late in the year. Paul warns the centurion that continuing the journey could end badly, but the ship's captain, owner, and majority believe they should keep going. At first, the decision appears correct. But it quickly turns into a life-threatening situation. The sailors lose control of the ship. They reinforce the hull, throw cargo and equipment overboard, and eventually go many days without seeing either the sun or stars. In the middle of the storm, Paul tells everyone that an angel from God had appeared to him. God had assured Paul that he would stand before Caesar and that everyone sailing with him would survive. The ship will be lost, but their lives will be spared. What is interesting is that God's promise does not immediately stop the storm. They remain at sea for roughly two weeks. Paul eventually becomes the calmest and most useful person on the ship. He warns them when sailors attempt to escape, encourages everyone to eat, gives thanks to God openly, and helps prepare them for what comes next. The ship eventually runs aground and begins breaking apart. Some swim to shore while others float in on pieces of wreckage. All those aboard survive, exactly as God had promised. Paul went into the crisis as a prisoner, but he increasingly functions as a trusted leader.

Application: Acts 27 gives us one of the clearest pictures of God being present without immediately calming the storm. Sometimes we pray, "God, make this stop," and the storm keeps going. That does not mean He has left. God gave Paul His promise while the waves were still crashing. Crisis also reveals what we are leaning on. The experienced sailors eventually ran out of answers. Paul still had something solid because his confidence was not in the ship, weather, or experts—it was in God. And one steady person can change the atmosphere of an entire room, family, workplace, or crisis. We may not be able to stop the storm, but with God's help we can become someone who brings calm, wisdom, hope, and practical help to the people going through it with us.

- How can one calm, faithful person affect everyone else during a crisis?
- When life feels out of control, what do you tend to trust first—your own plan, other people's expertise, or God?
- What would it look like for you to be a steady presence for someone else going through a storm right now?

OUR MIGHTY

2026 BIBLE READING GUIDE

God

Wk 27 - Day 5: Psalm 91

Explanation: Psalm 91 is a song about finding security in God while living in a dangerous world. The writer describes threats that can come at any time such as hidden traps, disease, terror at night, arrows during the day, destruction, wild animals, and other dangers beyond a person's control. The psalm begins with the picture of someone dwelling in God's shelter rather than simply visiting occasionally. God is described with several names: Most High (Elyon), emphasizing that no power is above Him; Almighty (Shaddai), emphasizing His sufficiency and strength; and LORD (Yahweh), the covenant God who remains faithful to His people. The psalm then uses several pictures of protection. God is like a refuge or fortress, and also like a bird spreading its wings over its young. The point is not that God's people never experience danger, but that they have somewhere secure to run when danger comes. Wiersbe notes that the psalm is dealing specifically with the dangers of life and emphasizes the hidden life of communion with God as the foundation for confidence in public life. The closing section shifts to God speaking. He promises to be with His people in trouble, to hear when they call, and ultimately to deliver and satisfy them. That may be the most important promise in the psalm: not simply that trouble will never come, but that God will be present when it does.

Application: Psalm 91 does not promise Christians a life where nothing painful ever happens. Scripture itself contains many faithful people who suffered greatly. The promise is deeper: we never face danger alone. Most of us are not worrying about arrows or lions, but we understand anxiety. We worry about health, children, finances, accidents, bad news, relationships, and things that might happen tomorrow. This psalm invites us to make God our dwelling place, not just our emergency contact. There is a difference. We can run to God only when life falls apart, or we can build the habit of living close to Him every day through prayer, Scripture, and worship. That everyday relationship prepares our hearts when crisis comes. And sometimes God protects us from trouble; other times He protects and carries us through it. Either way, the safest place for us is near Him.

- Which picture of God in Psalm 91—shelter, shadow, refuge, fortress, or wings—means the most to you right now and why?
- What future danger do you find yourself worrying about even though it has not happened?
- When have you experienced God being with you in trouble even though He did not immediately remove the trouble?
- What would change about the way you handle fear if your first thought was not “What if something goes wrong?” but “God will be with me whatever happens”?

Week 28: “Our God Who Works Behind The Scenes”

Wk 28 - Day 1: Genesis 28

Explanation: Genesis 28 begins with Jacob leaving home because of the broken situation with Esau. Isaac sends him toward Haran to find a wife and formally gives him the blessing of Abraham, confirming that Jacob will carry forward God’s covenant promise.

Jacob is now alone, traveling roughly 500 miles toward Haran. One night he stops near Luz and sleeps outside. There he dreams of a stairway connecting earth and heaven with angels ascending and descending. God speaks and repeats the promises of land, descendants, and worldwide blessing, but He also makes them personal. God promises to be with Jacob, watch over him, and eventually bring him home. Jacob may have left his father’s house, but he has not left God’s presence.

When Jacob wakes, he is stunned that God had been present when he did not realize it. He names the place Bethel, meaning “house of God,” sets up the stone as a memorial, and responds in worship. God meets Jacob with grace while Jacob is running from the consequences of a very messy chapter of his life.

Application: Jacob probably felt like everything in his life was falling apart. He had left home because of his own bad decisions and was headed somewhere completely unfamiliar. Yet God was already working in the middle of that messy season. Sometimes we assume, “Once I get through this mess, then God can really do something in my life.” Jacob discovered that God could meet him in the middle of the mess. There is also something powerful in Jacob realizing that God had been there and he did not know it. We often recognize God’s work afterward. The closed door, unexpected change, difficult season, new relationship, or unwanted transition may make very little sense today. Years later we may see that God was doing something we could not see at the time. Genesis 28 reminds us that He may be doing some of His deepest work when we feel uncertain, displaced, or uncomfortable. Jacob’s statement that God was present and he “did not know it” is especially relatable. There are seasons we only understand looking backward. Later we realize, “God was doing something there. I just couldn’t see it.” Our God is always at work, even in the places we would never have chosen for ourselves.

- What do you think Jacob was feeling as he left home?
- Have you ever looked back at a difficult season and realized God was working in ways you could not see at the time?
- What do the promises God gives Jacob reveal about what God is doing in the larger story?

Wk 28 - Day 2: Matthew 28

Explanation: Matthew 28 begins with Mary Magdalene and the other Mary going to Jesus’ tomb. An earthquake occurs, an angel rolls away the stone, and the women discover that Jesus has risen. The stone is not removed to let Jesus out, but to show that the tomb is already empty. They soon meet the risen Jesus personally and worship Him.

At the same time, the guards report what happened, and the religious leaders pay them to spread the story that Jesus’ disciples stole the body. Matthew places these responses side by side: some encounter the evidence and worship while others encounter it and try to explain it away. Jesus later meets His followers in Galilee and declares that all authority belongs to Him. The Greek word *exousia* carries the idea of both the right and authority to act. The One sending them into the world is not hoping His mission succeeds, He is the risen King with authority over heaven and earth. Jesus then commands His followers to make disciples of all nations. The main command is not simply “go,” but “make disciples.” A disciple is more than someone who makes a one-time decision; it is someone learning to follow Jesus, obey His teaching, and help others do the same. Jesus sends them with the promise of His continuing presence.

Application: Matthew 28 begins with people who think nothing else can happen. Jesus is dead. The stone is sealed. Guards are standing outside. Then Sunday comes. That is a needed reminder that our inability to see God working is not evidence that He has stopped working. But the chapter does not end with the disciples simply celebrating what God has done. Jesus invites them to join what He is doing by making disciples. And that can be much more ordinary than we make it sound. Disciple-making can happen when a parent teaches a child Scripture, a mature believer meets with a younger believer, someone answers a coworker’s questions, or two friends begin reading the Bible together. You do not need a platform. You just need a person. The promise at the end is also important: Jesus does not simply say, “Go do this.” He promises His presence as they do it. The God who is always at work invites us to work alongside Him.

- Why do you think people can look at the same evidence and respond so differently?
- Who is one person you could intentionally help grow spiritually?
- What would disciple-making look like in your ordinary weekly routine?
- Where might God already be working around you and inviting you to join Him?

OUR MIGHTY God

2026 BIBLE READING GUIDE

Wk 28 - Day 3: Esther 5

Explanation: Esther 5 begins on the third day after Esther and the Jews have been fasting. Esther changes from her fasting clothes into her royal clothing and enters the inner court, knowing she could be killed for approaching the king without being summoned. Esther did not simply make a courageous commitment in chapter 4—she followed through in chapter 5. The king welcomes Esther and offers to hear her request. Surprisingly, she does not immediately expose Haman. Instead, she invites the king and Haman to a banquet. When asked again what she wants, she delays once more and invites them to another banquet the following day. That delay becomes one of the most important details in the story. Something still needs to happen overnight. Before Esther presents her request, the king will discover that Mordecai was never rewarded for saving his life. Esther does not know any of this. God's timing was arranging circumstances Esther herself could not see. Meanwhile, Haman leaves feeling important because he alone has been invited with the king to Esther's banquets. Yet when he sees Mordecai, his joy disappears. He brags about everything he has but admits that none of it satisfies him while Mordecai refuses to honor him. He then prepares for Mordecai's execution, not realizing that his own downfall is already beginning.

Application: Esther 5 teaches us something difficult: God's work sometimes looks like a delay. We tend to think that if God is working, things should happen quickly. The door should open. The prayer should be answered. The conversation should happen. The problem should get resolved. But Esther had the king's attention and still waited. She could not know that something important needed to happen during that night. Sometimes God is doing things outside our field of vision that need to happen before the next part of our story unfolds. That means waiting is not necessarily wasted time. Haman gives us another lesson. He has money, power, position, family, and access to the king and queen, but one person who does not admire him makes him miserable. When our happiness depends on everyone approving of us, there will always be a Mordecai somewhere who can ruin our day. While Esther waits, God is working on the circumstances. And often while we wait, God is also working on us.

- Why do we tend to assume quicker answers are better answers?
- What does Haman reveal about the danger of needing everyone's approval?
- Why can one person's criticism sometimes overshadow ten people's encouragement?
- What are you currently tempted to rush?

Wk 28 - Day 4: Acts 28

Explanation: Acts 28 begins after everyone survives the shipwreck and reaches Malta, an island south of Sicily. The local people welcome the survivors and build a fire because of the cold and rain. Paul does not act like an important apostle who deserves to be served after everything he has endured. He gathers firewood with everyone else. While doing so, a viper fastens onto his hand. The islanders assume he must be a criminal receiving divine punishment, but when Paul suffers no harm, they quickly swing to the opposite conclusion. Later Paul heals the father of Publius, a leading official, and others on Malta also come for healing. After three months, Paul finally continues to Rome, the city God had promised he would reach. Christians travel out to meet him on the road, and their presence encourages him. In Rome, Paul is allowed to live under guard and begins sharing the gospel with Jewish leaders. Some believe while others reject the message. The book ends with Paul spending two years receiving anyone who comes to him and teaching about Jesus. Luke's final word is especially powerful: Paul is preaching "unhindered." Paul is restricted, but the gospel is not.

Application: Paul wanted to go to Rome. He probably did not picture getting there through arrest, trials, a violent storm, a shipwreck, a snakebite, and house arrest. But he got there. Acts 28 shows us that God accomplishing His purpose does not mean the road will look the way we expected. It also challenges the excuse, "I could really serve God if my situation were different." Paul could have said, "Once I'm free, I'll get back to ministry." Instead, he served people on Malta. He gathered wood. He prayed for the sick. When he reached Rome, he opened his house to whoever would come. Sometimes we become so focused on what we cannot do that we overlook what we can do. The ending of Acts is almost intentional in its unfinished feeling. The story of the gospel going forward did not end with Paul. God was still working, and He still is today too.

- Why were the people on Malta so quick to judge Paul based on his circumstances? How can we make the same mistake when looking at someone else's life?
- What limitation in your life do you tend to use as a reason you cannot do much for God?
- What could God do through you right now that you keep assuming has to wait until your circumstances change?

OUR MIGHTY

2026 BIBLE READING GUIDE

God

Wk 28 - Day 5: Psalm 138

Explanation: Psalm 138 is David's song of praise for God's faithfulness. It begins with David thanking God for His steadfast love, truth, and faithfulness to His promises. When David called on God, the Lord answered...not simply by changing his circumstances, but by giving David greater strength and courage. David then looks beyond his own experience and pictures the kings of the earth recognizing God's greatness. Though God is exalted above everyone, He pays attention to the humble rather than being impressed by human status. The final verses acknowledge that David is still walking through trouble. His problems have not all disappeared. Yet David trusts God to preserve him and fulfill His purpose for his life. Opposition in his life was real, but it could not ultimately stop what God had determined to accomplish. The word translated "perfect" or "fulfill" in verse 8 carries the idea of bringing something to completion. David trusts that God has not started working in his life only to abandon the project halfway through.

Application: Psalm 138 reminds us that God's work is not always seen in the problem disappearing. Sometimes God changes the situation. Sometimes He changes us in the situation. David prayed, and God strengthened him. That is an important answer to prayer that we can easily overlook. We ask God to make something easier, while God may be making us stronger. Verse 8 is especially encouraging because every one of us has unfinished parts of our lives. Whether that be relationships we are praying about, habits we are trying to change, people we are concerned about, decisions that are unresolved, and places where we still need to grow. We can see the unfinished work and become anxious about it or we could see it as God does, a work in progress. While God continues His work in us, what must we do? We keep praying, obeying, growing, and doing what God has placed in front of us. But we do not have to act as though everything depends on us. Our God is always at work, and He is faithful to finish what fits His purpose for our lives.

- Why does it matter that the God who is above everyone still notices humble people?
- In what ways might God be changing you while you are waiting for Him to change something around you?
- Why do unfinished situations create so much anxiety for us?
- What unfinished part of your story do you need to trust is still in God's hands?