

Bible Challenge May 29 – June 4, 2016

Advent's weekly Bible Challenge is based upon the readings assigned for each Sunday. The basic challenge is to re-read the texts that were read on Sunday morning and are included in the Sunday bulletin. The Adventure and Explorer challenges are suggestions of different ways to deepen your knowledge of the Bible. The challenge is organized as one reading for each of five days, but find a pace or style that fits your schedule.

INTRODUCTION

God hears every prayer—the prayer of the outsider as well as the prayer of the insider. The attentive nature of our God is evident as God comes to us again and again in the word and in the supper. "Ascribe to the LORD the honor due the holy name; bring offerings and enter the courts of the LORD." Do it today.

DAY ONE: 1 Kings 8:22-23, 41-43

King Solomon prays at the dedication of the temple in Jerusalem, built under his direction. Solomon prays that the temple will be a sign of God's presence and power, not only to the Israelites, but to all peoples.

²²Then Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the assembly of Israel, and spread out his hands to heaven. ²³He said, "O LORD, God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven above or on earth beneath, keeping covenant and steadfast love for your servants who walk before you with all their heart, ⁴¹Likewise when a foreigner, who is not of your people Israel, comes from a distant land because of your name ⁴²—for they shall hear of your great name, your mighty hand, and your outstretched arm—when a foreigner comes and prays toward this house, ⁴³then hear in heaven your dwelling place, and do according to all that the foreigner calls to you, so that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your people Israel, and so that they may know that your name has been invoked on this house that I have built."

Adventure Challenge: 1 Kings 8.

Explorer Challenge: *Option A:* Using reference tools, find depictions of Solomon's temple based upon Biblical descriptions and research. What was it like? How large was it?

Option B: Using reference tools, learn about the history of Solomon's Temple. When and how was it built? How long did it last? When was it re-built and how long did that temple last? Were they the same?

DAY TWO: Psalm 96:1-9

This psalm is a hymn of praise to God as ruler of all.

- ¹Sing to the LORD a new song;
sing to the LORD, all the earth.
- ²Sing to the LORD, bless the name of the LORD;
proclaim God's salvation from day to day.
- ³Declare God's glory among the nations
and God's wonders among all peoples.
- ⁴For great is the LORD and greatly to be praised,
more to be feared than all gods.
- ⁵As for all the gods of the nations, they are but idols;
but you, O LORD, have made the heavens.
- ⁶Majesty and magnificence are in your presence;
power and splendor are in your sanctuary.
- ⁷Ascribe to the LORD, you families of the peoples,
ascribe to the LORD honor and power.
- ⁸Ascribe to the LORD the honor due the holy name;
bring offerings and enter the courts of the LORD.
- ⁹Worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness;
tremble before the LORD, all the earth.

Adventure Challenge: Psalm 96.

Explorer Challenge: This psalm uses a number of expressions and images that are uncommon in everyday speech. Examples: “power and splendor are in your sanctuary,” “the honor due the holy name,” and “the beauty of holiness.” How might you explain these phrases to someone for whom they are unfamiliar or strange?

DAY THREE: Galatians 1:1-12

Paul, who started the church in Galatia, is angry and troubled that the congregation has been confused by other teachers. As he begins this letter, Paul is direct with them about his desire for Christ’s pure gospel to be the center of their lives.

¹Paul an apostle—sent neither by human commission nor from human authorities, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead—²and all the members of God's family who are with me,

To the churches of Galatia:

³Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴who gave himself for our sins to set us free from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, ⁵to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

⁶I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—⁷not that there is another gospel, but there are some who are confusing you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. ⁸But even if we or an angel from heaven should proclaim to you a gospel contrary to what we proclaimed to you, let that one be accursed! ⁹As we have said before, so now I repeat, if anyone proclaims to you a gospel contrary to what you received, let that one be accursed!

¹⁰Am I now seeking human approval, or God's approval? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still pleasing people, I would not be a servant of Christ.

¹¹For I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel that was proclaimed by me is not of human origin; ¹²for I did not receive it from a human source, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

Adventure Challenge: Galatians 1

Explorer Challenge: We will be reading Paul’s letter to the Galatians for several weeks. Use an introduction or study guide to Galatians to gain an overview of this letter, the people it was addressed to, and the main themes. What were the Galatians confused about?

DAY FOUR: Luke 7:1-10

A Roman centurion stands to lose a highly valued slave. Jewish leaders in Capernaum consider the centurion worthy, but the Gentile declares himself unworthy. In the midst of this tangle of attitudes, the centurion shows his understanding of authority and his testimony that Jesus has it, even authority over illness and death.

¹After Jesus had finished all his sayings in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum. ²A centurion there had a slave whom he valued highly, and who was ill and close to death. ³When he heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders to him, asking him to come and heal his slave. ⁴When they came to Jesus, they appealed to him earnestly, saying, "He is worthy of having you do this for him, ⁵for he loves our people, and it is he who built our synagogue for us." ⁶And Jesus went with them, but when he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to say to him, "Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; ⁷therefore I did not presume to come to you. But only speak the word, and let my servant be healed. ⁸For I also am a man set under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this,' and the slave does it." ⁹When Jesus heard this he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd that followed him, he said, "I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith." ¹⁰When those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the slave in good health.

Adventure Challenge: Luke 7:1-35.

Explorer Challenge: *Option A:* Research Capernaum; what was the city like in Jesus’ day?

Option B: Research “centurion”: what do we know about men of this rank? Was it common for them to be

friendly to locals? What characteristics can we surmise about this specific person?

DAY FIVE:

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Merciful Lord God, we do not presume to come before you trusting in our own righteousness, but in your great and abundant mercies. Revive our faith, we pray; heal our bodies, and mend our communities, that we may evermore dwell in your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life. (*John 3:16*)

Explorer Challenge: Review how the theme of authority is presented in each of the four readings.