

## Bible Challenge January 10 - 17, 2016

### INTRODUCTION

*The Sundays after Epiphany continue to celebrate the revelation of the glory of God to us as it was made known to the magi and to those on Jordan's banks at the baptism of Jesus—today using wedding imagery. Our God rejoices over God's people "as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride." By the power of the Spirit there are gifts galore for everyone. In Christ Jesus the best wine is saved for last. Taste and see.*

### FIRST READING: Isaiah 62:1-5

*The people's return to Judah after the exile was marred by economic and political troubles. Nevertheless, the prophet declares, Jerusalem and Judah will be restored. God will rejoice over Jerusalem as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride; and the people are called to the celebration.*

**Adventure Challenge:** Isaiah 62.

**Explorer Challenge:** *Option A.* Research Jewish marriage customs to learn more what Isaiah meant when he said "as a young man marries a young woman." (Information about Jewish marriage customs may help you better understand the Gospel reading as well.)

*Option B.* At several points Isaiah 62 says Jerusalem will have a new name. Research the importance of names in the Bible, in Jewish culture, in psychology, or in sociology. When and why do we change people's names (or titles) in modern society? Is it important?

### PSALM: Psalm 36:5-10

*We feast upon the abundance of your house, O LORD. (Ps. 36:8)*

**Adventure Challenge:** Psalm 36.

**Explorer Challenge:** Identify the contrasts between verses 1-4 and the rest of this psalm. (Example: does "all people" in v. 7 include the people described in v. 1?) Do the opening lines of Psalm 37 suggest a response or resolution to the contrasts in Psalm 36?

### SECOND READING: 1 Corinthians 12:1-11

*The congregation at Corinth experienced division; people were comparing one another's spiritual gifts, thinking some to be superior to others. Paul invites this fractured community to trust that God's Holy Spirit has gifted them all perfectly for their mission together.*

**Adventure Challenge:** 1 Corinthians 12.

**Explorer Challenge:** Read 1 Corinthians 12 – 14 to follow the entire discussion of spiritual gifts in this epistle.

### GOSPEL: John 2:1-11

*Turning water to wine at the wedding at Cana is described as the first of Jesus' signs. Through many such epiphanies, Jesus reveals that he bears God's creative power and joyful presence into the world.*

**Adventure Challenge:** John 2. (or John 1-2.)

**Explorer Challenge:** *Option A.* With Bible maps, locate the places noted in the first two chapters of John: Bethany, Galilee, Bethsaida, Cana, Capernaum, and Jerusalem.

*Option B.* Research Jewish rites of purification. Is the water special in any way? How is it used? Are purification rites significant to a Jewish wedding or to the Cana story?

### PRAYER OF THE DAY

Lord God, source of every blessing, you showed forth your glory and led many to faith by the works of your Son, who brought gladness and salvation to his people. Transform us by the Spirit of his love, that we may find our life together in him, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

### GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Jesus revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him. (John 2:11)