

## Bible Challenge January 25-31, 2016

### INTRODUCTION

*The glory of God is often revealed when and where it is least expected. God uses our lips to declare that glory, inexperienced and hesitant though they may be. God uses our love to demonstrate that glory and so urges us to exercise it. God uses Jesus of Nazareth, water and the word, bread and wine, to reveal God's glory where and when God chooses. Take heed, lest the glory of God slip through our midst unnoticed.*

### FIRST READING: Jeremiah 1:4-10

*God calls Jeremiah to be a prophet and consecrates him in the womb. Jeremiah's task is to preach God's word in the midst of the difficult political realities of his time, before the Babylonian exile. He is to make God known not only to Judah, but also to the nations.*

**Adventure Challenge:** Jeremiah 1

**Explorer Challenge:** Read an introduction to Jeremiah or a summary of his life to learn about the difficult political and religious challenges of the time and how they influenced Jeremiah's message and impacted his personal life.

### PSALM: Psalm 71:1-6. *From my mother's womb you have been my strength. (Ps. 71:6)*

**Adventure Challenge:** Psalm 71.

**Explorer Challenge:** *Option A:* Google "from my mother's womb" or "before I formed you in the womb I knew you" (from Jeremiah) to learn how frequently this womb image appears in the Bible and what commentators have said about it.

*Option B:* Explore Psalm 71 to see how it is built on contrasts; youth--old age; confidence—doubt; security—threats; the past—the future. How are such contrasts an element of your religious experience?

### SECOND READING: 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

*Christians in Corinth prided themselves on their spiritual gifts. Paul reminds them that God gives us many gifts through the Holy Spirit, but the purpose behind all of them is love, the kind of love that God showed us in Jesus Christ.*

**Adventure Challenge:** 1 Corinthians 13.

**Explorer Challenge:** *Option A.* Memorize this famous text on the importance of love.

*Option B.* To enrich your understanding, read at least three different translations of this passage.

*Option C.* How many times in this passage does Paul use absolute words like "all," "nothing," "fully," and "greatest"? What is the impact of these words? (Try substituting words like "some" and "not very much.")

### GOSPEL: Luke 4:21-30

*People in Jesus' hometown are initially pleased when he says that God will free the oppressed. Their pleasure turns to rage when he reminds them that God's prophetic mission typically pushes beyond human boundaries so that mercy and healing are extended to those regarded as outsiders.*

**Adventure Challenge:** Luke 4:14-30. (A repeat of last week's challenge. This passage describes the complex, sometime changing reaction people may have to "good news.")

**Explorer Challenge:** *Option A.* Read 1 Kings 17:1-6 and 2 Kings 5:1-14 to learn about the incidents that Jesus refers to in verses 25-27.

*Option B.* In verse 23, the people reference events at Capernaum; read 4:31-41 to learn what the people of Nazareth likely were hoping to see happen.

### PRAYER OF THE DAY

Almighty and ever-living God, increase in us the gifts of faith, hope, and love; and that we may obtain what you promise, make us love what you command, through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

### GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

You shall go to all to whom I send you. Do not be afraid, for I am with you. (*Jer. 1:7, 8*)