

Bible Challenge April 30 – May 6, 2017

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 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.

DAY ONE: Acts 2:14a, 36-41

Today's reading is the conclusion of Peter's sermon preached following the giving of the Holy Spirit to the apostles on the day of Pentecost. The center of his preaching is the bold declaration that God has made the crucified Jesus both Lord and Christ.

^{14a}Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed [the crowd]: ³⁶"Let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified." ³⁷Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?" ³⁸Peter said to them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him." ⁴⁰And he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." ⁴¹So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added.

Adventure Challenge: Acts 2:14-47 (or Acts 2).

Explorer Challenge: *Option A:* This passage describes what we, today, might call *a conversion experience*; what do you identify as the key elements of the experience described?

Option B: Verse 36 says God made Jesus *both Lord and Messiah*; consider what these two terms mean and what distinction Peter is likely making.

DAY TWO: Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19

I love the Lord, who has heard my voice and listened to my supplication.

¹I love the LORD, who has heard my voice,
and listened to my supplication,

²for the LORD has given ear to me
whenever I called.

³The cords of death entangled me; the anguish of the grave came upon me;
I came to grief and sorrow.

⁴Then I called upon the name of the LORD:
"O LORD, I pray you, save my life."

¹²How shall I repay the LORD
for all the good things God has done for me?

¹³I will lift the cup of salvation
and call on the name of the LORD.

¹⁴I will fulfill my vows to the LORD
in the presence of all God's people.

¹⁵Precious in your sight, O LORD,
is the death of your servants.

¹⁶O LORD, truly I am your servant;
I am your servant, the child of your handmaid;
you have freed me from my bonds.

¹⁷I will offer you the sacrifice of thanksgiving
and call upon the name of the LORD.

¹⁸I will fulfill my vows to the LORD
in the presence of all God's people,

¹⁹in the courts of the LORD's house,

in the midst of you, O Jerusalem. Hallelujah!

Adventure Challenge: Psalm 116.

Explorer Challenge: Read Exodus 29: 38-40 to learn what is probably meant by *the cup of salvation* (v. 13) or Leviticus 7:11-18 and 22:17-33 to learn what is mean by *the sacrifice of thanksgiving*.

DAY THREE: 1 Peter 1:17-23

The imagery of exile is used to help the readers of this letter understand that they are strangers in a strange land. Christians no longer belong to this age. Through the death of Christ we belong to God, so that our focus, faith, and hope are no longer on such things as silver or gold.

¹⁷If you invoke as Father the one who judges all people impartially according to their deeds, live in reverent fear during the time of your exile. ¹⁸You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold, ¹⁹but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without defect or blemish. ²⁰He was destined before the foundation of the world, but was revealed at the end of the ages for your sake. ²¹Through him you have come to trust in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are set on God. ²²Now that you have purified your souls by your obedience to the truth so that you have genuine mutual love, love one another deeply from the heart. ²³You have been born anew, not of perishable but of imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God.

Adventure Challenge: 1 Peter 1.

Explorer Challenge: Read this passage slowly, identifying the many metaphors or figurative words that are essential to its meaning; how much of the core message being expressed through metaphors?

DAY FOUR: Luke 24:13-35

The colorful story of Jesus' appearance to two disciples on the road to Emmaus answers the question of how Jesus is to be recognized among us. Here, he is revealed through the scriptures and in the breaking of bread.

¹³Now on that same day two [disciples] were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁴and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, ¹⁶but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?" ¹⁹He asked them, "What things?" They replied, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, ²⁰and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. ²¹But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. ²²Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, ²³and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. ²⁴Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him." ²⁵Then he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! ²⁶Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" ²⁷Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures. ²⁸As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. ²⁹But they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over." So he went in to stay with them. ³⁰When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. ³¹Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. ³²They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?" ³³That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. ³⁴They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!" ³⁵Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Adventure Challenge: Luke 24.

Explorer Challenge: *Option A:* Research Emmaus. (The Wikipedia article is interesting.)

Option B: Research Cleopas.

Option C: The expression *our hearts burned within us* is not in common use today; can you think of a more contemporary expression (s) that might describe what these two disciples experienced?

DAY FIVE:

PRAYER OF THE DAY

O God, your Son makes himself known to all his disciples in the breaking of bread. Open the eyes of our faith, that we may see him in his redeeming work, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Our hearts burn within us while you open to us the scriptures. (*Luke 24:32*)

Adventure Challenge: *Option A:* Consider how your eyes of faith are able to see Jesus' redeeming work.

Option B: Reflect on and give thanks for a time when your spiritual heart burned within you.