

Bible Challenge May 14 - 20, 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 7:55-60

Stephen was one of the seven men chosen by the apostles to serve tables so that the apostles could be free to serve the word (Acts 6:1-6). Stephen does more than distribute food, however. For his preaching of God's word, he becomes the first martyr of the faith.

⁵⁵Filled with the Holy Spirit, [Stephen] gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. ⁵⁶"Look," he said, "I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!" ⁵⁷But they covered their ears, and with a loud shout all rushed together against him. ⁵⁸Then they dragged him out of the city and began to stone him; and the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. ⁵⁹While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." ⁶⁰Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he died.

Adventure Challenge: Acts 6:3 - 8:1 (the whole Stephen story).

Explorer Challenge: *Option A:* Read Leviticus 24:10-23 to learn about the Mosaic tradition of stoning outside the city gates.

Option B: Research Saint Stephen.

DAY TWO: Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16

In the midst of trouble, surrounded by oppression, the psalmist surrenders utterly to the Lord for security.

¹In you, O LORD, have I taken refuge; let me never be put to shame;
deliver me in your righteousness.

²Incline your ear to me;
make haste to deliver me.

³Be my strong rock, a castle to keep me safe,
for you are my crag and my stronghold;
for the sake of your name, lead me and guide me.

⁴Take me out of the net that they have secretly set for me,
for you are my tower of strength.

⁵Into your hands I commend my spirit,
for you have redeemed me, O LORD, God of truth.

¹⁵My times are in your hand;
rescue me from the hand of my enemies,
and from those who persecute me.

¹⁶Let your face shine upon your servant;
save me in your steadfast love.

Adventure Challenge: Psalm 31.

Explorer Challenge: In verse 15, the psalmist asks to be rescued from *enemies*; read through the whole psalm to identify what enemies the psalmist faces. What enemies do you fear?

DAY THREE: 1 Peter 2:2-10

Christ is the cornerstone of God's saving work and the foundation of our lives. We are God's chosen, holy people who continuously celebrate and declare the mercy of God we experience through Jesus Christ.

²Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation — ³if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good. ⁴Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and

precious in God's sight, and ⁵like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.⁶For it stands in scripture: "See, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame." ⁷To you then who believe, he is precious; but for those who do not believe, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the very head of the corner," ⁸and "A stone that makes them stumble, and a rock that makes them fall." They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. ⁹But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. ¹⁰Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Adventure Challenge: 1 Peter 2.

Explorer Challenge: *Option A:* Read the sources for the scriptural quotations in verses 6-8: Isaiah 28:14-19; Psalm 118:20 - 25; and Isaiah 8:11-15. How do these passages relate to the discussion on 1 Peter 2?

Option B: Research *cornerstone* (Wikipedia has a good article.).

DAY FOUR: John 14:1-14

On the night that he is to be arrested, Jesus shares final words with his disciples. As the one through whom God is known, he promises to go before them and act on their behalf.

[Jesus said to the disciples:] ¹"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. ²In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. ⁴And you know the way to the place where I am going." ⁵Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" ⁶Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him." ⁸Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied." ⁹Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? ¹⁰Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. ¹¹Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. ¹²Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. ¹³I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it."

Adventure Challenge: John 14.

Explorer Challenge: *Option A:* Contrast John 13:36-38 with John 14:1-6 (specifically 13:36 with 14:4).

Option B: Research Saint Thomas.

DAY FIVE:

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Almighty God, your Son Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. Give us grace to love one another, to following the way of his commandments, and to share his risen life with all the world, for he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. (*John 14:6*)

Explorer and Adventure Challenge: *Option A:* Consider whether *way*, *truth*, and *life* point to three different aspects of Jesus, or are different words referring to one idea. (Notice the second sentence of Prayer of the Day.)

Option B: Consider what is meant by *grow into salvation* (a phrase from the Day Three reading).