

## Bible Challenge August 21-27, 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 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

*Remember the sabbath day. Call the sabbath a delight. This is the Lord's day, and the Lord will do for us what the Lord does: feed us, forgive us, help and heal us. Rejoice at all the wonderful things God is doing.*

### DAY ONE: Isaiah 58:9b-14

*The Lord promises those who have returned from exile that where justice and mercy prevail, the ruins will be rebuilt and light will rise in the darkness. It is a day for new beginnings.*

**Adventure Challenge:** Isaiah 58.

**Explorer Challenge:** Research “keeping the sabbath” or “Martin Luther on keeping the sabbath” to learn about modern understandings of the third commandment. Note what Luther says and doesn't say about this commandment in the small catechism?

### DAY TWO: Psalm 103:1-8

*A praise hymn that celebrates God's inexhaustible love for the sick and oppressed.*

**Adventure Challenge:** Psalm 103

**Explorer Challenge:** *Option A:* Study how Psalm 103 uses contrasts and absolutes (the word *all*) to establish the extent and power of God's love, despite (or in response to) human frailty and sin.

*Option B:* *Bless* and *blessed* are key words in the Psalms and in the Bible. With a dictionary and concordance, explore what these words mean and how they are used. How would you explain to a non-believer the meaning of the phrase “all that is within me, bless his holy name”?

### DAY THREE: Hebrews 12:18-29

*Using images of Moses from the Old Testament, the writer presents a striking vision of the new covenant of God made possible in Christ. There is no longer fear; only awe in the new promise in Christ into which we are invited.*

**Adventure Challenge:** Hebrews 12

**Explorer Challenge:** *Option A:* The image of God as a consuming fire is likely an additional reference to Moses, specifically his warning in Deuteronomy 4:24. Read Deuteronomy 4, and compare how Moses' warning relates to the message of Hebrews 12.

*Option B:* Read the opening of Chapter 13 to learn what specific actions can be considered “an acceptable worship,” that Hebrews 12:28 says we should offer.

### DAY FOUR: Luke 13:10-17

*Jesus heals a woman on the Sabbath, offering her a new beginning for her life. When challenged by a narrow reading of the Sabbath command, Jesus responds by expanding "Sabbath work" to include setting people free from bondage.*

**Adventure Challenge:** Luke 13.

**Explorer Challenge:** *Option A:* Evaluate how Jesus' actions and teaching conform to the standards for true worship presented in Isaiah 58 (the reading for Day One).

*Option B.* Research *Sabbath laws* to learn about their detail and complexity in traditional Jewish analysis.

### DAY FIVE:

### PRAYER OF THE DAY

O God, mighty and immortal, you know that as fragile creatures surrounded by great dangers, we cannot by ourselves stand upright. Give us strength of mind and body, so that even when we suffer because of human sin, we may rise victorious through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

### **GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

The crowd was rejoicing at the wonderful things that Jesus was doing. (*Luke 13:17*)

**Explorer Challenge:** Write a short explanation of how you understand and apply the third commandment (“remember the Sabbath) in our twenty-first century, multicultural society.