

Bible Challenge August 28 – September 3, 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

Invited and inviting—that is the nature of the church. By God's grace in holy baptism we have a place at the banquet table of the Lord. When, by the power of that same Spirit, humility and mutual love continue among us, the church can be more inviting still.

DAY ONE: Proverbs 25:6-7

The book of Proverbs is part of a collection of writings known as wisdom literature. Wisdom literature gave directions to Israel's leaders and people for the conduct of daily life. Today's reading is about humility.

⁶Do not put yourself forward in the king's presence
or stand in the place of the great;
⁷for it is better to be told, "Come up here,"
than to be put lower in the presence of a noble.

Adventure Challenge: Proverbs 25.

Explorer Challenge: *Option A:* Use a concordance to find other Bible passages on humility.

Option B: This passage is about “saving face” or “losing face”; research how this social concept changes in different cultures. Is the psalmists’ advice something a parent today would give to his son or daughter?

DAY TWO: Psalm 112

The righteous are merciful and full of compassion; ... their righteousness stands fast forever.

¹Hallelujah! Happy are they who fear the LORD
and have great delight in God's commandments!
²Their descendants will be mighty in the land;
the generation of the upright will be blessed.
³Wealth and riches will be in their house,
and their righteousness will last forever.
⁴Light shines in the darkness for the upright;
the righteous are merciful and full of compassion.
⁵It is good for them to be generous in lending
and to manage their affairs with justice.
⁶For they will never be shaken;
the righteous will be kept in everlasting remembrance.
⁷They will not be afraid of any evil rumors;
their heart is steadfast, trusting in the LORD.
⁸Their heart is established and will not shrink,
until they see their desire upon their enemies.
⁹They have given freely to the poor, and their righteousness stands fast forever;
they will hold up their head with honor.
¹⁰The wicked will see it and be angry;
they will gnash their teeth and pine away;
the desires of the wicked will perish.

Adventure Challenge: Psalm 112.

Explorer Challenge: Research the word *righteousness*. Do the examples of righteousness in the psalm fit the definitions that you have found, or has the psalmist shifted the focus?

DAY THREE: Hebrews 13:1-8, 15-16

The conclusion of the letter to the Hebrews contains suggestions for the conduct of a holy life, all of which are shaped by God's love toward us in Jesus Christ.

¹Let mutual love continue. ²Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it. ³Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them; those who are being tortured, as though you yourselves were being tortured. ⁴Let marriage be held in honor by all, and let the marriage bed be kept undefiled; for God will judge fornicators and adulterers. ⁵Keep your lives free from the love of money, and be content with what you have; for he has said, "I will never leave you or forsake you." ⁶So we can say with confidence,

"The Lord is my helper;
I will not be afraid.

What can anyone do to me?"

⁷Remember your leaders, those who spoke the word of God to you; consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. ⁸Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. ¹⁵Through him, then, let us continually offer a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that confess his name. ¹⁶Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

Adventure Challenge: Hebrews 13.

Explorer Challenge: Compare the advice here for "living forward" with the summary of where they had been given in Hebrews 10:33-36. What practical advice might you give to young Christians for living forward, given the challenges of today's world?

DAY FOUR: Luke 14:1, 7-14

Jesus observes guests jockeying for position at the table. He uses the opportunity to teach his hearers to choose humility rather than self-exaltation. Jesus also makes an appeal for hosts to mimic God's gracious hospitality to the poor and the broken.

¹On one occasion when Jesus was going to the house of a leader of the Pharisees to eat a meal on the sabbath, they were watching him closely. ⁷When he noticed how the guests chose the places of honor, he told them a parable. ⁸"When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet, do not sit down at the place of honor, in case someone more distinguished than you has been invited by your host; ⁹and the host who invited both of you may come and say to you, 'Give this person your place,' and then in disgrace you would start to take the lowest place. ¹⁰But when you are invited, go and sit down at the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he may say to you, 'Friend, move up higher'; then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at the table with you. ¹¹For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

¹²He said also to the one who had invited him, "When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. ¹³But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. ¹⁴And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

Adventure Challenge: Luke 14.

Explorer Challenge: *Option A:* Re-read Luke 14: 1-24, focusing on the fact that the events and commentary take place during a meal "in the house of **one of the leaders** of the Pharisees."

Option B: Use a concordance or Bible commentary to research the frequency and importance of *humility* in Biblical teaching.

Option C. Today, we make a distinction between "true humility" and "false humility"; do these stories support that distinction? How would you explain the difference?

DAY FIVE:

PRAYER OF THE DAY

O God, you resist those who are proud and give grace to those who are humble. Give us the humility of your Son, that we may embody the generosity of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart. (*Matt. 11:29*)

Explorer Challenge: Research the meaning of *pride*, which is one of the seven deadly sins, and is generally identified as the opposite of *humility*. If we follow the advice of Hebrews and take responsibility for how we live, isn't some self-pride necessary?