

## Bible Challenge October 9-15, 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

*It's a miracle! Multiple miracles! The waters of holy baptism have healed us. The body and blood of Jesus in holy communion have made us clean. We have died with Christ and been raised with him. For all this we have returned to offer thanks. From this place we are sent on our way rejoicing to share the good news.*

### DAY ONE: 2 Kings 5:1-16, 19a

*Naaman, a Syrian general, suffers from leprosy. In this passage Elisha miraculously cures his illness, but only after Naaman realizes, with the help of his servants, that he also needs healing for his pride. This foreign general then acknowledges the sovereignty of the God of Israel.*

<sup>1</sup>Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Aram, was a great man and in high favor with his master, because by him the LORD had given victory to Aram. The man, though a mighty warrior, suffered from leprosy. <sup>2</sup>Now the Arameans on one of their raids had taken a young girl captive from the land of Israel, and she served Naaman's wife. <sup>3</sup>She said to her mistress, "If only my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy." <sup>4</sup>So Naaman went in and told his lord just what the girl from the land of Israel had said. <sup>5</sup>And the king of Aram said, 'Go then, and I will send along a letter to the king of Israel.'

He went, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten sets of garments. <sup>6</sup>He brought the letter to the king of Israel, which read, 'When this letter reaches you, know that I have sent to you my servant Naaman, that you may cure him of his leprosy.'

<sup>7</sup>When the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes and said, "Am I God, to give death or life, that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his leprosy? Just look and see how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me."

<sup>8</sup>But when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, he sent a message to the king, "Why have you torn your clothes? Let him come to me, that he may learn that there is a prophet in Israel." <sup>9</sup>So Naaman came with his horses and chariots, and halted at the entrance of Elisha's house. <sup>10</sup>Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go, wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored and you shall be clean." <sup>11</sup>But Naaman became angry and went away, saying, "I thought that for me he would surely come out, and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, and would wave his hand over the spot, and cure the leprosy! <sup>12</sup>Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them, and be clean?" He turned and went away in a rage. <sup>13</sup>But his servants approached and said to him, "Father, if the prophet had commanded you to do something difficult, would you not have done it? How much more, when all he said to you was, 'Wash, and be clean'?" <sup>14</sup>So he went down and immersed himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God; his flesh was restored like the flesh of a young boy, and he was clean.

<sup>15</sup>Then he returned to the man of God, he and all his company; he came and stood before him and said, "Now I know that there is no God in all the earth except in Israel; please accept a present from your servant." <sup>16</sup>But he said, 'As the LORD lives, whom I serve, I will accept nothing!' He urged him to accept, but he refused.

<sup>19</sup>He said to him, 'Go in peace.'

**Adventure Challenge:** 2 Kings 5.

**Explorer Challenge:** *Option A.* Research Elisha, one of the major prophets of Israel.

*Option B.* Why was the King of Israel suspicious of the King of Aram? Read 1 Kings 20 or 22 to learn a little about the recent relations between these two kingdoms.

*Option C.* Research to learn the approximate value of "ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold,

and ten sets of garments.”

*Option D.* Research the meaning(s) of *leprosy* as it is used in the Bible. Do we know specifically what disease Naaman suffered from?)

*Option E.* What social and religious significance did leprosy have for Jews? Read Leviticus 13:46 and Numbers 5:2-3 to learn Jewish law regarding leprosy.

## **DAY TWO: Psalm 111**

*I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart. (Ps. 111:1)*

<sup>1</sup>Hallelujah! I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart,  
in the assembly of the upright, in the congregation.

<sup>2</sup>Great are your works, O LORD,  
pondered by all who delight in them.

<sup>3</sup>Majesty and splendor mark your deeds,  
and your righteousness endures forever.

<sup>4</sup>You cause your wonders to be remembered;  
you are gracious and full of compassion.

<sup>5</sup>You give food to those who fear you,  
remembering forever your covenant.

<sup>6</sup>You have shown your people the power of your works  
in giving them the lands of the nations.

<sup>7</sup>The works of your hands are faithfulness and justice;  
all of your precepts are sure.

<sup>8</sup>They stand fast forever and ever,  
because they are done in truth and equity.

<sup>9</sup>You sent redemption to your people  
and commanded your covenant forever;  
holy and awesome is your name.

<sup>10</sup>The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom;  
all who practice this have a good understanding.  
God's praise endures forever.

### **Adventure Challenge:** Psalm 111

**Explorer Challenge:** Research/explore the phrase *fear of the Lord*. (Normally we do not associate *fear* with *wisdom*; in fact, fear seems the opposite of wisdom. Also, fear is generally not something that we suggest person *practice* in order to achieve *understanding*.)

## **DAY THREE: 2 Kings 5: 19c-27**

But when Naaman had gone from him a short distance, <sup>20</sup>Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, thought, ‘My master has let that Aramean Naaman off too lightly by not accepting from him what he offered. As the LORD lives, I will run after him and get something out of him.’ <sup>21</sup>So Gehazi went after Naaman. When Naaman saw someone running after him, he jumped down from the chariot to meet him and said, ‘Is everything all right?’ <sup>22</sup>He replied, ‘Yes, but my master has sent me to say, “Two members of a company of prophets\* have just come to me from the hill country of Ephraim; please give them a talent of silver and two changes of clothing.”’ <sup>23</sup>Naaman said, ‘Please accept two talents.’ He urged him, and tied up two talents of silver in two bags, with two changes of clothing, and gave them to two of his servants, who carried them in front of Gehazi. <sup>24</sup>When he came to the citadel, he took the bags\* from them, and stored them inside; he dismissed the men, and they left.

<sup>25</sup> He went in and stood before his master; and Elisha said to him, ‘Where have you been, Gehazi?’ He answered, ‘Your servant has not gone anywhere at all.’ <sup>26</sup>But he said to him, ‘Did I not go with you in spirit when someone left his chariot to meet you? Is this a time to accept money and to accept clothing, olive orchards and vineyards, sheep and oxen, and male and female slaves?’ <sup>27</sup>Therefore the leprosy\* of Naaman

shall cling to you, and to your descendants for ever.’ So he left his presence leprous, \* as white as snow.

**Adventure Challenge:** 2 Kings 4 (to learn a little background on Elisha).

**Explorer Challenge:** Choose one of the Explorer options you did not do for Day One.

#### **DAY FOUR: Luke 17:11-19**

*Jesus' mission includes making the unclean clean again. Unexpectedly, a cleansed Samaritan leper becomes a model for those who would praise and worship God and give thanks for God's mercy.*

<sup>11</sup>On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee. <sup>12</sup>As he entered a village, ten lepers approached him. Keeping their distance, <sup>13</sup>they called out, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" <sup>14</sup>When he saw them, he said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were made clean. <sup>15</sup>Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice. <sup>16</sup>He prostrated himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan. <sup>17</sup>Then Jesus asked, "Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they?" <sup>18</sup>Was none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" <sup>19</sup>Then he said to him, "Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well."

**Adventure Challenge:** Luke 17.

**Explorer Challenge:** *Option A.* If you have not already done so, read Leviticus 13:46 and Numbers 5:2-3 to learn Jewish law regarding leprosy.

*Option B.* Read and compare this story with several other healing stories in Luke; for example: 9:37-43; 13:10-17; 14:1-6; and 18:35-43.

#### **DAY FIVE:**

##### **PRAYER OF THE DAY**

Almighty and most merciful God, your bountiful goodness fills all creation. Keep us safe from all that may hurt us, that, whole and well in body and spirit, we may with grateful hearts accomplish all that you would have us do, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

##### **GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. (*1 Thess. 5:18*)

**Explorer Challenge:** *Option A.* In the Prayer of the Day we ask that we may be “whole and well in body and spirit;” what specifically are you asking God to do so that you can be whole and well?

*Option B.* Does the instruction from Thessalonians to “give thanks in all circumstances” apply when we are sick?