

## Bible Challenge October 16 – 22, 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

*Pray always. Do not lose heart. This is the encouragement of the Christ of the gospel today. Persistence in our every encounter with the divine will be blessed. Wrestle with the word. Remember your baptism again and again. Come regularly to Christ's table. Persistence in our every encounter with the divine will be blessed.*

### DAY ONE: Genesis 32:22-31

*Returning to the home he had fled many years before after stealing his brother's birthright and his father's blessing, Jacob wrestles all night long with a divine adversary who ultimately blesses him and changes his name to "Israel," a name that means "he wrestles with God."*

<sup>22</sup>The same night [Jacob] got up and took his two wives, his two maids, and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. <sup>23</sup>He took them and sent them across the stream, and likewise everything that he had. <sup>24</sup>Jacob was left alone; and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. <sup>25</sup>When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he struck him on the hip socket; and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. <sup>26</sup>Then he said, "Let me go, for the day is breaking." But Jacob said, "I will not let you go, unless you bless me." <sup>27</sup>So he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." <sup>28</sup>Then the man said, "You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with humans, and have prevailed." <sup>29</sup>Then Jacob asked him, "Please tell me your name." But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" And there he blessed him. <sup>30</sup>So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved." <sup>31</sup>The sun rose upon him as he passed Penuel, limping because of his hip.

**Adventure Challenge:** Genesis 32 – 33:17.

**Explorer Challenge:** *Option A:* Using a standard reference, read about the life and importance of Jacob (Israel), a key figure of Jewish history.

*Option B:* Using a Bible atlas or other references, locate Jabbok, Peniel and Penuel.

*Option C:* Read about "seeing the face of God" in Exodus 33:17-23 and Isaiah 6:1-5.

### DAY TWO: Psalm 121

*Seeing that challenges (the hills) are ahead, the psalmist takes encouragement in the realization that the LORD, who never sleeps, is his keeper.*

- <sup>1</sup>I lift up my eyes to the hills;  
from where is my help to come?  
<sup>2</sup>My help comes from the LORD,  
the maker of heaven and earth.  
<sup>3</sup>The LORD will not let your foot be moved  
nor will the one who watches over you fall asleep.  
<sup>4</sup>Behold, the keeper of Israel  
will neither slumber nor sleep;  
<sup>5</sup>the LORD watches over you;  
the LORD is your shade at your right hand;  
<sup>6</sup>the sun will not strike you by day,  
nor the moon by night.  
<sup>7</sup>The LORD will preserve you from all evil  
and will keep your life.  
<sup>8</sup>The LORD will watch over your going out and your coming in,

from this time forth forevermore.

**Adventure Challenge:** Psalm 121. (Compare this psalm with Psalm 123, another “song of ascents.”)

**Explorer Challenge:** *Option A.* This psalm is called “a song of Ascents.” Research this phrase to learn about the scholarly debate over what this label might mean.

*Option B.* Consider the metaphor “He will not let your foot be moved”; what might it mean in a “song of ascents” (which implies movement)? How does that meaning relate to the statement in v. 8 about “your going out and your coming in,” where your foot would be moving?

### **DAY THREE: 2 Timothy 3:14—4:5**

*Paul continues his instruction of Timothy, his younger colleague in ministry, by emphasizing the importance of faithful teaching despite opposition.*

<sup>14</sup>But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it, <sup>15</sup>and how from childhood you have known the sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. <sup>16</sup>All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup>so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.

<sup>4:1</sup>In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I solemnly urge you: <sup>2</sup>proclaim the message; be persistent whether the time is favorable or unfavorable; convince, rebuke, and encourage, with the utmost patience in teaching. <sup>3</sup>For the time is coming when people will not put up with sound doctrine, but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own desires, <sup>4</sup>and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander away to myths. <sup>5</sup>As for you, always be sober, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, carry out your ministry fully.

**Adventure Challenge:** 2 Timothy 3-4:5.

**Explorer Challenge:** Read all of 2 Timothy, one of the shorter pastoral epistles.

### **DAY FOUR: Luke 18:1-8**

*Jesus tells a parable of a hateful judge who is worn down by a widow's pleas. Jesus is calling God's people to cry out for justice and deliverance. For if an unethical judge will ultimately grant the plea of a persistent widow, how much more will God respond to those who call.*

<sup>1</sup>Then Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart. <sup>2</sup>He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people. <sup>3</sup>In that city there was a widow who kept coming to him and saying, 'Grant me justice against my opponent.' <sup>4</sup>For a while he refused; but later he said to himself, 'Though I have no fear of God and no respect for anyone, <sup>5</sup>yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will grant her justice, so that she may not wear me out by continually coming.'" <sup>6</sup>And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. <sup>7</sup>And will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long in helping them? <sup>8</sup>I tell you, he will quickly grant justice to them. And yet, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

**Adventure Challenge:** Luke 18.

**Explorer Challenge:** Using a dictionary and other reference works, research the meaning(s) of the word *justice*. Example: The Wikipedia article on justice begins: “Understandings of justice differ in every culture.”

### **DAY FIVE:**

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

O Lord God, tireless guardian of your people, you are always ready to hear our cries. Teach us to rely day and night on your care. Inspire us to seek your enduring justice for all this suffering world, through Jesus

Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

### **GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

The word of God is living and active, able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. (*Heb. 4:12*)

**Adventure Challenge:** Reflect on the phrase “the word of God is living and active.” What possible meanings are there for “the word of God” and how are words “living and active”?