

**Bible Challenge May 1-7, 2016**  
**FEAST OF ST. PHILIP AND ST. JAMES & SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER**

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 are 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**

*The readings for the sixth Sunday of Easter record the power of the Holy Spirit to enlighten the whole world. Paul is guided to bring the gospel from Asia Minor (Turkey) into Europe. The psalmist envisions a celebration of God's justice that includes all peoples. The risen Lord Jesus promises "the Advocate" will bring comfort and peace at a time of confusion and separation.*

**DAY 1: Acts 16:9-15**

*A vision compels Paul to move his ministry into Greece. There he meets Lydia, an important person in the business community, whose heart has been opened by God to receive the gospel. Her conversion and baptism provide the impetus for the founding of the church at Philippi.*

<sup>9</sup>During the night Paul had a vision: there stood a man of Macedonia pleading with him and saying, 'Come over to Macedonia and help us.' <sup>10</sup>When he had seen the vision, we set sail to Philippi. We remained in this city for some days. <sup>13</sup>On the sabbath day we went outside the gate by the river, where we supposed there was a place of prayer; and we sat down and spoke to the women who had gathered there. <sup>14</sup>A certain woman named Lydia, a worshipper of God, was listening to us; she was from the city of Thyatira and a dealer in purple cloth. The Lord opened her heart to listen eagerly to what was said by Paul. <sup>15</sup>When she and her household were baptized, she urged us, saying, 'If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come and stay at my home.' And she prevailed upon us.

**Adventure Challenge:** Acts 16

**Explorer Challenge:** *Option A.* Use a Bible atlas or other references to trace Paul's journey, through which the Gospel enters into Europe. Where is Thyatira?

*Option B:* Research "Lydia of Thyatira" and "Thyrian purple cloth" to learn more about the background of this story.

**DAY 2: Psalm 67)**

*One of the shortest psalm, this benediction prayer celebrates a time of God's apparent favor.*

- <sup>1</sup>May God be merciful to us and bless us;  
    may the light of God's face shine upon us.
- <sup>2</sup>**Let your way be known upon earth,  
    your saving health among all nations.**
- <sup>3</sup>Let the peoples praise you, O God;  
    let all the peoples praise you.
- <sup>4</sup>**Let the nations be glad and sing for joy,  
    for you judge the peoples with equity  
    and guide all the nations on earth.**
- <sup>5</sup>Let the peoples praise you, O God;  
    let all the peoples praise you.
- <sup>6</sup>**The earth has brought forth its increase;  
    God, our own God, has blessed us.**
- <sup>7</sup>May God give us blessing,  
    and may all the ends of the earth stand in awe.

**Adventure Challenge:** Psalm 67.

**Explorer Challenge:** Compare Psalm 67 with Psalm 66, another praise psalm but written from a different context.

### **DAY 3: 2 Corinthians 4:1-6**

*Paul assures the Corinthians that, despite darkness in this world which might cause us to lose heart, the light of the Gospel of Jesus reveals the glory of God.*

Therefore, since it is by God's mercy that we are engaged in this ministry, we do not lose heart. <sup>2</sup>We have renounced the shameful things that one hides; we refuse to practise cunning or to falsify God's word; but by the open statement of the truth we commend ourselves to the conscience of everyone in the sight of God. <sup>3</sup>And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. <sup>4</sup>In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. <sup>5</sup>For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake. <sup>6</sup>For it is the God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness', who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

**Adventure Challenge:** 2 Corinthians 4 – 5:10.

**Explorer Challenge:** In this passages Paul seems to be defending himself. To learn about the accusations against Paul, read an introduction to Corinthians, study 2 Corinthians 11, or research the church at Corinth.

### **DAY 4: John 14:8-14, 23-29**

*As Jesus talks of returning to the Father, he promises to send the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, who will teach Jesus' followers and remind them of all that Jesus taught. Even more, those in whom God makes a home will experience a peace that overcomes fear.*

<sup>8</sup>Philip said to him, 'Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.' <sup>9</sup>Jesus 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"? <sup>10</sup>Do 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. <sup>11</sup>Believe 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. <sup>12</sup>Very 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. <sup>13</sup>I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. <sup>14</sup>If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it. 'Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. <sup>24</sup>Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; and the word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me. <sup>25</sup>'I have said these things to you while I am still with you. <sup>26</sup>But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. <sup>27</sup>Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid. <sup>28</sup>You heard me say to you, "I am going away, and I am coming to you." If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I. <sup>29</sup>And now I have told you this before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe.

**Adventure Challenge:** John 14.

**Explorer Challenge:** *Option A.* Research Philip the Apostle to find what is known about him.

*Option B.* Starting with John 13:33, trace the thread of this conversation, which starts with Jesus' announcement to the disciples (whom he calls "little children") that he is going away. Confused by what this might mean, four different disciples ask for clarification. Note the emphasis on words like *believe*, *know*, *love*, and *reveal*. This part of the conversation ends when Jesus says, "Rise, let us be on our way."

**DAY 5:****FIRST PRAYER OF THE DAY**

Almighty God, you gave to your apostles Philip and James grace and strength to bear witness to your Son. Grant that we, remembering their victory of faith, may glorify in life and death the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

**SECOND PRAYER OF THE DAY**

Bountiful God, you gather your people into your realm, and you promise us food from your tree of life. Nourish us with your word, that empowered by your Spirit we may love one another and the world you have made, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. (*John 14:23*)