

## Bible Challenge May 15 - 21, 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 presented Sunday morning (included below). 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

*Pentecost is a day of promises fulfilled. The promised Spirit of God is poured out. The baptized have become "children of God" and "joint heirs with Christ." By the power of the Spirit we have seen the face of the Father in his only begotten Son and been saved by him. Bless the Lord, O my soul.*

### DAY ONE: Genesis 11:1-9

*The builders of the tower of Babel try to make a name for themselves by building their tower to the heavens. God scatters them, confusing their language so that they cannot understand one another. The miracle at Pentecost reverses this story, drawing many different peoples together into the new people of God.*

<sup>1</sup>Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. <sup>2</sup>And as they migrated from the east, they came upon a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. <sup>3</sup>And they said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly." And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar. <sup>4</sup>Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves; otherwise we shall be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." <sup>5</sup>The LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which mortals had built. <sup>6</sup>And the LORD said, "Look, they are one people, and they have all one language; and this is only the beginning of what they will do; nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. <sup>7</sup>Come, let us go down, and confuse their language there, so that they will not understand one another's speech." <sup>8</sup>So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. <sup>9</sup>Therefore it was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.

**Adventure Challenge:** Genesis 11.

**Explorer Challenge:** Research the "Tower of Babel" to learn some of its historical social, political, religious, and literary richness, as well as its use in later literature and art.

### DAY TWO: Psalm 104:24-34, 35b

*Psalm 104 is a celebration of God as creator, with many similarities to the creation story in Genesis 1.*

<sup>24</sup>How manifold are your works, O LORD!

In wisdom you have made them all;  
the earth is full of your creatures.

<sup>25</sup>Yonder is the sea, great and wide,  
with its swarms too many to number,  
living things both small and great.

<sup>26</sup>There go the ships to and fro,  
and Leviathan, which you made for the sport of it.

<sup>27</sup>All of them look to you  
to give them their food in due season.

<sup>28</sup>You give it to them; they gather it;  
you open your hand, and they are filled with good things.

<sup>29</sup>When you hide your face, they are terrified;  
when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust.

<sup>30</sup>You send forth your Spirit, and they are created;  
and so you renew the face of the earth.

<sup>31</sup>May the glory of the LORD endure forever;  
O LORD, rejoice in all your works.  
<sup>32</sup>You look at the earth and it trembles;  
you touch the mountains and they smoke.  
<sup>33</sup>I will sing to the LORD as long as I live;  
I will praise my God while I have my being.  
<sup>34</sup>May these words of mine please God.  
I will rejoice in the LORD.  
<sup>35</sup>Bless the LORD, O my soul.  
Hallelujah!

**Adventure Challenge:** Psalm 104.

**Explorer Challenge:** *Option A.* Research *Leviathan*.

*Option B.* Note how many times Psalm 104 pictures God with human attributes (hands, clothing, a face, etc.); what kind of a human is pictured? Are there images of God that are not human (anthropomorphic)?

### **DAY THREE: Acts 2:1-21**

*Before Jesus ascended into heaven, he told his disciples they would be filled with the Holy Spirit. Now, surrounded by signs of fire, wind, and a variety of languages in their midst, the people were amazed and astonished at Jesus' promise coming true.*

<sup>1</sup>When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. <sup>2</sup>And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. <sup>3</sup>Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. <sup>4</sup>All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

<sup>5</sup>Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. <sup>6</sup>And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. <sup>7</sup>Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?" <sup>8</sup>And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? <sup>9</sup>Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, <sup>10</sup>Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, <sup>11</sup>Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power." <sup>12</sup>All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" <sup>13</sup>But others sneered and said, "They are filled with new wine."

<sup>14</sup>But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, "Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. <sup>15</sup>Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. <sup>16</sup>No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

<sup>17</sup>In the last days it will be, God declares,  
that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,  
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,  
and your young men shall see visions,  
and your old men shall dream dreams.

<sup>18</sup>Even upon my slaves, both men and women,  
in those days I will pour out my Spirit;  
and they shall prophesy.

<sup>19</sup>And I will show portents in the heaven above  
and signs on the earth below,  
blood, and fire, and smoky mist.

<sup>20</sup>The sun shall be turned to darkness  
and the moon to blood,

before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day.

<sup>21</sup>Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'

**Adventure Challenge:** Acts 2.

**Explorer Challenge:** *Option A.* Research the Jewish festival of Pentecost.

*Option B.* Locate on a map all the places identified in verses 8-11.

*Option C.* Explore the relation between the story of Babel and the story of Pentecost.

#### **DAY FOUR: John 14:8-17 [25-27]**

*Though the disciples struggle with Jesus' nature and identity, they receive the promise that they too will be identified with God and God's mission. Though he must leave them now, Jesus promises the coming of the Advocate whom God will send to comfort and enlighten them.*

<sup>8</sup>Philip said to [Jesus,] "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.

<sup>15</sup>If you love me, you will keep my commandments. <sup>16</sup>And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. <sup>17</sup>This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

[<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.]

**Adventure Challenge:** John 14.

**Explorer Challenge:** Research *paraclete*, the Greek word translated "advocate."

#### **DAY FIVE:**

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

God our creator, the resurrection of your Son offers life to all the peoples of earth. By your Holy Spirit, kindle in us the fire of your love, empowering our lives for service and our tongues for praise, 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**

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful, and kindle in us the fire of your love.

**Explorer Challenge:** Research "Holy Spirit" to see what you find.