

EVERY DAY WITH JESUS (December 7-13)

Savor a segment of the gospel each day so that you may...

“...grow in the grace and knowledge of our LORD and Savior Jesus Christ.” “II Peter 3:18)

MONDAY, December 7 – Please read: John 1:35-42 **Questions:** 1. What common activity do John the Baptist and Andrew share? 2. Why would they do this? 3. Is there a way you and I can imitate this? 4. What surprising thing happens when Andrew brings his brother to Jesus? 5. How will this be true when you share Christ too? **Possible Answers:** 1. Both John and Andrew *immediately* point people or lead people to Jesus. 2. They personally knew and believed that Jesus was the only One who could meet their own needs. They knew that everyone else too had the same needs, which only Jesus could meet. 3. Learning to know Jesus better ourselves, following Him and staying close to Him will naturally lead to wanting others to know Him. That too will help us to become increasingly ready and confident to share Him with them. 4. Jesus doesn't need Andrew to introduce Him to Peter. He already knows all about Peter. He knows more about Peter than Peter knows about himself! 5. Jesus perfectly knows everyone you know. He understands all of their needs just as He has met their greatest need. He uses us to bring people to Him so that they too can discover all their longings fulfilled in Him. **Prayer:** Dear Savior, help us to know You better and to share You more. Amen!

TUESDAY, December 8 – Please read: John 1:43-51 **Questions:** 1. What joyful excited activity took hold of Philip? 2. Who finds whom in these events? 3. What did Philip experience and what might we expect when we seek to share Jesus with others? **Possible Answers:** 1. Personally rejoicing in his own Savior, he simply has to let his friend Nathanael know too. 2. While Philip claims to have found Jesus and seems to be the one who finds Nathanael, it is actually Jesus who finds both of them. He uses Philip to find Nathanael and He uses us to find others just as He found us through others. Always and everywhere it is Jesus who does the seeking and finding. 3. Doubt, skepticism, even outright rejection are not uncommon responses people receive when they seek to share Christ with others. While we can always learn how to better approach people in respectful considerate ways, we can't control their response. The sinful human nature of all people will find common or unique ways to resist the message we share. At the same time, God's Word shared by us has the power to shatter that resistance and create acceptance. **Prayer:** Dear Jesus, thank You for honoring me with the joyful privilege and duty of sharing with others the good news about You. Help me to seize the opportunities, to respectfully share Your truth and then to prayerfully “get out of the way” leaving the results to You. Amen!

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 9 – Please Read: John 2:1-11 **Background:** Jewish wedding celebrations were often more than just one day, perhaps as long as a week. Wine, commonly diluted with water, was the standard beverage for adult Jews. For a wedding reception to run out would be a great embarrassment to the family and the couple. Jesus' creation of 120 – 150 gallons of wine was an extravagant gracious gift that provided a basic staple of life for the newly married couple for no doubt many months. Jesus' response to Mary's initiative is actually more forceful than our translation suggests: Literally, “*What is there for you and me in this matter?*” **Questions:** 1. The abuse of wine (alcohol) has caused untold heartache! What can we learn from Jesus' providing wine for the couple and their guests? 2. While we commend Mary for her loving concern for the couple's need, what does Jesus' response to her indicate? 3. What does verse 11 tell us concerning various non-Biblical sources that credit Jesus as a little boy doing miracles in Nazareth? 4. How can you and I apply what Jesus did here to our own lives and needs as well as the lives and needs of others? **Possible answers:** 1. The fact that the sinless Jesus provided wine shows that wine has a proper godly use. 2. Jesus' always perfectly respected His mother. It was a part of His perfect obedience to all the commandments. In His public ministry, His mother needed to respect Him; that is, she needed to understand that His actions and their timing would be determined by His heavenly Father, not His earthly mother. Mary got that message. She also understood an implicit promise that He would help in the right way at the right time. 3. All such accounts are lies. 4. The child's hymn verses says it “...*(He) knows my needs and well provides me...*” **Prayer:** We praise You Jesus for Your great glory! We trust You as our Savior and rely on You as our Helper. Amen!

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 10 – Please read: John 2:12-25 **Background:** Jesus cleansed the temple two times. Once at the beginning of His ministry as recorded here by John. The other recorded by Matthew, Mark, and Luke took place during “holy week”. **Questions:** 1. Jesus' “*Father's house*” had been turned into a market place. What did this indicate about their attitude toward God? Toward His presence among them? 2. When the LORD is not honored and His Word is despised, what always happens? 3. It's easy to read this and see their sins. What do you see when you honestly and carefully look at your own attitude about the place where God comes to you in Word and Sacraments? About His Presence through those means? About those “Means of Grace” themselves? 4. What miracle is the ultimate proof of Jesus' deity and therefore of His right to do what He did in this account? **Possible answers:** 1. Their relationship with God has ceased to be the most important thing in their lives. They didn't value His Presence. 2. People miss the blessings that the LORD gives through His presence in His Word. 3. Answers will vary; each of us needs to continually evaluate our attitudes and actions in this most important area of life! 4. Jesus' resurrection from the dead. He did

countless miracles but to those who refused to see His deity in those actions He finally directed them to the empty tomb.

Prayer: Lord, don't let my consideration of this event today stop with simply seeing the sins of the people who despised Your house in the days of Your Son's visit. If there are ways that I myself despise Your house and Your Presence there in Word and Sacrament, show them to me. Lead me to genuine repentance and a new appreciation that honors You and blesses me. Amen!

FRIDAY, December 11 – Please read: John 3:1-8 Background: Jesus and we meet Nicodemus in this chapter. Don't forget we see him again in John 19:39. By then he has come a long way! The religious expression "born again" is often used. Tragically most people who use it misunderstand the concept! There are not two categories of Christians – plain ones and born again ones. All believers are born again. To be born again means to have become spiritually alive through faith in Jesus. (See I Peter 1:23.) Interestingly! the word translated "again" can also mean "from above". Jesus deliberately used this word to indicate the heavenly Source of the new birth. **Questions:** 1. Can you explain why Nicodemus would wait until nightfall to approach Jesus? 2. Who alone is responsible for the new birth?! 3. Through what means is the new birth accomplished? 4. What might Jesus be teaching Nicodemus and us in verses 7,8? **Possible answers:** 1. Unlike other members of the Jewish ruling council, Nicodemus was sincerely searching for answers and interested in who Jesus was and what He would say. Yet, at this point, he was not ready for the criticism and the rejection by his peers that he would receive for his willingness to take a sincere look at and listen to Jesus. Coming to Him at night he hoped to hide his visit. 2. The Holy Spirit is the Agent of life who alone causes the new birth. "...*the Spirit gives birth to spirit*" (verse 6 and see chapter 1:13). Our salvation is totally by grace – planned by God; carried out by God; received by God's work in us. (See Ephesians 2:1-10, especially verses 8,9!!) 3. The Holy Spirit creates faith through the Word. "*Faith comes from hearing the message...*" (Romans 10:17) Here Jesus teaches us about a special connection of that Word with water, baptism. 4. There are things that God reveals which will far transcend our reason and ability to explain. They simply need to be believed. (See Isaiah 55:8,9; Psalm 131:1; Romans 11:33,34) **Prayer:** LORD, thank You for causing us to be born again! By the same Spirit, help us to grow in our knowledge of what You have revealed and in our acceptance of everything, even the many things that transcend our puny reason. AMEN!

SATURDAY, December 12 Please read: John 3:9-15 Background: "Israel's teacher" appears to have been a title of respect given to Nicodemus by the people in recognition of his gifts of understanding and ability to share what he knew. "*Moses lifted up the snake in the desert*", is a reference to Numbers 21:4ff. **Questions:** 1. With respect to understanding God – His ways and His world – what problem do even "the experts" like Nicodemus have? 2. How alone will we earthbound time trapped creatures ever understand heavenly eternal things? 3. What is the most amazing thing we will hear and understand when we listen to the One sent from heaven? **Possible answers:** 1. Man will never really know and understand God by his own natural powers of intelligence and reason. They are things revealed by God through His Spirit in the Word. They are things that can only be understood with the insight the Holy Spirit gives through the use of that Word. Elsewhere Jesus praised His Father for "...*hiding these things from the wise and learned, and revealing them to little children*" (Matthew 11:25). 2. We will understand the things of heaven and eternity only through listening to the Eternal One who has come from there, "*the Son of Man*", Jesus. 3. We will learn the astonishing truth that salvation for all sinners will be accomplished only through the crucifixion and subsequent resurrection of God's Son sent from heaven! **Prayer:** Father, thank You for sending Your Son from heaven to accomplish and make known to us Your plan to open up heaven to all sinners, including me! AMEN!

SUNDAY, December 13 – Please read: John 3:16-21 Background: Of course, all Christians from childhood know and love John 3:16. Read it aloud slowly – savor it! Ask the Holy Spirit to astound you again with the enjoyment of this amazing truth! **Questions:** 1. What makes this declaration of love so astonishingly amazing?! 2. God "...*did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world...*" – what truth is implicit in this statement? 3. Is there then no condemnation for the world? 4. In what condition do sinners love to live? 5. In what "*light*" do Christians live? 6. What will be the result of living in the "*light*"? **Possible Answers:** This true love is completely unexpected and undeserved! 2. Condemnation is what the world truly deserved. 3. As Jesus said here and His apostle would say in Romans 8, there is no condemnation for those who believe in Jesus. However, there will be condemnation for all who do not believe in Him. 4. Like spiritual vermin, sinners love to live in the darkness of deceit to hide the reality of their sin from themselves, from others, and – vainly – from God Himself. 5. Believers live in the light of truth – the truth that they are sinners whose sins have been forgiven by a gracious God thanks to the merits of Jesus Christ! 6. Living in that "*light*" will lead to lives that do not need to be hidden. Lives that are lived to God's glory for the good of others and oneself. **Prayer:** O God THANK YOU FOR LOVING ME! Enable me to live in the light of that love and to love You in return. Produce evidence of my love for You, a life lived for Your glory. AMEN!