

# LOVE GOD'S WORD & PRAYER

New Testament Challenge 2020

At Faith Baptist Fellowship, we *Love God's Word and Prayer*. Hearing a sermon at church on Sunday mornings alone isn't enough to be considered a healthy diet of God's word and prayer. We strongly believe that every growing disciple of Jesus needs to be regularly hearing from God through his word and personally speaking back to God through prayer.

**We are challenging everyone to read through the entire New Testament in 2020 – one chapter per day, five days per week.** If regular Bible reading is not yet a habit of yours, this is a great way to get started! As always, we will provide devotional thoughts and helpful prayer points on the passages. The weekend material will prepare you for the upcoming Sunday sermon as well as provide some discussion help for Faith Groups.

*We recommend you set aside at least 15-20 minutes a day for this plan and prayer. If you fall behind, just start on the current day. Try to develop the habit of reading at the same time and place. We suggest having a journal and pen for answering questions and recording your thoughts and insights. Happy Bible Reading!*

## Monday, July 13

Read Acts 26:1-32

**THINK:** Sometimes we encourage people to write out their testimony so they can share it clearly with others. We suggest this simple outline. Fill it out with *Paul's testimony*:

Prior to coming to Jesus:

How Paul came to believe in Jesus:

Since coming to Christ:

Why do you think Festus accused Paul of being out of his mind?

**PRAY:** Are you prepared to share your testimony? Ask God to help you prepare, then open doors of opportunity for you. Pray by name for loved ones and friends who need Jesus. *Pray for VBS in a Bucket going on all over the city this week!*

## Tuesday, July 14

Read Acts 27:1-44

**THINK:** Extraordinary! What a vivid, thrilling, detailed account. The ESV SB has an excellent map of the route taken, bringing the journey to life. Dr. Luke's account reveals the special way God took care of Paul and also how God spoke through Paul to the 276 others on the ship. What scene does v. 35 bring to mind? Have you ever sailed on the sea, in violent weather, with little food, ending in a shipwreck? By Dr. Luke's hand, you have now! As you reflect on this vivid episode, what encourages you as you apply it to our present circumstances?

**PRAY:** Are you praying for **VBS in a Bucket** going on in many backyards this week? Please do! Pray for young lives to be impacted by God's word and the gospel.

Thank God for his amazing grace to Paul on that sea journey, and for his amazing grace to you every single day.

## Wednesday, July 15

Read Acts 28:1-31

**THINK:** The shipwreck and now a snake! How does the Maltese opinion of Paul drastically and quickly change? (How fickle are people's opinions!) In yesterday's reading God spoke through Paul in prophetic ways; in this chapter God works wonders through his apostle. [If you have some free time today, read the fascinating history and description of Malta from Wikipedia. What an amazing place! What rich history!] The favor of God upon Paul is revealed in the treatment he received in Malta and Italy. Ponder the all-day teaching Paul gave to the Jews at Rome. What OT scriptures would he have used? Why do some believe and others not? (vv. 26-28)

**PRAY:** *Please continue to pray daily for VBS in a Bucket!* Join the Zoom prayer meeting group in praying for our Mayor, Governor, President, and other officials who are leading us in these difficult times. Pray for **Dr. Ben Jones**, Faith member, who as SD Secretary of Education is advising school district leaders state-wide in the difficult planning and adjusting related to schools reopening this fall. Pray for Faith educators of all kinds, including **Todd Holthaus**, superintendent at Hills-Beaver Creek, planning for his district. Pray for the children and teens! As God kept is mighty hand on Paul through this amazing journey, so God will keep his hand on us!

## Thursday, July 16

Read Colossians 1:1-29

**THINK:** There is a lovely richness to this passage as Paul pours out his heart for this church in Colossae. Who is the faithful minister in this passage and what was the ministry he carried out? How does this passage shape your view of the preeminence of Christ? What does this passage teach was unique about Jesus Christ? Who is the “you” of verse 21? What is the eternal destiny of this “you” group? If you wonder about the meaning of v. 24, the ESV SB has a helpful note. Nothing is lacking with regard to the atoning death of Jesus on the cross! What is the outcome Paul desires for every believer? Christ in you! Amen!

**Pray:** First, pray through Paul’s own prayer in vv. 9-14 several times. Pray this prayer for yourself, for your loved ones, for our church—for whomever God brings to mind. It’s a grand prayer! Then pray a prayer of praise to God regarding the preeminence of Jesus Christ. Use the actual words and phrases (vv. 15-20) of this remarkable chapter. Finally, ask God to grow you into maturity as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

## Friday, July 17

Read Colossians 2:1-23

**THINK:** Memorize vv. 6-7. What a remarkable summary of the believer’s journey of discipleship! It captures the concern of Paul expressed in vv. 1-5. *Would you say that you are walking with Christ, rooted and being built up, abounding in thanksgiving? Is this true of you today?* What is the danger we face (v. 8)? The section 9-15 is one of the truly beautiful pictures of our great salvation. Reflect for a few moments on each and every phrase. Chew on it! Digest it! As you reflect on vv. 16-23, what grave danger is Paul warning against? How easy it is to get diverted from Christ by “religion.”

**PRAY:** Consider your own journey as a disciple walking with Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, and then pray through verses 6-7, taking it to heart and asking God to help you grow and prosper in your faith. Express your thanks to God for his redeeming grace in your life. Ask God to protect you – and our church! – from the harm of false teaching and distortions of the gospel. *VBS in a Bucket!*

## Weekend, July 18-19

Read Genesis 34:1-31

If you've fallen behind this week, consider using these extra days to catch up. You can also prepare your heart and mind for this Sunday's worship service. Read the planned sermon text above and the thoughts below in advance of Sunday morning's message. If you are in a Faith Group, consider discussing the questions below together.

**THINK:** What a tragedy! The *ESV SB* says, "Almost as soon as Jacob returns to Canaan, an incident threatens the future security of his whole family. While the rape of Dinah by Shechem is inexcusable, the punishment meted out by Simeon and Levi far exceeds the crime. While they are very reluctant to acknowledge any fault on their part, Jacob is very conscious of how their actions have endangered his entire household. Furthermore, circumcision, which was intended by God to bring divine blessing, leads on this occasion to death and destruction. ***All this takes place without any reference to God.***" This hideous sin and its impact remind us all too well of the horrid consequences of sin in our own day, and of the need we have for Jesus, because "the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23)

**PRAY:** Does any unconfessed sin come to mind? Take a moment now to confess it to the Lord. Thank God for the promise of I John 1:9. Acknowledge to God in prayer the rampant iniquity of our own nation, the rebellion against God that is eating away at the very fabric of our country, whether it be racial or ethnic hatred, sexual immorality, the pervasive lying and cheating so common today, violence and theft, or any other sin you could name. "Oh God, how we need YOU! We are in desperate need of revival in the church and spiritual awakening in our land. Father, in your wrath remember mercy, and bring millions to yourself through Jesus Christ your Son. Amen."

**FAITH GROUP:** Discretion will be needed for this conversation if children are present. Nevertheless, such sin is not uncommon in our day. In fact, it could bring PAINFUL memories for some in the group. So exercise caution and care. Talk about the reality of the pervasiveness of sin and the uncommon mercy of the gospel. Pray for one another.