

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, August 3

Read Philippians 3:1-21

THINK: The theme of joy and rejoicing continues with a stern warning concerning those whose teaching will destroy your joy. According to Paul, who is the true “circumcision”? If Paul were to put confidence in his “flesh” – that is, his credentials as a Jew – what qualifications would he have? But what does Paul consider of far greater value than these things? Notice his strong endorsement of justification by faith and the grand hope of the resurrection. For what does Paul “press on”? How does the apostle contrast heavenly things and earthly things? *Note: Paul is not saying we cannot enjoy today! But our focus is eternity.*

PRAY: Thank God for every good and perfect gift that you will enjoy today, including food, clothes, a home, etc. Express to God your desire to not be preoccupied with earthly things but rather live expectantly in light of eternity. Ask God for protection against the false teachers who would destroy your joy and contentment in Christ. Pray a prayer of thanksgiving for your great salvation through Jesus Christ, including being justified by faith and having the grand hope of the resurrection. *Ask God for fruit in the lives of those who attended camp last week!*

Tuesday, August 4

Read Philippians 4:1-23

THINK: What affection for his readers! Hear his exhortation: “Stand firm in the Lord!” Conflicts in churches are nothing new. We are called to help one another come to peace and labor side by side when conflicts arise. Verses 4-7 is a terrific, brief paragraph to memorize and hold close in these anxiety producing times. Rejoice! Reasonableness. Pray often! God’s peace. Hallelujah. “Think on these things” speaks of disciplining the mind. What are the “these things”? Do you find that difficult to do? What is Paul’s key to being content? Do you find contentment elusive? What is the “fruit” of their giving to help Paul’s ministry? Do you enjoy that fruit? What return can these generous believers count on? Saints at Caesar’s house!

PRAY: Ask the Father to help you stand firm in Christ. Pray for peace and unity in our church body. Pray through the words and phrases of vv. 4-9. Make them your own; apply them to your day. Anxious? Tell the Lord all about it. Ask God to help you be content in your life and walk today, trusting his grace, filled with the Spirit. Thank God for the privilege and fruit of being a cheerful giver.

Wednesday, August 5

Read Philemon 1-25

THINK: Who were Philemon and Onesimus? What was their relationship? What does Paul mean when he refers to Onesimus as his child? What was Paul’s purpose in writing this letter—what was Paul asking Philemon to do? Why does he ask it “for love’s sake”? The play on words—useless, now useful—is a fruit of the gospel transforming a man’s life! What is the difference between goodness that is “of your own accord” rather than compulsion? How can the two men become *double brothers*? What further act does Paul offer? Does this remind you of a parable of Jesus?

PRAY: Praise God for the transforming power of the Gospel! What a change came into Onesimus’s life. How has the presence and power of Jesus Christ changed you? Ask God to make that transformation evident in the lives of people here at Faith Baptist Fellowship. Is there someone who comes to mind where reconciliation is needed? Pray for courage and humility to take the necessary steps as God leads you. *Tonight is the Senior Send Off as youth group “grads” head off soon to their next assignment. Pray!*

Thursday, August 6

Read Hebrews 1:1-14

THINK: Most scholars agree that the author of Hebrews is unknown and there is no introduction. It is considered a “word of exhortation”. How did God speak “long ago” and how has He spoken in “these last days”? What do we learn about Jesus in this chapter? Who is He? What has He done? Where is He now? Why is He superior to the angels? How are the angels to respond to Jesus? How should we?

PRAY: God has revealed Himself through His creation (Romans 1:19-20), through His word recorded by the Prophets, and now through the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus has God’s glory, His exact nature and His power. He is God! Creation reveals Jesus, the Bible points to Jesus, and 1 John 5:12 says “whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.” It really is all about JESUS! *Pour out your heart in prayer and praise to HIM! Pray that our church would in every way EXALT CHRIST!*

Friday, August 7

Read Hebrews 2:1-18

THINK: What was the message declared by angels and what did it expose? (See Romans 3:19-21). Where do we find salvation? Who was made a little lower than the angels yet crowned with glory and honor? Jesus took on flesh and blood; who did He come to help? (vs 16) Who is the offspring of Abraham? Why did Jesus become like us, in human form? Why did He suffer and why was He tempted?

PRAY: The amazing message of the Bible is that Jesus created the world, then stepped into His creation becoming human and walked among us. Furthermore, He endured temptation, suffering and even death in order to bring us into His world—glory! This is a message that needs to be shared with others. Pray for our missionaries that serve around the world. Pray for Faith family as we pursue opportunities in our community to share that message. Pray for opportunities to share this message with all in your sphere of influence. *Thank God for baptisms at South Campus the next two Sundays!*

Weekend, August 8-9

Read Luke 14:12-24

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: Why would Jesus say it's wiser to invite to your banquet those who *cannot* repay you? When will the repayment come? How do you think this applies to your life and to the ministry of Faith Baptist Fellowship? Why do you think Jesus encouraged the people to invite the poor, crippled, lame, and blind? Note: isn't it true that these folks are often the most neglected and "left out" by the rest of society? How should the church of Jesus Christ be different? How are "the excuses" of the parable paralleled in our present day? Who is making excuses and what are they? "Still there is room" – ponder that statement. Jesus is making an important statement about the Jewish religious leaders who refused to receive him.

PRAY: *This is a remarkable text about our ministry and mission as a church! What does it say to us about our evangelism and missions? Pray Pray Pray! "Father, give us a heart to go out into the highways and hedges and bring in those you are calling to Christ! Give us Christ's heart for those in need of salvation!"* Pray for the pastors preaching on this vital parable Sunday morning at both South and West campuses.

FAITH GROUP: Are we as a church fulfilling the teaching of Jesus in this parable? How do you think we are doing well? How do you think we need to improve and change?

How could your group take a step toward fulfilling the ministry and mission described in this parable?