

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 24

Read Hebrews 13:1-25

THINK: Begin with the benediction, vv. 20-21. Reflect on its truth. Then ponder also the foundational truth of v. 8. Knowing that these core essentials are absolutely true, make a list of the exhortations we are to obey as Christ followers – around 15 of them.

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| 1. | 2. |
| 3. | 4. |
| 5. | 6. |
| 7. | 8. |
| 9. | 10. |
| 11. | 12. |
| 13. | 14. |
| 15. | |

PRAY: Praise God for his great work of grace in you through the unchanging Lord Jesus Christ. Then pray item by item through your list that fleshes out what “doing his will” (v. 21) looks like. How are you doing in aligning your life with these principles? Pray about that.

Tuesday, August 25

Read 1 Timothy 1:1-2:15

THINK: Why did Paul consider it crucial that Timothy stay on at Ephesus as pastor there? Verse 5—what a beautiful summary of gospel life! False teachers “wander away” from this, much to their detriment. Whom does the law confront? Paul testifies to God’s work of grace transforming him. What does Paul’s life now display? What a glorious God! All glory to him alone. Why must we, like Timothy, “wage the good warfare”? What place does prayer have in our lives? What is the core truth of the gospel? Paul gives a key exhortation to men and one to women. Identify each. Verses 12-14 are why we identify our church as “complementarian”—the office of elder/pastor is restricted to men only. God created male and female to beautifully “complement” one another in his grand design for church and family.

PRAY: Respond now to the “first of all” priority of prayer (2:1) in our Christian life by spending time in prayer. Let the passage set the agenda for your prayer. Ask God to protect the church from the harm of false teaching. Ask God to keep us focused on the gospel. Praise God with the words of v. 17! Pray for a friend who has made “shipwreck” of their faith. Pray for those in governmental authority. Pray for a wise and discerning understanding of male and female in our homes and church life: praying men and modest, godly women.

Wednesday, August 26

Read 1 Timothy 3:1-4:16

THINK: Most Bible scholars believe Paul uses the terms overseer, elder, and pastor interchangeably, differentiating that office of teaching and authority from the office of deacon. Reflect on the list of qualifications for overseers. Compare that list to the qualifications for deacons—ministering servants. Why do you think Paul refers to the church as a “pillar and buttress of the truth”? V. 16 was likely an early Christian confession; it is beautiful. Timothy’s high calling to protect the church from false teaching and harm is clear in ch. 4. His youth should not hinder him (v. 12). Our worship services at Faith seek to uphold v. 13. How will his teaching “save” his hearers?

PRAY: Pray for our Elder Council, including our pastors. Pray for our ministering servants (such as our Ministry Team leaders and their teams). Ask God to help us keep his word central and so protect us from the harm of false teaching. *Pray for our youth!*

Thursday, August 27

Read 1 Timothy 5:1-6:21

THINK: We are to exercise care in our handling of relationships both in the church and in our families. We have a clear responsibility to help care for our family members (v. 8); notice the warning! How are widows to be cared for? Though our culture is quite different today—with pensions, Social Security, and so forth—how would you sum up the church’s responsibility? How about the church’s responsibility to its pastor/elders? Paul continues to urge Timothy to guard the true gospel with diligence; if not, the results can be disastrous. Similarly, he encourages contentment rather than the love of money, and generosity for the wealthy (6:18). What a high calling Timothy has!

PRAY: Ask God to give wisdom and discernment to our spiritual leaders here at Faith. Ask God for those things yourself. Pray for a widow you know who may need care, and for our Care Team. As you read about the high calling of the pastorate (6:11-16), pray for our pastors at Faith: Dana, Dave, Jayson, and Thomas. Ask God to help us guard the gospel and be free of the love of money.

Friday, August 28

Read 2 Timothy 1:1-2:26

THINK: Paul’s affection for Timothy is expressed in earnest prayer for him. Verse 7 is precious truth. Take it to heart. 8-12 has one of Paul’s famously long run-on sentences. So much precious truth! What truth can you take to heart today? “Guard the gospel” (v. 14) might well sum up both of these letters to Timothy. Who could you “refresh” today? “What you have heard entrust to others” – is there someone you could disciple and encourage in the faith? What point does Paul make with each example?

Soldier

Athlete

Farmer

Ponder v. 10 and all that Paul endured (chains!) for the sake of the elect. How does “irreverent babble” spread like gangrene? 22-26 is not only sound counsel for Timothy; it is sound counsel to us.

PRAY: Pray through each truth of 1:12-14, taking it to heart and both rejoicing in what you have received and asking for grace in the journey onward. Ask God to protect you from “irreverent babble.” Instead ask him to help you pursue the fruit of v. 22.

Weekend, August 29-30

Read Luke 24:36-53 and Psalm 117

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: The Great Commission isn't only in Matthew 28. In fact, it begins in Genesis (as we've seen this past year!) and ends in Revelation. Our God is a global God with a grand, global purpose to fill his kingdom with worshipers from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation. The exuberance of Psalm 117 and Dr. Luke's unique account of the Great Commission both highlight this global vision. Christ clearly had a heart for the "*ethne*" (the Greek term for peoples or nations; we get our English word *ethnic* from it).

PRAY: Ask God to give you Christ's heart for the nations. Pray for one or more of our missionaries as they give themselves to the global spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ. In particular, pray for our "international staff" as they navigate the difficult waters of the current COVID-19 pandemic. (Pray for A. who just departed this week for her new country.) Pray with great faith that God is working out his global purpose in ways we cannot see or perceive in the present climate.

FAITH GROUP: Tell stories of your own experiences with missions: short term ministry trips, international travel, missionary service, etc. Talk about what you saw, felt, experienced...share how it changed you (or didn't!).

How is Dr. Luke's account of the Great Commission different from Matthew 28 or Acts 1 ("you will be my witnesses...")?

Since each Faith Group is assigned one of our missionaries or U.S. based gospel workers, pray for that person(s) with special earnestness at this time of COVID-19 and uncertainty.