

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 31

Read 2 Timothy 3:1-4:22

THINK: Think seriously about vv. 1-5 as a detailed description of TODAY. Is there any item in this list that is not true today? Consider the fact that evil people can “creep into households” digitally as well as literally, and lead people to destruction. Who were Jannes and Jambres? Now consider all that Paul endured for Christ. Yet who rescued him from these harms? Verse 12 makes crystal clear that God has not promised us an easy life. Following Christ will bring hardships. What means will God use to help us endure? How is Timothy to preach? How does this differ from what people *want* sometimes? Which kind of preaching do you desire to hear? What helps Paul finish well? Who will stand by us to the very end?

PRAY: There is so MUCH here to pray about! Ask God to keep you from the sins of the last days. (If you have a particular struggle, admit it to God and ask for his help!) Ask God to protect your family from “home invasion” of evil. Ask God for every grace you need to endure the hardships of today, as well as for faithfulness in the long journey of life. Thank God for the gift of the Holy Spirit. *Pray for our children and youth as well as teachers and administrators in school.*

Tuesday, September 1

Read Titus 1:1-2:15

THINK: What a glorious calling Paul has! What are the qualifications of elders? (The terms elder/overseer are likely interchangeable.) On the other hand, who are a danger to the church? What evidence shows that a profession of faith is false? Why is sound doctrine so important? What does *maturity* look like in older men and women? Who should teach the younger women? Notice how Titus's life is to confirm the reality behind what he teaches. What "adorns" the doctrine of our Savior, Jesus Christ? How are believers to wait for the second coming of Jesus Christ? Titus is not to be timid.

PRAY: Much was said in these two chapters regarding Christian maturity: for leaders and followers, for men and women, young and older. What stood out to you as you reflect on your own maturity? Pray about the things that come to mind. Ask God to help you grow into maturity in Christ. Ask him to help you bear good fruit, the fruit of a life that has been transformed by grace and is filled with the Holy Spirit. Ask God to strengthen you with sound doctrine, self control, godliness, and patience as we await the coming Savior.

Wednesday, September 2

Read Titus 3:1-15

THINK: Paul continues to contrast Christian maturity with sinful immaturity. List the items in the two contrasting descriptions:

Maturity in Christ:

Immaturity/Sin:

Now write out verses 4-7 in your own hand:

What should elders do with a divisive person?

PRAY: Pray through the lists. Then praise God for your salvation. *Ask God to work powerfully in you to bring you to maturity in Christ.*

Thursday, September 3

Read 1 Peter 1:1-25

THINK: To what does the phrase “elect exiles of the Dispersion” refer? Note how all three persons of the Trinity are mentioned in v 2. How would the stirring phrases of gospel hope in vv 3-5 give courage to suffering believers? Clearly these were persecuted Christ followers (v 6) who were being sorely tested by hard trials, and Peter aims to give them assurance and hope and yes, even joy. What point is Peter making about the prophets and the angels? In our current difficulties (COVID-19, upheaval in the nation) would you say you have “sober-minded hope set on future grace” as Peter exhorts these readers? Is holiness your aim today? Believer, with what has God “ransomed” you? What is the relationship between obedience and love? Ponder this: all flesh is grass! What endures?

PRAY: So many rich layers of gospel encouragement! Wow. Simply pray through these verses, phrase-by-phrase and line-by-line, taking to heart the riches of gospel hope written for the encouragement of believers going through trials. Think of someone going through a particularly difficult trial right now and pray for them. Pray for the persecuted believers around the world, asking God to give deep joy and abiding hope and assurance of the return of Jesus Christ. *Pray for the church to be strong in gospel confidence and faith.*

Friday, September 4

Read 1 Peter 2:1-25

THINK: Because of rich gospel hope (ch. 1), what are believers to *put away*? Ponder the profound truth of the Cornerstone and the living stones being built into a spiritual house by God. In what way is Jesus Christ a *stone of stumbling and rock of offense*? Can you imagine how Peter longed for his stirring description of the church (vv 9-10) to encourage these persecuted Christians, and inspire in them holy conduct (vv 11-12)? What is the importance of doing good? How are we to follow in Christ’s steps?

PRAY: Ask God to help you both *put away* (attitudes and actions contrary to the gospel) and *grow up*. Pray for our church to continue to grow as a spiritual house, reaching out to lost people, doing good, living as holy people, loving others. Ask God for courage to follow in the footsteps of Jesus in our current situation. *Pray for our children and youth to know Jesus and grow, nourished on God’s word.*

Weekend, September 5-6

Read Ephesians 5:25-33

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 an inspiring picture of Christ's heart of love for his church! What insights does this paragraph give you about Jesus and his church? What is Christ's goal? What does Jesus do for the church toward that end? [Husbands, are you getting inspired by Christ to more fully love your wives?]

PRAY: Pray for our pastors as we close out our "Christ's Heart for Sinners and Sufferers" series this Sunday with Christ's Heart for His Church. Ask God to help us as a church share Christ's goal: to be presented to God the Father as a sanctified, holy people, paid for with the precious blood of Christ.

FAITH GROUP: Let's get practical. What does this "nourishing and cherishing" look like in the day to day life of a local church? What implications does it have for our Faith Group and how we relate to one another?

Pray for one another and for our holiness as the church of Jesus Christ.