

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, November 9

Read Revelation 12:1-17

THINK: Whew! The intensity and detail of this prophetic vision of a woman who gives birth and a dragon that makes war capture our attention and our imagination. The child born seems clearly to be the incarnate Jesus, who is taken up to the throne. And the dragon is Satan, thwarted in his desperate attempts to devour the child. Once again worship language is used (vv. 10-12) to honor God and convey the message that the key to victory is Christ's blood and a faithful testimony and loyalty to Jesus no matter what, even in death. Does this chapter stir up in you faith to trust God, courage to live for Christ, and love for those who stand true to Christ in the face of the dragon's desperate attempts to harm the people of God? That is what it is meant to do! Amen.

PRAY: Express to God your love for him. Rejoice that Satan's ultimate defeat is guaranteed, and that by Christ's resurrection your resurrection is guaranteed as well. Thank God for his faithfulness; honor him for his perfect wisdom. Ask God to give courage (the true "encouragement") to those who face persecution and martyrdom today in our world. Ask God to increase your courage to live to the praise of Jesus Christ in your everyday walk, especially in these difficult days.

Tuesday, November 10

Read Revelation 13:1-18

THINK: Before reading and pondering about the dragon and the beast, read the last line of v. 10. Memorize it. This could be a theme statement for all these chapters. Our goal in these middle chapters of Revelation has been to “Look for Christ! Look for hope in Christ. Look for the victory of Christ that gives us great hope.” In this chapter, another rather dark and foreboding one with blasphemy and death, we hope in this, that our names are written in the Lamb’s book of life. Is yours written there?

PRAY: Pray for Christian saints suffering and dying for Christ today around the world. Pray for the endurance, by faith, of these suffering Christians. Ask God to give you endurance for whatever lies ahead, even as believers of the past have endured by faith. We certainly need endurance by faith and hope in our present circumstances.

Wednesday, November 11

Read Revelation 14:1-20

THINK: In this extraordinary chapter there are two kinds of people, both of whom bear a mark. For the people of God (the 144,000), they have the name of the Lamb and his Father written on their foreheads. These saints worship with a new song and live lives of sexual purity and integrity (vv. 2-5).

In contrast are those destined for God’s wrath, who bear the mark of the beast, who do not believe in the gospel but rather live for themselves in illicit behavior. For believers, this chapter is “a call for the endurance of the saints.” **Memorize v. 12!** Notice that the punishment of the wicked (“the wine of God’s wrath”) is forever, eternal (v. 10-11). This is a sobering word.

PRAY: Pray for a worldwide harvest of souls by the preaching of the gospel. Thank God that you are, by his great grace, a worshipper of Jesus Christ. Pray for all in your sphere who do not know the Lord Jesus Christ as Redeemer and Friend. Plead with God for their eternal salvation, by grace through faith. Pray for them by name. Pray verse 12 for yourself. *Endurance* is a key word in these chapters and a key word for us as we live today.

Thursday, November 12

Read Revelation 15:1-8

THINK: Have you noticed the significance in this book of the number seven? Seven plagues are now made ready to pour out on the earth with seven golden bowls of the wrath of God. Before this judgment commences, a magnificent song of worship is sung! Read this short chapter again, underlining the attributes of God. Note the sanctuary: what was significant about it? Who could enter? What had to be done first?

PRAY: What did you learn about God in this chapter? Note that the seven bowls represented God's wrath and they had to be empty before anyone could enter the sanctuary. Pray a prayer of worship, honoring God for his divine attributes spoken of here. Pray through vv. 3-4, the song of the Lamb. Make it your own. In fact, why don't you make up your own melody and sing these lines out loud to God! "All nations will come and worship you!" Amen.

Friday, November 13

Read Revelation 16:1-21

THINK: If you read only verses 1-4 and stopped, what would be your impression of God, since the angels are pouring out his wrath? How would your opinion change when you read verses 5 - 7? Would God be just if he did not punish those who persecuted believers? What did people do when they were scorched by the sun? Did taking the sun away (verse 10) make them happy? What would happen if they repented? Humans are proud of their big cities. What happens to those? Are you staying awake? (v. 15)

PRAY: Praise God that he is just. Thank God that he made a way for those who believe to escape his wrath. Praise God for his discernment, for he knows when to pour out his wrath and that it will be upon those who have hardened their hearts so much that they cannot repent. Ask God to help his followers keep alert and remain clothed in his Word. *Rejoice in Christ! He is Lord!*

Pray for our nation and for the current difficulty as we head toward transition and change in the midst of rather chaotic times. Express your confidence in God's plan and his providence! Hallelujah!

Weekend, November 14-15

Read Genesis 45:1-28

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 tension that's been building in our story finally breaks wide open and Joseph reveals his identity to his brothers. What is their response to the revelation? Ponder v. 5. What does it reveal about Joseph? Clearly, Joseph already has a plan that includes relocating Jacob and caring for the entire family. As we have seen previously, there is an explosion of emotion as Joseph and his brothers reunite, weep and embrace, and communicate. Notice the rich detail of the account. Pharaoh announces elaborate care for Joseph's father Jacob and all the family. Why do you suppose he told them not to quarrel? How does Jacob take the news?

PRAY: Amazing grace and profound providence are on display, as God brings to a stunning denouement the twenty-year journey of Joseph from pit to pinnacle. Pray a prayer of praise to God. Exalt him for his wondrous grace shown to Joseph, Jacob, and the entire family. Then express your trust in God that he also has a plan for you and will care for you now and for all eternity.

Pray for our pastors preaching on this marvelous text of Scripture. Ask God to allow this stunning account to sink deeply into the depths of our being so that we walk by faith and not by sight in this tumultuous time. "Why are you downcast, O my soul; Hope in God!" (Psalm 43:5)

FAITH GROUP: Share with the group what you have learned from this amazing account of Joseph's 20 years in Egypt and this extraordinary reunion now with his brothers. What have you learned about the providence of God? What have you learned about trusting God over the long haul? How might this be applicable to your life currently?

Pray for one another as we continue this eight-month journey through the coronavirus. Hope in God!