

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, December 21

Read Matthew 20:1-34

THINK: As you reflect on vv. 1-16, what attitude is Jesus warning about here? Are you able to rejoice (with the angels!) over each and every sinner who repents and believes the gospel? Why do you think the disciples didn't really "get it" when Jesus foretold about his death and resurrection? Why was the request of the mother off the point, according to Jesus? Do you enjoy serving others and giving your life to them? Was there only one blind man (see Mark 10:46) or two? How do you respond to detail differences like this?

PRAY: God's great generosity to needy sinners must be celebrated! Pray a prayer of praise and thanksgiving. Rejoice that your name is written in the Lamb's book of life! Thank God for the cross and the empty tomb. "Father, forgive us for any attitude of superiority, or 'I've followed you longer.' Give us joy in following Jesus, no matter what the divine timing. Give me joy in serving others and giving to them." *What do you want God to do for you? TELL HIM!*

Pray for our 4 Christmas Eve services on Thursday (2 at each campus at 4:00 pm and 5:30).

Tuesday, December 22

Read Matthew 21:1-46

THINK: Leaf back in your Bible to Zechariah 9:9. Read it. Matthew continues to emphasize to the Jewish reader, “Jesus is your promised Messiah!” What does *Hosanna* mean? Read Isaiah 56:7 and Jeremiah 7:11. God is able to do what man considers impossible. What is needed is faith to trust him completely, not a certain *size* of faith that *forces* God to do what we ask. Frequently Matthew emphasizes the issue of authority; how did Jesus turn this against the chief priests and elders? How did the parables of the two sons and tenants confront the Jewish religious leaders?

PRAY: Pray that Jews around the world would recognize Jesus as the promised Messiah and believe in him for salvation. Ask God to help you trust him completely in all circumstances, even to trust him for things that seem humanly impossible. Ask God to give you a gracious attitude toward others, as God has shown grace to you.

Wednesday, December 23

Read Matthew 22:1-46

THINK: How does Jesus once again confront the Jewish religious leaders with the parable of the wedding feast? How does he also confront anyone, Jew or Gentile, who is not prepared for the feast? Ponder: *many are called* (general call of the gospel to all) *but few are chosen* (referring to election). Reflect on the meaning of “render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and to God...” Why were the Sadducees sad? What astonished the crowd? What silenced the Pharisees? *Reflect on the love commands and God’s love for you!*

PRAY: Are you prepared for the feast? If you are, praise and thank God! If you are not, why not repent and believe today? Express your heart to God in prayer. In response to the “render to Caesar” passage, pray for our nation. Ask God to come to his people the church (in revival), and also to our country (in spiritual awakening and harvest). Rejoice in the hope of resurrection! “Father, help me to love you with my entire being and to love my neighbors. Thank you so much, Father, for loving me!”

Thursday, December 24

Read Matthew 23:1-39 Christmas Eve at 4:00 and 5:30 pm!

THINK: After accusing the scribes and Pharisees of hypocrisy, Jesus pronounced 7 woes upon them. In a few words, summarize each:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.

PRAY: Now fashion a prayer that touches on each of these woes, applying them to your life and walk of faith as a disciple. (We are more Pharisee-like than we care to admit.) This won't be easy, but with reflection it will lead you into deep and meaningful prayer. "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord."

Friday, December 25

Merry Christmas to you!

Read Matthew 24:1-51

THINK: In light of current national and world events you may feel anxiety as you read Matthew 24. What did Jesus say about the end of the age? How are we to respond to false prophets who might try to lead us astray? What parallels do you see with present day occurrences? What happens with the gospel? Look back at Daniel 9:27. What does the book of Daniel have to say about the end? Take comfort that the Father knows the time and day and that believers need not worry but instead persevere by faith in Christ.

PRAY: "Lord I praise you that you are sovereign in all things, especially the end! I rejoice that you have given us a hint of what to look for at the end of the age and that you have had a plan from eternity past." Use this passage to remind you to pray for present believers that suffer in the persecuted church! Pray that you would live each day knowing that you are one day closer to having the Son of Man return. Pray that you would be faithful and wise in the Lord. Pray that you would be a good steward of your days and years.

Thank God for the birth of his Son, our Savior, Jesus!

Weekend, December 26-27

Read Psalm 148

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: Repetition in itself conveys important meaning. What does the repetition of "Praise the Lord" and "Praise him" convey to us in this psalm? What do you learn as you ponder the sheer variety of things and creatures commanded to praise our Lord? Who is the "horn" that God has raised up for his people? Is this aspect of the psalm prophetic?

PRAY: Pray for elder Tanner Leuthold (South) and pastor Jayson (West) as they preach on this exuberant psalm of praise.

Pray your own prayer of praise and adoration, expressing to God your own great heart of worship to God for all that he has done for you and for such a great Savior, Jesus Christ. Thank him for his grace and care and provision in the now concluding, challenging year 2020.

FAITH GROUP: Talk about the role of praise in enduring hard times. Why should we praise God in the midst of a pandemic? How is this unique to Christians and our faith?

Pray for each other regarding current needs and concerns, but then transition into a time of Praise Prayer and musical worship.