

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 28

Read Matthew 25:1-46

THINK: The Boy Scout Motto “Be Prepared” comes to mind! The 10 Virgins parable underscores the necessity of one being ready for Christ's return at any moment, no matter when that takes place. Will there be a second chance for those that are unprepared for His return? (vs. 11-12, vs 14-30) Reflect soberly on vv. 29-30. Are we using every opportunity to present the Gospel and represent Jesus Christ in both word and deed? What happens to the slothful servant? This chapter is a sober reminder of the reality of the final judgement.

PRAY: Pray that you would be prepared for the return of Jesus. Give glory to God for the gift of faith through Jesus Christ! Pray that you would be faithful. Pray that God would bring a person in your path today with whom you could share the Gospel and show the love of Jesus. Tell God that you desire to be the good and faithful servant. “Father, help me by your Holy Spirit to be mindful of the needs of others today. As you open doors of opportunity, enable me to walk through those doors to care, share, and pray!”

Tuesday, December 29

Read Matthew 26:1-75

THINK: What motivated the woman who anointed Jesus's head with the expensive ointment? Why were the disciples indignant? How did Jesus respond? What stands out to you about each of these:

- the prophecy of his betrayal
- Jesus institutes the Lord's supper
- they sang a hymn!
- the foretelling of Peter's denial
- Jesus praying in the garden
- his betrayal and arrest

PRAY: What an amazing chapter! Thank God for his word and for all of these amazing actions of our Lord. Pray for your decisiveness in following Jesus. Ask God for strength to be faithful to acknowledge Jesus in all times. Thank God for the amazing privilege of prayer. Pray for our celebration of the Lord's Supper as we gather this coming Sunday, the first of the new year 2021.

Wednesday, December 30

Read Matthew 27:1-66

THINK: Chapter 27 is a heavy chapter with many different events chronicled by Matthew. The events:

- The sentencing of Jesus—Who were those involved on the Jewish side of sentencing Jesus?
- The suicide of Judas—Judas felt his guilt.
- The trial of Jesus before Pilate—Ultimately, where did Pilate's authority come from?
- Extreme bullying/mockings of Jesus by Roman soldiers—What are some of your thoughts as you read about the Roman Soldiers mocking Jesus?
- The crucifixion and death of Jesus. Reread vv. 32-56, focusing on the details that Matthew includes in his account.
- The burial of Jesus—Were the Jews satisfied with the burial situation? Were the Jews able to remain victorious?

PRAY: Hallelujah! Rejoice in God's sovereignty. Praise God that the story doesn't end here. Praise God that he completed his promise! Thank Jesus for His atoning death for you. Ask God to bring someone with whom you can share this story! Pray for openness to tell it! We all are called to share the good news.

Thursday, December 31

New Year's Eve

Read Matthew 28:1-20

THINK: RESURRECTION! In Matthew 26 and 27 we were brought through some heavy and at times painful writings about how our Lord was treated. We need Friday—Jesus Crucified, to get to Sunday — Jesus Resurrected. In Matthew 28:19 we are called to go and make disciples of all the nations. What does it mean to make disciples? If all believers had an intentional focus on making disciples, how would the church be strengthened?

PRAY: Praise Jesus for his resurrection! Please pray for the Lord to build up disciples at Faith, men and women who walk with Jesus and live to the praise of his glory. Pray for those we have helped send out into the harvest field of the nations. Pray for them by name!

Friday, January 1 New Year's Day! God bless you!

Read Psalm 1

THINK: *Today we will launch our series of readings for 2021. We will spend the first few months reading through the Psalms, chosen because of the current challenging days we are living through in our nation and world.*

What does the blessed Christian choose NOT to do? What does the blessed Christian choose to DO? What word picture does the psalmist use to describe this blessed life? What contrast is being drawn? What is the warning we must take to heart from this Psalm? What encouragement?

PRAY: Pray through the Psalm thought by thought, asking God to make you a thriving tree in the journey of life. Tell him that you want no part in wickedness. Pray for others in your sphere of influence who are choosing wickedness and rebellion against the Lord and his word. Ask God to move mightily by his Spirit in their lives, taking out their heart of stone and giving them a new heart. **2021! Thank God.**

Weekend, January 2-3

Read Psalm 1 once again

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: *As we mentioned Friday, we are launching into 2021 by reading slowly through the Psalms. Today at both campuses the first Psalm will be preached as we begin both this series of Bible readings and a new year, asking God to give us a great love for his word, "delight in the law of the Lord."*

Reflect on your current walk with God. Would you characterize your current walk with Jesus as a tree planted by a stream, thriving and growing and bearing much fruit? What are your struggles? Are there sins you need to confess to your Heavenly Father? Who are your counselors? Do you receive counsel from wicked people, sinners, and scoffers? (See II Corinthians 6:14.) Do you receive well the wise counsel of God's word and those who love God's word and are devoted to him?

PRAY: Commit yourself to God for this new year. Commit your walk and your way to him. Tell God that you desire his counsel! Tell him that you will spend time in his word daily in 2021, soaking up all that he has for you in his inspired and inerrant word. Pray for those preaching on Psalm 1 Sunday morning at our two campuses. Ask God to help our ministries thrive with gospel vibrancy in this new year.

Ask God to grant relief from the coronavirus according to his will.

FAITH GROUP: Discuss: what are the things which enable your walk with Christ to thrive and prosper? What are the things that prove to be obstacles? Share insights about walking with Jesus. Then pray for each other, asking that the new year be one of spiritual renewal and thriving, like trees planted by streams of water.