

LOVE GOD'S WORD & PRAYER

Daily Bible Reading

At Faith Baptist Fellowship, we *Love 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. If regular Bible reading is not yet a habit of yours, this is a great way to get started!

We are encouraging everyone to begin 2021 with spending time in the Psalms. 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 encourage you to set aside at least 15-20 minutes a day for reading 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. Have a journal and pen for answering questions and recording your thoughts and insights. For additional Bible reading plans check out our website at www.faithsf.com. Enjoy your time in God's Word and Prayer!

Monday, February 15

Read Psalm 37

THINK: Who will “soon fade” and wither? What do you think it means to “befriend faithfulness” and how would you pursue it? Memorize vv. 4-5. How would you rate yourself on: waiting patiently, fretting not, and refraining from anger? How does the Lord respond to the plots of wicked people? How would you sum up the two contrasting pictures in this psalm (re the wicked and the righteous)? For a similar teaching from Jesus, read Luke 16:19 ff., the story of the rich man and Lazarus. Compare with Psalm 37:34-36. Do you find it hard to “wait patiently” when the wicked seem to prosper? Ponder a plan for cultivating and “befriending” faithfulness.

PRAY: Our culture has totally confused the temporary and the eternal. So many people live for the moment and chose the immediate pleasure of sin, rather than the long-term pleasure of eternity with God. Pray about this for yourself. Ask God to help you discern the difference between wickedness and righteousness. Ask God to help you “befriend faithfulness” and grow in patience. Thank God for the precious gift of righteousness in Christ and deliverance.

Tuesday, February 16

Read Psalm 38

THINK: Some people today live in complete denial of the effects of sin; certainly the psalmist does not. What is he feeling in v.2? What impact has sin had on his health (vv. 3-10)? Have you ever felt the weight of sin in a similar way? Are other people a big help (vv. 11-12)? Wisely, David's thoughts turn to God, and he begins to pray. He confesses his sin and expresses sorrow for it. He cries out to God for help, "O Lord, my salvation!" Can you think of a similar time in your life, when your sin weighed heavily on you, but you turned to your Heavenly Father, confessed to him, and cried out for help?

PRAY: How do you need the Father's help today? What sins and circumstances are a burden upon you today? Tell the Lord! Confess, cry out, ask for his help. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died to atone for your sin. I John 1:9! He will cleanse you! Tell him of the trials and cares that weigh you down and ask him for wisdom, grace, and the fullness of the Holy Spirit to walk today with Jesus. As the old song says, "Tell it to Jesus; Tell it to Jesus! He is a friend that's well known." Pray also for others you know are facing hardship.

Wednesday, February 17

Read Psalm 39

THINK: Identified as a choral anthem, this "song" is a companion to the previous one. Sin remains the key issue; oh, that more people today would muzzle their tongues (and their keyboards!). When David cries out it is with the brevity of life in view (vv.4-6). The Lord's rebuke is upon him; it has taken a toll on him (as in yesterday's psalm). But he continues to hope in the Lord (v.7) and trust God for deliverance (v.8). The Lord's discipline must not be taken lightly (v.11). In light of his final cry (vv.12-13), isn't it good to know Jesus?

PRAY: Read Hebrews 12:5-11. Thank God that he disciplines his children in love, and that you are one of them! Thank him for that fatherly work in your life, for without it we would be lost! Ask God to reveal to you where he is at work in your life now--perhaps you already know. Welcome that work of grace, delight in it, painful as it may be, and express your trust that he has your best interest in view. Thank him for the cross and for the gift of new life in Christ, for "the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord." God bless you today!

Thursday, February 18

Read Psalm 40

THINK: Another choral anthem, and more patience needed! (v.1) Reflect for a good while on the imagery of vv.2-3: the miry bog, the rock, and the song. Are you stuck (in the pit) or singing the song? Pride is the enemy of trust (v.4). Ponder this: the good works of God are 'more than can be told' (v.5). It is not religious exercises that God desires, but that we do God's will. We are to speak UP! and testify of the deliverance and faithfulness of God. Enemies? David has plenty. But he looks to God and finds deliverance from trouble.

PRAY: Still in the pit and bog, or singing a praise song on the rock? Tell it to the Lord right now! The closing verses (16-17) of David's song are a grand concluding chorus, but they are also a wonderful prayer that we can pray today. Do so now. Making these lines your own, pray them to God, adding applicable thoughts from your own life that come to mind. Truly we are poor and needy, are we not? Yet we have a Heavenly Father who will not delay to help us!

Friday, February 19

Read Psalm 41

THINK: This psalm concludes the first major section of Psalms, as the closing verse indicates (see Psalms 72, 89, and 106; *credit Dr. Sailhamer*). David is sick and in need of God's grace. Warren Wiersbe suggests he *looks back* and recalls his previous help to the poor and needy and is confident that the Lord in turn will show kindness toward him. He *looks out* and sees his enemies - and even his friends - gossiping and whispering and wishing ill will upon him. But then he *looks up* and trusts that the God of grace will raise him up again. Wiersbe concludes, "Sometimes, how you feel depends on where you look." Look up and trust your Father!

PRAY: Look up and pray a prayer of praise and adoration to God for who he is in all his splendor and majesty and mercy and grace! Look out and pray for others who don't know Jesus, lost in their sin and caught up in rebellion and unbelief. Look inward and express to God the inner reality of your walk with him today. Ask for his help as you follow Jesus. *"Father in heaven, fill me with your Holy Spirit today. Please lead me and guide me today. Open doors of opportunity for helping the needy, witnessing to the lost, showing love to the hurting. I am yours today to do with as you will. Amen!"*

Weekend, February 20-21

Read John 18:28-38

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: In v. 29, Pilate (who was the Roman representative in charge of the region) asks the Jewish authorities a question. Did they answer him? In v. 33, Pilate asks Jesus a question. Did Jesus answer him? How does Jesus answer the further question, "What have you done?" Once more, Pilate asks a question, "So you are a king?" How does our Lord respond to him? What do you suppose motivated Pilate to ask then, "What is truth?" This is a powerful moment, one of many, in John's gospel. Since this gospel emphasizes the need to believe in Jesus, why do you think John highlighted this question from Pilate?

What is Pilate's verdict?

PRAY: Pray for the pastors preaching on this powerful exchange between Jesus and Pilate. Ask God to bring people to saving faith in Christ as a result of our study in John these three months or so.

FAITH GROUP: Do you find that today people are asking, "What is truth?" Do you think they really want to know? Or are they avoiding "truth" by asking the question? These things are well worth pondering and discussing as a group. What do you think prompts a person to begin seeking after truth? Or should we say Who prompts this search in a person!

Pray for those in your sphere who do not know Jesus as the Truth.