

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, April 12

Read Psalm 80

THINK: Two images are used in this song of Asaph to describe God's people: A flock (v.1) and a vine (v.8). God is the shepherd of the flock, which needs restoration. Israel needs to see the face of God again and be saved from their rebellion, which has caused much heartache and many tears. The vine came out of Egypt and flourished. But something happened to disrupt things. What was it? What is the hope for this vanquished people? Who came among the people calling himself the Son of Man? Who is the ultimate hope for the people of God?

PRAY: Verse 19 is a great prayer to pray! Restoration for a broken people can come only by the grace of God through the Light of the World, the Savior and Messiah Jesus Christ. Restore us, O God! Let your great Light shine among us that we may be saved! Read John 8:12 and respond in thanksgiving and praise. Jesus is also the Good Shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep (read John 10:7-18). Respond to John's good word there also with thanksgiving and praise for our Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ, who laid down his life for us, and took it up again! Thank you, God, for Easter!

Tuesday, April 13

Read Psalm 81

THINK: Another song of Asaph--Sing, shout, play the tambourine and trumpet to God! To whom will God's people listen? To the one who delivered them from Egypt? To the true God? Or to strange gods who cannot deliver and will not save? Listening to the wrong voice brings heartache and disaster, for God judges by letting the people have their own way (v. 11-12). *Warren Wiersbe: "One of God's most painful judgments is to permit you to have your own way."* Is this not the reality we face in our own nation? God responds to rebellion by letting us have our way, a way that leads to ruin.

PRAY: To whom will we listen? You are doing these Bible readings because you want to listen to God speak to you through his word. Ask God to help you listen and understand and grow in the gospel of Jesus Christ and the knowledge of his will. Pray for a movement of God's Spirit in our land, for repentance and faith and submission to the will of God. Pray about the famine of God's word in our nation! Ask God to move mightily to transform hearts of stone into hearts of flesh. Pray that way for your loved ones and friends.

Wednesday, April 14

Read Psalm 82

THINK: *Warren Wiersbe: "The Lord stands as Judge and indicts the human judges for their failure to defend the poor and needy and condemn the wicked."* Partiality in the justice system makes it a farce; likewise, partiality is forbidden in the church (James 2:1ff). Our response to weak and needy people as the body of Christ is a vital testimony of God's work of grace in us. *"Leadership is a serious thing, for leaders stand in the place of God and will one day answer to Him...The judges will be judged righteously by the Judge of all the earth, and there will be no escape."* [With the Word, p.360] In the end, we know who will inherit the nations!

PRAY: Pray that our church would shine with love to the neediest among us in Sioux Falls and the world. Ask God if he has some role for you in making a difference. Pray for justice and godliness in our elected officials and judicial system. Pray about our current national scene of brokenness, division, turmoil, and sin. Pray that God would move among Christians to stand out from the crowd, with the love and compassion of Jesus Christ.

Thursday, April 15

Read Psalm 83

THINK: Many conspire against God's people. It was true for Israel, and it's true for the church of Jesus Christ. It was true when Asaph wrote this psalm, and it is true today. Crafty plans are laid by those who oppose God and his ways, but those plans are thwarted again and again. From v. 1, "O God, do not keep silence" to the closing v. 18, "that they may know that you alone, whose name is the Lord, are the Most High over all the earth," it is clear that God himself will be the protector of his people and the protector of his great name. Does the current picture look bleak? Trust God to guard his people!

PRAY: We can pray with great confidence when we pray for God's glory to be spread to all the nations and for his church to thrive and grow, because God himself has promised to make that happen! "I will build my church," Jesus said in Matthew 16:18, "and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Threats and even martyrdom may happen, but even death cannot separate us from the love of God (Rom. 8:38). Pray for our church, and for the global church: for growth, advance of the gospel, and kingdom fruitfulness.

Friday, April 16

Read Psalm 84

THINK: Choirs have sung a marvelous setting of this great Psalm for many generations. "How Lovely Is Thy Dwelling Place" is by Brahms, and part of his stirring "Requiem." (YouTube it!) You will recognize many a memory verse in these 12 verses. Indeed, this would be a perfect psalm to memorize. Who are the "blessed" in this poem? What great benefits are bestowed on God's people? (Make a list of them!) Why is one day better in God's presence than a thousand elsewhere? Indeed, blessed is the one who trusts in God!

PRAY: A perfect psalm to pray through, line by line, thought by thought. Do so now, making each expression your own. Tell the Lord of your own personal longing for his presence. Ask him to deliver you safely home when your days have been fulfilled. Thank him for every blessing and benefit you enjoy in Christ Jesus. Tell God that you trust in him alone for the future.

Pray for our those you love who don't have this grand hope in Christ. Ask God to draw them to himself. Pray for them by name.

Weekend, April 17-18

Read John 20:19-23

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: Wow! What a remarkable scene. Jesus enters through locked doors and offers them "Peace." Yes, it was Jesus, for he showed them his nail-scarred hands and the wound from his side. The risen Lord! Yes, the disciples were glad; even more, they were now commissioned by Jesus, "As the Father has sent me, so send I you." What further gift did he promise them? How crucial was their role to be? Where do we read of these promises being fulfilled?

PRAY: Pray for Pastor Jayson at West Campus and Pastor Thomas at South preaching on this stirring text. Ask God to move among us by his Holy Spirit! Thank God for the gift of the Holy Spirit and for the peace that Jesus Christ has given you. Pray for our obedience to Jesus as his "sent ones." Ask God for a season of great kingdom fruitfulness for God's glory.

FAITH GROUP: Why were the disciples truly in need of peace when Jesus appeared to them in that room? Imagine their gladness when they knew Jesus was alive and among them! Share with your group a time when you truly needed peace and received from God a peace "which passes understanding" (Philippians 4:7).