

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 19

Read Psalm 85

THINK: *Dr. John Sailhamer: "It is interesting to note how this psalm appears to cast the specter of hope into the more remote future, with expressions such as, 'Will you be angry with us forever? Will you prolong your anger through all generations?' The viewpoint of the psalm is toward a more seasoned hope in God's deliverance."*

God's past mercy and faithfulness toward his people anticipates future revival and renewal and restoration for them. Our need? To turn to God in holy fear and faith, trust him and rejoice in him. Steadfast love and faithfulness, righteousness and peace will meet in God the Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord! Hope in him.

PRAY: The need for revival (in the church) and spiritual renewal (in our land) is evident every time we check the newsfeed on our phones! How we must pray, asking God to "revive us again" and move among us by his Holy Spirit. Pray for our sin-loving nation. Ask God to expose our bent toward evil and pour out a spirit of repentance. Pray for Christ's church to "be strong and courageous" in the face of growing opposition. "O how we need you, Father!"

Tuesday, April 20

Read Psalm 86

THINK: The great need expressed in Psalm 85 for restoration is now personified by King David's prayer in this psalm. The prayer is heartfelt and expressive: David is "poor and needy" and crying out to God all day, in need of grace. He rests in God's character (vv. 5, 10, 15), knowing that God will hear and answer and deliver him from "insolent men." Ponder those verses which describe the character of God (5,10,15), taking time to consider the perfection and glory of God. Soon you will turn those thoughts into a prayer of praise!

PRAY: Do so now: take the reflections on God's character from the "THINK" section above and turn them into a prayer of praise, exalting God for all his divine attributes. "Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name" (Psalm 29:1). Then pray line by line through this entire psalm, turning David's lines of prayer into your own, making them personal. Ask God for grace as it relates to your day, assured that he will both help and comfort you (v. 17). What challenges and difficulties do you face today that you can bring now to God's throne of grace in earnest prayer?

Wednesday, April 21

Read Psalm 87

THINK: Some will recall the classic hymn, "Glorious things of thee are spoken, Zion city of our God" which is based on this psalm as well as Isaiah 33:20-22. The hymn was written by John Newton, the ex-slave ship captain and writer of "Amazing Grace." Warren Wiersbe: "*The earthly Mount Zion is a figure of the heavenly Zion, the city of God and God's redeemed people.*" (Heb. 12:22-24) Even the enemies of Jerusalem, like Babylon and Philistia have to acknowledge that the Most High God himself has established Zion. The future is bright for all born (born again!) in God's city!

PRAY: Let us also speak glorious things of God's eternal city and our future home, the new Jerusalem! For Jesus Christ himself, the risen Savior, is preparing that place for us. What a home that will be! For God himself will dwell there, and in his presence there is fulness of joy. Imagine the cacophony of joyous worship when the Lamb of God, Jesus himself, reveals himself to all God's family. What a day that will be! Pray a prayer of hope-filled expectation concerning the everlasting home awaiting you in the new Zion of God.

Thursday, April 22

Read Psalm 88

THINK: Another choral anthem from the sons of Korah, this lament expresses the painful cries of one who feels abandoned and faces death. This is no joyful song. In fact, unlike so many other psalms, it does not “shift” and offer hope at the conclusion. This is more of a dirge; it expresses the pain and sorrow and darkness of real life when hope is elusive and death appears inevitable. Yet the song writer knows whom to call upon, “God of my salvation,” and that prayer is the best outlet for such misery. In the sadness of feeling shunned by companions, “Every day I call upon you, O Lord.” (v.9) Question: in your darkest moments, do you continue to pray?

PRAY: This is a dark hour for our nation and for our world. Covid heartaches, unrest, division over race, religion, and even male and female. Times are hard; darkness looms. So how do we respond as believers? We keep on praying! We pray without ceasing. We cast our cares on our God who cares for us. Pray now for these things. Pray for the lost, the hurting, the lonely, the confused, the sick and the needy. Pray for our testimony as Christians as we give others the reason for the hope we have in Christ. Pray with perseverance.

Friday, April 23

Read Psalm 89

THINK: *“Faithfulness is a key word in this psalm.”* (Wiersbe) God’s faithful promise to David for an eternal line of kingship is stated; yet that promise seems threatened by defeat (vv.38ff). How can God allow such utter defeat and destruction of his people when he made a promise? The answer lies in our perspective: our close-up picture needs to be retaken with a wide-angle lens. Ultimately the “horn of David” will come in the Son of Man, and Son of God, Jesus. Jesus will reign forever! Short-term defeat is painful; long-term victory is inevitable. How vital we keep this in mind when hardships come: God’s final victory and the reign of his eternal kingdom is sure!

PRAY: The first verse may well remind you of a song. Sing it! “With my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness, thy faithfulness.” In the challenges of today praise God for his faithfulness! It is GREAT! Tell God today of all the difficulties you are facing, then praise him for his daily faithfulness and mercy. Ask God to give you the long view. Delight in knowing Jesus will reign and he cannot be defeated!

Weekend, April 24-25

Read John 20:24-31

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: What a remarkable scene! We often refer to him as "Doubting Thomas," but can we really blame him? How could they have seen the Lord when he had died, his body prepared, then buried? But his encounter with Jesus changed his doubt to vibrant faith, "My Lord and My God!" When did you have your personal encounter with Jesus? When were you transformed from doubt to saving faith in Christ? John could not be clearer about his purpose in writing down this careful account: vv. 30-31.

PRAY: Pray for Pastors Dana and Jayson preaching on this vivid text in our Sunday worship gatherings. Pray that God will move so that believing, many might have life in his name.

Pray the same for loved ones and friends who do not yet trust in Jesus Christ for salvation! Pray for them by name, asking God to take out their hearts of stone and give them hearts of flesh. Question: to whom could you give a copy of the gospel of John?

FAITH GROUP: Doubt can be, but isn't always, sin. When is doubt a healthy exercise in questioning? When does it cross the line into willful unbelief? Share with the group your own journey through doubt to vibrant faith in Jesus Christ. How did our Heavenly Faith move you through that journey?

Close by praying for lost loved ones and friends who need the Lord Jesus. Pray especially for those who seem trapped in doubtful unbelief.