

# 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 continue our daily bible readings with spending time in Proverbs.** 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](http://www.faithsf.com). Enjoy your time in God's Word and Prayer!*

## Monday, August 2

Read Proverbs 1:1-7

**THINK:** Today we begin a slow walk through the book of Proverbs. It is considered a prime example of "wisdom literature." Proverbs itself mentions King Solomon as the primary author although several others are mentioned as contributors as well. Solomon assumes the role of a father teaching his son. This first section appears to be answering the questions, "Why pursue wisdom?" and "Where do we start?" How would you answer those questions based on this passage?

**PRAY:** Verse 7 introduces the theme of the book of Proverbs—"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge." Fear is seen in a positive light here, acknowledging God's good intentions. We cannot hope to gain an understanding of spiritual things if we refuse to recognize God's character and nature. So, teaching our children about God and His purposes is just laying the groundwork for all further education and character building. Pray for our parents of young children in our church family. Pray for our Middle School campers and leaders this week at Swan Lake Camp in Viborg.

## Tuesday, August 3

Read Proverbs 1:8-19

**THINK:** In this passage we see that the family is the educational center where both mother and father are involved. Hearing or listening is mentioned several times throughout Proverbs and is a key component in learning. It is also important in fulfilling the 5<sup>th</sup> commandment—Honor your father and mother (Exodus 20:12). Note the contrast between the parent’s teaching and the appeal of the wicked. What is the appeal or reward that wickedness offers? What ultimately are the consequences of pursuing wickedness?

**PRAY:** We know that peer pressure can be strong, especially among young people. But it is not limited only to young people. We all face it at one time or another. Knowing what the ultimate consequences of our wickedness will be goes a long way in preventing us from going in that direction. Are you facing peer pressure? Pray for wisdom. Pray for wisdom for our parents to properly educate their children to recognize these pressures, the invitations to do evil, and the ultimate consequences of making the wrong decisions.

## Wednesday, August 4

Read Proverbs 1:20-33

**THINK:** In this passage, wisdom is personified as a woman. This occurs a number of times throughout Proverbs. What is she doing? Who is she speaking to and how? Who are the simple, and how have they responded to the cries of wisdom? What are the results of not accepting wisdom? Note that there will be a time when it is “too late,” and sinners will have to face the consequences of their actions. (Refer to Jesus’s teaching in Matthew 7:21-23). Finally, what are the results of accepting wisdom?

**PRAY:** The ‘simple’ are those who are naive or uneducated. One could assume that the enticements of the sinners to do wickedness in vs 10-19 were done in secret. Note how wisdom shouts in the streets and other public places. Pray for our pastors who preach and teach the word publicly. Pray that they remain faithful to God’s word and proclaim wisdom. Pray also for our Sunday school teachers who are currently teaching during this summer cycle. Keep praying for our Middle School campers and leaders.

## Thursday, August 5

Read Proverbs 2:1-22

**THINK:** In this chapter, the father is instructing the son on the moral values of wisdom. Vs 1-6 speak to the effort required in pursuing wisdom; note all the action verbs—receive, treasure, call out for, seek. What other ones do you see? Ultimately, who gives wisdom? What are the moral benefits of wisdom described in vs 7-10? Vs 11-22 describe the protection that wisdom provides. What type of protection is offered and what type of immoral people are referred to in these verses? What other rewards are noted in vs 20-21?

**PRAY:** The pursuit of wisdom requires effort on our part. But what (or who) is it exactly that we are pursuing? Vs 6 indicates it is the Lord who gives wisdom. Like Prov 1:7, where the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. So, while effort is required in pursuing wisdom, it is not something we can acquire on our own. We must be in a growing relationship with Jesus. Jesus spoke similar words in John 15:5, “whoever abides in me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.” One of our “Five Loves” is to ***Love God’s Word and Prayer***. Draw near to Jesus in prayer, ask Him for wisdom and then spend time meditating on His word.

## Friday, August 6

Read Proverbs 3:1-12

**THINK:** Again, the father is teaching his son. He makes an appeal to follow his teaching and includes the benefits (vs 1-4). What are those benefits? There are four commands included in this passage:

- 1) Trust in the Lord and lean not on your own understanding (vs 5-6)
- 2) Fear the Lord; don’t admire your own wisdom (vs 7-8)
- 3) Honor the Lord with your wealth; don’t hold back (vs 9-10)
- 4) Appreciate the Lord; don’t despise His discipline (vs 11-12)

Which of these speaks most powerfully to you?

**PRAY:** Do you ever lean on your own understanding, admire your own wisdom, have confidence in your own wealth, or get angry when it seems like God is disciplining you? Pray!! Ask Him for help in trusting Him even when you can’t figure out what is happening or why. Ask Him to help you guard against pride and trusting in your own wisdom. Ask Him to help you honor Him with your giving and generosity. Ask Him for self-control and humility when it seems like He is disciplining you.

## Weekend, August 7-8

Read Matthew 18:10-22, 1 Corinthians 5:1-13

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:** The final message in our mini-series on the church addresses the teaching of Jesus and Paul on the discipleship essential of church discipline: helping a straying person come back into alignment with biblical faithfulness and keeping the church in alignment with God. Why would a church discipline a member? Author Jonathan Leeman helpfully says, "Church discipline is not about retribution or enacting justice. It's redemptive. It's meant to help the individual Christian and the congregation grow in godliness--in God-likeness." (from "Is It Loving to Practice Church Discipline?", Crossway) When a church allows a member to live in open, unrepentant sin, it is unloving toward the member and unhealthy for the church. The reputation of both are damaged and the testimony of each is diminished. Reflect on the teaching of Jesus: how does a church go after a straying sheep? What is the first step?

**PRAY:** Pray for Pastor Dana and Pastor Jayson addressing this vitally important discipleship essential. Ask God to give them wisdom on how to communicate these crucial passages of the Bible. Pray for God's Spirit and grace in your own walk with God, and offer yourself to God as a vessel for helping other believers who may stray from the faith.

Pray for continuing fruit from this past week of Middle School camp.

**FAITH GROUP:** Have you ever taken the "first step" of going to another person (see Matthew 18:15)? Was it hard for you to do? Did you feel worried or intimidated? How did it turn out? Discuss the process of trying to restore a straying Christian as taught by Jesus in Matthew 18. What is the brilliance of it? According to Paul, why is this vitally important to the health of a local church?