

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 encourage everyone to continue our Daily Bible Readings in Ecclesiastes. 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 faithsf.com. Enjoy your time in God's Word and Prayer!

Monday, November 29

Read Ecclesiastes 1:1-11

THINK: We are embarking on a wild ride of wisdom lit, this literary work of The Preacher, who is likely Solomon. Imagine a scribe who is given the responsibility of writing down and collecting the sayings and thoughts of the King, a brilliant king famous for wisdom and wealth, but also excess and moral compromise. So, buckle up and go along for this ride, seeking wisdom from above through the twists and turns of an earthly man's reflections on what gives life meaning.

"Vanity of vanities" introduces a theme of this book, the fleeting nature of life ("vapor") as seasons come and go. As Christians, we will read Ecclesiastes under the shadow of Christ's cross and with the resurrection hope of eternal life raising our eyes to Jesus!

PRAY: Let us also PRAY in the light of eternity, Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior, and our great hope. "Father, as our seasons come and go and the days seem fleeting, thank you that we can remember Jesus and the cross and have rekindled hope. This coming Sunday when we take communion, we will worship you, recalling the finished work of Christ and loving the fact you have sent your Holy Spirit to dwell in us and help us walk by faith."

Tuesday, November 30

Read Ecclesiastes 1:12-18

THINK: The Preacher finds the quest for wisdom and meaning an “unhappy business” - that is, it is fleeting and frustrating, for life is not a straight road of constant joy and fulfillment. Instead, the wiser and more knowledgeable we become, the more we comprehend the sorrows and pain of life and the fleeting nature of it. The NT also refers to the brevity of life (James 1:10-11; I Peter 1:24) but assures us that the word of God will stand forever! Thanks be to God for his word, for the gospel, for the risen Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

PRAY: What sorrow and heartache are you experiencing in the present time? Tell it to the Father in heaven. Are you finding the road of life difficult and painful, and wondering what it all means? Look to the cross, to the sacrifice of the Son of God on your behalf, to the cleansing power of the blood of Jesus, and pray a prayer of thanks to God for the truth of the gospel: Jesus saves! Ask God for gospel wisdom to see the curving road of life as divine preparation for the unimaginable joy of new heavens and new earth to come.

Pray for our church in this season of Anticipating Change.

Wednesday, December 1

Read Ecclesiastes 2:1-11

THINK: Warren W. Wiersbe: “*God made life for enjoyment and investment (I Tim. 6:17-19), but Solomon decided to turn it into experiment. He tested his heart with pleasures, works, and the acquisition of wealth, and he discovered that they did not satisfy. These things can bring a certain amount of enjoyment while you are doing them, but when it is all over, you feel empty. ‘Enjoyment without God is only entertainment, not enrichment; you cannot live on entertainment.’*” [With the Word, p. 437]. What a commentary on life today! People are “amusing themselves to death” as one commentator said. But all our “things” do not satisfy.

PRAY: Do you see it around you? People accumulating stuff, striving after achievements, going from one relationship to another, trying desperately to be happy. But the gnawing hunger inside is never quenched. Pray about this. Ask God to help you learn the lesson that contentment comes through walking with Jesus, not the wealth of this world. Ask God to help you keep your eyes fixed on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith. Rest in the cross!

Thursday, December 2

Read Ecclesiastes 2:12-17

THINK: Interesting, isn't it, that there are people in our world who are considered wise (or at least very smart) whose lives are a shipwreck; their death is no different than a fool's. The wisdom of the world, and knowledge of things, makes you neither holy nor happy. In fact, these things can puff up and make us self-centered and proud, leading to arrogance and ignorance of genuine virtues like love, kindness, humility (well, all the fruit of the Spirit!). The wisdom we need is found in Jesus Christ, in the gospel of salvation by grace through faith, in the word of God rather than the words of men. Our future is secure in Christ, the resurrection and the life.

PRAY: "Heavenly Father, help me know the difference between worldly wisdom and knowledge and that which is found in your word, in the gospel, in Jesus Christ my Lord. Help me know that life lived with Christ at the center, a life pleasing to you, is not in vain."

Read I Corinthians 15:58. Memorize it. Pray it.

Friday, December 3

Read Ecclesiastes 2:18-26

THINK: *ESV Study Bible:* "The Preacher 'hates' life in the sense that he finds it deeply disappointing in certain key respects; life has lost much of its sweetness for him." He has discerned something basic: you might work hard all your life to gain, but then leave it to someone who squanders all you gained. Think of the farmer whose son gambles away his inheritance (The Prodigal Son!) or the investor whose successors lose everything by foolish decisions.

Let's remember the NT truth, "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." I Cor.10:31. Enjoy your Christmas pie, drink your morning coffee to the glory of God, find joy in simple pleasures as good gifts from our Father, but know that the true investment of life is in the kingdom of God and his righteousness in Jesus Christ.

PRAY: Who is your master? Is it Jesus? Or is it stuff and job and bank account? What do you lose sleep over? Speak to your heavenly Father about the things that are bugging you. Express to God your love for him, your thanks for salvation, your thanks for every good gift from above. Ask your Father to help you work hard to his glory but with contentment and faith, trusting him alone.

Weekend, December 4-5

Read Ruth 2

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: Who was Boaz? Why do Ruth and Naomi express interest in him? It would be helpful to check a good study Bible or Bible dictionary on the practice of levirate marriage, which is important in this story. What was gleaning? How does Boaz display godly honor and noble character? Ponder the beautiful phrase, "under whose wings you have come to take refuge." Ponder the reality that Ruth was a foreign woman in need of protection from harm.

What a blessing to take refuge under the wings of our heavenly Father!

PRAY: Pray for Pastor Jayson and Pastor Dana as they proclaim the truth of this passage. Ask God for grace to be a person of noble, godly character like Boaz, looking out for the welfare of others and seeking to protect and serve them, including those of a different race or ethnicity. Thank God for the marvelous story of grace which will lead directly to the birth of Christ!

FAITH GROUP: What can we learn from Boaz? Discuss the vulnerable position Ruth was in, and God's provision of care and protection for her. How might that shape our own attitude toward caring for and protecting others, including foreigners, among us.