

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. 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, December 27

Read Ecclesiastes 9:11-18

THINK: This week we complete the year and this remarkable book of Ecclesiastes. WISDOM in the face of life's uncertainties has been the major theme of the wisdom literature we have been reading the last couple months. Uncertainty and unpredictability are the focus of these verses, aren't they? While the list in v.11 might *often* be true ("fast runners win races") it's also true that bad things can happen ("runners fall down; smart people can fail at business"). Death also comes unexpectedly, so it's wise to be ready to meet God today! Verse 17 speaks to our day, does it not? Wise people seem to be in short supply in our world. May that not be so in Christ's church!

PRAY: Pray for wise leadership amid much clamor and shouting:

- in the church (especially at Faith as we *Anticipate Change*)
- in our government (in these days of division and anger)
- in our homes (wise parents leading Christ-centered homes)

Ask God for a wise and discerning heart. With a new year just ahead, submit your heart, mind, and future to our Heavenly Father. Thank God for Christ and a secure future in him!

Ask God to bless our West Campus ministry in 2022!

Tuesday, December 28

Read Ecclesiastes 10:1-7

THINK: Folly and foolishness are on display; they are in contrast to wisdom and calm. “Calmness and serenity” will go a long way in the midst of a crisis, when fools speak too quickly, make rash decisions, and add to the mess. In such circumstances, things often get turned upside down (v.7) and calamity can result. Can you think of a time when others were getting worked up into a frenzy and you stayed calm and were able to help the situation? Because of our faith in Christ and great hope that he is coming again, we as believers ought to be calm and wise in challenging times such as this present moment. Proverbs 3:5-6 goes a long way in trouble!

PRAY: Express to God your desire for a calm heart and wise mind for navigating our present circumstances. Tell God that you want to trust him with all your heart and lean on him. Ask God to keep you from folly and foolishness, especially under pressure (like at your work, or in relationships). Tell your Heavenly Father about any concerns you have for the year ahead, and where you need help.

Ask the Father to bless our South Campus ministry in 2022!

Wednesday, December 29

Read Ecclesiastes 10:8-20

THINK: Throughout this wisdom book, The Preacher has been fascinated by the reality that some bad things happen because of foolishness while others simply happen. We should seek wisdom and make sensible, righteous decisions, but that won't guarantee that life will be easy. Accidents happen, sickness comes our way, wicked people may mistreat us. In addition, words matter! The words of the wise help, while the words of fools do damage. This is most certainly true with leadership: what a difference a wise leader makes in the land! *Trust God, walk in wisdom, let your words be few and righteous, enjoy the life God has given you.*

PRAY: Review your year. What difficult circumstances did you face? How did you face them? What blessings came your way? God is sovereign over all! Pray, thanking him for his grace in your life. Ask for his grace now as a new year dawns: to speak graciously to others, and to extend grace to others in the challenges of life.

Rejoice with us for God's provision financially at Faith in 2021!

Thursday, December 30

Read Ecclesiastes 11:1-10

THINK: *The ESV SB says of this section: “Wise practices in light of the unpredictability of life.”* Several of these statements are challenging for us to understand; for example, the meaning of v.1 “Cast your bread” is not certain today. However, it may well refer to being generous, as Jesus taught in Luke 14:12-14. Give generously, and God will bless you generously with his provision. Vv.3-4 seem to imply “if you stare too long at the weather, you’ll never get anything done.” How God grants life is a mystery (v.5), but we know he makes everything! And he will judge in his time (v.9), so live with that understanding. Life will bring light and darkness; walk with God!

PRAY: As you look back on 2021, would you say that your actions were characterized by generosity? Did you trust God and give? Ask the Father to enable you to be generous, kind, and compassionate in the new year. Ask him for industriousness in your work, faithful to do your work “heartily as unto the Lord” (Colossians 3:23). Thank God for life itself, and for new life in Jesus Christ! Walk in the light!

Ask God to help us magnify the Lord Jesus in 2022!

Friday, December 31: New Year’s Eve!

Read Ecclesiastes 12:1-14

THINK: Our year and our book, Ecclesiastes, closes on this final day of 2021, with a summary statement: “Remember your Creator.” That is sound advice every day! The book also closes with a final summing up of these wise sayings in vv.13-14. “Fear God and keep his commandments” is the Preacher’s conclusion. God will Judge, and we ought to live with that understanding. Death is coming and so many things in this world are vain (vv.1-8). Humans make many, many books, but many words do not add up to wisdom! Worship God! Walk with God in the obedience of faith. Trust him. **AMEN!**

PRAY: What better way to end a year than this: “I love you, Lord. I worship you, the Creator and Sustainer of life, the Giver of your Son, Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior and Redeemer. I know that you are the Judge of all things, and that nothing escapes your view. Forgive me of all my sin. Fill me with your Holy Spirit. Help me walk in the obedience of faith, aligning my steps with your word. As you love me, so let me love you and others, and live in the light and for the light. Amen.” *Ask God to direct our church into a new era!*

Weekend, January 1-2: Happy New Year!

Read Colossians 3:12-17

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: This weekend we are stepping back into our sermon series entitled *Mystērian*, based on Colossians 1:27, "God chose to make known...this *mystery* (mystērian in Greek), which is **Christ** in you, the hope of glory." In chapter 3, the text talks about *putting off the old self* and *putting on* the new self as if these items are clothes we wear. In this passage, with what were the Colossian believers called to clothe themselves? How were the Colossian believers to do that? What does it mean to let the word of Christ dwell in you richly? *HOW* are we to do the things that we do (vs 17)?

PRAY: Pray through your list of items to "put on." Is there someone you are needing to show compassion to or to forgive? Pray and ask for God's grace to do so. If another person in your sphere of influence comes to mind, intercede for them. Thank God for His sovereign work of grace in your life, loving you and making you holy in Christ. Pray for those preaching on this important text of Scripture.

FAITH GROUP: Spend some time discussing what it means to "put on" compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. If you are comfortable, share how you feel you are doing in these areas? What are some practical ways you could grow in these areas? How can you let Christ's word dwell in you richly? Pray about these things.