

# 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 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](http://faithsf.com). Enjoy your time in God's Word and Prayer!*

## Monday, December 6

Read Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

**THINK:** This is Hebrew poetry, some of the most famous lines in the Old Testament (even The Byrds sang them). Like much Hebrew poetry, the lines are in couplets (or two lines per stanza of poem). What do you think the author is trying to convey with these poetic lines? Note: tomorrow's verses in the next section will show that God is the mover behind these various facets of life ("he has made everything beautiful in its time"). How might these lines of poetry help you in facing difficult life circumstances? What perspective might they give you when things are going extremely well? How do you as a follower of Jesus Christ apply these verses to your life?

**PRAY:** Proverbs 3:5-6, those memorable verses about trusting the Lord with all our heart, come to mind as we ponder this poem. Each and every circumstance of life is an opportunity to trust God. Why don't you do that right now by prayer! Tell God that you will trust him no matter what: in times of life and death, in times of plenty and want, in times of gain and loss. Pray for friends or family who are facing heartbreaking circumstances right now, such as the death of a loved one or a broken relationship. *Father, help me trust you now!*

## Tuesday, December 7

Read Ecclesiastes 3:9-15

**THINK:** Verse 11 is well worth your time to contemplate and take to heart. When God surveyed his creation, he saw that it was good (Genesis 1). What do you think “he has put eternity into man’s heart” implies? It’s a mind-stretching phrase, but at least we can say this: a person’s knowledge now is limited, but our capacity for eternity is unlimited for those who know God and walk with him! Life is God’s gift to us, and we should enjoy its simple gifts, like a good meal or a job well done. Wiersbe: “No matter what the seed looks like, the flower will be beautiful, so give God time to work.”

**PRAY:** A wise person enjoys the present while keeping in mind the vastness of eternity to come. Be thankful for God’s gracious gifts, and especially thankful for Jesus and the open door to eternal life through the cross and resurrection! In difficult times, trust your Heavenly Father to work all things together for our good, in his time and in his way (Romans 8:28). Enjoy the beauty of today and thank God for it! Pray a prayer of thanksgiving and adoration and entrust your day to God. Pray for our season of *Anticipating Change* at FBF.

## Wednesday, December 8

Read Ecclesiastes 3:16-22

**THINK:** Verse 16 reads like a comment written just for today. Wow. It feels like corruption is so great as to be overwhelming. Yet the end result, for man or beast, is death, and the body goes in the ground. Nevertheless, while the earthly body decays, for humans, God’s judgment lies ahead: God will judge the righteous and the wicked. Oh, to be prepared for that day! And we can be, through saving faith in Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. As children of God, by faith in Christ, we can walk by faith and not by sight, trusting our Father, enjoying God’s gifts and guidance and grace, day by day.

**PRAY:** Pray the words of this famous Swedish hymn: “Day by day, and with each passing moment, strength I find to meet my trials here; trusting in my Father’s wise bestowment, I’ve no cause for worry or for fear. He whose heart is kind beyond all measure, gives unto each day what he deems best. Lovingly, it’s part of pain and pleasure, mingling toil with peace and rest.” Amen! Pray for our Wednesday evening activities at South Campus, asking especially for the Spirit’s work in the lives of youth and children.

## Thursday, December 9

Read Ecclesiastes 4:1-8

**THINK:** Once again, the verses read like a commentary on our day. The first verses remind us of the persecuted, suffering church. Oppressed and mistreated, they often suffer in silence. Is there anyone to comfort the oppressed? [But we have read Revelation and know our God comforts them at his throne!] There are so many people striving after...what? All the hard work and effort to make money so that...what? Apart from Christ and a daily walk with God, the striving after things is so empty. It is vanity! A vapor. But a relationship with God in Christ Jesus offers meaning and hope!

**PRAY:** Pray for the oppressed of our world, who suffer at the hands of powerful people and face injustice and persecution. Ask God to give them hope! Admit to God that there is much corruption and sin in our world; confess to God your own struggle with sin. Thank God for salvation in Christ. Ask God to give you meaning in your work and daily life as you live for him and serve him to the best of your ability. Pray for the spread of the gospel to every people group on earth. Ask God to give you grace to be generous, kind, and hopeful.

## Friday, December 10

Read Ecclesiastes 4:9-16

**THINK:** We need each other! We need to work together, live in harmony, help one another--this is better than going it alone. This is part of the beauty of the body of Christ! We don't have to live the Christian life in isolation. We enjoy community with the household of faith. We have brothers and sisters in Christ to help us in the journey with Jesus. Together we can face the enemy and be victorious, full of faith and the Holy Spirit. (Isn't it good to know that Jesus is a friend who sticks closer than a brother?!) Verses 13-16 remind us of the story of Joseph, who went from the poverty of prison in Egypt to the very pinnacle of power, ruling over the land.

**PRAY:** Thank God for his church, the body of Christ. Thank God for the believer(s) who led you to Jesus. Ask God to help you be a friend and "Barnabas" to others who are struggling in their walk. Know of someone who has fallen? Intercede for them, then call and offer your encouragement.

This reminds us to keep praying for the coming months of *Anticipating Change*. Ask God to provide and guide!

## Weekend, December 11-12

### Read Ruth 3

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:** There are customs of the time known in Israel that are certainly unknown and curious to us. Boaz was a possible kinsman-redeemer, a near relative who could marry Ruth and give her an heir to continue the family line. Read more about *levirate marriage* in Deuteronomy 25:5-10. Naomi coached Ruth on approaching Boaz to request his "redemption" in a forthright yet chaste way. Boaz is certainly interested, and honored, but there is one who must be approached first.

We have our own Redeemer who is our kinsman by the grace of God, Jesus Christ! And he had an ancestor from the tribe of Moab, Ruth. The great-grandmother of King David is a vital link in the chain that leads to our Redeemer, Jesus Christ himself. Hallelujah! Praise the Lord.

**PRAY:** Pray for our pastors preaching on this great chapter, unpacking both its mysteries and its marvels, pointing to Jesus. Pray a prayer of thanks to God for your Redeemer, Jesus. Ask God to help you share the message of redemption with those on your personal prayer list.

**FAITH GROUP:** Discuss the strange (to us, not to them) custom of levirate marriage and the kinsman redeemer. How would this have worked in Israelite culture? What do you find fascinating about it? Hard to understand?

**Then discuss the beauty of Christ as our kinsman redeemer, culminating in a time of praise and thanksgiving.**