

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, January 10

Read Matthew 5:27-48

THINK: As the very practical instruction of the Sermon on the Mount continues, Jesus expounds on the 7th Commandment. He makes clear that sexual sin is a matter of the heart. He uses confrontive exaggeration to exhort his followers to take sin seriously: heaven and hell are at stake! Likewise, marriage vows are to be taken seriously, something our culture seems to have forgotten. Christians should have a reputation for keeping their word and for generosity. Going beyond the expected includes even loving our enemies and praying for them. Have you prayed for an enemy today?

PRAY: This teaching of Jesus is amazingly relevant for today, is it not? It is a clarion call to live counter to the way the world lives. Life in the Holy Spirit is radically different from life according to the spirit of the age. Pray for a pure heart, for yourself and also for others in your sphere of influence, whether married or single. Ask God to help you be honest in all your dealings, faithful in marriage, generous for the cause of the kingdom, and loving toward all--even your enemies. Pray right now for someone who might be considered your enemy.

Pray for wisdom for leaders of our West Campus ministry.

Tuesday, January 11

Read Matthew 6:1-24

THINK: Hypocrites live to be seen by others, but their hearts don't match. This is an integrity issue. Give, but not for show; God will know. Pray, but not for show; sincerely call upon your Father in heaven. [This passage does not forbid praying with others - see Acts 4, for example - but rather praying in front of others to be seen.] For 2,000 years, believers have loved the Lord's Prayer: simple, deep, profound. Digest each line and take this model prayer to heart. Then ponder the warning of v. 15. It is deadly serious!

As with the earlier exhortations, don't fast for show, to be seen, but as a matter between you and God. Where is your treasure laid up? What master are you serving?

PRAY: There is so much here! Ask God to give you a pure heart with regard to your motives and integrity. Pray line by line through the model prayer of Jesus, making it your own. Is there anyone you have refused to forgive? Is your treasure invested in heavenly things? Pray about these things as well. *Pray for South elders and Jim Capaldo this weekend as they pursue assessment exercises.*

Wednesday, January 12

Read Matthew 6:25-7:14

THINK: If our perspective on treasure is godly (vv.19-24, yesterday) then fighting anxiety will be much easier. Anxiety plagues millions in our country. How does Jesus exhort us to handle anxiety? Meditate on his profoundly simple examples. Take to heart the promise of v.32 and the command of v.33. Anxiety is a waste of time! How much better to ask, seek, and knock in prayer to our Father! He has good and precious gifts to give us. Note the danger of trying to play God by pronouncing judgment on others. Why is it a danger? What is *golden* about the Golden Rule?

PRAY: "Heavenly Father, thank you that by faith in Christ I have entered the narrow gate of walking with Jesus! Help me to trust - *like the birds and the lilies!* - and not be anxious. Help me please to seek first your kingdom, for you know what I need every day. Teach me to bring my daily requests to you. Forgive me for passing judgment on others; help me rather to love them as you have loved me. Amen."

Thursday, January 13

Read Matthew 7:15-29

THINK: Beware the ravenous wolves! According to Jesus, how do we detect false teachers? In a similar way, what is the evidence that truly Jesus Christ is our Lord? To whom will Jesus (as Judge) say, "Depart, I never knew you!" *Note: as we've seen in the Sermon on the Mount, we have to learn to be discerning and wise. But it's best to leave ultimate judgment to the Lord Jesus.*

We are to be doers of God's word, aligning our lives with him. Doesn't that sound like James 1:22? How does Jesus brilliantly illustrate this alignment? Where is your "house" built? Ponder that.

Why were the listening crowds astonished? How does the Lord's teaching in the Sermon on the Mount astonish you?

PRAY: Ask God to give you a great love for his word, that through the study of his word you would grow more discerning and wiser, detecting false teaching (and observing its bad fruit!) and living by God's truth. Pray for lost people - even religious ones - in your sphere of life who are in danger of hearing, "Depart from me, I never knew you." Tell God how you long to be a doer of his word, building on the solid Rock that is Jesus Christ. *Ask God to help us at Faith keep our ministries at South and West focused on Jesus Christ.*

Friday, January 14

Read Matthew 8:1-17

THINK: Matthew concluded chapter 7 with a reference to the authoritative **teaching** of Jesus. We now begin a section of Matthew that highlights the authoritative **actions/deeds** of Jesus. In three separate encounters Jesus illustrates His authority. How?

the leper

the Centurion's servant

Peter's mother-in-law and the demonized

How did this fulfill prophecy? (see Isaiah 53:4)

PRAY: Express to God your willingness to submit to the authority of Jesus as your Savior and Lord. Express to your Father your amazement at the authority of Jesus displayed in Matthew 8. Thank God for Matthew's emphasis on prophetic fulfillment. Please pray for our Jewish friends that they would come to recognize Jesus as the true Messiah. *Ask God to clearly direct Faith in the coming year!*

Weekend, January 15-16

Read Colossians 4:2-6

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: Think about this: what is the relationship between prayer and watchfulness (or alertness)? Prayer and thanksgiving? Why must God open a door for the word? What do you think that means? "To declare the mystery of Christ" - see 1:27 - *Mysterion!* What a vital prayer for all of us in sharing the gospel: Father, help us to make it clear! Clarity must be our goal. Our posture toward those who don't know Christ as their Savior:

1. Walk in wisdom in relation to them.
2. Make the best use of your time with them.
3. Use gracious, salt-seasoned speech with them.

PRAY: Ask the Father to help you be watchful and alert for the purpose of intercessory prayer. Pray for clarity in your understanding of the gospel of Jesus, so there will be clarity in sharing it with others. Ask God to help you walk wisely, make best use of your time, and speak graciously with those who don't know Christ. Ask God to open doors for the word so you can share it clearly! Then express thanks to God for all he has done for you and for every promise of his word.

FAITH GROUP: Discuss the three elements of a healthy posture toward lost people mentioned in the Scripture text and above. What does each look like: a wise walk, the best use of time, gracious and salty speech. What makes each a challenge? Share examples from your own experience.

Share some names from your Sacred 7 lists and pray for lost people and our relationship to them. Ask God to open doors for his word!