

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 24

Read Matthew 11:7-30

THINK: Speaking of John the Baptist, Jesus quotes an OT prophecy, Malachi 3:1. What is he telling his listeners (and us!) about John? Why is the one who is least in the kingdom greater than he? The violence Jesus refers to may well be John's arrest and coming execution by Herod. Jesus then exposes the hypocrisy of the Jewish elites who opposed both John and him. He also calls out the cities who have received his presence and power but refused to repent and believe. His pronouncement of judgment is humbling for us to consider. Ponder awhile vv.28-30 and memorize them. How does Jesus (who has just pronounced judgment!) describe himself?

PRAY: Jesus: "Gentile and lowly in heart." What a powerful truth. What is the prerequisite for that easy yoke and light burden? Faith! Express to God right now your faith in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. Praise God that following Jesus is an easy yoke - think of the alternative, the judgment pronounced on the unrepentant! Ask God to give you grace today to follow Jesus as his disciple. *Pray for our West Campus ministry. Pray for your Sacred 7.*

Tuesday, January 25

Read Matthew 12:1-21

THINK: The Pharisees question the action of the disciples, revealing their legalistic view of the Torah. But Jesus knows his Bible better than they do! Again, Jesus quotes from Hosea 6:6, “I desire mercy, and not sacrifice” and declares his Lordship over the Sabbath as the Messiah. Jesus performed an amazing miracle by healing the man with the withered hand. Did that please the legalistic Pharisees? Matthew quotes Isaiah 42:1-4 (our text in a few weeks!). Why? Hope for the Gentiles and promise to the bruised reeds: Amen!

PRAY: Jesus was again asserting His authority with the title “lord of the Sabbath.” He was also exposing the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. Aren’t we glad that the goal of God’s word is to reveal his mercy toward us (in Christ Jesus) and to call us to mercy toward others in his name? To whom would God have you show mercy today? Pray for them. Praise God that Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath. Tell God about your “bruises” and ask him for healing and grace. Pray for our missionaries who are declaring the gospel to the Gentiles. *Pray for our South Campus ministry, and for this period of assessment.*

Wednesday, January 26

Read Matthew 12:22-45

THINK: After the healing of the demonized man, the question of the people, “Can this be the Son of David?” underscores Matthew’s purpose in his gospel. Yes, this is he! Once again Matthew exposes the Pharisees hypocrisy. Jesus gives a rather lengthy defense and then warns them about an unpardonable sin. What was that sin? He reveals their careless words and bad fruit, prophecies his death and resurrection, warning them of judgment to come.

PRAY: Given the context, blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is to attribute to Satan what is accomplished by the power of the Holy Spirit. If they continued along this path and never acknowledged who Jesus was, they could not be forgiven. This sin is committed today only by unbelievers who deliberately and unchangeably reject God’s call to repent. Pray for those you know who need to repent and believe the Gospel. *Rejoice in God’s abundant provision for our Faith finances!*

Thursday, January 27

Read Matthew 12:46-13:23

THINK: Is Jesus dissing his mother and siblings here? What point is he making? What is the point of the parable of the Sower? Summarize the explanation Jesus gives for speaking in parables. Does this explanation surprise you? Why are the disciples blessed? Do you believe your heart and life are “good soil”? Do you sense that God is blessing your life with kingdom fruitfulness?

PRAY: Rejoice that God has called believers into his family. Thank God for being your Father, the Lord Jesus your “big brother.” Ask God to prepare the lives of those on your *Sacred 7* list as good soil. Pray for opportunities to sew the word of God into their lives. Express to God your desire to be fruitful. *Anticipating Change:* “*Father grant us courage, vision, and unity for this crucial hour!*”

Friday, January 28

Read Matthew 13:24-46

THINK: Read the entire section of Scripture first, since all of these parables are related by a kingdom motif. How does Jesus explain the parable of the weeds sown by the enemy? How does the mustard seed parable relate; the one of the leaven hidden in the flour? Did you find the gospel to be a treasure, a pearl, worth all? Spend some time pondering these parables. What do you learn about the kingdom? What do you learn about Jesus as a teacher? Write a response here:

PRAY: Thank God for calling you into his kingdom family. Pray for our church, and for The Church (around the world) to be protected from the “weeds” that would damage or destroy her. Pray for our church leaders who have the responsibility to care for the flock. Rejoice that you have received such a great treasure as Christ! Ask God to give you a greater and greater love for Christ, his gospel, and the church. *Pray for discernment for our Elder Council and grace for assessment (South) and planning (West).*

Weekend, January 29-30

Read Isaiah 40:1-31

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: Anyone who remembers the film *Chariots of Fire* recalls the vivid scene where Eric Liddel, who had refused to run on Sunday in the Olympic games, instead is reading from a pulpit in a grand church verses from this extraordinary and glorious chapter, Isaiah 40. "Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket" the future missionary to China reads, as he extols the glory and majesty of God, while exhausted runners of the steeplechase fall and stumble and cross the finish line in defeat. In this chapter, an exiled and defeated Judah is to take comfort in who God is, in his glory and rule and reign and supremacy. "Behold your God!" is a good message for us as well in these tumultuous days. Memorize vv.30-31. Take them to heart!

PRAY: Pray a prayer of praise (for who God is), of thanksgiving (for what God has done for you), and of hope (for his precious promises of victory). Pray for our pastors, launching into a new series on these marvelous chapters in Isaiah's prophecy. Ask God to help you mount up with wings like an eagle!

FAITH GROUP: Discuss how a knowledge of the glory of God and his promises helps us to soar in days of pandemic, division, rebellion, and doubt. What in this chapter struck you most deeply, given your current life circumstances? Share. Pray.