

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 faithsf.com. Enjoy your time in God's Word and Prayer!

Monday, May 16

Read Luke 1

THINK: What was Dr. Luke's goal in writing this account? What remarkable promise did the angel Gabriel make to Zechariah? To whom did Gabriel then make another astonishing promise? Who would this child be? What miracle will bring this about? Memorize v. 37. What stands out to you as you reflect on Mary's song? Why did Zechariah and Elizabeth name their son John? From Zechariah's prophecy, what will be the mission and calling of John? Read Isaiah 40:3 and Malachi 3:1. *Ponder these remarkable things.*

PRAY: Using the Song of Mary and the Prophecy of Zechariah, pray a prayer of praise and thanksgiving for all that God did in fulfilling his promises and sending John (to prepare the way) and Jesus (to be our Savior as the Son of God). Exalt God for his attributes you find in these lines, like mercy, strength, and holiness, as well as for the Lord's actions, like scattering the proud and lifting up the humble. How are these actions of God of benefit to you? Tell him now! Ask the Lord to use these *Christmas in May* readings to encourage you.

Pray for the kingdom impact of our West Campus ministry.

Tuesday, May 17

Read Luke 2

THINK: What action of Caesar in Rome initiated the series of events that led to the birth of Christ in Bethlehem? What prophecy did this fulfill? Ponder the fact that God chose shepherds in a field to hear the news of the birth of Jesus. How did the shepherds respond to seeing the child just as the angels had told them? What do we know about Simeon? How do Simeon's words highlight the reality that the birth of Jesus fulfilled many prophecies? What is revealed to Mary about the future death of her son? Who was Anna? What additional event caused Mary to treasure her thoughts and memories of this amazing child? *Like Mary, ponder and treasure these things!*

PRAY: We're celebrating the birth of Jesus in May! Our perspective now is different than that of the shepherds, Simeon, and Anna. Put yourself in their sandals! Reflect on what the coming of this child meant to them. Then pray a prayer of thanksgiving to God for sending his son to be our Redeemer and Deliverer. Ask God to help you "treasure" the coming of God's son "in the flesh" throughout this week. *Pray for our newly forming Young Adult Fellowship at South.*

Wednesday, May 18

Read Luke 3

THINK: What purpose for our writer, Dr. Luke, and his readers do the details in vv. 1-2 serve? What was John's message? What OT prophecy did this fulfill? What do you think it means to "bear fruits in keeping with repentance?" How did John make that practical? According to John, how will the Messiah's ministry be different than his own? What signaled the transition from John to Jesus? Take to heart the statement of God the Father about God the Son--beloved! Dr. Luke traces the lineage of Jesus all the way back to Adam.

PRAY: "Heavenly Father, thank you for sending your son Jesus to be our Savior and Redeemer. I trust in Jesus with all my heart and thank you also for sending your Spirit to live in me. Please help me live a life pleasing to you, bearing true fruits of repentance in keeping with my new life in Christ. Help me see the needs of others around me and respond with Christ-like love. Help me also to be content with what you provide and not live for worldly things. Just as you love Jesus your son, your beloved, so also you love me! I am amazed by that grace. I love you, my Father and my God. Amen." *Thank God for providing all of our financial needs at Faith as our faithful Provider!*

Thursday, May 19

Read Luke 4

THINK: The account of the temptation is fascinating! How does Jesus respond to each of the devil's temptations? What can we learn from this? The devil also "uses" Scripture; how does his use differ from the responses of Jesus? Once again, at Nazareth, Jesus uses Scripture: he reads from Isaiah 61 in the synagogue. What makes the assembly turn against Jesus? At Capernaum how did the demon recognize who Jesus was? What amazed the people about Jesus? What message was Jesus sent to preach?

PRAY: Ask God to help you memorize Scripture (Psalm 119:11) so that you can answer temptation with truth. Ask God also to help you use Scripture accurately, not distorting its meaning as the devil and cults do. This requires the careful study of God's word. Rejoice that Jesus came to preach good news to needy people like us and that by God's grace we have become part of God's kingdom family. Praise God that he is more powerful than Satan and that he has greater authority. *Pray for Faith to grow in this season of change.*

Friday, May 20

Read Luke 5

THNK: Imagine this remarkable scene as described by Dr. Luke. Why did Simon (Peter) respond to the great catch with such humility and confession? Would you have done the same? Imagine again, this time that you have a horrible skin disease or that you are paralyzed and that the Lord Jesus heals you completely. What remarkable power! What love! Meditate on the statement, "...the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." What did Jesus do after these periods of exertion and ministry? What ought we learn from that? How did Jesus explain his meal at the tax collector's home? What is the lesson of the bridegroom and the wineskins?

PRAY: Jesus had the habit of going off by himself to pray. If he did that, certainly we would be wise to do the same. Our prayers should include confession (like Simon's did), thanksgiving (for the healing and wholeness Jesus has given to us), adoration (for the great power and authority that belong to God alone), and supplication (asking God on our own behalf or for others). Express to God how much you love him! *Pray for others in your sphere of influence who do not know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior and King – your Sacred 7!*

Weekend, May 21-22

Read Isaiah 58:1-59:13

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: We begin reading in Isaiah 58 and the word *hypocrisy* comes to mind. The people were outwardly religious – “*We fast! We draw near!*” – but in daily life they were oppressive to workers, self-seeking, quarrelsome and violent. That fasting will get you nowhere with God (v.4b). What kind of behavior should genuine, humble fasting produce? How will God respond to those heartfelt actions of humble faith? How would you like to “ride on the heights of the earth” today? Wouldn't that be marvelous? Ah, but sin gets in the way of such freedom and grace (59:1ff.).

PRAY: Pray for our worship as the body of Christ this Sunday! Pray for our pastors as they preach, for our worship to be deep and heartfelt and genuine, for our prayers to connect with God as we trust in him! Ask God to be at work, filling us with the Holy Spirit and using us to make kingdom impact in our neighborhoods and community. Will Sioux Falls be different because we are here? Pray that it will!

FAITH GROUP: Read through 58:6-12 as a group. Discuss what kind of impact a group of Christ-following, praying, worshipping, Spirit-filled Christians can have in their community. Has it been a while since your Faith Group took some kind of action together? Consider something you might do to put your faith in action in the coming weeks. Need suggestions? Pastor Dave Vilhauer is often aware of such needs, as are Greg Friesner (Care Team) and Matt Thompson (Share Team), as well as JoAnne Tolliver (Kingdom Opportunities).