

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, January 16

Read Genesis 27-28

THINK: The cultural and family complexities continue. Today our legal system would not allow such a deception to stand; however, we are reading of a much different time. Ultimately, this is God's providence fulfilling all that had been prophesied: "the older will serve the younger." How did the two prophetic "blessings" to Jacob and Esau differ? What was Esau's response? How did God speak to Jacob when he had a rock for a pillow at Bethel (the house of God)?

PRAY: Life is full of twists and turns, and ultimately, we must trust in God and bend our knee to his power, plan, and authority. Submit yourself and your family to God. Pray Proverbs 3:5-6, asking our Heavenly Father to strengthen your trust in him and help you to lean on him for guidance and grace. He WILL direct your path! *Pray for our FBF Elder Council. These are crucial days for wise shepherding of our church family as we "Anticipate Change."* *Pray for our Annual Celebration, January 29th at 4 pm at South Campus.*

Tuesday, January 17

Read Genesis 29-30

THINK: *What in the world is God doing?* You might be asking that question! Laban's deception of Jacob, Jacob marrying sisters, conceiving of children by the servants: these are all things we find curious and even immoral. One of the Bible's clear lessons is "all have sinned" and yet God works powerfully through flawed people. God gives Jacob 12 sons and creates 12 tribes. God gives Joseph as a Deliverer for his people Israel; he also prefigures the ultimate Deliverer Jesus Christ. See the hand of God working through the sins and waywardness of people and TRUST HIM. He is at work.

PRAY: "Heavenly Father, through these stunning turns of events in Genesis you were creating a people for yourself, a people through whom you would send your Son Jesus as the Savior and Redeemer. I trust you, I trust in your hand of providence, and I trust you also in the twists and turns of my own life." *Thank God for our worship teams and tech ministry (computer, audio and visual) who so powerfully lead us into God's presence for worship each week.*

Wednesday, January 18

Read Genesis 31

THINK: The drama of Jacob's quest for a wife from his father's kinsmen, which brought him not one but two wives and a long sojourn to get them, now comes to a close. How did God convince Jacob that it was time to leave Laban? What did Rachel do by stealth as they prepared to depart? What kept Laban from trying to harm Jacob? How was the impasse resolved? What do we learn from their covenant and the names they gave the place? Reflect on areas of your life currently where you aren't sure what God is doing yet are trusting him to guide you by his grace and power.

PRAY: Do you trust God to lead you and guide you through the long-life journey? Express your trust in the Lord. Ask God for his guidance (you might pray the words of the great hymn, Guide Me O Thou Great Jehovah). Thank God and praise him for his willingness to enter into a covenant with you by faith in Jesus Christ. *Pray for the pastors and staff of FBF. Ask God to give them a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; that they would be strengthened with power through his Spirit (Eph. 1:17; 3:16).*

Thursday, January 19

Read Genesis 32-33

THINK: The departure of Jacob to return home prompts a concerning question: How will Esau receive him? After all, Jacob had stolen his brother's birthright. What news heightens Jacob's worry about his brother? What did Jacob pray? And how did he plan? With whom was Jacob wrestling? How do you know? After all of Jacob's preparations, how did Esau receive him? As you reflect on these two chapters, what lessons of faith ought we to take to heart? Jot them down so you will remember.

PRAY: Prayer is often a kind of wrestling with God! We are asking for things when God wants to give us HIMSELF above all else! What do you need to "wrestle" with God about today? Tell him what is on your heart and mind. Give him your worries and fears. Ask for his grace and peace and blessing. *Pray for your neighbors. "Love your neighbor as yourself." Pray for opportunities to make connections and ways to show God's love in practical ways.*

Friday, January 20

Read Genesis 34-35

THINK: This chapter ought to fill us with grief. The rape of Dinah and the bitter deceit and retribution of her brothers is nothing to celebrate. The name of God does not appear in this chapter. Yet, in the divine plan of God, the sins of men occasion God's direction of his children and they do not settle among the Canaanites at Shechem. They move on to Bethel, where Jacob becomes Israel. In ch. 35 God cleanses the people of idols, protects them from harm, and we observe the deaths of Rachel and Isaac.

PRAY: The hymn writer Wm Cowper wrote the lines, "God moves in a mysterious way, his wonders to perform; he plants his footsteps in the sea and rides upon the storm." Acknowledge to God that at times his ways are a mystery, but that you trust his hand to guide you through the perils of the present day. *We thank you for your regular, faithful giving so that salaries, missionary support, operations, and regular programs can be provided. Ask God to provide for our church in 2023 as we "Anticipate Change."*

Weekend, January 21-22

Read 1 Corinthians 10:1-22

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: Paul begins with imagery from the time of Moses and the wilderness wanderings (Exodus). As you carefully read this section, jot down here all the things we are NOT to do. There are quite a few! Don't miss any.

Memorize v. 13. It is a crucial help in daily Christian living. What is the warning Paul gives to those who are making offerings to idols?

PRAY: God offers to us ways of escape when temptation comes! Isn't that good news? Ask God to help you discern those ways of escape and thereby turn away from temptation and avoid sin. Pray through the list you made of things we are not to do. Ask God for grace to obey him and walk in the obedience of faith, experiencing the great joy and blessing of knowing God and walking with Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. Pray for our pastors preaching on this passage on Sunday.

FAITH GROUP: Why do we not always take advantage of the ways of escape God grants us? How can we be more discerning of temptation and those ways of escape? Do you find it frightening that some people in serving idols are actually serving demons? The instruction regarding idolatry is not to be taken lightly; it is actually a crucial teaching for spiritual warfare!

Pray for one another with regard to this warfare!