

Faith Baptist Fellowship Bible Reading Initiative for November 14 to December 4

Reading Through the Letters of John, Part II

We recommend you have a notebook and pen for answering questions and recording your thoughts and insights. Bring this notebook with you to Faith Group for discussions and prayer times. Select a quiet place and consistent time to read and pray. We also recommend you pray for a moment before you read God's word and ask for his illumination by the power of the Holy Spirit as you read. Be prepared to think carefully about what the author is conveying in the passage, what God's word is saying, and how you might apply it.

Abbreviations: TAI – *Think About It* PP – *Prayer Point*

Monday, November 14 – I John 4:10-12

TAI: In both our Bible readings and study of Romans we have studied *propitiation*. It is a crucial concept in understanding the benefits of the cross for believers in Christ. What is it? How do *propitiation* and *love* relate to one another? How does God's love for us lead to our love for one another? To others "seeing" God through us?

PP: Thank God for the cross of Christ, and for his love for you in Christ. Thank him that through the cross, his wrath toward you has become favor. Ask him to let others see his glory and love through you. Continue to pray for our church to be a community of love for one another. Pray for those who don't know Christ on your Sacred 7 list.

Tuesday, November 15 – I John 4:13-15

TAI: How does God confirm to us his presence in us and our abiding in him? (Have you been noticing how much overlap there has been between our study of Romans 8 – such as the indwelling of the Holy Spirit – and our readings in I John?) Do you *testify* to others, verbally and by your life of faith in Christ, that God the Father has sent his Son Jesus to be the Savior to the world? What assurance does this give you, if you *confess* (to God and others) that Jesus is the Son of God?

PP: Pray for yourself, for your Faith Group, and our church that we would be bold to testify and confess to others of Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Savior of the world. Ask God to fill you with the Holy Spirit and help you abide in him, day by day and hour by hour. Pray for the Evangelism Team of our church (part of our Running Group of ministries) and Pastor Moe as he leads them, that they would both inspire us to share Christ and be bold in sharing the gospel. *Pray for the upcoming Prelude to Christmas outreach.*

Wednesday, November 16 – I John 4:16-18

TAI: God is love. Take a few minutes to "sit and stew" on that profound truth today. Have you come "to know and to believe the love that God has for us"? Is your love for God settled, so that you no longer have to fear judgment? How/why do you think "perfect love casts out fear"? How does the gospel of Jesus Christ set us free from fear and settle for us the issues of punishment and judgment?

PP: Pray for those who live in constant fear of the future and what happens after death. Ask God to help you tell others how the gospel sets us free from these fears. Praise God that he is love, and that through Jesus Christ we learn the character of true love. Continue to pray for our church to be a loving community of Christ-followers.

Thursday, November 17 – I John 4:19-21

TAI: Why does “God love” and “brother hate” prove a person is living a lie? Why is it so important that “whoever loves God must also love his brother”? Reflect on whether you feel hatred toward anyone, and why. What would God have you do about that situation? As thoughts come to mind, take a moment and jot them down, so you won’t forget.

PP: Pray for God’s help in loving people in your life who are hard to love. Tell God about it, and ask for his grace. Ask God to show you how to seek healing in broken relationships. Ask for God’s help to live out the radical love commands of I John. Rejoice that God first loved us. Ask God to help you love others authentically.

Friday, November 18 – I John 4:7-21

TAI: Because the love section of I John 4 is so vitally important for living the Christian life and living in community as believers, today we are reviewing that entire section. Rather than piece by piece, read the entire passage. What is most challenging for you? Are there any changes God would have you make? Read it as if it is a personal message from God to you, slowly. Make notes of any thoughts which come to mind. Apply the gospel to your “love” life.

PP: Pray through any notes you’ve written as a result of slowly reading this passage. Did anyone come to mind? Pray for them by name. As we have already done in this section, pray for your “love life” as a believer, and pray for our church to be a loving household of faith. Pray for courage to seek healing in any broken relationships God brings to your mind.

Weekend, November 19-20 – Romans 8

TAI: This Sunday marks the conclusion of our series of messages on Romans 8. Have you done any memorizing? Review. As you read through the chapter one last time, reflect on lessons you have learned and what God has been teaching you. Make a personal commitment to “own” this chapter as your own, now, so that when hard things happen in your life, you will have this firm foundation for your faith and remain unshaken. *Believe it now for application later!*

PP: Rejoice in the truth that the Holy Spirit of God dwells in each believer. Thank God that his Spirit dwells in you! Praise God that as a believer, nothing can separate you from his great love in Christ Jesus. Make it very personal. Pray through the entire chapter, and insert your name where appropriate. Thank God that in Christ you are called, justified, and glorified by God. Ask God to help you live as an heir, like Jesus, filled with the Spirit, conformed to his image, confident in hope and steadfast in every circumstance of life.

Monday, November 21 – I John 5:1-5

TAI: Can you say that you love whoever has been born of God? How do we know that “love” here does not refer to some kind of wishy-washy, sentimental, romantic notion of love? How does obedience to God’s commands confirm that we truly love God? What does that look like in real life? How have you been challenged by it recently? Do you find God’s commands burdensome? Why or why not?

PP: Ask God to help you build a healthy concept of love, one more biblical rather than defined by the world. Confess areas where you have disobeyed God’s commands, or ignored them. Ask for God’s help to truly love his children by obeying his commands. If you sometimes find God’s commands burdensome, tell him so, and ask for his help.

Tuesday, November 22 – I John 5:1-5 Repeating the same verses as yesterday.

TAI: Do you feel like you are an “overcomer”? What do you think John means by overcoming the world? How does *our faith* bring the victory that overcomes the world? How does the new birth (“everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world”) relate to this? Practically speaking, where in your life have you found “overcoming” difficult lately?

PP: Rejoice in the new birth God has given you by faith in Jesus Christ. Admit to God areas of your life where you have found “overcoming” very difficult lately. Acknowledge the help of the Holy Spirit and ask God for grace to overcome the world. Pray for others who may be struggling with this. Ask God to help you preach the gospel to yourself.

Wednesday, November 23 – I John 5:6-12

TAI: What do you think John means when he says Jesus came by water and the blood? How does the Spirit “testify” and how are the “three” in agreement? This will require a bit of pondering. How is the testimony of God greater than the testimony of men? What is God’s testimony? Do you believe the testimony of God regarding his Son? What if you didn’t?

PP: Ask for God’s help in discerning the meaning of John’s words in this paragraph. Ask God to help you believe his testimony with your whole heart. Pray for friends on your Sacred 7 list who have not believed what God has revealed about his Son, Jesus Christ. Express thanks to God that the Spirit is the truth-confirmer regarding Jesus Christ, and that by the Spirit’s work you have believed this message with your whole heart.

Thursday, November 24 – Thanksgiving Day! I John 5:6-12

TAI: Have you ever memorized I John 5:11,12? This is a wonderful passage to memorize, and we recommend that you take some “Thanksgiving moments” right now to do so! It is only two lines long, and easy to remember. Have you received the gift of eternal life through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ? This life-transformation guarantees that you have life: the life of God alive in you (the Holy Spirit!) and the promise of an extraordinary forever life with God. But don’t think that you can have this forever life apart from personal, life-changing faith in Jesus Christ.

PP: Praise God for his grace! Thank God for the gift of eternal life through Christ. Pray for some of your friends and family who do not have the Son of God and therefore do not have the gift of eternal life (your Sacred 7 list is a great place to begin). *Pray for the outreach of the upcoming Prelude to Christmas.* Today, thank God for **ALL** his wonderful gifts to you!

Friday, November 25 – I John 5:13-21 *We'll stay on these verses over the weekend also.*

TAI: What is the grand promise regarding prayer in this text? Is there any qualification to this sweeping promise? According to John, when God hears us we know that we...*what?* How does “according to his will” help us understand times when we’ve prayed really hard about something and been disappointed with God’s answer? Take some time to ponder what John means by “sin that leads to death” – what do you suppose that is?

PP: Thank God for his tremendous promises regarding prayer in Scripture. Submit your life to his will. Tell him that you will trust him no matter what, because you know that whatever is the will of God is for the glory of God. Ask him to help you understand these verses regarding sins that lead to death and sins that don’t lead to death (keep in mind that this is tough even for well-trained Bible scholars to understand with certainty).

Weekend, November 26-27 – I John 5:13-21

TAI: While it is true that believers still struggle with sin, the new birth means that believers are not slaves to sin, bound to “keep on sinning” or making sin an ongoing habit. By God’s grace and power we are protected—from whom? What is the great difference between those who “are from God” and those who are of the world? How does our faith in Christ keep us from idols?

PP: Exalt God for his greatness and power and that, because of his superiority to the devil, we do not need to fear. Ask God to help you be free from the sins which seem to easily beset you. Rejoice that by grace you are “in Christ Jesus” and have eternal life. Ask God for grace to help you flee from idols, with discernment to understand when idols are beckoning you.

Monday, November 28 – 2 John *Read the whole, short book each day we think about it.*

TAI: Reflect on this: who do you suppose is “the elect lady and her children”? What seems to be the key word in 2 John, repeated several times in the greeting? Why do you think John repeats this word again and again? Once again, John ties together love for one another with truly loving God and obeying him. How does this apply to your life? To our church?

PP: Ask God to give you a great love for biblical truth. Rejoice that Jesus himself is “the way, the truth, and the life” and that he has given us truth in his word, the Bible. Thank him for his grace, mercy and peace, offered to us in truth and love. Pray for your children (and if you don’t have children, the children of our church) to walk in truth. Ask God to help us love one another.

Tuesday, November 29 – 2 John

TAI: How does John define a “deceiver” here in this passage? Are there still false teachers and cults today teaching error about Jesus? Can you think of any examples? What are some practical ways we should “watch ourselves” concerning cults and false teachers? [Important note: we hope to have a J-term class in Faith U. concerning cults and their teachings.] How do reading the Bible, thinking about it, and praying it help us “abide” in the teachings of Christ? What limits should we place on “welcoming” cultists/false teachers into our lives?

PP: Do you know anyone caught up in a cult group or group teaching errors about Jesus? Pray for God’s Spirit to convict them and guide them into the truth. Pray for our church to grow strong in our understanding of biblical truth and sound doctrine. Ask God to help you grow in Christ and be discerning with regard to error. Thank God for the “complete joy” of fellowship with other believers and camaraderie in the gospel.

Wednesday, November 30 – 3 John *Once again, read the entire short book each day.*

TAI: Consider v. 4: Does it surprise you that “children walking in the truth” would be such a source of great joy for John? Which is more important to you, that your children (whether truly your family members or of the family of God) are walking in the truth or that they are “successful” in their endeavors? What ministry does Gaius and others in his church seem to be carrying out? Do we have a ministry similar to that in our church?

PP: Pray for our children (again, whether by birth or by “new birth” in the church) to be faithfully walking in the truth of Christ. Pray for “prodigal” children you may know, asking God to draw them powerfully to himself. Pray for our ministry of blessing gospel workers with encouragement, support, and partnership. Pray for the Voss’s, for example, raising support right now for a return to Papua New Guinea in January (or as soon as possible).

Thursday, December 1 – 3 John

TAI: What are the problems with Diotrephes? What seems to be happening between Gaius and Diotrephes? Take a moment to write a brief profile of what Diotrephes was doing and how it was harming the church. What does John seem to be saying he will do when he comes to visit this church? Read Matthew 18:15-20. Does church discipline apply to this man Diotrephes?

PP: Ask God to protect our church from those who would do harm to it, whether on the outside (like the false teachers mentioned in 2 John) or the inside (like Diotrephes). Ask God to keep you from committing the sins of Diotrephes, such as putting himself first, refusing to accept authority, and talking in a gossipy or slanderous way about other believers. Pray that we will always joyfully welcome faithful gospel workers and send them on their way “in a manner worthy of God.”

Friday, December 2 – 3 John

TAI: It seems that John feared Diotrephes would refuse to welcome was Demetrius, who perhaps was John's carrier for his letter. What are the two kinds of "imitation" John is speaking of in these verses? How do these forms of imitation relate to our walk with God? What do these final thoughts convey about John's reputation among the believers? Why do you think John writes in such a veiled way (the 'friends' greet you; greet the 'friends')? Is there a parallel today?

PP: Ask God to help you imitate good. Ask him also to help you avoid imitating evil. Ask God to give you discernment concerning people who behave like Diotrephes. Pray that in time God would grant you the kind of reputation for truth which was true of John. Pray earnestly for persecuted Christians, who are today suffering for their faith in Christ. Many Christian workers face the threat of harm by those who vigorously oppose the gospel. Pray for their boldness, courage, and faith; and pray for your own!

Weekend, December 3-4 – Reread 2 John and 3 John

TAI and PP: All the letters of John give insight into how we should pray for our church and other gospel-preaching churches. 1 John emphasizes love and the radical love of God and one another characterized by obeying God's commands. 2 John spoke of being devoted to the truth of Jesus Christ and avoiding false teaching and error. 3 John warns against those who stir up trouble by their self-centeredness and sin, and affirms those who love gospel workers and support and encourage them. Pray for the gospel workers we support, whether world-wide, in the U.S., or locally. Pray with earnestness for the Prelude to Christmas outreach, including the speaker (Beth Nagel), all who work and serve, and every guest. Pray for Christ to be magnified and for the Holy Spirit to work in power for the glory of God and the gospel.