

Weekly reading
guide to help
grow our
understanding of
what it means to
become complete
disciples of Jesus.

Summer 2021

Summer Reading

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Colossians



FBC Clinton

Summer Reading, 2021

Friend:

If you're reading this you've decided to engage in First Baptist, Clinton's "Summer Reading" and I'm glad.

It's my hope and prayer as you listen to messages on Sunday morning (preached from the recommended "Summer Reading" for the following week) and continue to search, pray, seek God, and work to change, you'll find more, lasting, and joyous growth in your relationship with our Living Lord Jesus.

I know what I'm asking is out-of-the-ordinary. But we are not living in ordinary times! And the Church is at a crisis point. There is no longer a discernible difference in the moral beliefs or the external behaviors of people who call themselves "Christians" and those who consider themselves irreligious. What does that mean? It means you are as likely to be cussed at by a deacon as by a pagan. It means you're as likely to catch a born-again believer looking at porn as you are a person who claims no faith. It means people claiming Jesus are just as likely to cheat on their taxes, steal from their workplace, cut corners on a project, and abuse their children as people who say, "God is not real."

Brothers and Sisters: this sort of "church" is not acceptable for this shepherd. No, I don't want a church filled with SNL's "Church Lady" or prudish moralists who are only concerned with dotting the "i"s

and crossing the “t”s of proper behavior. Jesus desires to change us, inside and out.

Summer Reading is only a first step in a process of learning to see and then do what Jesus himself did. I’m on this journey myself.

We’ve been summoned to it by God himself. We’ve been gifted it by the Lord Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross and resurrection. And we’ve been enabled to live it by the Holy Spirit within us. We are without excuse.

And now, you have an opportunity to choose to move beyond the oxymoronic Sunday only Christianity. Will you? Peter encourages us to “Work hard” at this sort of life (2 Peter 1:5). By God’s help, I will.

Thank you for joining me.

Summer Reading List

Needed: A Bible, a pen/pencil and a notebook (or a digital means to record your thoughts)

Why? To help your life find its center, to enable you through encouragement and deep wisdom, to live the life God intends you to live.

How? Slowly. Only read one chapter a day.

1. Slowly read the chapter in the morning.
2. When an image grabs your attention or a “light” goes on or you go, “What?!” **Stop**.
3. Write down that thought word-for-word. If it’s a verse or a paragraph, write it down. Before you read anymore.
4. Then, **pray**. Ask God, “**Lord, help me to _____.**” The blank will be determined by the idea that caught you. If it were a **question**, something that puzzled you, ask God to help you **understand** it. If it were a **truth**, ask God to help you **live into** it. If it were something joyous and revealing, ask God to help you to live your life in the light of that truth.
5. Repeat this process until you finish the chapter.

To fully saturate your mind with God’s word to you: read the same chapter again at mid-day. This time a different truth may present itself. If it does, just like before, write it down, exactly as it appears in the text. And then pray a similar prayer, “Spirit, help me to _____.”

Allow the words, the truths presented to steep in your mind.
For the afternoon.

In the evening, **work through the questions** for that day. Yep. The same chapter.

Keep reading. Keep writing. Keep praying. Watch what God does!

I'm not presenting you with something new. This practice has been helpful to God's people from the beginning of God's people (Joshua 1)

About the Questions:

These questions/ideas are intended to be used alongside your reading in Colossians (one chapter a day this week). **They are not intended to replace what you discover as you read (slowly) each day.** If time doesn't allow, skip this latter part (these questions) not the first.

Colossians

Read Chapter 1:

For whom are you praying (9-12)?

_____ Is that person's
(including your own!) faith part of your prayer? ____

Why or why not?

Big Picture: the preeminence of Jesus is a major theme in Colossians (i.e., He can handle anything)

- Jesus is Supreme--vv. 15-20 are some of the richest words in the Bible describing who Jesus is [creator, savior, the power

that holds the universe together, leader of the church, the first to be resurrected, pre-existent, the very Person of God, et al.]

- As you consider all these attributes, for which aspect of the Lord Jesus are you most thankful? _____
 - Is there one of these facets of the risen Christ you **need** more than the others right now? _____. Why?
-
- What do you think Paul means when he says, “*Christ in you, the hope of glory*” (v. 27)?
 - ⇒ If Christ **does** live in you, how are **you** living out the hope He brings?

Read Chapter 2

Paul commends these churches in *how disciplined you are and how firm your faith in Christ is* (v. 5). To be *disciplined* is to be in “**effective training toward a goal.**” The goal of a Jesus-follower is to look, act, think like Jesus did (“Christlikeness”). *Faith in Christ* means “**fully trusting him**, leaning your **whole weight** into His promises, His life.”

- How are you doing on the *disciplined* front?

Do you have a plan? If so, what is it?

- Are you moving toward Christ-likeness? If so, how?

⇒ How is your “full trust” in Jesus reflected in your life (finances, time, commitment to serve others, etc.).

vv. 6-8 explain some steps we might take to live our faith more effectively.

⁸ *See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy* is part of Paul’s counsel to these young believers.

- Knowing that the average adult spends over six hours a day looking at screens (TV, computer, pad, mobile, etc.) how might you ensure that you are not being held *captive* by the thinking of the world?

Action Step: What will you do this week to remedy some of those habits that need to be dropped/altered? I will stop/start

Now that you've freed up some time (see **Action Step** above), how might you put your roots down into Christ so you can draw up nourishment from Christ (v. 7) on a daily basis?

Action Step: What will you do today to ensure you are growing in Christ? I will _____

*vv. 20-23--regulations and rules might look good or even be good for some in growing faith, but they cannot save you and, apart from the Spirit, they are dead.

Read Chapter 3

Paul talks about *killing* those things that are not part of a life *in Christ* (v. 5). Later he says *rid* yourself of others. He mentions *sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language* (v. 8).

- With what on these lists do you struggle most?

- **Big Truth:** Knowing that the best way not to do something is not to try not to do it but to substitute something else in its place, how might you begin to starve that wicked action/desire to death today?

In v. 13 Paul advises *Bear with each other and forgive one another.... Forgive as the Lord forgave you.*

- Who, in your life, do you need help *bearing* with?

- To whom do you need to practice forgiveness?

- How will you express that forgiveness today?

What does it mean to be *called to peace*?

- For what are you thankful (vv. 15, 17) today?

- Whom (other than God) can you tell about your gratitude?

Read Chapter 4

In almost every letter, Paul includes pointed, practical advice about living your current life the way God intends (3:18-4:6) [Pastor Blake talked about one of these pieces of advice on Sunday morning]. In 4:2-4 Paul is encouraging/seeking prayer from these believers. He recommends they be *watchful* and *thankful* when they pray.

- How might you ensure these two words are descriptive of your prayer life/times?
- What will you do differently today as you spend time with Jesus?

Paul's last practical counsel to Colossae?

⁵ Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. ⁶ Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

Often, we don't get a second chance to influence *outsiders* (people who don't know the one, true God). Too often what the outside world sees (from people claiming Christianity) are not the attributes

he described earlier (compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forgiveness, love (3:12-14). Knowing you've witnessed this sort of behavior from "Christians" to the outside world...

- What will you do this week to ensure your conversations are *full of grace, seasoned with salt* (not full of salt, seasoned with grace)?
- How might this impact your social media postings/repostings?

v12--Epaphras was **burdened** to fight for them in prayer. For whom can you be praying for like this?