

The Chapel Family Bible Reading Program – December 18 -23
Doing Life Together – Love

MONDAY: 1 John 4:1-6

KEY VERSE: 1 John 4:2

OBSERVATION: Love transforms. Outside the Bible, every world religion teaches that there is a great gap, or a deep divide, between God and humans. On the one hand, both Hinduism and Islam teach that the deity is strictly transcendent wholly and utterly other than us. He may represent himself on earth through a human prophet or a spiritual appearance, but never in the flesh as a fellow human. Their gods are too special to bridge the gap, but the living God is bigger yet, because his love even brings him into the flesh to be with us.

TUESDAY: John 3:1-17

KEY VERSE: John 3:16

OBSERVATION: Because this passage has been used so effectively to communicate simply and powerfully the message of God's love and salvation, Martin Luther, a leader of the Protestant Reformation, called John 3:16 the Gospel in a nutshell. What is hidden in plain view is the extraordinary love God has for his world literally, Jesus tells Nicodemus, — God so loved the cosmos... We know that the prime recipients of his love are human beings—his children. Still, the saving work of God is explicitly part of his love for all his creation, his cosmos, the world.

WEDNESDAY:

KEY VERSE: Isaiah 40:28-31

OBSERVATION: Let us also turn to the ultimate source, our Creator, as the prophet Isaiah suggests. After all, the most elemental description of the Lord is that he is the Creator of the ends of the earth the one who created everything, even in the most remote areas. The Creator himself has no energy shortage; he —does not faint or grow weary; and he knows what to do, because “his understanding is unsearchable.” Therefore, he gives power to those in need, so we can “run and not be weary... walk and not faint.” The prophet's message is about the Creator's greatness to supply both the spiritual and the physical energy that we need to fulfill our responsibilities in creation.

THURSDAY: Ephesians 2:1-10

KEY VERSE: Ephesians 2:8-10

OBSERVATION: In one of the clearest affirmations of good works, the Apostle Paul declares that we are not saved as a result of good works, but for the very purpose of doing good works. This high role of good works is made possible both (1) because of the loving, grace-filled birth and ministry of our Lord Christ Jesus, and (2) because of the loving behavior Creator-God had prepared for us all along. God is love, and he filled his creation with love.

FRIDAY: Romans 8:28-39

KEY VERSE: Romans 8:38-39

OBSERVATION: The Apostle Paul makes a verbal twist that is easily missed: his phrase the love of God means both God's love for us and our love for him. The love of God cannot be diminished or derailed by circumstances of any sort—whatever the condition of our lives or creation around us. He will always love us with his transforming embrace—and we should be committed to love him regardless of what happens to us or around us.

SATURDAY: Matthew 25:31-46

KEY VERSE: Matthew 25:40

OBSERVATION: Christmas is the definitive coming of Jesus. He also comes wherever there is need. If most scientists are right, future ecological disasters will leave more and more people without sufficient food, with severely damaged housing and other tragic suffering. Many of these disasters will occur on other continents far from the behavior that contributed partially to the ravages of these ecological imbalances. All the while, many of us may feel secure many miles from the worst disasters. However, if we listen to Jesus' teaching here, the people enduring disasters are not faceless or nameless. It is his face we see among —the least of these. || It is his name we serve, whether or not the victims have heard of him.

Portions of this Bible Reading Program was taken from an article written by Paul De Vries