

Reading Schedule for February 4-10, 2019

You won't be disappointed as we read the remainder of the letter to the Philippians. These two chapters are some of my most favorite. We learn about pressing on. We learn about dwelling on what is good and right. We learn about contentment, as well as the promise that God will meet all our needs according to his riches in Christ Jesus. This is sure to be a marvelous week, even as we make transition into the Old Testament and launch into the Book of Genesis. This is way better than the Super Bowl.

February 4 – Philippians 3:1-11: “I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death . . .” (v.10) I appreciate the Apostle Paul's goal of knowing Christ. There is nothing more significant in our Christian life than getting to know Jesus in a deeper and more intimate way. It is the essence of our salvation. Because we have received Christ into our lives, we can know him more and more. We can know about the highest power found in the resurrection, as well as the companionship of Christ when we go through suffering. This life can be characterized by suffering, as there are challenges before us all the time. But just like Jesus suffered before he died and rose again, so too we will rise with him. How do these eleven verses stir your heart? How does your life demonstrate a passion to know Christ better?

February 5 – Philippians 3:12-21: “I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.” (v.14) This is such a powerful summation of moving forward, as well as giving the past to the Lord. The reference here is like a finish line in a race, or an archery target. Paul was always purposeful, aiming toward his heavenly goal, and living life with heaven in mind. When we have an eternal perspective, we can remain hopeful no matter what. Of course, none of us have obtained complete maturity or perfection. Neither will we. But here Paul says move in that direction. I am a very goal oriented person, and this kind of challenge always stirs my heart. How might I pursue the Lord through his Word and prayer, as well as express his love by serving others? I could do that with more passion and greater vigor. May that be true for you as well. How do you respond to this challenge?

February 6 – Philippians 4:1-9: “Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.” (v.8) I usually only cite one verse in a reading, but I was really torn between two. I have found a lot of encouragement through the invitation Jesus gives to pray about anything. No worry is too big for God, and neither should I hang on to my worries. But rather, my focus should be on what is true, honorable, and right. We are to fill our minds with things that will inspire worship of God and service to others. The principle in verse 8 is very practical, and makes an incredible difference in your life when you focus your thoughts on the good things that God does, and the wonder of being his child. How do you respond to this inspiring reading? It's my favorite.

February 7 – Philippians 4:10-13: “I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.” (v.11) I could have picked any verse in this short paragraph as the one to highlight. I am drawn to the word “content.” I am not sure how content I am, but I love the idea. The Apostle Paul said there is a secret to it. It is like the word for a secret passage into something that is

surprising and so rich. The Apostle Paul later said to Timothy, “Godliness with contentment is great gain.” I suppose that the bottom line of this paragraph is that I can only do this through Christ, who gives me strength. Simply put that means trusting God in such a way as I lean into him and place my confidence in his faithfulness. How would you define content? What are the “all things” in verse 13 in your life? What have you learned about being content whether in the good times and the bad times? This reading is worth contemplating as you pray through it.

February 8 – Philippians 4:14-23: “And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.” (v.19) This promise is in the context of generosity. We can be generous because we know that God will always take care of us. There is a saying that I have shared a few times, “You cannot out-give God.” There is a phrase that jumps out to me, “fragrant offering.” The idea is a pleasing aroma to the Lord as we bless others with generous giving, along with meeting their needs. As I said, those who are generous towards God will find that he is generous towards them, equal to his extravagance in offering his Son Jesus to us. How do you respond to these ending verses in the letter to the Philippians? How have these readings enriched your life?

February 9 – Genesis 1: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” (v.1) Obviously, I would have to begin with the first verse as we read in a whole new chapter and launch into the Book of Genesis, which is about the beginning of everything. The first phrase is, “In the beginning,” which is a perfect way to begin this book. We will be reading through Genesis for the next 50 days because there are 50 chapters. The story will be relevant, inspiring, and practical. The name for God is Elohim, and is plural, but the verb “create” is singular. We are not talking about many gods when we refer to Elohim. It points to how immense he is and his multi-faceted power to create. But there is only one God. The Hebrew word “bara” is only used of God, who speaks things into existence out of nothing. The heavens and the earth really means everything. The idea is that God created everything in the universe, which thus affirms that he, in fact, creates out of nothing. The significance of the Lord speaking and thus creating is an inspiring thought to me. This chapter is well-known and is rich in meaning. How do you respond to it after reading this chapter of 31 verses?

February 10 – Genesis 2: “The Lord God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.’” (v.18) This chapter elaborates on the creation of the man and the woman. We already read that God created them male and female, and he said it was very good. But now you get the nature of the companionship so necessary to the success of the creation. There is livestock, and birds, and the fish in the sea. But nothing would fit for the man. This beautiful word “helper” is one who comes alongside, and it implies that the one strong becomes even stronger through the help of the other. The idea means “fitting for him” or matching him. The wife clearly compliments her husband and they work together in union. It is a beautiful picture of marriage. It's the foundation of society. It is God's plan. What do you learn about marriage in this chapter? What do you learn about the creation from this unique account, compared to how Moses wrote chapter 1?

PRAYER: Let's have our prayer focus be for the children of our church. The Lord is bringing new children on our way, and we want to nurture them with the love of Christ and the truth of His Word.