

BIBLE CHALLENGE 2018

WEEK 52

The Bible Challenge 2018 Intro and the reflections and notes for each week may be found at biblechallenge.pendletonchurch.org

Read 4 chapters per day

December 24-31: Romans 15-16; James 1-5; Hebrews 1-13

(At our regular reading rate of 4 chapters per day you will finish December 28th, so there's room to take a couple days off over Christmas and New Years! A blessed Christmas season to all! See you January 1st for a new focus as we read through the Bible in a year. Feel free to invite others to participate with you, and share your thoughts about the readings on our Facebook page!)

Completing the reading of Romans we see God's mercy, love, and grace offered to all. Paul emphasizes the spiritual relationship between human beings and God, and among people, using the gifts and graces we have received from God to serve one another in this world. Paul speaks of the ways in which our faith/spiritual life impacts our behaviors as we consider how others see us living out our faith. The way we choose to live is an indication of our faith in God through Jesus Christ. The proof of a person's faith in Jesus Christ is a life of continuing, progressive transformation toward Christ-likeness. This can only be accomplished by God's power as we follow the Holy Spirit's leading. How do you see yourself in Christ-likeness today in comparison with when we began this year's Bible Challenge? How have the insights you have gained about yourself and the Christian faith impacted your own faith journey over the past year? Is there anything in particular that has "stuck out" and "stuck with" you that you know you will carry into 2019?

James gives us specific, practical examples of what it means to live as a true disciple of Jesus Christ. Some people believe this book emphasizes works too much over faith. But if we maintain the perspective that if we are in Christ all our good works are motivated and empowered by our faith in Christ, then we can begin to see how faith and good works in the world work together as a witness to the love and grace God extends to all. Faith without works is dead, but works without faith carry no eternal hope. It's kind of like the saying if you give someone a fish and they'll eat for a day; but teach them to fish and they'll have food to eat every day. Only our witness for Christ concerns people's eternal salvation! It is not enough to merely do good works in this world if no one knows why they are being done, what the source of the blessing they are receiving really is.

Hebrews ties together the meaning of the promises and law of God with their fulfillment in Jesus Christ and the obligation of the disciple of Jesus Christ to live out this life worshiping God. A significant element of the Christian life is keeping ourselves separated from ways of life that are contrary to God's expectations. Knowing we are also called to share the Gospel message by both telling people about Jesus and living our faith with practical help for others whenever possible, how do we live "in the world but not of the world"? In chapter 11 we find a brief reminder of all the faithful men and women we have read about this past year, whose stories are examples for us, and encourage us. This Christmas let us celebrate God, who has and always will be with us, in the light of all we have experienced through reading and reflecting on God's Holy Word.

Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year to all!
Pastor Lisa