

Preparing the Soil

For week beginning on December 23

Being in relationship with God is more than just a once-a-week event. Just like any relationship, regular communication is needed. I challenge you to create a daily routine to prepare your hearts for God’s word. This is something that can be done in less than 20 minutes per day. It just requires a time and place of quiet (before the day begins or after the day has ended or even on the train coming home from work). The readings are designed to coordinate with the sermon theme of the following week. I invite you to follow each step Monday through Saturday.

I. Invocation (Pray this each day):

Almighty God, the coming of your light into our world has brightened weary hearts with peace. Call us out of darkness and empower us to proclaim the birth of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

II. Psalm 98 (Read this each day):

III. Daily Scripture Readings

Monday	Matthew 1:18-25
Tuesday	Micah 5:2-5a
Wednesday	Luke 2:1-20
Thursday	Genesis 1:1-5,14-18
Friday	Matthew 2:1-11
Saturday	John 1:1-5,14

IV. Prayers

Monday	For those in need of healing from <i>Yellow Pages</i>
Tuesday	For those serving in military and vets
Wednesday	For our shut-ins and caregivers and families in grief
Thursday	For our leaders in government and church
Friday	For family members and neighbors
Saturday	For yourself

V. Reflection Silent and/or written

VI: Benediction (Spoken each day):

And now may the Spirit which was in Jesus Christ be in me, enabling me to know God’s will and empowering me to do God’s will. Amen.

The general idea and often the words of the benediction are taken from: *A Guide to Prayer* by Rueben Job and Norman Shawchuck, (The Upper Room: Nashville, 1983).

Reading through the Bible in two years.

The following readings are designed to lead the reader through the Bible over the course of two years. Each day there is a reading from the Psalms, the Old Testament, and the New Testament. The readings will be given for Monday through Saturday. Sunday will be a day of rest (and catch up if needed).

Mon.	Psalm 147:1-6	2 Kings 21:1 - 22:10	Luke 1:57-66
Tues.	Psalm 147:7-14	2 Kgs 22:11 - 23:20	Luke 1:67-80
Wed.	Psalm 147:15-20	2 Kgs 23:21 - 24:20	Luke 2:1-20
Thurs.	Psalm 148:1-6	2 Kings 25	Luke 2:21-32
Fri.	Psalm 148:7-14	Amos 1,2,3	Luke 2:33-40
Sat.	Psalm 149	Amos 4,5	Luke 2:41-52

For an introduction for Week 52 readings, see SOTH’s webpage (shepherdofthehill.com), find the sidebar button entitled “Read Through the Bible Program”. The same introduction is also found on the Shepherd of the Hill Facebook page.

If you need some help understanding the Bible texts you are reading, try the Augsburg Fortress *Lutheran Study Bible*. Google “Augsburg Fortress Lutheran Study Bible” to buy through the Augsburg Fortress Publishing.

If you want a narrated version of the Bible, try out the audio Bible version from Bible Gateway (<https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/audio/>) or download the Bible Audio app from your app store.

A good online resource is called “Enter the Bible” (enterthebible.org). It is produced by Luther Seminary. This website can give you information about each book of the Bible. Take some time and explore.

Another good source of information is a Bible study that I did two years ago entitled “See Through the Scriptures.” Each of the lectures were videoed. Go to shepherdofthehill.com, click on the tab “Deepen Your Faith”. Look under the heading “Reading and Understanding the Bible” for “See Through the Scriptures.” Check out Sessions 11 & 12 as they cover the not only the fall of both the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah, but also the message of the prophets during that time.

Join us as we deepen our knowledge of God’s word.