

New Year, New Habit: James Bible Reading Plan



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Welcome to OnlyBy Prayer's week-long Bible reading plan to kick off New Year's! Thank you for joining us. This week (Monday-Friday) we will read the book of James and then discuss our reading. It's a simple plan, but it will help us start the New Year on a good note.

Mary and I will add our thoughts on each day's reading under

the heading for that day. Please add your thoughts each day in the comment section. Feel free to respond to what other people have written as well. Ready? Let's get started.

January 8, Day 1: Read James 1:1-27

Mary's Thoughts!

We have been scattered so we can gather! Gather in at school, at work, across nations, towns and workplaces. God calls us to gather his people. While we are walking out our faith, we will experience trials. These trials contain gifts, blessings and that we must open our hands to receive (James 1:7, 12, 21). Some works of God in us will only be completed through trials. Trials are tailor made to benefit us not destroy us. This doesn't mean the circumstances of our trials are good, but that God can work them to bring us good.

Good from suffering. Good from pain. Good from desperate hurt. Hang on and hold out your hands.

To thrive and gather through our trials we need wisdom, patience, love and faith. Ask God for these things and hold out your hands to receive them (holding out your hands day upon day upon week is an act of faith!).

Believe. Seek. Receive. Repeat.

God is good!

Jane's Thoughts!

I am focusing on James 1:5-8. What stood out to me is that I don't want to be a double-minded woman. A double-minded person constantly waffles back and forth between trusting God and then not trusting God. I want to have a steady faith that God will do what is best for me and His purposes. Part of trust is

realizing that this can be different than what I think is best. Once I ask, I need to 1) trust and then 2) be content with whatever God's answer is: yes, no, or wait.

Sometimes I think that this issue is too trivial or I am too trivial to come before God for help. That is wrong. That is the enemy's thinking, not God's. The enemy plants the thoughts "Who are you to come before God? You're not important enough," or "You can handle that issue on your own. Don't bother God with it." Both are wrong. Nothing or no one is too small (or too big) for God to handle. He wants us to come to Him. He values each one of us so much that He sent Jesus to die for our sin.

Don't let the enemy rob you of taking your concerns before God and seeking His wisdom and help. He will answer.

January 9, Day 2: Read James 2:1-26

Mary's Thoughts!

Partiality is always under-girded by a lack of mercy. Partiality shows a lack of wholeness. We don't whole-ly love others because we don't whole-ly love or trust God, who is the God of mercy and grace. Souls of others are won by mercy and grace. No one has ever come to Christ through the condemnation and scorn of another.

Faith is for EVERYONE. So what am I doing to get it to everyone? The poor, the dirty, the sick, the homeless ... in Jesus own words the CHOSEN. Chosen by God to inherit His grace and peace and love. So what am I doing to get this good news to EVERYONE?

Because believing requires doing. working. giving. sacrificing.

There can be works without faith, but there can be no faith without works.

So what will I do?

Believe. Seek. Share. Repeat.

January 10, Day 3: Read James 3:1-18

Mary's Thoughts!

The hardest thing to tame on earth is not an eagle, a lion or a bear; man can tame all these things. The un-tameable creature is the tongue. So powerful and potentially destructive only God can tame it. And we need him to. Why? Because our words direct our actions and ultimately our destiny.

How does God tame the tongue? Through His Word.

His Word can change our words.

Jesus is the Word. In the beginning was the word. The word was God and the word was with God. If we want a changed life, we must have changed words. Remember, God used words to create. We have the choice to use our words to create or destroy. The more I am in the word, the more his word will be in me, creating, remaking, healing, restoring.

“Go and I will be with your mouth, and I will teach you what to say.” Exodus 4:12

Amen.

January 12, Day 5: Read James 5:1-20

Mary's Thoughts!

Why do our riches, gifts and talents get rusted and moth-eaten? Because of lack of use. The other day my husband told me he was *rusty* at his guitar playing. It had been a while since he had strummed his 6-string. He was rusty and it was hard to get going again. Same thing with our gifts and talents. We try to save them for ourselves but when we do that, we end up losing them. We must use 'em or lose 'em. Our clothes get moth eaten and our food gets moldy while the world shivers and starves.

Convicted.

We have a choice according to James 5, we can fatten our hearts or establish them. We are so afraid of suffering. A little pain, a little sacrifice so we store everything up for ourselves. What about Job? Have we suffered as much as Job? For most of us, not even close. He suffered much and was able to endure. I can too.

I can endure not having another dress, another gourmet meal, another Starbucks. I can give a little so another can be warmed and be filled.

Amen.

Jane's Thoughts

When are we to pray? All the time. When we are suffering ... when we are cheerful ... when we are sick James 5:16 tells us prayer is powerful: **"The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. "**

My Spirit-filled Life Bible makes these points about prayer:

1. Prayer is empowered by the Holy Spirit. It is God's power infused in our prayer. So this means that this is relationship-based prayer. We have to be Christ followers before we can be filled with the Holy Spirit.
2. This type of prayer should be the norm for all believers, not just pastors, or apostles, or prophets.
3. Our prayers when energized by the power of the Holy Spirit, cause things to happen. Amazing!
4. We can always plant a prayer in another person's life.

Let's be prayer planters today!

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5 Questions to Ask Yourself for the New Year



5 Questions to Ask Yourself for 2017

It seems that we were just welcoming 2016, but here we are hitting the reset button with fresh, new 2017. Whether last year was a banner year for you or one that was full of challenges, it's always good to revisit what happened and decide how to move forward from where you are right now.

Isaiah 43:19 is one of my favorite verses. It reminds me that nothing is too hard for God:

See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland." NIV

This verse reminds us that we are never beyond God 's help if we are submitted to Him and seeking His best for us. The

following five questions will help you greet this new year with purpose and hope. Work prayerfully through each one, being open to how the Holy Spirit wants to work in your life.

5 Questions to Ask Yourself

- 1. What are your top priorities for 2017? Set at least one goal in each of the following four areas:**
 - Spiritual
 - Physical
 - Soul (your soul is comprised of your mind, your emotions, your will, and your conscience). Pick one of those areas and set a goal.
 - Business
- 2. What pattern or habit do you need to break this year?** Is there something you know that should be out of your life? Perhaps smoking. Maybe too much shopping. Or it could be an attitude that you need to give the boot to.
- 3. Which relationships should you focus on this year?** Who are the people you want to invest in for the next year? Make a list and then brainstorm ways that you will make them a priority. Perhaps you need to meet on a regular basis with a friend or family member. Or date night with your spouse needs to be added to your schedule.
- 4. What one word or theme is God putting on your heart for 2017?** Two years ago my word was *focus*. In 2016 it was *believe*. Ask God to show you what [your word](#) is for this year. Then let it affect your decision making for the year.
- 5. Is there something you have been putting off that you need to take on this year?** Perhaps you're stuck and stagnant and you need to make some forward progress in one area of your life. Get specific about what you are going to do.

Journal Your Answers

Sit down with a journal and work through the questions sometime this week. Don't rush the process. Take as much time as you need. Then you use your answers to set an agenda and priorities for 2017. Actually schedule some plans, projects, and appointments based on your answers. Be as specific as possible because if you're vague, you won't move forward.

Feel free to share any of your dreams for 2017 in the comment section below.

Happy New Year!

Jane

New Year 2015 Make It Count! Podcast Part 1

Before you jump headlong into the New Year, it's always prudent to take an honest look at the past year. What did you do right over the last 365 days? What changes do you need to make? With some soul searching and **prayer**, God will give you a plan for what lies ahead. Take a few hours or, if you can spare the time, a mini-retreat to shore up your soul and plan and prepare for the next 12 months.



Join Mary Kane and me (Jane VanOsdol) of Only By Prayer as we share some suggested areas of focus for this next year. Our topics touch on **spiritual, physical, and personal goals.**

Looking forward to the New Year with you!

Jane

Click the sideways triangle directly below to listen to the podcast:

<http://onlybyprayer.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/NewYear2015MakeItCount.mp3>

Resources from the Podcast

1. [OnlyByPrayer Facebook page](#)
2. Private prayer request page. [Contact us](#) and let us know if you'd like to join this page.
3. Erin Leigh's [31 Days of Scripture Art Journaling](#)
4. [How To Pray](#) blog post
5. [How To Pray: Praying God's Word](#) podcast
6. [I Pray Journal-graphics](#)
7. [One Word](#) podcast
8. [One Word website](#)
9. [Free Faith & Fit Workout](#)
10. [Sit and Be Fit](#)
11. T-Tapp More Workout (includes a chair workout)

12. Update: Since this podcast was recorded, Jane has become a certified aromatherapist. You can find her website at JanesAromaScents.com and can order essential oils from her as well.
 13. [Shannon Buck's Organic Olive Oil Hand Salve](#)
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Five Ways to Pray in January



January is the start of a fresh year. It's the time when we have a completely blank book open before us waiting to be written. Much of the content is of our own making, and it depends upon our choices, behavior, thoughts, and actions. Other parts of the book are filled with things that happen to us, but again, we get to choose how we react to those things. As we begin this New Year, here are a few suggestions to *fuel your prayers*.

1. New Year's Day – January 1 is about possibilities. We can leave behind the mistakes and regrets of the past and start over with the promise of a fresh start. It's worthwhile to reflect on what was and set goals for what is yet to be. Pray that God will give you His vision for your New Year and anything that He wants you to confess, learn, or do in the upcoming 365 days. The following resources may help you with goal setting.

Resources:

- [Only By Prayer One Word podcast](#)
- [Get One Word](#)
- [The Lens of Love](#)

*Verse: "But Jesus looked at them and said to them, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."
Matthew 19:26 NKJ*

Prayer: Lord, we pray that you would drive deep into our hearts the truth that with You we always have a fresh start. We don't have to wait for the New Year to hit the reset button. But we do ask that You will help us to make the most of 2015. May we listen to Your plans for us and obey what You are calling us to do. We ask for the faith to believe that whatever You want to do in each of our lives is possible. In Jesus' name. Amen!

2. The Epiphany – January 6 commemorates the Magi's visit to Baby Jesus (this date is also used to remember Jesus' baptism in the Jordan River by John the Baptist). If we can cultivate the same characteristics that the kings had as they were searching for Jesus, we can grow in our faith just as they did. Read more about this below.

Resources:

- [Journey Like the Magi](#)

- [Re-gifting to the King](#) by Mary Kane
- The Season of Epiphany by Dennis Bratcher

Verse: "We saw his star in the East and have come to worship him." Matthew 2:2 NIV

Prayer: Lord, we pray that we have our eyes to the sky looking for You this year, just as the Magi did on their journey to Bethlehem. Help us to make You our top priority. May we remember to give You the best of our resources and gifts – not the leftovers. Amen.

3. Human Trafficking Awareness Day – January 11 is the day set aside to draw attention to the plight of those caught in the web of human trafficking. This problem is much more invasive than you may realize. When researching this topic, I came across a long article by Vanity Fair that sickened and convinced me of the horror of this problem right here in the U.S. I did not put it in the resources (choosing instead to focus on what we can do to combat the problem), but you could easily find it by googling it.

Resources:

- [5 Ways You Can Combat Human Trafficking](#)
- [Shared Hope](#)

Verse: "For he will deliver the needy who cry out, the afflicted who have no one to help. He will take pity on the weak and the needy and save the needy from death. He will rescue them from oppression and violence, for precious is their blood in his sight." Psalm 72:12-14 NIV

Prayer: Lord, often times the victims of trafficking have no one to defend them, no one to help them. We pray for their plight to be made known. We ask for their rescue, deliverance, and healing. We pray that all those participating in enslaving others would be brought to justice. And show us what each one

of us can do to combat trafficking in our communities, states, and countries. Amen.

4. National Religious Freedom Day – January 16 is set aside to support the religious freedoms we enjoy as Americans and to particularly celebrate the rights our students enjoy in school. Download the short guidebook from the website below. Pay close attention to the section entitled “The Religious Liberties of Public School Students.” This section highlights seven areas underscoring students’ rights regarding religious freedom. In this day and age when it seems that there are so many challenges to religious freedom in our schools, these freedoms enacted by our own presidents (from Clinton to Obama) are eye-opening – and ones we should all be familiar with.

Resource:

[Religious Freedom Day](#)

Verse: Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. 1 Peter 2:16 ESV

Prayer: Lord, we ask for protection of the freedom to worship You. Perhaps we are guilty of not taking advantage enough of this freedom to worship and serve You. May we remember the old saying that says “If you don’t use it, you’ll lose it.” Give us the courage and gumption to speak up. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

5. Martin Luther King Day – On Monday, January 19, we will celebrate this federal holiday. Martin Luther King was a civil rights leader who worked for racial equality. Let’s pray for racial unity in our country where we are too often divided by politics, social standing, misunderstandings, and outright hatred. May we remember that we are all made in the image of God.

Resource:

[How We Open Our Hearts to God](#) excerpt from Coretta Scott King's book

Verse: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Galatians 3:28

Prayer: Lord, we pray for your balm of peace and unity to spread across our country. May we treat each other with dignity and respect. Help us to remember that each person is made in Your image and is far more valuable than any material possession. Amen.

Feel free to add your own prayers in the comment section below.

Pray on!

Jane

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Tired of Failing at Goals?

2 Ways to Set Goals for 2014

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Lately, I've been spending some time setting **goals** and **praying** about the year ahead. I love the fresh start that the New Year affords us but have to admit that I've never been very good at setting – or keeping – goals. Identifying priorities is *not* one of my strengths. I feel almost paralyzed at the prospect of it all. What if I set the wrong goal and I'm boxed in for the whole year and I can *never* change it?! (Silly, I know.) So goes the thought process in

my head.

If at First You Don't Succeed ...

Well, this year a few things are different. First, I joined the [Compel](#) writers and speakers group from Proverbs 31 Ministries. Using one of their tutorials, I actually set six **smart goals** that I feel rather hopeful about. Whether I follow through with them remains to be seen, but they are realistic, specific goals. For example, rather than "Write a book this year," one of my **goals** says "I will write a Kindle book on Prayer Strategies as one of my four special projects for this year, and I will work on it on Friday afternoons." See what I mean by specific? Through this training, I realized that being specific will actually give me a chance of succeeding and hitting at least some of my goals.

The second thing that happened is that I stumbled across a totally different way of approaching **goal setting**. One morning this week I had the Today show on in the background as I was eating breakfast. My ears perked up when I heard Al Roker and Natalie Morales mention goals, so I tuned in to hear what they had to say. They introduced their guest, motivational speaker Jon Gordon. Jon didn't sound too hopeful about the whole process of goal setting as he cited the following statistics:

- 9 out of 10 people will fail at their resolutions
- 50 percent of us will fail by the end of January

I could just see my smart goals going up in a puff of smoke.

Instead, Jon recommended a simple goal-setting process he calls **One Word**: God gives him one word for the year that becomes his focus.

Hmm. That sounds easy enough, yet powerful. He said in the last three years that he, his family, and now many others (including sports teams, businesses, and schools just to name a few) have done this, it has revolutionized their lives. Here's the simple three-step process he says will help you choose your word.

Look in. Look up. Look out.

I decided to check out the [One Word website](#) to download a free action plan to take me through the three steps of choosing my One Word for the year. Incidentally, I bought the book *One Word That Will Change Your Life* that Jon wrote with Dan Britton and Jimmy Page, which I really like. It's an inspiring read and only takes about 50 minutes to get through.

And the Word Is ...

So, back to me. God gave me my word for the year: **Listen**. Already it's changing how I go about my day. I'll share more about that after I've lived with it for a while.

Does this mean I'm going to drop my smart goals? Nope. I'm still excited about trying those out, too, and will update you on that progress in about a month.

What about you? Where are you in **setting goals** for 2014? Are you a believer, or do you think it's a waste of time? Will you choose One Word? If so, I'd love to hear it. Please share in the comment section below. If you'd like to watch the Today

show segment with Jon, I've embedded it below.

Happy goal setting (or not) and **pray on!**

Jane

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the economy