

Ordinary

Reason why you have chosen this topic: In a world in thrall to the extraordinary, the word “ordinary” is a dirty word. But God delights in, indeed calls us into the ordinary, and in it we find out how extraordinary He is.

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**BIBLE
SOCIETY**

Live light

Scripture taken from *The Holy Bible: (NIV)*

Day	Readings	Reference	Reflection/Question	Prayer
1	<p>The Lord had said to Abram, “Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you.</p> <p>“I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”</p>	Genesis 12:1-3	<p>The key words in this passage are “I will make”. God is the one who is doing extraordinary things here for Abram—at a time when Abram and his wife Sarai are less than ordinary. We strive to make names for ourselves, to create our own empires, to leave our own legacies. But the God of the Bible gifts greatness to ordinary people. The foundation of God’s salvation story is his extraordinary greatness and glory, and the goal of God’s salvation story is his extraordinary greatness and glory. We worship an extraordinary God.</p> <p>How does God’s extraordinary salvation encourage you in your ordinary life?</p>	<p>Heavenly Father,</p> <p>Thank you for your extraordinary promise made to Abraham and fulfilled in your Son the Lord Jesus. Thank you for blessing ordinary people such as us with an extraordinary salvation that gives meaning and hope in our ordinary lives.</p> <p>Amen.</p>
2	<p>When the time came for her to give birth, there were twin boys in her womb. The first to come out was red, and his whole body was like a hairy garment; so they named him Esau. After this, his brother came out, with his hand grasping Esau’s heel; so he was named Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when Rebekah gave birth to them. The boys grew up, and Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the open country, while Jacob was content to stay at home among the tents. Isaac, who had a taste for wild game, loved Esau, but Rebekah loved Jacob.</p>	Genesis 25:24-28	<p>If you needed a man for the times it was first-born manly man, Esau. He was a tough hunter who was suited to ensure that God’s people, living as tribal nomads, would survive. How else would God’s promises to bless the world through Abraham be kept, unless someone had God’s back? Except of course God’s intention was to pursue his extraordinary salvation through Isaac, the boy who was both a crafty so and so and who stayed at home among the tents. God works his mighty power through the weak and the unimpressive in order that the glory of salvation remains where it should remain: with Him.</p> <p>Why does God so often use us in our weakness to showcase his glory? What might we be stealing from him if we try to impress people with our own power?</p>	<p>Father God,</p> <p>Thanks you for using even the weak and the insignificant. In fact, Father, thank you for especially using the weak and the insignificant to bring about your extraordinary purposes. Please work in us and through us to showcase your glory and not ours. In your Son’s mighty name.</p> <p>Amen.</p>

Ordinary (continued)

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3	<p>Moses said to the Lord, “Pardon your servant, Lord. I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue.”</p> <p>The Lord said to him, “Who gave human beings their mouths? Who makes them deaf or mute? Who gives them sight or makes them blind? Is it not I, the Lord? Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say.”</p>	Exodus 4:10-12	<p>Moses had once been extraordinary—in his eyes and the eyes of the Egyptians. After many years he meets the God who had preserved his life in the desert. Now God calls him to lead his people to the deliverance that God has prepared for them. His insecurity in himself seems admirable, but is a foil for his lack of trust in the God who made every living creature and who will put His very words into Moses’s mouth. God delights in our ordinary lives, and is indeed pleased to use them as He does his extraordinary work in our world.</p> <p>Can you see how Moses’ humility is perhaps a false humility that does not want to lean on God?</p>	<p>Dear Father,</p> <p>Give us faith to trust that you know us better than we know ourselves. You created us and you are recreating us by your Spirit in the image of your Son. Grant that we will be humble and obedient to obey your call to serve you and others in the ways in which you have called us.</p> <p>Amen.</p>
4	<p>The Lord did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But it was because the Lord loved you and kept the oath he swore to your ancestors that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Know therefore that the Lord your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments.</p>	Deuteronomy 7:6-9	<p>The Bachelor scans the room, looks past the beautiful, the rich, the impressive, the successful, and fixes his eyes on the mousey-haired librarian in the corner with the blue stockings and sensible shoes. He comes and hands her the final rose. Shocked? Of course. But that’s God with Israel. In Bachelor-land we love the lovely and we yearn to be with the ones who tick all the boxes. God, however, loves the ordinary, and chooses to love them. Why? Because he’s a promise making, promise keeping God who is faithful to his people. That’s God with us—chosen in Christ before the foundations of the world because he loved us not when we were lovely, but when we were not.</p> <p>How does God’s love encourage your confidence in Him and in his love for you as you live your ordinary life?</p>	<p>Loving Father,</p> <p>Thank you for loving us when we were unlovely. Thank you that it is your goodness, kindness and faithfulness that brings us into your family, and not ours. We ask for a deeper insight to the great love you have for us, that it will overflow into the rest of our lives and our relationships, so that others will see how great our God is, and what great lengths he went to, to love us.</p> <p>Amen.</p>

Ordinary (continued)

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5	So the Lord gave Israel all the land he had sworn to give their ancestors, and they took possession of it and settled there. The Lord gave them rest on every side, just as he had sworn to their ancestors. Not one of their enemies withstood them; the Lord gave all their enemies into their hands. Not one of all the Lord's good promises to Israel failed; every one was fulfilled.	Joshua 21:43-45	<p>Remember those promises to Abram back in Genesis 12? Well here we are many years later and we find that the extraordinary promises of God have been kept—by God. God gives this ordinary group of people the good land, giving them the promised blessing of rest and defeating their enemies. Once again the text makes it plain that despite all of the effort Israel made, behind these efforts stands God. He takes this small, insignificant enslaved nation and does great things with them. Just as with Israel, so even more so with us—all God's promises are fulfilled in Jesus Christ.</p> <p>How does it encourage you to know that our great God promises and then delivers—always?</p>	<p>Heavenly Father,</p> <p>Thank you that in Christ all of your extraordinary promises are “yes” and “amen”. Thank you that you have made us a people who were not a people. Thank you that you have guaranteed us a spiritual inheritance, kept in heaven for us, and that one day, as Israel did in their day, we will have rest there.</p> <p>Amen.</p>
6	The Lord said to Gideon, “You have too many men. I cannot deliver Midian into their hands, or Israel would boast against me, ‘My own strength has saved me.’ Now announce to the army, ‘Anyone who trembles with fear may turn back and leave Mount Gilead.’” So twenty-two thousand men left, while ten thousand remained.	Judges 7:2-3	<p>What happens when two thirds of your strength disappears? It leaves room for God to show His power! God's not going to allow anyone to boast or take the gloss from his glory and deliverance. Deluding ourselves that we are strong enough or rich enough or smart enough tarnishes the beauty of God's extraordinary deliverance. In the midst of Israel's enemies, the Midianites, God uses lowly born, cowardly Gideon to deliver his people in a classic “I am weak, but He is strong” counter punch.</p> <p>Are you feeling weak? Don't try to muster your strength in order to achieve what the motivational posters say you can do. Trust in the One who is your strength.</p>	<p>Heavenly Father,</p> <p>We are weak, but you are strong. Thank you that your power is made perfect in our weakness. Help us to live in the power of your Spirit each day, and deflect all the praise and glory to you so that we can say, “You have saved us!”</p> <p>In Jesus' name, Amen.</p>

Ordinary (continued)

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7	<p>“Do not keep talking so proudly or let your mouth speak such arrogance, for the Lord is a God who knows, and by him deeds are weighed. “The bows of the warriors are broken, but those who stumbled are armed with strength. Those who were full hire themselves out for food, but those who were hungry are hungry no more. She who was barren has borne seven children, but she who has had many sons pines away.</p>	1 Samuel 2:3-5	<p>Hannah was ordinary. Even less than ordinary in her own eyes, as she was childless and without hope of children in a culture that valued them. She felt like she was the bottom of the pile. But our extraordinary God is the great reverser. He raises us Hannah, He gives her a son, Samuel, and Samuel leads God’s people Israel away from the sin and rebellion they have wandered in to. Weak are raised. Hungry are fed. The barren are fruitful. These sound exactly like the type of things Jesus would do. Which of course he did. One day ordinary Mary would echo these words as God begins a new work of salvation in Israel.</p> <p>How does it help you knowing that the title of “Role Reverser” is on God’s CV? What about your circumstances can you bring to our great King today?</p>	<p>Heavenly Father</p> <p>Thank you that in the Lord Jesus you fulfil and complete your promise to raise up the weak. Jesus went to the cross for us as a slave, but you have raised him to the highest place. We praise you for Jesus and the reality that ordinary Christians are seated with Christ in heavenly places. We pray too for your church around the world, as it suffers persecution. We ask that you remind them of this reality today.</p> <p>In Jesus’ name, Amen.</p>
8	<p>When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and thought, “Surely the Lord’s anointed stands here before the Lord.”</p> <p>But the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”</p>	1 Samuel 16:6-7	<p>People admire celebrities. Christian people admire Christian celebrities. God looks past the impressive, the celebrity, the external, to the heart. Even Samuel, God’s ordinary prophet, fell for the old trick. Surely God’s king should look extraordinary. But good looks, good teeth and good hair are not what God is interested in—He cuts to the chase. He is interested in the heart, and everything else is peripheral. Humans give great value to what God holds no store in. In fact God rejects the very things we view as extraordinary. And when God chooses the youngest, lowliest son of Jesse, David, to be king, he is choosing someone after God’s own heart.</p> <p>Are celebrity Christian your heroes? How can you take measures to ensure that you take a God’s-eye view of people?</p>	<p>Father God</p> <p>Help me to see all humans as you see them. Please forgive me for treating with indifference those who do not match what I value, and for treating with too much deference those who are impressive merely in the eyes of the world. Help me to do so for the sake of the one who identified with the downtrodden and outcast, the Lord Jesus. In His name we pray, Amen.</p>

Ordinary (continued)

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9	<p>Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?</p> <p>He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground.</p> <p>He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.</p> <p>He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain.</p> <p>Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.</p>	Isaiah 53:1-3	<p>If ever we needed reminding that God's economy is not for changing, we get it in this picture of God's coming Servant. And it's not pretty. It's not impressive. It's not something we'd pin up on our wall, or link to Facebook. God's servant won't pass muster when he arrives on the scene and people won't be taking selfies with him. Everything that God's Servant will experience are the things that we wish to avoid. In fact his life looks less than ordinary! Yet this Servant is God's King, his Messiah, the Lord Jesus. If this will not convince us of God's delight in the ordinary, then nothing else will.</p> <p>Are you someone who wants to serve and love the unlovely?</p>	<p>Father God</p> <p>Forgive us for looking past the common and the unimpressive. Help us to serve the lowly. Thank you that when you look at us you see not what we are in our sin, but you see the Lord Jesus, the one high and lifted up, who has given us his right standing with you, and taken our sins upon himself on the cross.</p> <p>In His name we pray.</p> <p>Amen.</p>
10	<p>Then Haggai, the Lord's messenger, gave this message of the Lord to the people: "I am with you," declares the Lord. So the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua son of Jozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of the whole remnant of the people. They came and began to work on the house of the Lord Almighty, their God, on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month.</p>	Haggai: 1:13-15	<p>God's people had given up working on rebuilding the temple after exile. They had lost sight of their identity, surrounded as they were by their enemies. For years it lay unfinished. No amount of cajoling would get things restarted. No amount of pulling themselves up by their bootstraps would empower them to take the risk and identify with their God. It took a powerful act of God among a small, struggling community to transform things. Not a few weeks after the prophet Haggai calls them the work of rebuilding, God stirs them up and work recommences! He is, after all, exactly who the passage claims He is—the Lord Almighty.</p> <p>Does change seem impossible to you? If God is the God of what seems impossible, will you ask him to help you change?</p>	<p>Heavenly Father,</p> <p>We pray that you would give us your Holy Spirit to transform us and change in our lives what we in our own strength cannot change. We admit our need of you as we live our ordinary lives. Encourage us by your power to identify as your people in the midst of a world which does not love or recognise You.</p> <p>Amen.</p>

Ordinary (continued)

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11	Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. 21 He began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. “Isn’t this Joseph’s son?” they asked. Jesus said to them, “Surely you will quote this proverb to me: ‘Physician, heal yourself!’ And you will tell me, ‘Do here in your hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum.’”	Luke 4:20-24	<p>When the extraordinary King of the universe came to live among humans he came in an ordinary way. So ordinary that even those who spoke well were highly dubious of his pedigree. It reminds us of what John’s Gospel tells us; “He came to his own and his own did not recognise him.” Why not? Because he just didn’t cut as fine a figure as they wanted or expected of their Messiah. Despite the amazing things he did he just looked too darned ordinary! But behind that ordinariness was one full of grace and truth, and that graciousness overflowed from him to the world. Extraordinary!</p> <p>What difference will it make to your ordinary work-a-day life to know that God delights in the ordinary?</p>	<p>Father God,</p> <p>Thank you for Jesus. Thank you that the one who spoke your words in that ordinary synagogue is still the one speaking gracious words over us, his ordinary people, as we go about our lives this day.</p> <p>In his name we pray,</p> <p>Amen.</p>
12	Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” And they divided up his clothes by casting lots. The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, “He saved others; let him save himself if he is God’s Messiah, the Chosen One.”	Luke 23:32-35	<p>On the cross Jesus is reduced to less than ordinary. Jesus is humiliated, abused, and is counted among criminals. Ordinary folk turn their heads and sneer at him. He saved others in extraordinary ways, but he is incapable of coming off the cross! Who is this Messiah? Yet on the cross the extraordinary work of God in redeeming lost humanity, in forgiving guilty humanity, and in reconciling his enemies, is achieved. We glory in the shame of the cross and revel in its brutal ordinariness, because God was pleased to do his extraordinary work of salvation upon it in Christ.</p> <p>Have you thanked God for taking on our shame and sin in Christ on the cross?</p>	<p>Heavenly Father,</p> <p>We marvel at the cross. We thank you for your Son’s obedience that led him to suffer that ignominy on our behalf. Please empower us to take up our cross and follow him, glorying in the shame of following a crucified Messiah who stayed on the cross to save us, rather than saving himself.</p> <p>Amen.</p>

Ordinary (continued)

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13	Jesus is “the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone.’ Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.” When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.	Acts 4:11-13	<p>Ordinary fishermen speak boldly of the extraordinary Jesus, the one who was rejected by the powerful and the impressive, but who is actually God’s central stone in his building. The extraordinary Jesus gives previously cowardly Peter the courage to speak. The extraordinary Jesus equips these ordinary fishermen to not only speak boldly, but to possess the depth and insight into Scripture that the leaders, for all their learning, did not possess. Jesus is the fulfilment of every promise in Scripture. He answers every promise with an extraordinary “Yes!”</p> <p>How is Jesus transforming your life and equipping you to speak and act boldly for him every day?</p>	<p>Father God,</p> <p>Thank you that Jesus, the rejected one, is now the ruling and reigning one. Give us courage in a world that continues to reject him, to proclaim his excellence and to showcase his glories to our world. Thank you that with Jesus ordinary people have the capacity to astonish the world. Please help us to abide in him every day.</p> <p>Amen.</p>
14	Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him.	1 Corinthians 1:26-29	<p>It’s good to think about what we were like before Jesus changed us. Not all of the time, but often enough to remember that we were not impressive or noble or even batting on average. Most of us were below par in the eyes of the world, and certainly had no merit with God. But by his extraordinary blessings, promised to Abraham, he has chosen a people out of this world and blessed them. And he has done it in such a way that he gets all the glory, and in such a way that all of our boasting is rightly attributed to Him. Such ordinariness nullifies—cancels out—all of the boasting and self-promoting extraordinariness of our world. God’s way is the way of the ordinary. Are you on that way?</p> <p>Are you happy or threatened by the truth that God chooses the lowly and despised?</p>	<p>Father God,</p> <p>Thank you that you chose us not because we were impressive, but because your grace is impressive. Equip us with the eyes of faith to see that in our ordinariness you are being extraordinary, and that you will be glorified by our humble status. Grant that we will also love and value the loveless and insignificant in our world, and seek to lift up the weak and powerless.</p> <p>We pray this in Jesus’ mighty name. Amen.</p>