
Letters to a Young Episcopalian: Why Do We Pray Scripture Over and Over?

This letter is part of a series of fictional letters by Canon George Maxwell intended for Episcopalians young and old who wonder what it means to be faithful in the world today.

[Last week's letter](#)

[Back to all letters](#)

Dear Anna,

In your latest letter you wondered why Anglicans keep circling back to the same psalms and readings. The monks in the desert might answer for us. They prayed the psalms daily until the words became breath, until they discovered the psalms were praying them. For them, Scripture was not mainly a text to dissect but a place to dwell. Repetition was not boredom but fidelity.

We inherit that instinct. Our Anglican imagination is dialectical and poetic. That means we don't expect Scripture to flatten into one meaning. We let it resound. The words carry us, and in their rhythm we hear something beyond ourselves.

So when you hear Psalm 23 for the hundredth time, or say the Magnificat again at Evening Prayer, remember you are returning to a well that never runs dry. The same water can taste new each day depending on your thirst.

That is why Episcopalians keep repeating Scripture. We are not gathering information; we are letting God's word gather us.

Your affectionate uncle,
Ames