

Some thoughts to start...

Engaging in the practice of faith is not always easy. For some people, sitting down and having an open, in-depth chat with God is not difficult. For many of us, however, it is.

What we're trying to do here is to give people a resource – to help them in their thinking about scripture, and in the practice of personal prayer.

Everything written here is simply a suggestion. If you find other practices more helpful, please use them!

Find a bible (or go to <http://bible.oremus.org/>) and head to a place you won't be disturbed. Before opening up your bible, take a few moments to sit quietly. In that quiet moment you might want to say to God, "What would you like me to hear today?"

Read each of the scriptures. Some people prefer to read silently, while others find it more helpful to read out loud. Take a few moments to reflect on what you've heard. (If you would like, the 'reflection' section is there to help start you off.)

Finally, take a few moments to talk with God. The printed prayer is there as a guide, but there may be other things you want to share with God. Chat, as openly and honestly as you can. Then, through the day, listen for God's response.

This resource was initiated by St. Andrew's Haney United Church, Maple Ridge, BC.

The suggested scripture readings are based on the Consultation on Common Text's *Daily Lectionary*.

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Daily Scripture and Prayer Time

(February 5th to 10rd, 2007)

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Monday

Scripture:

- Judges 5.1-11
- Psalm 115
- 1 Corinthians 14.26-40

Reflection:

When we gather for worship we are tapping into the core of our relationship with God and with one another. It's no surprise that the manner of worship elicits strong emotions within us. For some, worship cannot happen without stained glass and organ music, while others find these elements to be a barrier to encountering the Holy.

Clearly, there is no single liturgy that will be a good fit for everyone, so creators of worship can only let the Spirit guide and do their best to meet the needs of the community. What creates worship that is "decent and in order" for you?

Prayer:

Loving God,
I thank you that your Spirit
always hovers near
for guidance, comfort and strength.
Help me to go into this day
knowing that these prayers
of thankfulness and concern
are also a form of worship and praise.
May all who worship find peace
in your presence this day.

I pray today for _____, friends blessed by
your love and compassion.

For your grace,
with your love,
and in Christ's name, I pray.

Tuesday

Scripture:

- 1 Samuel 9.15-10.1b
- Psalm 115
- 1 Timothy 3.1-9

Reflection:

It's no wonder that, as a church, we are often confused about the role of those set aside for particular ministries. We are a denomination that believes in the strong ministry of the whole people of God, and yet, we require some to be set aside for particular aspects of ministry. It seems to me that some folks are still confused about whether we are a clergy-driven church or a laity-driven church.

The Epistle to Timothy sets an almost impossibly high standard for ministry personnel who are, after all, simply children of God trying to live faithfully. These readings might inspire you think about your own expectations of those serving in the church's paid-accountable ministries.

Prayer:

God,
bless me today,
and help me to see the humanity
in all people.
Remind me that each one of us
is called to a form of ministry,
and that each of us
will respond uniquely
according to the Spirit's guidance.
Ordered or lay,
we share in the life and work
of the body of Christ together.

Today I pray for _____ friends blessed by
your love and compassion.

For your grace,
with your love,
and in Christ's name, I pray.

Wednesday

Scripture:

- Isaiah 8.1-15
- Psalm 115
- Luke 5.27-32

Reflection:

Awareness is so important to our spiritual lives. Jesus is perfectly comfortable sitting to dinner with a tax collector and his friends; people generally viewed as criminals and thieves. Isaiah talks about the Assyrian invasion with confidence instead of fear. Why? In both cases, fear and apprehension are replaced by an awareness of God's abiding presence. When fear is diminished, there is room for confidence, faith, tolerance, and most of all, love. A solid sense of self goes a long way toward erasing fears and insecurities. When you know who you are, as Jesus did, then it's much easier to meet others where they are, and as they are.

Prayer:

God of Life and Love,
help me to be aware of who I am
and remind me that your Spirit
and my spirit are bound in relationship.
Help me to know and define myself,
so that I need not fear
the diversity around me,
but rather embrace it
as an expression
of your wondrous Creation.

Today I pray for _____ friends blessed by
your love and compassion.

For your grace,
with your love,
and in Christ's name, I pray.

Thursday

Scripture:

- Jeremiah 13.12-19
- Psalm 1
- Acts 13.26-34

Reflection:

There are echoes of some old "fire and brimstone" theology in these readings. Images of an angry, vengeful God who lacks compassion for the people don't exactly fit with my liberal post-modern understanding of the Creator. The Hebrew scripture writings are filled with warnings about living in the "fear of the Lord." So one might wonder how we have moved from fear to awe, from cowering to co-creation.

Perhaps the writer of Acts reveals a clue to this shift in understanding - Jesus. The redemptive love of God, shown to us in Jesus of Nazareth, tells us that God is indeed loving and compassionate. The fear of the past is replaced with the assurance of God's word - that we are loved. Always.

Prayer:

Loving God,
I don't want to cower in your presence,
afraid of your anger and vengeance.
That is so out of sync
with my relationship to you.
I want to rush into your embrace
and celebrate your goodness and grace.
I pray, fill me with the joy and confidence
to go forward in faith,
this day, and every day.

Today I pray for _____ friends blessed by
your love and compassion.

For your grace,
with your love,
and in Christ's name, I pray.

Friday

Scripture:

- Jeremiah 13.20-27
- Psalm 1
- 1 Peter 1.17-2.1

Reflection:

If the fear of the Lord wasn't enough for you yesterday, we have even more fun today! These passages deal with some deeply troubling racist and sexist imagery in Jeremiah, and then we're on to predestination and ransom salvation theology. But wait - you don't have to go back to bed!

As is usually the case, there is a gem of wisdom and good news in these readings. The Epistle reminds us that in Jesus we are freed to "love one another deeply from the heart." Jesus came to find the heart of God's children and to remind them that Love always trumps Law - in fact, Love trumps everything. That is good news enough for me this morning.

Prayer:

Wondrous God,
through generations your people
have prayed and called upon you,
seeking wisdom, nurture, comfort,
strength and goodness.
Today I come before you
with an open heart,
ready to grow into my faith a bit more
every day.

Today I pray for _____ friends blessed by
your love and compassion.

For your grace,
with your love,
and in Christ's name, I pray.

Saturday

Scripture:

- Jeremiah 17.1-4
- Psalm 1
- Luke 11.24-28

Reflection:

The first reading this morning is Jeremiah's version of "You do the crime, you do the time." It seems to me that Christianity in general is often distilled down to the same kind of system, saying, "If you're good, you go to heaven with God. If you're bad, you're outta luck." But is that what the gospel is all about? What about God's grace? What about the redeeming power of God's love, shown in Jesus and proclaimed through the ages by people like you and I?

Jesus had a way of seeing the divine spark within each human being and drawing out every person's goodness. We can learn to do the same - to honour the sacredness of each person, even when they shroud their goodness in a harsh or cruel exterior. It's not an easy thing to do but we have an excellent teacher, Jesus himself.

Prayer:

Gracious God, bless me this day
and help to see the sacredness
in all of creation.
God, the task of loving those
who are unlovable
is one of most difficult things
about following the way of Jesus.
Help me to remember
that even the most difficult people
have some of your light within them.
Bless them God,
and strengthen my faith today.

Today I pray for _____ friends blessed by
your love and compassion.

For your grace,
with your love,
and in Christ's name, I pray.