

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.

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

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ST. ANDREW'S HANEY UNITED CHURCH

Daily Scripture and Prayer Time

(January 22nd to 27th, 2007)

Writer for this Week:
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Monday

Scripture:

- Jeremiah 36.1-10
- Psalm 119.89-96
- 1 Corinthians 14.1-12

Reflection:

I once had a friend who told me of his experience with speaking in tongues in a charismatic church. He said that a person who speaks in tongues is believed to not understand what they are saying. Someone else has to interpret for them. Speaking in tongues, by itself, is still respected as a spiritual gift and it's certainly one of the most dramatic gifts of the Spirit, but, in many ways, it is not of much use.

Prophecy, on the other hand, can do a lot for the church. Contrary to popular opinion, prophecy is not about foretelling the future. It's about telling the world of God's pain. God's pain at homelessness. God's pain at hunger and poverty and oppression and injustice and despair. God's pain at the destruction of the earth and all her children. This pain has repercussions for the future, it's true. But it calls us to work in the present to change the future.

What can you change? Where do you see God's pain?

Prayer:

Eternal God, your word may be written in the heavens, but your pain seems to go on forever. There is so much in our world that goes against your hopes and your will. Open my ears to hear your prophets and my heart to hear your prophecies. Open my hands to act and my mouth to speak. I am sorry for your pain. Let me do what I can to ease it.

I pray today _____, friends blessed by your love.

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

Tuesday

Scripture:

- Jeremiah 36.11-26
- Psalm 119.89-96
- 2 Corinthians 7.2-12

Reflection:

I'd rather read a mystery book or a political thriller than a learned theological text any day. But in readings from the Hebrew Scriptures we can have both. Here, in the middle of prophecies of hope and doom, is a snapshot of political intrigue. Prophet Jeremiah versus King Jehoiakim. The difference is, it's easier to see reflections of our own lives in Bible readings than in the works of John LeCarre or Tom Clancy. How often do we turn away from what we don't want to hear? How many times do we skip the bits that make us uncomfortable or seem to speak directly to our own failings? Perhaps a few. But there does come a time when we are faced with reality and have to come to terms with it and with what it means for us. As the hymn says, "Will you hide or decide to meet the light?" (Voices United #96)

Prayer:

Adonai, give me the courage of Jeremiah.
Where I would rather hide from the truth
or make it go away,
give me ears to hear and a heart to act.
Give me friends like Baruch,
who will carry truth.
Your faithfulness endures forever
and your loving kindness is to all generations.
What am I afraid of?
You are with me.
Always and forever.
May it be so.

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

Wednesday

Scripture:

- Jeremiah 36.27-32
- Psalm 119.89-96
- Luke 4.38-44

Reflection:

King Jehoiakim burns the scroll, even as it is being read. Jeremiah immediately rewrites it, adding the imminent and ignominious death of the king. Jesus, having been driven out of Nazareth, has moved on to Capernaum, where even the demons recognize him. Nothing and no one will stop what God has to say. I'm sensing a theme here: God's messages will be spoken and people may or may not listen, but the message will continue. The messengers will move on. The messengers will change. Many people still won't listen. But some will.

Somewhere I have a book called "The Tipping Point" by Malcom Gladwell. Mr Gladwell suggests that there is a threshold that an idea or behaviour can cross and once it does... it spreads. One day, I believe, God's message will cross that threshold – from many different places, even different religions, there will be enough people who hear the same message that the world will change. But we have to hear, act and share the Word. Now's as good a time as any. Let's go!

Prayer:

Messenger God, keep sending messengers. Maybe I can be one of them. Show me how to show others. Keep changing me. I'll try to keep up. But – maybe – you could be a little kinder to the dissenters than you were to Jehoiakim? Just in case I get mixed up.

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

Thursday

Scripture:

- 2 Chronicles 34.1-7
- Psalm 71.1-6
- Acts 10.44-48

Reflection:

When you were a child, did you ever play superhero? My brother spent several years as Batman. Occasionally I played Wonder Woman with my friends (I think we were all Wonder Woman).

Today we get some stories about superheroes. Or, if that's a bit of an overstatement, we finally get some stories about people who hear and do some good. A king who does right in the sight of the Lord. People who are transformed by the Holy Spirit. And the king is only eight years old. Some of the new believers were gentiles. Will wonders ever cease?

Probably not. At least, I hope not. We all know stories like that of Craig Kielburger, Mahatma Gandhi or Mother Theresa. People who started out fairly ordinary but ended up doing untold good to untold numbers of people. Sometimes it starts small. Sometimes it comes from nowhere. But it starts and it comes. We're not all superheroes. But we can all use our power for good.

Prayer:

Listen to my prayer, O God. I take refuge in you and hope that I will never be put to shame. But - send me out to use my power for good. Send my out to be my own small version of a superhero. Even if I can't fly, I can help dreams soar – if not mine, someone else's. I can be strong – strong in faith, strong in kindness, strong in love. I may not be able to move mountains, but maybe I can move some hearts.

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Friday

Scripture:

- 2 Chronicles 35.20-27
- Psalm 71.1-6
- Acts 19.1-10

Reflection:

I feel slightly let down by these readings. The good king Josiah is killed in battle because he didn't hear the Word of the Lord from an unlikely source. Paul preaches persuasively but some still speak evil of the Way. And even though most in Asia Minor heard him preach, there don't seem to have been all that many new believers. Yesterday's hopes are dashed.

Of course, that's the way it is, isn't it? How many of us are still keeping up with our New Year's Resolutions? (Congratulations!) It's all about try, try again, really. The perseverance of Paul is absolutely astounding: two years of daily argument in the heat of the day when no one else wanted the hall. It sounds terribly disheartening. But, those were probably the two years during which the seven churches mentioned in the Revelation (Rev 2:1-3:22) would have been founded. That progress seems a little more satisfactory. Another reminder to look at the big picture.

Prayer:

God, I want you to be my refuge, my fortress, protecting me from mistakes, missteps, despair and misfortune. But you don't. You send me out to try my best and take my knocks. You send me out to pick myself up and start again.

You send me out.

Thank you.

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Saturday

Scripture:

- 2 Chronicles 36.11-21
- Psalm 71.1-6
- John 1.43-51

Reflection:

For some reason, I imagine Nathanael sitting under the fig tree, waiting for something to happen. Maybe he was trying to decide something, maybe he was just thinking deep thoughts. But for some reason I imagine a stillness about him and a sense of waiting.

In the same way, I imagine the land of Israel lying still, waiting, desolate without its people or its God. But at the same time it was keeping Sabbath, resting, getting ready to welcome the exiles home again.

Nathanael was waiting for a new thing to happen. Israel was waiting for a new chapter in her history.

What are you waiting for? What are we waiting for? And what will let us know that it's about to happen?

Prayer:

I trust you, God, and you have always been with me. Sometimes I can feel you there, sometimes I take it on faith. I hope you do the same for me: even when you are not sure I am with you, believe in me. Believe that I can make it and my time will come to act. My waiting will pass, my growth will begin again.

I pray today _____, friends blessed by your love.

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