

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 8th to 13th, 2007)

Writer for this Week:
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Monday

Scripture:

- Judges 4.1-16
- Psalm 106.1-12
- Ephesians 6.10-17

Reflection:

The imagery of battle is a big part of the witness of the First Covenant stories. We are rightly wary of the call to arms that seems a part of these stories. But the imagery of struggle and even of "battle" is important. Paul is very clear, "put on the whole armour of God", "our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, and the authorities". The "authorities" against which we struggle to live the good news, are not always the ones we expect.

Expectations of family, of employers, threats of shunning, threats of prison, all these can be part of the power and authority that keep us from peace and from truth.

What is the call of the authorities against which I need to fasten the "belt of truth"?

What grace do I ask of God, to enable me to "stand firm"?

Prayer:

Jesus our brother
who stood quietly between
a woman taken in sin
And a crowd who relished her destruction
Give to me armour to act in confidence,
rather than fear.
Give me a belt of truth,
stand beside me as I quake but "stand firm".
May your presence give me strength
may your words give me vision
may your call give me purpose.

I pray today _____, friends blessed by your love.

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

Tuesday

Scripture:

- Judges 5.12-21
- Psalm 106.1-12
- 1 John 5.13-21

Reflection:

There are always good reasons for NOT doing what we are called to do. I once worked with a man who obsessed about the smallest details of why something wouldn't work. The equipment wouldn't handle it, someone might be allergic, or hurt, or you never knew what might happen. He always sounded very reasonable, as if he had great expertise. It took a while to realize that his obsessive compulsive disorder railed against any and all changes in pattern. The ability of an entire organization to function effectively was compromised.

In John's gospel, Jesus has the power of God to heal. In the face of this wonder, worrying that he does it on the Sabbath is absurdly minor. But the disruption in the usual pattern is seen as an enormous threat.

What are the minor things that stand in the way of the power of God working through me?

Prayer:

God of small things, and big plans
Your son, Jesus, says that
You are still working, that He is working.
Help me reach out with joy
finding new ways of being and
doing, that will fulfill your plan.
Help me to pick up my bed,
and Walk, stepping forward
into the light, finding ways to heal your world
rather than reasons not to.

I pray today _____, friends blessed by your love.

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

Wednesday

Scripture:

- Numbers 27.1-11
- Psalm 106.1-12
- Luke 11.33-36

Reflection:

It's hard to make good judgments when we are full of anger, or fear. What we observe about the world, about other people, about our own actions, is seen through an "eye" that is full of darkness. A simple misunderstanding becomes an incident that threatens our jobs, our relationships, our loved ones. But pushing away the dark, giving up our anger and our fear is terribly hard. Sometimes we have good reasons for our fears. And yet, decisions based in fear or anger lead to spiteful, revenge filled or painful outcomes. Seeing with the eye of light, is not a switch we can turn on, it is an ability that must be practiced, praying for peace and calm to clear our vision and allow us to see the truth.

Prayer:

God of light,
Only light comes from light.
I cling so to the darkness that I
cannot see the way.
Help me tend the fire of your light,
Building inside me a fire
of truth, compassion and understanding
that light and hope might light my
reason and my experience.
Through this light may I see more
clearly the path ahead, reaching for
healing
Instead of spite, and for laughter, despite
the pain.
I pray today _____, friends blessed
by your love.
For your grace,
with your love,
and in Christ's name, I pray.

Thursday

Scripture:

- Jeremiah 3.1-5
- Psalm 36.5-10
- Acts 8.18-24

Reflection:

The greatest treasure of our faith, is that God offers us a chance to start again. Jeremiah asks whether we have the right or ability to turn and return to God, when we have sinned. The psalmist celebrates that God's love is steadfast. This does not mean there are no consequences for our actions. Forgiveness, the new start God offers, is not a "second chance" to return to the old life. Forgiveness is the chance at a new life. I was once asked why a man who had molested a child could not return to his old life as a pastor, if we truly forgave him. A good question - but the old life for all those affected by this man's actions has past away. Just as true repentance seeks a new way of being, forgiveness is not a lack of consequences, but a chance for a new life and new relationships. Forgiveness is not just a comfort, but an opportunity. Few of us are dealing with anything as serious as this - but we may feel the same desperation at relationships lost, and old life passing away. Each day IS a new life lit by the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Prayer:

How precious is your steadfast love, O God!
Whatever I am, whatever I do,
You offer me abundant life,
if I can walk toward it.
Whatever has been done to me,
who ever has sinned against me,
You offer me abundant life,
if I can walk toward it.
May your righteousness and judgment inspire
my vision, that I may see the way
to embrace the new life You offer.
I pray today _____, friends blessed by
your love.

Friday

Scripture:

- Jeremiah 3.19-25
- Psalm 36.5-10
- 1 Corinthians 7.1-7

Reflection:

The readings today are about faithfulness and particularly faithfulness in marriage. All three scriptures compare love between people to the relationship with God, for real love fills our lives with all life is - joy and pain, companionship and desire. Jeremiah compares the devastating pain of unfaithfulness, to a loss of God. Paul writes acknowledging the power of sexuality. Paul also writes of the need within marriage for both togetherness and separation. Time alone, time for prayer by mutual consent; or time together, by mutual consent. The relationship Paul describes is radically egalitarian for the day when it was written. And our relationship with God, just as our marriages or partnerships, is often a pattern of separating and coming together again filled with desire for the one we most need.

Prayer:

Great Lover, whose love is steadfast and true
Increase my desire
Increase my pleasure
At the thought of You.
Your embrace is more than I could ask
What you create in me is more than
I can imagine.
The fulfillment I have from you
gives me both joy and strength
To live in the afterglow of your presence.
I pray today _____, friends blessed by
your love.
For your grace,
with your love,
and in Christ's name, I pray.

Saturday

Scripture:

- Jeremiah 4.1-4
- Psalm 36.5-10
- Luke 11.14-23

Reflection:

We no longer use the language of demons in our daily lives. Yet it seems we are set about by demons. Addictions possess us in ways that can easily be described as demonic. We behave in ways that destroy our lives and relationships that hurt others. Sometimes the demons wear the face of angels: the drug that calms our pain, the wealth that sets us apart from people, the security for which we sacrifice our souls to a job. I heard about a conversation with a nun who said that when she no longer was required to wear the habit, she had lost her peripheral vision. She had to teach herself to look to the side, again. Our habits can be just as restrictive - preventing us from seeing God when we only look ahead, possessed by the demons we see before us.

What is it that I have not seen today, because I was focused by habit only on what was before me?

How can I stop to look around and see the hand of Christ reaching toward me?

Prayer:

Jesus my brother, sometimes I think I see you
from the corner of my eye
when I'm reaching for something else.
But the demons have hold of me, rushing me
pulling me to the next thing, showing me
false wonders, expectations that quicken
my pulse, but sicken my soul.
I will try to turn toward you, if you
will just keep reaching toward me.
I pray today _____, friends blessed by
your love.
For your grace,
with your love,
and in Christ's name, I pray.