

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 and head to a place you won't be disturbed. 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. 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*.

If you'd like to share some thoughts about what you've read, head over to the 'chat space' at www.standrewsuc.com

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ST. ANDREW'S HANEY UNITED CHURCH

Daily Scripture and Prayer Time

(July 2nd to 7th, 2007)

Writer for this Week:
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Monday

Scripture:

- 2 Kings 3.4-20
- Psalm 75
- 1 John 2.7-11

Reflection:

It may be important to note that Joram was the son of King Ahab, husband of the infamous Jezebel, and that while he tore down the statue honouring Baal, he "kept doing the sinful things" that his father had done (2 Kings 3:3). So his fear that God had betrayed them was not the disappointment of a faithful follower: God has a lot to prove as far as Joram is concerned. But isn't it interesting that when things got bad, God was to blame, even though there's no record that Joram consulted God before setting out on his expedition.

After the battle, 1 John 2:7-11 is like refreshing rain: if you can't see where you are going, maybe it's because you're in the dark. Try stepping into the light.

Where in your life might you be walking in the dark, maybe seeking retaliation or avoiding responsibility for your own actions like Joram? And how might you step back into the light?

Prayer:

God of Light, keep me in the light.
If I claim to hate someone,
help me restore right relationships.
If I blame you or someone else for my actions,
help me to take responsibility.
If I cause problems for others,
help me to make amends.
If I seek revenge, help me find a better way.
Today, I remember and pray for _____,
friends blessed by your love and compassion.
For your grace, with your love,
and in Christ's name, I pray.

Tuesday

Scripture:

- 2 Kings 3:21-27
- Psalm 75
- Ephesians 5:6-20

Reflection:

Ephesians gives us more theory about living in the light, and 2 Kings gives us more reality of darkness. I don't think this has disturbing messages about the theology of the two parts of the Bible, I think it has to do with the great divide between reality and theory. How often to we set out with good intentions only to find that the reality of what happens doesn't measure up?

The author of Ephesians writes that those who live in the light should be good and honest and truthful. But honest and truthful can be unkind when the high principles meet real life.

And in reality, the destruction in Moab could have been worse. The land can be rebuilt, although it will take work. Rocks can be moved and at least the fields weren't sprinkled with salt. Today we would initiate diplomatic measures first, but in those days that wasn't really an option.

So as we live in the light, let's remember to be kind and understanding as well as honest and truthful.

Prayer:

God of truth,
may I truly seek truth
as I try to understand the world around me.
And may my truth always be tempered
by kindness and generosity of spirit.
Give me the gift of good sense.
Help me to make every minute count
and to praise you
and thank you for everything.
Today, I remember and pray for _____,
friends blessed by your love and compassion.
For your grace, with your love,
and in Christ's name, I pray.

Wednesday

Scripture:

- 2 Kings 4.1-7
- Psalm 75
- Matthew 10.16-25

Reflection:

In this passage the themes are almost reversed: 2 Kings gives us an example of someone reaching out in kindness to help another and Matthew reminds us that faithfulness can lead to trouble. When I tried to explain this to my four-year-old daughter, she asked, "What if you try to do the right thing and the police put you in jail?" Isn't that what Jesus was warning about?

Sometimes doing what is kind and right gets you in trouble. Not necessarily with the authorities, but perhaps with friends, neighbours or fellow citizens. Sometimes it works out and we are able to do some good either for an individual or for something bigger.

Either way, and in spite of all the reality in the world, nowhere does it suggest that when it's inconvenient or difficult, we are excused from being faithful followers of God's way. It's not easy but, as the psalm says, God "will give strength to those who are good."

Prayer:

God who leads me, help me to follow.
Where I am challenged to do good,
help me to rise to the occasion.
Where things are easy,
don't let me take that for granted.
I praise you for being near to me
and for all you have done.
May you continue to do more
and may I continue to be part of it.

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

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

Thursday

Scripture:

- 2 Kings 4.8-17
- Psalm 30
- Romans 7.14-25

Reflection:

The rich woman's grief is turned to joy when her son is born. The psalmist writes that mourning is turned to dancing. And Paul laments that it's too hard to do what he should but that Jesus helps him anyways. The cycle of grief to joy comes over and over again in our lives.

Sometimes things are hard because of circumstances beyond our control.

Sometimes our struggles come from our own disappointment with what we are able to do or have been able to accomplish. No matter how hard it is to believe at times, Scripture reminds us that "weeping may endure the night, but joy cometh in the morning."

Has this promise comforted you? Or do you find it annoying to be reminded that today's pain won't last forever? For me, I think, it's both. But I do thank God that, in the end, the good times rolled back in.

Prayer:

God of joy and sorrow,
I have struggled and called out to you.
And you answered.
I have rejoiced and given thanks.
And you heard that, too.
Thank you for being with me in good times
and in bad.
I thank you from my heart
and I will never stop praising you,
no matter how hard it is sometimes.

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

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

Friday

Scripture:

- 2 Kings 4.18-31
- Psalm 30
- 2 Corinthians 8.1-7

Reflection:

"You do everything better than anyone else" (2 Corinthians 8:7). Now there's a set up if ever there was one. Faith, speaking, knowledge, enthusiasm, love – all are better in Corinth than anywhere else. And now the pressure is on to give more than anyone else, more even than the church in Macedonia which was very poor when they were so generous.

Now, to me, this is out-and-out manipulation, albeit manipulation for a good cause. It's not even very subtle. I wonder how the church in Corinth received it? They had been generous in the past and seem to have been a relatively wealthy church. So, perhaps, to refuse to be generous now would have been cutting off their collective nose to spite their face.

Of course that can be tempting too. Have you ever been asked to do something and wanted to refuse because of the way you were asked, even though it was the right thing to do? I'm pretty sure I have. Maybe when our reluctance is turned into willingness, it's another way of turning mourning into dancing.

Prayer:

God of the dance, help me to join in.
In giving of my time, my skill, my money,
my knowledge, help me to be generous.
Don't let me compare myself to others,
just give what I can, how I can, when I can.
I'm not better than anyone else.
We're all your beloved children.

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

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

Saturday

Scripture:

- 2 Kings 4.32-37
- Psalm 30
- Luke 9.1-6

Reflection:

The dramatic conclusion of the life, death and resuscitation of the rich woman's son. I wonder why she wouldn't tell Elisha's servant what was wrong, only Elisha. And only Elisha could restore her son. Sometimes we can't get someone else to do our work for us. After all, the woman had been generous to Elisha. It seems reasonable to think that she deserved the personal touch. Kind of like writing your own thank you notes.

In sending out the twelve disciples, Jesus expects them to recognize that they rely on other people too. They were to depend on others for their food, lodging and care wherever they went, just as Elisha had depended on the rich woman when he was in Shunem. He helped her out when he gave her hope (and a hope that was realized) of a son. But that wasn't all that was needed. Our responsibilities to one another do not just amount to a favour for a favour. We are all connected and we all depend on each other. We can't ever make the balance come out even. So why try? We help where we can. We accept help when we can.

Prayer:

Saving God, help me to give and receive help with a gracious and generous heart.
I will never catch up and owe no one anything,
because all that you have given me,
I can repay only by helping others.

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

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