

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

(June 18th to 23rd, 2007)

WRITER FOR THIS WEEK:
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Monday

Scripture:

- Genesis 31.17-25
- Psalm 83
- Galatians 3.1-9

Reflection:

Jacob is undoubtedly one of the more colourful characters in the Bible. He's hard-done-by and quite rough around the edges, maybe as a result. Reading his story always grabs me and pulls me in – heart-first.

Today's verses paint a picture of a family under stress; this little part of the story includes stealing, deceit and abandonment...certainly not things to be held up as a biblical 'model' for family relationships - at least not in any kind of prescriptive way! There are real problems in this family - tension between the generations, estrangement and even open conflict. The story provides a 'balm,' perhaps, for those times when we forget how 'true' the Bible is!

Prayer:

God of Jacob, hear my prayer. Fill me with your peace. Surround me with your grace, especially in times of trouble...when life just isn't going quite right...when I act with my rough edges showing...when they cut, injure or hurt others, especially those closest to me, who might feel the pain they can cause the most. Smooth me out a bit, I pray. Knock the jagged edges off, so that the colourful, loving 'me' inside is more evident and more visible. Polish me up to reveal again the person you created - in your own, divine image - the object of your steadfast, generous Love.

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 Samuel 19.31-43
- Psalm 83
- Galatians 3.10-14

Reflection:

Talk about 'naming names!' The psalmist confronts God, whose apparent silence and inactivity is blamed for the trouble that's so evident. The list of offenders is detailed and thorough - the guilty parties brought right out in the open for God's immediate (and alarmingly overdue) attention. The 'faithful finger of judgment' is pointed with unwavering certainty, 'turning in' those on the list who've been (somehow) determined to be 'Holy-hating Enemies of God.' The 'righteous writer' prays that God will deliver us [God's Beloved] from evil - just like always, and even tags on a plea for what sounds a bit like 'conversion' for *them* [the un-Godly Others.]

How relevant for our reflection today, in a time when so much hatred, armed conflict and violence of all kinds is carried out, in God's name. There's no doubt (is there?) that God-Emmanue - is on all 'sides.' Perhaps discerning the nature of the values and principles that are on God's, however, is a more useful task for God's people living in a world-in-crisis. What (not who) are the 'enemies' of Life in Fullness?

Prayer:

God-with-us, give me critical eyes, ones that can see those things that kill you in the world, my behaviour that keeps you from me, actions and opinions that deaden Love and Life. Move me beyond naming people and nations, I pray, to a vantage-point that better enables me to name evil and, with you help, resist it, that I might be 'un-hardened' in my relationships with you and with others. May all of your Creation flourish.

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Wednesday

Scripture:

- Malachi 3.5-12
- Psalm 83
- Mark 2.1-12

Reflection:

The four books of the gospel contain numerous references to the theme of forgiveness of sin. In Mark's Story for today, a bit of a stir is caused, as Jesus pronounces someone forgiven. "Doesn't the 'power' to forgive sins belong to God alone? It's not really the business of humans, is it?!" We know that the prayer Jesus taught his friends links God's forgiveness with our forgiving others: "And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." Jesus, in some ways, provides a model for our lives.

Today's Story compels us to consider the human side of the 'forgiveness equation' - and it seems to have a lot to do with healing. Could it be that Jesus' actions in these verses show us that forgiveness isn't something we can earn from God by forgiving others, but rather that forgiving others is something that God deeply desires we do...for our healing? Could it be that, in forgiving others, a space is opened, making room in our hearts for the divine forgiveness that's already ours?

Prayer:

Halleluia! Thanks and praise to you, forgiving God! Open an 'entry-point' for me, I pray. Give me the way and the will to be helped through it by whatever means - to be able to move toward forgiving those in my own life for whom I still hang on to anger and resentment. In doing so, may I be healed - more able to embrace the forgiveness that is mine through Christ - that which cannot possibly be earned.

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

Thursday

Scripture:

- Genesis 24.1-21
- Psalms 42 & 43
- Romans 2.17-29

Reflection:

I have a friend - a student of theology - who has a T-shirt that reads: I don't like Paul. The apostle's writing can be tough to get through! In this passage, Paul addresses Jews directly about matters of The Law - an area of considerable difficulty. As I read it, though, I find myself thinking about a couple of things. The idea of 'hypocrisy' - maybe not so much meaning, 'saying one thing and doing another,' as 'telling people what they should do and then not doing it myself.' I wonder if this means I have to be an 'example' to others? For God? I'm also thinking about appearance versus 'true' faith. Does the outward and physical need to be 'spiritualized' to give it real 'value?' Do I need to 'prove' outward signs of faith? To whom? How?

Prayer:

Be in my thoughts, Holy One. Be in my words, Conversation-Made-Flesh. Be in my actions, Spirit of Love. Bless who I am and what I do, that I might bless you...

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Friday

Scripture:

- Job 6.14-30
- Psalm 42 & 43
- Galatians 3.15-22

Reflection:

Water. The caravans set their course for the streams, only to find them completely dried up in the heat of the summer. They search elsewhere, but in vain. The deer pants for the flowing stream, as our souls long for the Living God. Water has become big news; it's making headlines. We hear different voices talking about the issues around water using all kinds of language. For us, water is a basic human right. It's about theology. It's about God. Awareness of what happens when water is considered a 'marketable commodity,' rather than a basic right, is growing. We're changing our way of thinking and our habits - as individuals and as communities. The spiritual metaphor - that we 'thirst for God' - is left all but 'high and dry' as the real stuff runs out, or when we consider that it isn't available at all, in any usable condition, for so many people in the world. How cruel to offer Jesus vinegar on the cross, in response to his words, "I thirst..."

Prayer:

We're thirsty, O God. We clutch our bottles of precious water; lately, of course, it's from the tap. (Well, most of the time, at least...) We thank you for the abundance of fresh water where we live. We thank you for the Water of Life that is ours through Christ. Grant us wisdom, vision and strength as we seek ways to support initiatives that would make clean water available to all people.

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Saturday

Scripture:

- Proverbs 11.3-13
- Psalm 42 & 43
- Matthew 9.27-34

Reflection:

The two paths...sin and righteousness. It's a common theme in scripture. The comparisons, however, are often written in a style that makes it easy to imagine that there are two kinds of people - 'good' and 'bad.' I heard a true story today about someone who'd left a valuable piece of jewelry on a train. Someone found it and turned it in. On the radio, the relieved (and much surprised) purchaser said that the experience had, "restored [his] faith in humanity." He reluctantly concluded that, "there are still some good people out there!" Is that where we are? Surprised at signs that there are (a few) 'good' people in the world, among the crowds of 'bad' ones? Is that what God sees?

Prayer:

Lead us in paths of righteousness for your namesake, Great Shepherd. Save us from the time of trial, Heavenly, Loving Parent. Let your Realm of Love be revealed...and may it begin, I pray, with me.

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