

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 25th to 30th, 2007)

Writer for this Week:
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Monday

Scripture:

- 2 Kings 9.1-13
- Psalm 59
- 1 Corinthians 1.18-31

Reflection:

As I read the story of the anointing of Jehu, I found myself thinking "this story is so bizarre!" Every scene seems weirder than the one before it. Why did Elisha send a junior prophet to anoint Jehu king instead of doing it himself? Was he afraid? Was that why he told the young man to run away as soon as he had done the deed? Why then does the young prophet not anoint and run, but stick around to prophesy about Ahab and Jezebel's future? If the military leaders all thought the young prophet was a babbling mad man, why were they apparently so ready to join in this act of sedition against Joram by proclaiming Jehu king? It doesn't quite all seem to compute.

Try reading this text without letting your brain rationalize it right away. It's as though God is out there making foolish the wisdom of the world again.

Prayer:

Foolish Wisdom,
you turn the world topsy turvy ... and me with it. Startle me. Shake me from my complacency. Discombobulate me so that I may hear and see something new and fresh and surprising. As you shook Jehu to his foundations with your surprising word, shake me, that I too may receive your anointing and your foolish servant in this so-called wise world.

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 9.14-26
- Psalm 59
- Ephesians 2.11-22

Reflection:

Have you noticed how two people can look at the same thing and see it two very different ways? Through what kind of eyes do we see the world? Are we aware of how we who were far off have been brought near? Can we see the dividing wall between Christians and Jews (and Muslims for that matter) broken down? Do we deeply and truly know the peace proclaimed to us? Do we understand all of us to be citizens of God's reign, no longer strangers or aliens? Can we look at our fellow Christians, particularly those with whom we disagree, as well as the other peoples of the book, and see one dwelling place for God? Or do we still need Jesus to come and restore our sight?

Prayer:

Healing Jesus,
touch our eyes and heal us, that we may see your world and our sisters and brothers through healthy eyes like yours. Thank you for bringing us near, giving us a spiritual home, and breaking down the walls that divide us from each other. Remind us that the things which unite us are stronger than the things which make us different. For the sake of your creation and our life, grant that we not rebuild what you have broken down.

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friends blessed by your love and compassion.

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

Wednesday

Scripture:

- 2 Kings 9.30-37
- Psalm 59
- Luke 9.37-43a

Reflection:

I started to reflect on the gospel for today, and realised it would have only have been in order to avoid dealing with Jezebel's death. It is narratives like this one that help earn the Bible its PG-13 rating, and make it a struggle for many Christians to take the Hebrew scriptures as seriously as they do the New Testament. Jezebel's comparison of Jehu to Zimri makes this story of prophecy fulfilled and the triumph of Yahweh over Baal also a prophecy that Jehu himself will not escape condemnation in the end. One of the aspects of Hebrew Scripture that helps me to take it so seriously is its disarmingly honest reflection of the breadth of human experience -- good and evil -- and its unflinching assertion that somehow God is present through it all.

Prayer:

Compassionate One, sometimes I encounter the word and wonder how it can possibly be your Word. Hold me in the questions. Help me to trust in the ability of your Holy Spirit to meet me somewhere in this incredibly important task of encountering scripture. Give me the kind of confidence in your desire for me that Israel had in your desire for her, so that I too may be honest about my life, knowing that nothing will separate me from you and from your love.

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friends blessed by your love and compassion.

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Thursday

Scripture:

- 1 Kings 22.29-40; 51-53
- Psalm 77.1-2, 11-20
- 2 Corinthians 13.5-13

Reflection:

Some in the church in Corinth accused Paul of not being a real Apostle. Paul's response was to invite the Corinthians to look at their own faith, and decide whether the message Paul had preached had taken root in them or not. In other words, Paul asks the Corinthians to judge him by the fruit of his work amongst them, not the appearance of it. Sometimes it is difficult to discern whether our efforts as followers of Jesus are fruitful or not. Our definition of "fruitful" and God's definition may not be the same.

How do you try to discern God's will? What "fruits of the Spirit" let you know whether you are on the right path or not?

Prayer:

Generous Provider and Guiding Light, thank you for the gift of faith and the call to serve you. Help me to wonder if what I do really does please you. Help me want to please you in everything I do. Show me the signs of when I am on track ... or not. Give me the strength to examine myself and my actions, and the courage to change what needs changing, trusting in your love for me, and your delight in my desire to please you.

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friends blessed by your love and compassion.

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

Friday

Scripture:

- 2 Kings 1.1-12
- Psalm 77.1-2, 11-20
- Galatians 4.8-20

Reflection:

In Psalm 77 the psalmist gives voice to thoughts that I suspect all of us have had from time to time -- certainly I have. When life is painful, or when we find ourselves fearing the pain that may come, as I often do when I think about the world my young children will face when they grow up, we may find ourselves wondering if God's steadfast love has ceased forever, if God's promises and graciousness are no more. This psalm -- like so many -- breaks down the boundary of time: the psalmist speaks the present words of our hearts, and the psalmist's memories become our own, so that we too remember the Divine One's deeds and wonders of old, promises that God will not forsake us.

Prayer:

Faithful One, when I find myself in the valley of the shadow of death, and I cry aloud to you, and I doubt that you can or will do anything, break down the boundary of time and remind me of how your wonders and deeds have saved me in the past. Give me confidence and trust in your care for me.

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Saturday

Scripture:

- 2 Kings 1.13-18; 2.3-5
- Psalm 77.1-2, 11-20
- Luke 9.21-27

Reflection:

Every well-known scripture passage -- for better or worse -- comes with the baggage of nearly 2000 years of interpretation. In the case of the Luke text, some of the "worse" includes those in power using this text to encourage those without power to be content with their "lot." If we can move beyond that, this text makes a very important corrective to the contemporary individualist expression that what matters most at the end of the day is my own happiness. It speaks to the truth that so many of us have experienced: many of the most meaningful moments in life are those directed outward in service of the world rather than inward in service of ourselves. If we can begin to live more that way, without going so far as to erase ourselves completely, I think we might all be a lot happier.

Have you experienced the joy of giving and living for others? Are you able to do that in ways that honour the "you" that God has created and loves?

Prayer:

Generous God, thank you for giving yourself to us in Jesus Christ, and in so doing, showing us your way of generosity. Convince me beyond any doubt that I am precious and worthy in your sight. Then trusting and sure of your love for me, drive me out to follow Jesus and live, not for myself, but for your world in the ways you have created and called me to do so.

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friends blessed by your love and compassion.

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