

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

(March 19th to 24th, 2007)

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Monday

Scripture:

- Leviticus 23.26-41
- Psalm 53
- Revelations 19.1-8

Reflection:

As I'm writing this, February has just ended, along with the attendant comments from every corner that what this country really needs is a national holiday or some other excuse for a long weekend to help us all get through the February blahs. The text from Leviticus is part of God's instructions to Israel about the festivals they are required to observe.

Underlying the festivals are common themes of rest from work and offering gifts to God.

I don't think we can underestimate how counter-cultural this message is for us. Rest for a people that worships productivity, and giving to God for a culture rooted in acquiring more for ourselves are large and radical steps. But not impossible ones.

What roles do rest and giving to God play in your life? Do you experience balance between them and their opposites?

Prayer:

Generous One,

thank you for the life and abilities you have given me. Help me to use the gifts you have given me for the good of all. Orient me towards you in all I do, that I may set aside time to rest in you, and money and time for the building up of your reign. May my life be the celebration you intend.

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:

- Leviticus 25.1-19
- Psalm 53
- Revelation 19.9-10

Reflection:

This Leviticus reading was very popular back at the turn of the millennium with the Jubilee 2000 movement. For me, the theme carries over from yesterday's reading, taking rest for humans to the next level: rest for the land. Whether we're talking about rest or giving to God, I think the crux of the matter is trust. Do we trust in God and God's generosity enough that we can take time to rest, that we can give away some of what we have? Do we really believe that there is enough, apart from our own efforts to "produce" more?

Where do you find yourself placing your trust? Is there a discrepancy between where you would like to put your trust and where your actions suggest it is? What practices might you introduce to create more balance and fullness of life in your days?

Prayer:

Source of all that is,

I bless you for the bounty of creation and the richness of my life. Help me to stop my work long enough to enjoy your work. Give me the gift of trust in you, that my own work might be a joyful response to your generosity and not a hedge against the possibility that you might cease to provide.

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 53
- Luke 9.10-17

Reflection:

I get a little nervous about setting up facile contrasts between “good” religious people and an “evil” world. At the same time, though, I think I understand how the psalmist may have felt: I too have bad days when I look at something like global warming and feel like we’ve all “fallen away,” and some day we’re going to have to “pay the bill.”

Contrast this with the good news of God’s abundance. As people of faith, we are invited to live in a world where there is already enough, where we do not need to lay waste ourselves, our neighbours, or the planetary ecosystem in order to provide “enough.” Let’s give the psalmist the benefit of the doubt. Perhaps he was having a bad day. There are people doing good, signs of hope. Let’s take encouragement from that, and bring our best to those efforts.

Prayer:

Trustworthy One,

thank you for your abundant creation. Help me to see your generosity to me in the past, that I might trust that you will continue to be generous with me in the future. Show me how my actions serve to deny others of your generosity toward them, and help me to change my ways, that all may have enough.

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:

- Isaiah 43.1-7
- Psalm 126
- Philippians 2.19-24

Reflection:

This passage from Isaiah is one of my favourite texts. My tendency toward perfection leaves me mercilessly hard on myself and very critical. This text is an important corrective: I am precious, honoured, loved. A friend of mine, of middle age, divorced, with grown children, and pursuing her own education and interests after many years at home once said that she thought Jesus’ commandment about loving should be the other way around, that we should love ourselves as we love our neighbour.

I think she had a point. It seems that even though we are often encouraged to be selfish and feel good about ourselves, many of us are still working at the spiritual work of seeing ourselves as God sees us: precious, honoured, loved. How do you see yourself?

Prayer:

Divine Lover,

make me bold to receive your love. Give me the courage and the confidence to allow myself to be doted on by you, my creator, redeemer and sustainer. Allow me to be big enough in my own eyes to see how big I am in yours. And, should my ego get the better of me, allow me to see others as you see them as well

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:

- Isaiah 43.8-15
- Psalm 126
- Philippians 2.25-3.1

Reflection:

There are a number of reasons why I disagree with the often-heard statement that one can be a Christian without going to church. (I do agree that one can be a good person without going to church, but that’s not the same thing in my mind as being a Christian). One of the reasons I don’t think it is possible to practice Christianity outside of some form of community is that Christianity is fundamentally about hope, and we are not all hopeful all the time. When, like the psalmist, we find ourselves in times of despair, it is in part the community’s memory of better times that holds the hope of a better future for us when we cannot hold that hope ourselves. The corollary is also true: when “our mouth(s are) filled with laughter,” it becomes our responsibility to hold the hope for those amongst us whose hope has run dry.

Prayer:

Beloved Creator,

you have made us in your image, people of memory and hope. Help me to remember myself in you, and in so doing to remember your hoped-for world. Grant me freedom, not to forget the past, but to be liberated by it, so that I may welcome your rich vision for the future. Today I pray for _____ friends blessed by your love and compassion. For your grace, with your love, and in Christ’s name I pray.

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:

- Exodus 12.21-27
- Psalm 126
- John 11.45-57

Reflection:

As Lent draws toward a close and Easter weekend stands not far off, the time is ripe for reflecting on how we understand Jesus’ death and resurrection. John is clear in this passage that he understands Jesus to have died for Israel and for “the dispersed children of God.” Personally, I am not persuaded by that theology. I know that sets me outside of the majority of Christians, but I don’t think it puts me outside the family altogether.

I think all Christians would benefit from reflecting on how they understand the events of Easter weekend, and my hunch is that more and more have been doing that. There is academically solid, accessible literature available. Don’t be afraid to hold preachers, teachers and others to account.

Why do you think Jesus died? Why was he raised? What does that say about God? Maybe your questions have nothing to do with this. Whatever they are, ask them now.

Prayer:

God of restless searchers,

down through the generations you have accompanied people who have sought after you, after Truth. During this season of reflection and pondering, give me confidence and trust to ask the hard questions of your Spirit that are before me, and the patience and openness to listen for your Word.

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.