

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

(November 19th to 24th, 2007)

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Monday

Scripture:

- Isaiah 60.17-22
- Psalm 76
- Ephesians 4.25 - 5.2

Reflection:

The writer's challenge to the Christ followers of Ephesus definitely challenged me. How many of us need to work on one of these areas in our own lives: truth telling, being angry without sinning, theft, sharing with those who are in need... not letting our words or actions put others down, but work to build them up?

What I really appreciate about this list is that it doesn't sound like a condemnation, but a challenge to wholeness in love.

Perhaps as we find Ordinary Time winding down and the season of Advent approaching, this might be an appropriate moment to sit down with God and review how our lives are being lived.

Prayer:

Holy One...
I recognize that my life
isn't all it could be.
Could you help me to see
the places in which I need to grow...
and could you help me
in that growing?

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:

- Isaiah 66.1-13
- Psalm 76
- 1 Corinthians 10.23 - 11.1

Reflection:

When is our worship not worship? When are our prayers not really prayers? When are our spiritual disciplines... not particularly spiritual?

Worship and prayer and disciplines are important to me. I find that they help to give order to my life in a way that helps me to connect with God's presence. There are times; however, that my prayers become syllables without much meaning, my worship becomes perfunctory, and my disciplines feel like duty. Sometimes I can't find the awe and the joy of relationship with God.

Isaiah, being a prophet - one whose task was to call people back to God - has pretty harsh words for those of his people whose worship life was lacking integrity. I don't believe that God condemns us for our times of dis-integration, but, in love, calls us back into communion.

Who do you turn to, to help you find integrity? Are their parts of your relationship with God that need support right now?

Prayer:

God,
in your love, you hold all things.
As you hold me,
I ask you to help me
to find integration...
that my words and my actions
might be reflections of your 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.

Wednesday

Scripture:

- Isaiah 66.14-24
- Psalm 76
- Matthew 23.37 - 24.14

Reflection:

I was writing this week's brochure in a cafe, my bible and notebook sitting on the table in front of me. A young man stopped by my table, looked at what I was reading, and asked if I was 'born again'. As we explored what he meant by that phrase, he began to witness to me. He was, and is, sure that we will experience the biblically defined end-time in our life-time. He pointed out scripture and verse and connected it to world events of the previous decade. While I appreciate what he was doing - trying to keep me from what he believes will be eternal punishment - I found myself no more or less concerned than I had been beforehand.

Ever since they were first shared, biblical prophecies have been interpreted to mean the current era. Various groups of people have seen prophecies like those in the Matthew reading to mean that the end was nigh. I wonder if it would be more productive to live our lives in the love of God and with integrity and wholeness each and every day.

That way, whenever our individual or communal 'end-time' comes, we've lived every day fully and hopefully.

Prayer:

God of all times, God of all places,
God of right now... thank you for this moment
and for all of the moments
I have and will experience.
Whatever is to come, help me to live
Christ's love - now, and forever.

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

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

Thursday

Scripture:

- Jeremiah 21.1-14
- Luke 1.68-79
- Romans 1:18-25

Reflection:

There is something in me that cries out against the idea that someone else - even Jesus the Christ - needed to be sacrificed for my poor choices... my mistakes... my sins. Perhaps that's because those things are as much a part of me as my good choices and my accomplishments. Perhaps it's because I come from a culture in which we believe that individuals need to be held accountable for their actions.

How do we reconcile our understandings of personal responsibility with that of "substitutionary atonement"? I wish I had an answer for that one. I do know that for the writer and the first readers of the letter to the Hebrews, the idea of offering sacrifices for both thanksgiving and restitution, was part of their understanding of how to be in right relationship with God. To see Jesus' death as an ultimate sacrifice for sin would have made fundamental sense to them.

What makes fundamental sense to us?

Prayer:

Holy God... did you need a sacrifice
to respond to my choices?
Did you need a death
to balance out my life?
Or was Jesus' death something else?
As I look at my life, God,
take what needs to be taken -
heal what needs to be healed -
forgive what needs to be forgiven -
and help me to Live again.

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:

- Jeremiah 22.1-17
- Luke 1.68-79
- 1 Peter 1.3-9

Reflection:

Jeremiah heard God challenging the people to do justice for those who were without voice - widows and orphans, the innocent and those being oppressed. Over and over he told those in authority that they needed to change what was or all that they knew would be destroyed.

When I read passages like this, my imagination tends to put me in the place of those in authority... perhaps because, as a middle-class guy living in a democracy like Canada, my voice does have authority and power. So does yours. Our Members of Parliament and Members of the Legislative Assembly, those responsible for directly making decisions, do listen to our individual and collective voices. That gives us a great deal of authority... and responsibility.

What is God challenging us to do?

Prayer:

God of the widow,
God of the orphan,
God of the voiceless
and of the voiced -
what do I need to do
to live your justice?
Who do I need to be
to live your 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.

Saturday

Scripture:

- Jeremiah 22.18-30
- Luke 1.68-79
- Luke 18.15-17

Reflection:

A few weeks ago, the congregation of St. Andrew's celebrated the life of one of the newest members of the congregation - Caleb. An active 18-month-old, Caleb wandered around the church during worship, sometimes staying with his family, sometimes wandering to other members of the congregation. His parents, new to the church, were extremely surprised at how well his wandering and liveliness were accepted. I overheard her making a remark to one of the members of the congregation who replied, "Well, one of the things we're trying to remember is to let an 18-month-old be an 18-month-old, and a 4 year-old to be a 4 year-old, and a 15 year-old to be a 15 year-old... and not expect them to be anyone except who God created them to be." After a pause, she continued, "And... if we couldn't let ourselves see and hear the children... if we can't learn from them... well, we wouldn't be dying - we'd already be dead."

What do the children that touch your life have to teach you about the household of God?

Prayer:

God of sticky fingers and popsicle smiles,
God of exuberant joy and agonizing tears,
God of our children and grandchildren...
could you help me to see you
through their eyes, again?

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.