

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

(October 22nd to 27th, 2007)

WRITER FOR THIS WEEK:
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Monday

Scripture:

- Jeremiah 38.14-28
- Psalm 129
- 1 Corinthians 6.1-11

Reflection:

I must admit that I both snicker and shake my head at today's readings. I wonder whether the church of the 21st century has the faith to follow either a test of faith like the one Jeremiah (and God) gives to king Zedekiah, or like the one Paul gives to the church in Corinth.

Zedekiah is told to surrender, and his life will be spared. But he is afraid of what will happen to him if he does surrender. How often is that the case with us? Ever have a deep, gut feeling that a particular course of action or decision is right, is where God is calling, but then fear so much what will happen if you go that route that you waiver and question whether it truly is right? Never happened to me. At least not in the last hour.

Prayer:

Holy One, grant me such an openness to your love that I may acknowledge my fears to you and in so doing, find the comfort you offer.

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:

- Jeremiah 39.1-18
- Psalm 129
- James 5.7-12

Reflection:

King Zedekiah feared what might happen if he followed God's call to surrender. So he didn't. Now, he's paying the terrible price.

The congregation I serve have a tremendous opportunity before us - we have the space and have discerned a calling to open for one month year as part of a rotating Cold, Wet Weather Shelter for homeless folks in our area. Many wonder if it's the wise thing. Interesting that most of us don't question whether it's the right thing. Makes me wonder whose wisdom we're following. And now that we're starting to hear from a few terrified neighbours whose fears have turned to feelings bordering on hatred, I too question whether our congregation will have the faith to weather the storm. Where are these concerns floating in your life?

Prayer:

Give us eyes to see the spiritual death that is the result of pulling away from your call. Give us also courage to trust you - even in the face of our fears.

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:

- Jeremiah 50.1-7
- Psalm 129
- Luke 22.39-46

Reflection:

The promise of Israel's return is coming true. But not to the generation that was exiled. A great many of them have died in exile. They were told to trust in the promise, but like the generation of Moses, the promise was really for their children. And their children's children.

How do we deal with this in our society of instant gratification? What do we make of the "Good News" when common wisdom suggests that it's not necessarily all that "good" for us, ourselves? Perhaps the reading from Luke is the answer. This scene is the one where Jesus started becoming real for me. Jesus, the human, the flesh of my flesh and bone of my bones, bears all to God. And God answered in Love and courage and trust.

Prayer:

Thy will be done.
Thy will be done.
Thy will be done.
And help me trust that it is your will to give me comfort, strength, and courage.
And may that trust bring me peace.

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:

- Joel 1.1-20
- Psalm 65
- 2 Timothy 3.1-9

Reflection:

Ah! The lost art of lamentation. A lament is quite a different thing from a complaint. Complaining is only part of lamenting. A lament runs deeper. We're not just complaining. We're actually being so open and vulnerable as to really, truly grieve to / with our God. Lamenting is bearing it all to God. In our culture that teaches us to escape, resist, minimize, and control our vulnerability, lament is so often now we reserve only for our breaking point, if even then. And so we miss the release having truly grieved and been freed to new life.

'Tis a pity too. I can't help that think that perhaps, if we did more lamenting around the bare truthfulness of the reading from 2 Timothy, might we free ourselves for more constructive work with God?

Prayer:

Jesus, your prayers and your grief were so intense for Lazarus and at Gethsemane. Help me to trust that you will not let me drown if I let you thaw my heart to feel.

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friends blessed by your love and compassion.

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Friday

Scripture:

- Joel 2.1-11
- Psalm 65
- 2 Timothy 3.10-15

Reflection:

"Indeed, all who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." (2 Tim 3:12)

Ouch.

The church I grew up in seemed to be all about, well, "Nice-keeping". I differentiate that from peace keeping. It seemed to me that preserving at least the look of harmony and good relations with all was one of the chief values. It seemed to be the expected fruit of "love your neighbour as yourself." And yet, that's never what Jesus promised. That's certainly not were I see people of deep faith that I admire discerning his calling now. Where do I get tempted to be "nice" when "nice" isn't really being real? Where do I get tempted to rail in (self?) righteous anger and forget the love part of speaking the truth?

Prayer:

Jesus, you don't promise the road to be easy, but you do offer to relieve my burden. May I walk ever more faithfully with you.

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:

- Joel 2.12-22
- Psalm 65
- Luke 1.46b-55

Reflection:

The warning of disaster from yesterdays reading has led to repentance - a turning around of lives, priorities, and relationships back to a God centred, blessing centred, focus. And that in turn has led to a blessing in place of a curse. Was this because the curse never came, or because the right relationships grounded in the blessing of God shifted attention, and therefore power, away from the curse? Where the prophets talk of God's vengeance, I tend to see natural consequences of a people scattered and ill-equipped because of being turned from God and love of neighbour to love of self and other idols. Whatever your take, however, I wonder if you've had what could have been "curses" disappear through a focus on blessing?

Prayer:

Lover of all creation, as we head into a future filled with frightening potential for your world, help us to experience the blessing of the abundant choices we have to follow you and do our part.

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.