

## 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](http://www.standrewsuc.com)

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### ST. ANDREW'S HANEY UNITED CHURCH

## Daily Scripture and Prayer Time

(Oct. 29<sup>nd</sup> to Nov. 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2007)

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## Monday

### Scripture:

- Joel 3.1-8
- Psalm 87
- 1 Peter 4.12-19

### Reflection:

Ah, the sweet joy of being the special ones: the ultimately triumphant people of Judah and Jerusalem, the glory of Zion, the righteous and suffering Christians. Is it just me or is this a recurring theme in our scriptures?

We all want to be special and right and better. How many advertisements exhort us to buy something because "I deserve it"? There's no consideration of whether I need it or can afford it or even really want it. But I deserve it and therefore I should have it.

We all want to see those we might call our enemies or our nay-sayers or just plain "them" get what (we think) is coming to them. But when the same things happen to us, we interpret them quite differently. "Their" sufferings are deserved; "ours" glorify God.

I think it's natural to want to be the star of our own world. When we stop to realize how we "cast" the rest of the players in our drama what do we find? Co-stars or supporting actors?

### Prayer:

God of the cosmos, I am a small part of a big drama that unfolds telling the story of your people throughout time. May I play my part faithfully, neither seeking glory nor avoiding my role, and may I support others as they play theirs.

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:

- Joel 3.9-16
- Psalm 87
- 1 Peter 5.1-11

### Reflection:

Two different ways of heading towards the glory that is to be revealed. Joel's prophecy exhorts everyone to turn their ploughshares into swords so that even the weakest may claim to be a warrior. And Peter calls on the leaders to be gentle and humble in their care for the faithful.

Of course, there's a time to plant your feet and say "enough" and there's a time to be gentle and tolerant. And either way, no one likes to be called a doormat. But there is nothing in Peter's instructions to the elders that suggests they should not take a stand. In fact, their whole living should be a stand against evil and for loving service. And in this way they will prove themselves to be worthy of being obeyed.

Who are the leaders you are most likely to follow? The strongly impassioned or the gently persuasive? And which is your way of leading? Or maybe it's somewhere in between.

### Prayer:

God, I will follow you. You call me in ways I don't always hear and to things that aren't always fun. But I will follow you. And I hope that sometimes, others will follow me along our way.

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:

- Joel 3.17-20
- Psalm 87
- Matthew 21.28-32

### Reflection:

I am all about the elder brother. Except when I am all about the younger brother. I have a strong tendency to say "I can't" just before I do. But I also have a tendency to try, get distracted and give up.

Sometimes when I read this parable I become convinced that it's a trick and those who answered it are not up to snuff because they got the answer wrong, not the lifestyle. And then I re-read it and am reassured: it's not what we say we'll do, it's what we do.

Because we are so very adept at those little mind tricks: I will after I get this sorted out. I will do this better the next time. I will find the time later. I will be more patient when things ease up. And sometimes that allows us a bridge and sometimes it just bogs us down.

And the point of this is not to lay on the guilt for what we don't do. It's to encourage the doing. In the immortal words of Yoda: "There is no try: there is only do or not do."

### Prayer:

God of doing, give me the grace to not worry about what I am not doing or have not been doing the way I want to. And give me the power to do what I can, without excusing or regretting what I cannot.

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 33.14-26
- Psalm 119.137-144
- 2 Corinthians 1.1-11

### Reflection:

Unshaken hope. The knowledge that God is with you, good will triumph, all will work out. To me that suggests an eternal optimism, a perpetual confidence expressed in steady behaviour no matter how bad things seem to get.

But, you know, I'm not so sure about that.

I think that unshaken hope leaves room for despair. I'm sure that those exiled people despaired that God would ever remember them – why else did they need prophets to call them back and remind of whose they were? I'm sure that those early Christ-followers despaired of every making a difference, having freedom of religion or just plain making it out of the lion's den.

And probably some of them weakened and gave way to bouts of weeping, shouted imprecations at God and considered recanting their faith. But they also strengthened. And they got through because of the unshaken hope – the unquenchable gleam of light that shone in their darkness.

### Prayer:

I praise you, God, for hope. I praise you that I don't need eternal optimism because of my hope in you. At times, I despair, I rage, I turn away. But in me is the light of hope in you. Thank 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.

## Friday

### Scripture:

- Habakkuk 1.5-17
- Psalm 119.137-144
- 2 Peter 1.1-11

### Reflection:

Much as I like the idea that love as the basis for mutual affection is the basis for godliness until you come to faith (2 Peter 1.5-7), it sometimes seems like an unending slog of kindness and thinking of others until my nerves seem to be set on edge and I'd like to scream. Habbakuk's efforts to understand why God is letting things be as they are seems much more interesting and dramatic

But in the end the goal is the same: to understand what to do until we can get to the point where the world is right. We try to understand how we have got to where we are, we listen for what God might be saying about that and then we try to figure out what we need to do. Truly, it often does seem to come down to love, mutual affection, endurance, knowledge and so forth. But that's not really an unending slog of niceness. It's a challenge to see the world as God sees it: to see each part of it as God's creation; to seek knowledge and understanding instead of snap judgments of popular opinions, to not go after what we want but after what is best all 'round.

### 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. God of astonishing words and of amazing works, in the daily struggles of life may I stay true to my calling as your disciple. Instead of plodding steps of faithfulness, may I see a joyful journey of discovering more about you and your world and your people.

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:

- Habakkuk 2.5-11
- Psalm 119.137-144
- Luke 1.46b-55

### Reflection:

Jesus asks, "Why do you not understand what I say?" and then answers, "It is because you cannot accept my word." Why should they though? He speaks about everything they have been taught and taught themselves. And God insists that the people must live faithfully even before they see evidence of divine justice. Why? If God has deserted them, what difference does it make?

Faithful living in changing times is always a challenge. What do we do with all these situations that weren't covered by our scriptures? Or – worse – were covered based on assumptions based on a world view that we have left behind centuries ago? How do we know who to listen to? How do we know which is the right path to take?

But the fact that it's challenging is no excuse for pretending that the world hasn't changed or shouldn't have. The struggle to find our place in a changing world is what we are called to do. Sometimes we don't agree. Sometimes we don't know. But we are called to try. To listen, to hear, to trust and to respond.

### Prayer:

God of the ages, I listen for your voice, just as my ancestors did. Sometimes I understand. Sometimes it's hard to hear. Sometimes I can't figure it out. But I keep listening. Keep calling.

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.