

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

(September 10th to 15th, 2007)

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Monday

Scripture:

- Jeremiah 18.12-23
- Psalm 2
- 1 Timothy 3.14-4.5

Reflection:

"...I am writing these instructions to you so that...you may know how to behave in the household of God..."

In many places across the country Church School is starting up again after taking the summer off. Part of the task of being the church is to help each other learn and grow in faith. We all need reminders of how to behave in the household of God. We are all supposed to be both teachers and learners.

In fact this happens not just in Church School, or not even just in Church buildings. The household of God is of course the world in which we live. And the instructions come from a variety of places. The challenge is in recognizing them when they come from an unexpected place.

Prayer:

Teaching God, I admit that sometimes I am a terribly slow learner. Or sometimes I get frustrated when people don't hear what I am trying to teach, or even worse they disagree. For all the lessons learned the hard way, for all the lessons that catch me by surprise, thanks. Hopefully I will be able to keep growing in faith and in wisdom.

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 19.1-15
- Psalm 2
- 1 Timothy 4.6-16

Reflection:

Some words are hard to hear. Imagine living in Jerusalem when Jeremiah was wandering around shattering pottery and promising doom to come. Who wants to hear that?

Who wants to hear that because of choices we have made our world itself is being shattered? Or that our actions have hurt people we love? Who really wants to listen when we are being chastised?

Chastising people for bad choices is part of a prophet's job. Pointing out the consequences of those choices is another part of the job. And we need to listen and to think about what they say. After all, they might be right.

Prayer:

OK God I admit it. I screw up at times. I say and do things I regret. I say and do things I don't even realize hurt others. Please give me the grace to accept the challenge when others call me to account for my bad choices. Hopefully I can find a way to make better ones the next time.

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Wednesday

Scripture:

- Jeremiah 20.1-18
- Psalm 2
- Luke 18.18-30

Reflection:

It can be hard to tell the truth, especially when that truth is hard for others to hear. Now it is obvious that Jeremiah could be accused of being a little less than gentle in his truth-telling. In fact he was downright obnoxious. Sometimes the method of telling is as important as the content.

But what if he had been gentler? Would the truth have been easier to hear? I doubt it. It takes great strength to challenge the assumptions and truths of one's world. But we always need the Jeremiahs in our own time. Sometimes we need to step out and be a Jeremiah ourselves. There is always a need for truth-tellers.

Just don't expect that people will thank you for it.

Prayer:

God of truth and truth-tellers, help me to be a seeker and sharer of the truth – even when that truth is hard or terrifying. When there are things that need to be said may I find the balance between firmness and being hurtful. May I work with others to find the truths that are a part of our lives everyday.

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friends blessed by your love.

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Thursday

Scripture:

- Jeremiah 13.20-27
- Psalm 14
- 1 Timothy 1.1-11

Reflection:

There is something troubling and terrifying about this Psalm. Where is the hope? Where is the promise? All that talk about humanity's foolishness and evil ways gets me down.

Oh, so God is with the righteous. Great. But the people who describe themselves as righteous are so, well, scary. Or maybe it is God who decides who is righteous. Maybe it means that God is with those of us who are trying to do our best in a hard world.

Maybe the wisdom lies not in how we define ourselves but in letting God define us. Yeah, that works for me. The wisdom is in letting God in and even letting go of the wheel. Letting go of the wheel – that sure seems like some foolish wisdom to me.

Prayer:

God, I really do try to be wise. But it is hard sometimes to see what is wisdom and what is foolishness. I'm told you want us to be wise. But the wisdom of giving up control escapes me at times. How about this – I'll give it a try but I still want to drive now and then.

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Friday

Scripture:

- Jeremiah 4.1-10
- Psalm 14
- 2 Peter 2.1-10a

Reflection:

But how do you know?? It is nice of Peter to warn us about false teachers but how do we know? Is it just that they disagree with the last teacher we had?

Peter writes in a time when there is a great deal of disagreement about what is the "true Christianity". Accusations of being false teachers fly back and forth between rivals. Think of what passes for political dialogue in Canada and the US, then make it even nastier (if that is possible).

But still, how do we know the false teacher from the real one? Well what God do they reveal? The true faith reveals the God of love, grace, and forgiveness. It reveals the God who takes our actions seriously but never loses love no matter how bad our choices are.

Prayer:

I get confused sometimes God. There are so many voices out there claiming to have THE answer. And often I wonder if there is only one answer anyway. I need help discerning the path in a world of intersections. Help me find the way that leads to love and blessing.

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Saturday

Scripture:

- Jeremiah 4.13-21, 29-31
- Psalm 14
- John 10.11-21

Reflection:

There is a song we used to sing at camp where the chorus went:

*I just wanna be a sheep baa baa baa baa
I just wanna be a sheep baa baa baa baa
I pray the Lord my soul to keep
I just wanna be a sheep baa baa baa baa*

If Jesus is the Good Shepherd then we who follow must be the sheep, right?

But do I really want to be a sheep? In contemporary imagery sheep are used to define rather stupid animals who succumb all too easily to the flock mentality. We live in a culture that prides individuals. We encourage our children to grow up and think for themselves, not just follow a charismatic leader or go along with the crowd. Does shepherd/sheep imagery still work for us today?

Or even more to the point, are there times when we need to be more like sheep and spend less time trying to prove that we can do it all by ourselves?

Prayer:

Shepherding God, you offer guidance and protection, even when I am sure I don't need or want it. And for that I say thank-you. For those times when I wander from the flock and get lost in the wilderness and you come to look for me I say thank-you. Help me, I pray, to find the balance between independence and reliance.

Today, I remember and pray for _____,
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For your grace,
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