

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 3rd to 8th, 2007)

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Monday

Scripture:

- Jeremiah 2:23-37
- Psalm 58
- Hebrews 13:7-21

Reflection:

This closing chapter of the letter to the Hebrews is heavily into the blood and sacrifice of Jesus. At first reading there is so much emphasis on the bits that I don't like to think about that I find myself wanting to skip over it. But these images were important to the writer of the letter. It is worth another read or two.

Doing that I am able to look beyond the language which upsets me and to see the point that I think the writer was trying to make. All this sacrifice, all the laws which guided everyday life, are gone now. They are replaced by the sacrifice made by Jesus. I can hear a call to the people to look at the life of Jesus and to find there a better way of living the life that God would have us live.

This letter begins with a word to remember our leaders and to imitate their faith. Who are people that you know that you can observe and find a window into the life of Jesus? Do you thank God for them often? Remember that for others, you too may be a leader in the faith. How will you bear that responsibility today?

Prayer:

Creator and Sustainer of all that is and all that is yet to come, hear our prayer. We live and move and have our being in you, yet sometimes we forget to give you thanks and praise. We are surrounded by the work of your hands, but sometimes we forget your role in creation. Yet you never forget us. So we come with thanksgiving in our hearts to offer our prayers of joy and of yearning, of need and of fulfillment. May you move in our hearts and minds to have praise be our first thought, even when life is hard and we don't know why.

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 3:1-14
- Psalm 58
- Titus 1:1-9

Reflection:

In April of this year, I rescued a miniature schnauzer dog from a bad situation. She had been fed, but had not been socialized to any great degree. She barks a lot and has problems when we meet another dog. She regards our home as her domain and makes her presence heard whenever anyone walks past. She regards herself as the Alpha female. I'm working on getting her to look to me for leadership.

Titus was writing his letter to address a similar problem. Who would be the leaders of the church in Crete? How would they be chosen? How should they behave? He wrote a list of qualities that could be used to choose the leaders.

Who are the leaders in the church that you look up to and follow? We might immediately think of those who serve on our boards and committees. We might also for the mature voice of reason. We might find the one who is spiritually alive. We might follow the lead of others for any number of reasons. Finally, we might look to ourselves. How aware are you of having others look to you and copy your example? What kind of example do you set?

Prayer:

Thank you, God for raising up leaders and equipping them to be signposts to your glorious reign. At the times when others look to me, God, let me be conscious of your leading and the prompting of your Holy Spirit. At the times when I am looking for leadership, let me find it in the folks around me, and give me the wisdom to know a good example when I see it.

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Wednesday

Scripture:

- Jeremiah 3:15-25
- Psalm 58
- Luke 14:15-24

Reflection:

This parable from Luke's gospel talks about an invitation given and refused. I wonder how it would feel to have gone to all the work of planning a grand dinner, and then to have no one accept your invitation.

It hasn't ever happened to me, partly because I don't give grand dinners with lots of guests. But if it did, I expect I would feel let down, disappointed and hurt. I would feel that what I had to offer had no value to anyone else. My self confidence would take a dive. And I'd be far less willing to issue such an invitation in the future.

But this is a parable. It is not meant to be taken as if it happened, more as a pointer to something about God that we may not have realized or understood. When the host's friends wouldn't or couldn't come, the servant went out into the streets of the town. When there still were empty spaces, he went into the roads and highways. What does that say to us about the nature of God's hospitality?

Is it possible that God is issuing you and invitation right now? An invitation to come closer, to enjoy the good things that God has prepared for you? And if so, what will your answer be?

Prayer:

Loving, inviting God, thank you for this insight into your way of being. Thank you that there is room for all at your table. Thank you that none are excluded because of where they come from, or where they are now.

I pray today with gratitude and I ask that I will be open to your invitation to me.

Thursday

Scripture:

- Jeremiah 15:10-21
- Psalm 139
- Philippians 2:25-30

Reflection:

If, as many scholars think, Epaphroditus went from the church at Pilippi to be with Paul in prison in Rome, then he traveled around 700 miles to get there. No fast jets, no high speed trains, not even a family car. It was indeed a journey of love. And now Paul is sending him back, perhaps with this letter to take to the church. What a journey of faith.

Many of us have been on trips over the summer and have used modern transport to get there. We don't think too much about how we will get there, only setting our sights on our destination, and the welcome and refreshment we expect to receive. It reminds me of our journey of faith. Like Epaphroditus, we don't have jet aircraft, or fast cars. We set out and we keep going till we get there.

How do you see your journey? Is it filled with new sights and sounds, or is it a road you have traveled many times? What do you expect to find at the end of it?

Prayer:

God of the highways and the byways, of the skies and the seas, as I set out on today's part of the journey, I thank you for your presence. When the way is rough and I cannot see the way, I pray for your guidance and companionship. When I reach the end of my journey with you, I look forward to rest and refreshment, and a loving welcome.

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Friday

Scripture:

- Jeremiah 16: 14-17: 4
- Psalm 139
- Colossians 4: 7-17

Reflection:

Letter writing seems to be a lost art. It is for me. I send an e-mail, or I make a phone call, but the only letters I write these days are business ones. In my younger years I used to be a prolific writer of letters, and my correspondence base was such that I received one every day. I wonder if I even know how to do it any more.

Not so for Paul, he wrote many letters. The ones that have come down to us in Scripture are probably only a small proportion of his output. He begins with a statement of who he is, and who he is writing to, and his final paragraph is full of personal greetings. He names the people he knows, and includes a little of what their work has been. The one that intrigues me in this letter is Archippus. Paul is keen that he carries on the work given to him by the Lord. My immediate question is not "did he do it?" it is "what was it?" There is an assumption that Archippus knew exactly what he had to do.

Is God calling you to a task? Do you know what it is? Are you working faithfully to complete it?

Prayer:

Loving God, you have called us to walk in your way. Along this way you call us again and again to some special task for us to do. Help us to understand what our task is at this time and this place. Give us the confidence to identify and carry out what you are asking of us. Empower us with all that we need and give us grace.

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Saturday

Scripture:

- Jeremiah 17: 14-27
- Psalm 139
- Matthew 10: 34-42

Reflection:

"Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me" In the United Church many of our communities are working to become welcoming congregations. We each believe we are welcoming and hospitable. Ralph Milton suggests that to find out what it like to be a stranger in a congregation, we should go to worship in a church where we don't know anyone. After the service we should go to the coffee hour. I do this often in the summer and sometimes I am surprised to receive the depth of welcome that is extended to me.

As summer winds to an end and we begin to gather again in September, I wonder what we might have learned over the summer. Will we understand what it is like to be in an environment that we are not used to? That is the experience of some newcomers to our churches. Will we understand the sense of everyone knowing each other and feeling like the odd one out? Some folks in our congregations feel that.

Will it make a difference to how we treat visitors and newcomers?

Prayer:

Welcoming God, I come anew into your presence. As I consider the newcomer, or the visitor in our midst, give me grace to understand how they might be feeling. Help me to welcome others as you have welcomed me. Let your hospitality shine through me as a beacon of love for others.

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

For your grace,
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