

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 and their minister, the Rev. Richard Bott.

The suggested scripture readings are based on the Consultation on Common Text's *Daily Lectionary*.

ST. ANDREW'S HANEY
UNITED CHURCH

Daily Scripture and Prayer Time

(April 14th to 19th, 2008)

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Monday

Scripture:

- Ezekiel 34: 17-23
- Psalm 100
- 1 Peter 5:1-5

Reflection:

Shepherds! Not very present in our current Canadian experience. But in the Bible, shepherds appear frequently. Sheep, lambs, goats, rams abound.

Pastors! The Latin word for shepherd. Not just the official leader of a congregation or parish. But someone who cares what happens to the "flock", people.

The Bible is hard on pastors who don't care, or care more about themselves. God speaking through Ezekiel longs for shepherds who are good stewards of the pastures, of the water, of the weaker sheep; shepherds like Jesus the Christ, who gave self willingly for the well-being of the flock.

Prayer:

Teach us your way of caring for the earth, O Christ, so that all creatures and the human family may thrive on the Creator's wonderful earth. Thank you for buds, seeds, sprouts, seedlings, bulbs – all harbingers of the promise of enough for all.

By your love, we pray, bless those deprived of enough with your bounty and justice.

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:

- Ezekiel 34:23-31
- Psalm 100
- Hebrews 13:20-21

Reflection:

Today's vision moves from the local green fields of yesterday, to the global and universal pastures. It is a vision like that of the peaceable kingdom in Isaiah. Here too God is the shepherd in charge.

No more danger, shortage, drought, hunger, threat. God's new order will ensure peace, justice, fecundity, bounty, and freedom. "They shall know that I, the Lord their God, am with them."

It is that promise converging with human yearning that energizes the faithful for discipleship. Willingly we follow the Way of Jesus for a new era, a new commonwealth, God's shalom reign.

Placard carrying demonstrators witnessing for more housing and less war, more human rights and less oppression, more justice and less privilege, more peace and an end to the plundering of resources – God is still speaking!

Prayer:

Open our eyes to recognize your ongoing suffering, O Christ. Unplug our ears to hear you railing against injustice. Free our hands from our wallets, that your wealth may be shared. Open our hearts to rejoice as your Spirit transforms hearts, communities, and your whole human family.

Before you, I lift the name of those in need of your embrace and healing love: _____.

Bless them and me, I pray.

Wednesday

Scripture:

- Jeremiah 23:1-8
- Psalm 100
- Matthew 20:17-28

Reflection:

Both Jeremiah and Matthew continue the shepherd theme. But there is a critical edge in both passages. In God's reign, hubris and self-interest don't get a lot of space. Shepherds, pastors, leaders who are in it mainly for themselves will be severely disappointed.

God's world doesn't operate on their wave length. Instead, they need to look at the life of Jesus and the lessons it teaches about leadership, integrity, self-giving, and trust.

Read Psalm 100 or better yet, sing it the lively way Linnea Good has taught us in Voices United # 820. The tune, rhythm, and spirit lead us into the joy of being in God's holy presence.

Prayer:

I bless you, O God, for your abiding goodness.

My heartbeat, my breath remind me constantly of your living presence in me and in the six billion other humans who inhabit your world. Let humility, service, justice, and joy be the gift I bring to the global family and to my neighbour.

Today I pray for all who long for healing, for peace, for reconciliation....

Amen.

Thursday

Scripture:

- Genesis 12:1-3
- Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16
- Acts 6:8-15

Reflection:

Abram and Sarai (later renamed Abraham and Sarah) get the call: leave home and move to a new land. It won't be easy, but you can count on me to go with you.

Anyone who has been an immigrant will understand both the excitement and the anxiety such a call evokes. You have to be willing to let go of all the old securities that are part of "home" and trust the Voice that says: something better, richer, deeper, more meaningful lies ahead. You can't see it yet, but it will emerge – I promise!

Stephen trusted the voice and the vision, even though his testimony to the vision cost him his life. The church's first martyr believed the promise enough to risk life itself.

I wonder if he was repeating Psalm 31 to himself even as the rocks flew? "Let your face shine upon your servant; save me in your steadfast love."

Prayer:

We walk the journey from birth to death, and in between we venture and stray. We know that our origin and our ending are linked. You are alpha and omega. By your Spirit, keep us on the Way home. Today I pray for those who are embroiled in war: innocents, soldiers, insurgents, enemies, peace-makers, mediators. Grant us your peace, O God.

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

Friday

Scripture:

- Exodus 3:1-12
- Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16
- Acts 7:1-16

Reflection:

Everyone could use a burning bush that speaks. Some of us are blessed with those dazzling moments when we hear God speaking to us as clearly as we hear our neighbour. Mountain top experiences are a gift. When we attend to them, they mark a new beginning.

So it was for Moses. The presence of God confronted him. Not just as a spiritual high. But with a mission. "I have observed the misery of my people." I want to deliver them, free them, lead them to the life I intend for all people. You Moses can lead them so that I can liberate them!

Hear the message: I, God, will liberate them. Not you, Moses. You don't need to worry about whether you have the goods, the skills, the equipment, the brains, the strength. All you need to do is lead and remember that you worshipped here and will worship here again with all the people!

Prayer:

It is easy to forget. We easily think you want us to do it all. And when we do, we overwhelm ourselves and run ourselves into the ground. You keep reminding us that it is your mission and we're only a small part of it.

Today I pray for all who contribute to healing and wholeness: paramedics, emergency personnel, nurses, physicians, health administrators, cleaners, pharmacists. So many gifted people all working for our health and healing. Thank you, God.

Saturday

Scripture:

- Jeremiah 5:20-24
- Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16
- John 8:48-59

Reflection:

In the John passage, Jesus is locked in battle with the religious leaders of his time about his spiritual pedigree. Who are you, Jesus, to claim any connection with our patriarch Abraham? And what kind of blasphemy is it to claim that your relationship with God is as close as ours?

It reminds me of conversations with literal fundamentalists – the folks who leave no room for other ways of understanding the Gospel and relationship with God. What is it about humans that make us assume that right thinking is the way I think? And wrong thinking is the way you think?

And then if we have power, we pick up stones, swords, knives, guns, bombs, and whatever comes to hand to wound and kill. God must be reeling as we forget what relating to God is all about!

Prayer:

Free us from the need to impose our way on your other children, O God. Teach us the many-sided facets of love – your love which recognizes no boundaries.

Thank you for those who teach us your love by the way they speak, act, live.

I pray for leaders – seeking the common good, the well-being of the earth, the fullness of humanity, the blessings of your peace.

Amen.