

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*.

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ST. ANDREW'S HANEY UNITED CHURCH

Daily Scripture and Prayer Time

(April 7th to 13th, 2008)

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Monday

Scripture:

- Genesis 18:1-14
- Psalm 134
- 1 Peter 1:23-25

Reflection:

Someone once said that, in order to understand what the "good news" is in a particular context, we must first understand what the bad news is. Abraham and Sarah's bad news is infertility. God had told them that Abraham's descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky. Cruel joke it must have seemed, as the years pass without a pregnancy. But the day comes when the promise comes to fruition. Post-menopausal Sarah has a son. "Is anything too wonderful for the LORD?" God asks. No! Our faith is centred on good news – healing, reconciliation, new life... What is the bad news in your life, or the life of your community? What, then, is the good news for you?

Prayer:

Loving God,
help me to trust you
with all of the pain I carry.
Let me turn to you in my brokenness,
and offer up my failures, my scars,
my fears.
Plant hope in my heart
that I may accept your love,
accept myself,
and share your good news
with those I meet.
(silent listening)
I will trust in you, through Jesus Christ

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:

- Proverbs 8:32-9:6
- Psalm 134
- 1 Peter 2:1-3

Reflection:

The Christian life is not complicated, but it is difficult. It is not easy, but it is, in a way, simple. Listen. Watch and wait. Rid yourself of the behaviours and attitudes that close us off from one another. Seek wisdom. Taste and see that God is good. We are invited into a life of intentionality – choosing our words, building rituals, keeping to the path when straying from it is easier. It is difficult, and yet it is an invitation that comes from one who sets the banquet table for us, yearning for relationship, longing to feed us, care for us, and be one with us. Where can you find the time to sit at the table, and accept God's yearning for you?

Prayer:

Wise and wondrous God,
thank you for seeking me out.
Help me to turn to you
and accept your invitation.
Give me your wisdom and compassion,
for my sake,
and for the sake
of those I share my days with.
Help me to hear your voice,
that I may live my life on purpose,
and for your purposes.

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:

- Exodus 24:1-11
- Psalm 134
- John 21:1-14

Reflection:

God is with us, among us, within us. God is very different from us, beyond us, separate from us. These two ideas are rooted in our Biblical stories and faith traditions. There is an obvious tension between God's different-ness (that calls us to awe, to repent, to worship), and God's choice to be "at one" with us (that calls us to approach, to wrestle, to love). We strive to hold the two sides in balance. If God is too "out there," we can feel abandoned, distant from God. If God is too "in here," we can reduce God to a feel-good buddy whom we can take or leave. Which image of God do you feel most comfortable with? What side of God do you need the most right now?

Prayer:

Companion God,
I thank you for walking with me.
Majestic Creator,
I thank you for holding
the rest of Creation in your hands.
Help me to remember that I am yours,
that you love me, and that it is enough.
Teach me to walk in your way,
and to feel your nearness.
Move powerfully in my life, God,
so that I may be changed,
transformed into a new creation.
Let my life touch others
and bring glory to your name.
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.

Thursday

Scripture:

- Exodus 2:15b-25
- Psalm 23
- 1 Peter 2:9-12

Reflection:

I don't believe that everything that happens has been pre-planned by God. I cringe when I hear faithful folk tell a grieving wife or father, "There is a reason God took your loved one, we just don't know what it is yet." But I believe strongly in an "opportunistic" God – a God who is constantly working to bring healing, wholeness and new life out of every situation, and who is ready to change tactics as needed! Moses' family was forced to give him up, to save his life. Hmm, maybe he could be adopted by the Pharaoh's daughter. Moses flees a murder scene to hide out in the country. What better place to have a face-to-bush encounter? God is at work. Where do you see the signs in your life?

Prayer:

Mold me, God, and make me
into something beautiful and useful.
Let me be shaped by my past,
but not controlled by it.
Let me be softened by your love,
not hardened or brittle.
Lay your gentle hands upon me, God,
and mold me into one who is more open,
compassionate, and passionate.
Show me where I might be
a softening influence
in someone else's life.
Teach me about new life
by helping me to live it.
I place myself in your hands.

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:

- Exodus 3:16-22
- Psalm 23
- 1 Peter 2:13-17

Reflection:

I'm not too crazy about Peter's advice to "accept the authority of every human institution." He goes on to advise slaves to defer to their masters, even if they are cruel and unjust, and wives to submit to their husbands. Yes, there is some good advice about not being vengeful, and being examples of peace and goodness to others, but I believe that God calls us to be more than smiling doormats. Balance the passage against the call for the Hebrews to walk away from slavery. Remember Esther and Nathan, calling rulers to behave justly. Look to Jesus, always placing the needs of people above adherence to policies and traditions. What is your relationship with authority, and how does it reflect your faith perspective?

Prayer:

Gracious God, I know there is a time to
speak and a time to remain silent.
Help me to know which is which.
Give me the compassion to hear the
needs of others, and the wisdom to know
how best to help. Strengthen my resolve
and give me courage, so that I will be
able to be the voice of justice when it
needs to be heard. Let me be open to
the voices of others, and ready to see my
own need for change.
In all things, I will trust in 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:

- Ezekiel 34:1-16
- Psalm 23
- Luke 15:1-7

Reflection:

"The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want." Few passages are as well recognized as those. And yet, for two generations of unchurched urban people, these agricultural references are confusing or just plain meaningless. What does it mean to be a sheep or a shepherd? How can we find the essence of these images, and reframe them so that God's extravagant love may be made known? Jesus moved from parable to parable, image to image, to make his message clearer: God is seeking you out like a passionate lover. God will not give up on you. Angels will sing for joy when you return to God's embrace. It's good news for all people. How can we share it so that it can be heard?

Prayer:

Great is your faithfulness, God,
and I am grateful for it.
Do not turn away from me,
even when I turn from you.
Bless me with your constant presence, seek
me out when I falter, and restore me to the
fold. I thank you for all the ways your love
is made known: in story and song, in
sermon and silence, in prayer and action.
Help me to spend more time with you, that
I may truly know your love for me, and your
passion for all of your children.
Bring me in and send me out

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.