

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

ST. ANDREW'S HANEY UNITED CHURCH

22165 Dewdney Trunk Road
Maple Ridge, BC V2X 3H7

Phone: 604.463.9611
Email: standrewshaneyuc@telus.net
Web: standrewsuc.com

ST. ANDREW'S HANEY UNITED CHURCH

Daily Scripture and Prayer Time

(December 10th to 15th, 2007)

Writer for this Week:
Rev. Gord Waldie
Riverview United Church
Azikokan, Ontario

Monday

Scripture:

- Isaiah 24.1-16a
- Psalm 21
- 1 Thessalonians 4.1-12

Reflection:

Well a merry Christmas to you too Isaiah. Not really the most uplifting passage to read in the middle of December is it? Promises of woe and destruction and carnage don't go well with twinkling lights and carols.

But part of Christmas is waiting for the world to be changed. Part of our world being changed is being held to account for our actions. And that means accepting that our choices, our blessings, often come with a price. Still we wait with hope for the changing of the world. We trust that there is brightness on the other side of the changes. What changes are you waiting for?

Prayer:

God, we like to talk about your grace and forgiveness but judgment is another matter. Help me to remember that judgment is not necessarily bad, that being held accountable for my choices, for our choices, is a part of the journey towards forgiveness. Help me to remember that for the new to come the old sometimes needs to be broken down, and to face that breaking with hope instead of fear.

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:

- Isaiah 41.14-20
- Psalm 21
- Romans 15.14-21

Reflection:

Well this is a bit nicer. There is more hope and promise here, even if it is somewhat mixed with revenge/retribution. But that dream of water for the parched is certainly hopeful.

Water is the stuff of life. To talk about bringing water to the desert is to talk about bringing life itself. Symbolically there can be many different deserts. There are lots of droughts in the span between birth and death. But for all the deserts, all the droughts, there is the promise of life-giving water somewhere to be found.

Where do you need the water of God today?

Prayer:

God, over and over again our faith story talks about water. Our bodies are made mostly of water. In the dry times of my life I seek a well, a fountain in the desert. Help me find the sources of life-giving water, keep me wet and lively all my days.

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:

- Genesis 15.1-18
- Psalm 21
- Matthew 12.33-37

Reflection:

"...for the tree is known by its fruit." That is where the rubber hits the road. It doesn't matter what our intentions are (remember the old adage about a road paved with good intentions?), or how we view ourselves. It is our actions and statements that tell others about us.

The challenge of life in faith, or life outside of faith for that matter, is to be consistent. Sometimes it seems like there are always people watching for the chance to call us hypocrites. Do our actions match our professed beliefs and priorities? Do we treat people fairly and equally (which does not mean treating everyone exactly the same)?

Prayer:

God, am I always being watched? Are people waiting for me to be marked as a hypocrite so they can pounce? Sometimes consistency is hard. Sometimes I feel pressured to act in ways I disagree with. Help be in the quest to live a life where my fruits are what I want them to be.

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:

- Ruth 1.6-18
- Psalm 146.5-10
- 2 Peter 3.1-10

Reflection:

"Where you go I will go..." Now that is commitment. That is why the end of this Ruth passage is so well used for weddings. It describes our hope for what a committed relationship could be.

But notice what it doesn't talk about. The pledge doesn't include the classic "for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health". It is a pledge of commitment but the living out the pledge is the challenge. Let's face it – relationships take work, hard work at times. And that is what we need to name at our marriage ceremonies. We need to be honest with each other that living happily ever after is part of the fairy tale. It is great to pledge ourselves to each other. But it is more important to work at living it out.

Prayer:

God, in my life there have been a variety of relationships. Sometimes they enhance my life and sometimes they seem to weigh me down. And sometimes that happens with the same people at different times. Help me, help all of us, to remember that life-giving relationships don't just happen by themselves. Give us the courage, strength and wisdom to help our relationships grow to fullness.

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:

- Ruth 4.13-17
- Psalm 146.5-10
- 2 Peter 3.11-18

Reflection:

What do we do with those people among us who are "from away"? This is a key question any community that takes human rights and equality seriously has to face. And in fact scholars tell us that the book of Ruth was itself included in Scripture to help deal with the question of the outsider.

Many societies throughout history have decided that we should get rid of those who are different. Ancient Israel was no different. But their religious texts include instructions to care for the stranger among them. And this story tells us that even David, their beloved King, was descended from an outsider. So what do we do with those who are different? Who are the outsiders in our world?

Prayer:

God, when times are tough it is so easy to become defensive. There is some natural impulse to find someone to blame. Too often we end up using the tough times as an excuse to discriminate against people. Help us remember that what we have in common is far more important than what makes us different. Help me to be open to all of my brothers and sisters in your worldwide family.

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:

- 1 Samuel 2.1-8
- Psalm 146.5-10
- Luke 3.1-18

Reflection:

Rebel. Radical. Rabble-rouser. Who is that? Why God of course!

Just look at Hannah's song and these verses of Psalm 146. God's action in the world routinely seems to be of the "upset the apple cart" variety. God is the one who brings justice in an unjust world. God feeds the hungry, frees the captives, protects the vulnerable, and brings wholeness to the broken. This is the God we meet as a baby in a manger. This is the God of Christmas. Indeed Mary sings a song very similar to Hannah's during her pregnancy.

This Christmas may God's revolution begin again!

Prayer:

Revolutionary God, what changes will your coming bring to the world? What will it mean to bring the powerful down and raise up the lowly? This Christmas help me see the radical side of the baby in the manger and his mother. Help me find the way to help make real the old prayer "...thy will be done...".

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.