

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

(Dec. 31st to Jan. 5th, 2008)

Writer for this Week:
Rev. Scott Swanson
Langley United Church
Langley, British Columbia

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

Monday

Scripture:

- Kings 3.5-14
- Psalm 20
- John 8.12-19

Reflection:

Reflection:

The reading from 1 Kings describes the events by which King Solomon receives from God the characteristic for which he is best known: his wisdom. Leaving aside for the moment the question of how wise Solomon actually was, what interests me about this text is the nature of Solomon's request. I wonder: if I could have any request granted, what would I ask for? Would it be something that would benefit me? Or would it be something that would primarily benefit others, something that would help me to serve others better? Perhaps that is a somewhat false dichotomy, but I think this text may serve as another angle for reflecting on what we are for in the world.

What one thing would you/do you ask God for? What matters most for you? What are you for

Prayer:

Giver of all gifts, thank you for the gift of my life, and for all the gifts you have given me with which to serve the world. Show me where my gifts meet the world's need; help me to be clear about what I am for, what I am about. May my life be an expression of my gifts so that I may take my proper place in your good creation.

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:

- Ecclesiastes 3.1-13
- Psalm 8
- Matthew 25.31-46

Reflection:

It was hard choosing which text to focus on today since all three are well known to many and are worthy of reflection. Since it is New Year's day, I chose Ecclesiastes, if only because this is a day when many of us pause to reflect on time: the effect it has on us, how much of our time has passed, how much we might have left, and what we intend to do with it. This text is sometimes used at funerals and memorials to reflect on a person's life. Since this is a time of reflection, why not use this text now to reflect on what God might be saying it is time for – or not time for – in your life. Happy New Year.

Prayer:

Creator – you who is within and beyond time – thank you for the gift of time and the times of my life that have been so far. Show me how I have used the gift of time so far: where I have used it well, and where I have squandered it. Show me how you would have me use the time that is left to me.

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 12.1-17
- Psalm 20
- Hebrews 11.1-12

Reflection:

For the longest time I thought "faith" (whatever that meant) was an elusive thing in my life. I never considered myself a particularly "faithful" person, and I saw that as a mark against me. A number of years ago it was made somewhat better when I came to see faith as one of the gifts of the Spirit. As with all gifts, some got it and some don't. After that, I felt like I had a little more room to breathe. Now, as I near the mid point of my life, I consider myself to be a more faithful person than I used to. Partly because I think I understand the term differently, and partly because I have grown in my faith as I have worked at the various practices of discipleship.

I am still led more by fear than by faith some of the time, but I trust that God accepts me as I have been created, and will continue to use my desire for deeper faith to grow in me that which is as yet hoped for, but not seen.

Reflect on the role of faith in your life. Celebrate the faith God has given you. Bring before God your longing for deeper faith, if that is what you have.

Prayer:

Beloved, thank you for the gift of faith in the proportion you have given it to me. Increase my desire for you, so that I may grow in faith and hope and love all the days of my life.

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:

- Genesis 28.10-22
- Psalm 72
- Hebrews 11.13-22

Reflection:

The spiritual masters in many traditions including Christianity talk about the common human state of being "asleep," and about the fruit of spiritual practices – and the goal of the spiritual journey – as "waking up." Jacob's epiphany at Bethel (The House of God) is a text that can be read as addressing this issue. What if we, like Jacob, were to spiritually "wake up" and take his realisation about Bethel into our hearts as a realisation of all creation? What if in every place we went – the countryside, the office, the home, the grocery store – we "woke up" and said "Surely God is in this place – and I did not know it ... how awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

Are you awake or asleep as you move through your life? How well aware are you of being – wherever you are – in the house of God, and at the gate of heaven?

Prayer:

Awesome and amazing One, thank you for your constant presence with us in all our moments. Help me to "wake up" and experience you in every atom, in every breath. Help me to see that there is no real living in the past or the future, but only in this moment. And in this moment, you are here with me – with us – and nothing can separate us from you and your love for us.

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friends blessed by your love and compassion.

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Friday

Scripture:

- Exodus 3.1-5
- Psalm 72
- Hebrews 11.23-31

Reflection:

As it becomes increasingly evident that human activity is pushing the planet to ecological disaster, I believe it is the responsibility of faith traditions to address what I increasingly believe is a spiritual issue. Both today's text from Exodus and yesterday's text from Genesis speak of sacred places where the presence of the Holy is evident. I wonder if, as part of (or perhaps a result of) the "waking up" I talked about yesterday, people of faith might come to see all of creation as infused with the sacred, every spot as holy ground.

What might you do to help the Spirit cultivate within you a sense of the holy pervading the whole creation?

Prayer:

Ever-present Creator and Sustainer, thank you for the majesty of creation, a mystery which we only can just begin to comprehend. Create in us an ever-deepening sense that we walk on holy ground. Fill us with awe and reverence for your creation, of which we are but a tiny part. Allow that awareness to pervade our lives, our decisions, our actions.

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:

- Joshua 1.1-9
- Psalm 72
- Hebrews 11.32-12.2

Reflection:

For several days now we have prayed the famous treatise on faith in "the letter to the Hebrews." The author ends by connecting his audience to the "cloud of witnesses" that preceded them and which gives them strength to "run with perseverance the race that is set before [them]." My sense is that we live in a culture which is frequently somewhat disconnected from the past. That can make it difficult for us to be aware of how exist as part of a much broader and deeper tradition that can support and nourish us on our own "race." With Jesus as the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, and the great cloud of witnesses and saints alongside whom we stand, we are well accompanied on our journey of discipleship.

Who are the people, past or present, who help you to run the race that is set before you?

Prayer:

Blessed One, thank you for the great cloud of witnesses that supports me on my journey with your beloved Jesus. Thank you for the ones I am aware of, and the ones I have yet to come to know. Help me to gather strength, courage, wisdom, and whatever else I need from your Spirit, through those who accompany me along the way.

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

For your grace,
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