

## 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

(February 4<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup>, 2008)

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## Monday

### Scripture:

- Exodus 33.7-23
- Psalm 78.17-20,52-55
- Acts 7.30-34

### Reflection:

I was deeply drawn to the Exodus passage, for a number of reasons. I could picture, at the end of each day's journey, Moses taking the tent outside of the camp, and setting up "the meeting place". Why, was it outside of the camp... especially when it was a place that *anyone* could go to meet 'I Am'. I wonder if part of the reason that the meeting place was outside of the camp – outside of the safety of the community – was that they needed to make a conscious decision to have that meeting? Each step would have needed to be a deliberate decision to enter into the presence of the holy.

I recognize that, quite often in my life, I come to take the sacred for granted. I don't remember that meeting with God – especially in the ordinary moments of day-to-day life – is a wonder!

We don't need to let that wonder overwhelm us. Part of the wonder is that Moses... and the rest of us... have the ability to "speak with Adonai, face to face, as one speaks to a friend."

When was the last time you intentionally sat down to speak with God... "as one speaks to a friend"?

### Prayer:

God...  
the words on this paper are someone else's. They may be good words... but they aren't mine.  
If I say my own, will you listen?  
If I can't say my own, will you hear the words of my heart?

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:

- 1 Kings 19.9-18
- Psalm 78.17-20,52-55
- Romans 11.1-6

### Reflection:

Where do we expect to hear God's voice?

Hmmm... maybe there's a question that needs to be asked, even before that one. *Do we expect to hear God's voice?*

When we take a look at scripture – both in our own faith tradition and in others – we often read of the voice of the Divine being heard by everyday people. During early and mid-Christian history, we can read of the experiences of mystics, hearing (and tasting and feeling) God's words.

But... now... well... if I told you that God spoke to me – even if that speaking was in "the sound of sheer silence"... what would you think? Would you help me to test what I had heard against our understandings of God's love... or would you look at me askance and stay as far away as possible? Or, if in some tangible way, you were certain that the Divine had shared something with you... how would you react? What would you do? With whom would you share it?

Do we expect to hear God's voice?

### Prayer:

Holy One...  
I open my lips and my heart,  
to share my life with you.  
Sometimes,  
I listen for your voice,  
in the events that happen around me.  
In the conflicts.  
In the winter winds.  
In the silence.

But.. if you spoke to me...  
would I really believe it was 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.

## Wednesday

### Scripture:

- Isaiah 58.1-12
- Psalm 51.1-17
- Matthew 6.1-6, 16-21

### Reflection:

And so, with quiet and ashes, Lent begins.

I am an introvert. Every Ash Wednesday, I get this urge to plaster a sign on my chest that says, "Silent Retreat: on the Lenten walk to Golgotha and beyond. Please do not disturb."

Think about it! Time for quiet reflection and meditative prayer. Time for intentional introspection on my life as a disciple. Time for so many things with God!

Then I read, "Is such the fast that I choose, a day to humble oneself? Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush, and to lie in sackcloth and ashes? Will you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord?" (Is.58.5) and I read, "when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others" but by God (Mt.6.18).

It is interesting, though, that there is still a call to fast – a call to times of lamentation and confession... but one that is offered to God – not the world.

There may be no sign on our chests... but we're still called to reflection and prayer.

Care to join me on that Lenten walk?

### Prayer:

With my head held high,  
I come to you, God,  
knowing that there are things in my life  
that bind me -  
knowing that there are things in my life  
that bind others.  
As I walk this journey,  
could you help me to lament, with you?

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:

- Jonah 3.1-10
- Psalm 51.1-17
- Romans 1.1-7

### Reflection:

A member of the wider community attended a service at which I was the worship leader. Afterwards, she raised a concern with me – about the prayer of confession. I remember her words clearly, "I come to worship to experience God, and one of the first things the church does is tells me I'm not worthy."

In the order of worship that comes out of our Reformed tradition (and even in the traditions that came before it), the prayer of confession comes quite early in the service, as part of the way of "preparing to enter into God's presence." Part of me has long wanted to get rid of the Prayer of Confession, and this was a fine opportunity!

But she continued, "Today you read the Nineveh story... and I see that confession and reconciliation and forgiveness is really important... so don't get rid of the prayer. But can't you do *something* about it?"

After lots of discussion (and no little amount of prayer), we decided to move the confession into the "Prayers of the People" ... as an intercession for ourselves, and preparation to go on with the rest of our lives.

It seemed to work.

Were does "confession" fit in your life?

### Prayer:

What do I need to say to you, God?  
Are there things I have to change?  
Are there things for which I need forgiveness?

...  
Are there things for which  
I need to forgive myself?

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:

- Jonah 4.1-11
- Psalm 51.1-17
- Romans 1.8-17

### Reflection:

Oh, I love this part of Jonah!

Quick recap of the story – Nineveh has not been living out God's call. God tells Jonah to tell the people that Nineveh was to be overtaken because they weren't listening. Jonah balks. A number of times. Finally agreeing (under duress), Jonah passes the message on. The people of Nineveh realize what they've been doing and repent. God recognizes that they are truly changing... and decides that they will be saved.

Jonah gets really, really angry, saying (in paraphrase), "I **knew** you were going to do this! You are such a merciful God. *That's* why I didn't want to come here. I'm going to sit here and die. In fact, why don't you just kill me and get it over with."

Sometimes, especially when I listen to some Christian leaders, how often we play the role of Jonah – telling people (or wishing we could tell people) that if they don't "repent of their evil ways" that "God is gonna get them."

And sometimes, I wonder, how often those leaders... how often we, ourselves, get ticked when God loves them into abundant life.

### Prayer:

I offer to you the people I love, God.  
I offer to you the people I don't.  
I offer to you the ones I know  
and the ones I will never meet.  
I offer to you my respect of them,  
as your children,  
as your face in the world.

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:

- Isaiah 58.1-12
- Psalm 51.1-17
- Matthew 18.1-17

### Reflection:

I'm sitting here, kind of uncomfortable. You see, one of *those* words has been used in my presence. You know – the kind of word that gives a ripple of shock when used in "polite company." What is even worse is that I'm going to have to repeat it, so we can figure out how we're going to respond. Oh, well... here goes.

Sin.

There it is – sitting there on the page. How are we going to deal with it? Its not really something we talk about much, anymore... and if we do, we – ok, I – use definitions like, "Sin is anything that we do that works to separate us or another from God's love."

All my silliness aside, I do wonder – how do we go about talking about sin; without putting it down as an archaic concept that damages self-worth or searching for a list that says 'this, this and this are sins'?

Maybe each of us needs to start by asking ourselves the question, "What does sin mean, to me?"

### Prayer:

Help me, God-of-my-heart -  
because I want to understand  
who I was created to be...  
and what parts of my life  
don't fit with that dream.

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.