

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

(January 7th to 12th, 2008)

WRITER FOR THIS WEEK:
Rev. Tim Lissimore
St. Andrew's United Church
Port Moody, 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:

- 1 Kings 10.1-13
- Psalm 72
- Ephesians 3.14-25

Reflection:

There is an interesting contrast between the psalm and the tiny snippet from 1 Kings of the saga of the life and times of king Solomon. Dear old Solomon was known for his wisdom and all the stuff he gathered up while he ruled Israel. The little piece from 1 Kings, taken out of the context of the fuller story of Solomon, could easily be interpreted as a grand celebration of wealth, with a little wisdom thrown in as well. Queen Sheba was SO VERY impressed with all Solomon's wisdom and stuff, that she gave him more stuff, which he put to good use in lavishing up the already lavish places he'd built.

And then there's the Psalm calling for all kings to "fall down before [Solomon]." Why? Because "he delivers the needy when they call." That's what made him great to the psalmist. And yet I can't help but thinking about all his stuff.

Prayer:

God, in the midst of all my stuff, help me keep my focus on you, and loving your world and your people.

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 10.14-25
- Psalm 72
- Ephesians 4.7,11-16

Reflection:

All the world, we are told, revered Solomon and all his wisdom and his stuff. So they gave him even more! And yet we're reminded that it is God who gave Solomon his wisdom, and we're told that God is orchestrating all of this so that God may be revered and glorified among the nations.

Did God truly not know that the nations were revering the stuff more than the God supposedly behind it? Did God truly not know that Israel would get distracted by all this wealth and power?

Where do we cross the line between attracting wealth and power because of our use of the gifts God has given, and start using the gifts God has given to try to attract wealth and power? It seems to me that we have the ability to take any good calling and work it for the wrong reasons - ones that no longer bring glory to God.

Prayer:

God, you've given each of us some really wonderful gifts. Help us use them *with* 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:

- Micah 5.2-9
- Psalm 72
- Luke 13.31-35

Reflection:

'Tis the season to be reading from Micah of the shepherd king to be born, like David, in Bethlehem. I sit writing this before Christmas, but know that my mind will still be fresh Christmas scripture three days after Epiphany, when this gets read. Matthew quotes this scripture in saying that Jesus is the fulfillment of this prophesy. Actually, Matthew quotes part of this reading - for if he quoted all of it, Jesus wouldn't have actually fulfilled it, would he? For the shepherd king Micah talks of is a mighty ruler, during whose reign Israel shall conquer the Assyrians with the sword and the "remnant of Jacob, . . ., shall be like a lion among the flocks of sheep".

Not exactly the tender, yearning, mothering image of Jesus wanting to gather the people of Jerusalem "together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings."

Kind of makes me want to reflect on what criteria I use to decide how to interpret scripture, and how to quote it with integrity.

Prayer:

God, help me be biased more toward "mother hen" than "lion among the flocks of sheep." All metaphorically, of course.

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:

- 1 Samuel 3.1-9
- Psalm 29
- Acts 9.1-9

Reflection:

I love the story of the call of Samuel. I think I'm particularly attracted to it because it's one that I can most easily identify with. Samuel doesn't get it. He doesn't understand what's going on. He misinterprets the call because his mind is carefully interpreting the information based on the world as he has come to know it. And, much to our human relief, God is patient and persistent enough to keep calling until Samuel gets it. How many times have I missed God calling because I dismissed and extraordinary moment of meaning embedded within my ordinary senses and goings on?

I think the other reason that I love the call story from 1 Samuel is because Samuel doesn't get it by himself. He needs help. It is Eli, not Samuel that recognizes that it is God calling him. I can't help but think that one of the reasons the United Church is facing a clergy shortage as the boomers retire is that we've (as a whole church) not been doing a particularly great job at helping each other discern our gifts and callings. What gifts might others see more readily in you than you do? What gifts to you see in others that you might mention to them?

Prayer:

Help us, God, to help each other listen to and interpret your voice in our lives.

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:

- 1 Samuel 3.10-4.1a
- Psalm 29
- Hebrews 11.23-31

Reflection:

Two people: Samuel and Saul. Both receive a calling. Both respond. But, alas, I again am much more like Samuel than Saul. For Samuel is aware that people are sometimes not going to like the message he has perceived (like Eli, for example!), and he is afraid. He does tell Eli, but only after Eli curses him if he doesn't tell.

Saul (aka Paul) on the other hand just dives right in and is baptized (pun intended). He's got official permission to persecute the very people he is becoming. But he's raring to go.

I confess that there are times I've been so passionate about something that I too have chosen to ignore backlash. But more often than not I think I'm a Samuel. Perhaps part of the difference between the two is that Samuel's message was one of foreseeing consequences of not following God closely. Paul, on the other hand, is trying to get people to turn and be rewarded for doing so (not that Paul doesn't point a few fingers now and again!). A positive spin always goes down easier.

Prayer:

God, you are the author of continuous renewal. Help me discern how and when to speak your truth in love.

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 7.3-17
- Psalm 29
- Acts 9.19b-31

Reflection:

Frankly, people who display Paul's level of conviction tend to scare me. Having "seen the light," he's on his way witnessing and preaching up a storm, and all in the face of great personal danger. This is where scripture sometimes does us 21st century folks a bit of a disservice. Scripture tends to give us the already reflected upon stuff. The writers are trying to convince us of something God has done and is continuing to do. I know that when I'm trying to convince somebody of my position, I don't immediately offer the sometimes frighteningly windy path I've taken to get there.

I'd like to think Paul had his private moments of prayer where he'd at least periodically check-in with God and say something like, "Is this really still the right thing to be doing? Are you sure? Are you sure there isn't an easier, less dangerous way? Well, okay then - so long as you're with me."

What helps you have moments of Paul's courage?

Prayer:

Give me a fresh sense of your presence, God. And give me strength enough to at least aspire to be faithful.

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.