

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

(July 21st to 26th, 2008)

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Monday

Scripture:

- Genesis 32.3-21
- Psalm 139.13-18
- Revelation 14.12-20

Reflection:

As I read the Genesis passage, I found myself thinking, "But you don't have to do all that stuff, Jacob! Esau is going to..." Then I realized that the lectionary passage ends at *exactly* the right time – before we find out what happens.

This is where, on television, we'd see the screen fade to black, and the name of the executive producer show up on the screen.

Let's think it through from Jacob's perspective. He's heading back to his home 'town', family and flocks in tow. He's heading back to the place where his older brother – the one whose birthright Jacob "bought"... the one whose inheritance Jacob stole – is living. The brother who was a master hunter. Great with the bow. Strong as an ox. You know – the big guy with a temper.

I begin to see why Jacob is worried.

And then I begin to wonder how often I live my life the way Jacob was – trying to figure out what is around the next corner, assuming the worst, and trying to appease it? How often, instead of planning for the possibilities, do I get mired in this, "Oh, no! What if *this* happens?"

The story says that God had told Jacob all would be well. But Jacob knew his brother better... didn't he?

Prayer:

Holy One,
for this day's realities, thank you.
For tomorrow's possibilities – thank you!
Help me to not be mired in worry,
in fear, in distress -
but live each moment in You.
Amen.

Tuesday

Scripture:

- Genesis 33.1-17
- Psalm 139.13-18
- Galatians 4.21-5.1

Reflection:

This part of Psalm 139 is one that I enjoy coming back to, especially in those moments when I am feeling terribly alone.

When I listen to the psalmists words, I am reminded that who I am – who I *really* am – is known by Someone. This, for me, is a huge comfort, especially when I realize that I, myself, don't particularly know who I am!

With all of the roles we live, and with the masks that many of us wear, it can be difficult getting to know ourselves and others. There are depths of our being that can be difficult to open, even to people we trust completely.

But... if God has known me from the very beginning – if God knows every part of who I am... then I don't have to work to let God know.

Prayer:

God of all things,
all people,
all places -
thank you for knowing me.
Thank you for loving me -
not just for my 'good' parts;
not just for my masks!
not just for the roles I play;
but for everything that I have been,
everything I am,
and everything I am yet to become.

Today I remember and pray
for _____, friends, family,
community, creation - blessed by your love.

For your grace, with your love, and in
Christ's name, I pray.

Wednesday

Scripture:

- Genesis 35.16-29
- Psalm 139.13-18
- Matthew 12.15-21

Reflection:

"And in his name the Gentiles will hope."
(Matt. 12.21)

I'm afraid that this week's reflections are being done without the benefit of my library – so I'm not sure which prophet the gospel writer is quoting here.

When I read the line above, I found my head reworking it into, "And in his name the outsiders will hope."

When I take a look at our congregations, I realize that there are insiders and outsiders. Even when one of our core values is "inclusivity", there are lines drawn, simply by who we define ourselves to be.

What is the hope that we offer "in Christ's name"?

Prayer:

Open my eyes, God -
to the similarities and the differences
between me and those I meet.
Help me to see, in their eyes,
the presence of your Spirit.
Help me to offer Christ's hope -
not only in our unity,
but in our diversity.

Today I remember and pray for _____,
friends, family, community, creation -
blessed by your love.

For your grace, with your love, and in
Christ's name, I pray.

Thursday

Scripture:

- Genesis 29.1-8
- Psalm 105.1-11
- 1 Corinthians 4.14-20

Reflection:

"For the kingdom of God depends not on
talk but on power." (1 Cor. 4.14-20)

Being someone who attends way too
many meetings, I can empathize with the
hope of the epistle writer that God's
kingdom isn't based on talk. Though, if it
were, that kingdom would have been
fulfilled long ago, wouldn't it!?

Then again, I'm not particularly sure of the
writer's conclusion that God's kingdom
depends on power – at least, not on any
power of ours.

It strikes me that God's reign depends on
only one thing... God. All of our talk, all of
our action – all of how we use our power
– is a response to God's grace.

Prayer:

Generous One,
all that is, is yours.
Not only the sky, the earth, the water...
but we human beings, too.
Not only the tangibles -
but the intangibles, as well.
Help me to use those gifts you give,
in ways that celebrate your Presence.

Today I remember and pray for _____,
friends, family, community, creation -
blessed by your love.

For your grace, with your love, and in
Christ's name, I pray.

Friday

Scripture:

- Genesis 29.9-14
- Psalm 105.1-11
- Acts 7.44-53

Reflection:

Sometimes I wonder how often I try to put
God in a box.

Sure, over the course of my life, that box
has gotten bigger. I remember when God
was only "Father" in our language... even
if our experience was wider than that.

We keep exploring other ways of
expressing our experience of God,
knowing that we will never be able to
express the entirety of it, and recognizing
that the rest of creation may experience
God in ways we can't imagine.

And recognizing that God is 'bigger' than
even experience can define.

What does your 'God box' look like?

Prayer:

Loving God,
for all the times I try to box you in,
push my boundaries a little bit wider.
For all the times I forget,
that I was created in your image,
not the other way around,
shake me up
by showing me a different part
of who you are.

Today I remember and pray for _____,
friends, family, community, creation -
blessed by your love.

For your grace, with your love, and in
Christ's name, I pray.

Saturday

Scripture:

- Genesis 29.31-30.24
- Psalm 105.1-11
- Matthew 12.38-42

Reflection:

Families are interesting creations. Some of
them are created by people coming
together by choice. Many of them are
created by people coming together
through processes that don't have much
choice in them.

I remember a friend saying, "You know, I
love my siblings... but if we weren't born in
the same family, they wouldn't be people
I'd spend much time with."

The Genesis passage talks about another
one of the 'iconic' families in scripture. This
is the beginning of the story that many of
us call "Joseph and the coat of many
colours."

What families are you a part of?

Where do you see God moving through
that group of people?

Prayer:

Loving God...
today, I pray for my family,
and for my place in that family.
Whatever I feel towards them,
I ask that you would hold them
in the palm of your hand.
I ask that you would bring them
wholeness, healing and love.

Today I remember and pray for _____,
friends, family, community, creation -
blessed by your love.

For your grace, with your love, and in
Christ's name, I pray.