

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

(July 6th to 11th, 2008)

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Monday

Scripture:

- Genesis 27.30-46
- Song of Solomon 2.8-13
- Romans 1.18-25

Reflection:

Have you ever noticed how much "real life" one can find in the scriptures?

For today's readings, we've got one brother who essentially steals all of another's inheritance, part of a sensual love poem, and a sermon on how a wrathful God gives up on lustful humankind. Wow! Where does one go with this?

Perhaps this week could be one in which we open our eyes to reality that scripture is filled with God's presence in oh-so-human stories... and that our own personal oh-so-human stories are just as intimately connected to God. Our conflicts, our loves, our fears are just as important to God as those of the women and men of scripture.

We, too, are part of the living gospel of God's creation!

So... what is happening in *your* story?
Where do you see God's presence in it?

Prayer:

Sometimes, God,
my life feels mundane -
filled with long moments of nothing
but boring details.
Sometimes, God,
my life is so filled with excitement
and wonder
that I don't quite know when to breath.

I celebrate that you
are part of my story
and
that I am part of yours!

Alleluia! Amen!

Tuesday

Scripture:

- Genesis 29.1-14
- Song of Solomon 2.8-13
- Romans 3.1-8

Reflection:

The Song of Solomon (or the Song of Songs) is one of the books of the bible that I love to read. I find the imagery beautiful, and the joy expressed between the couple can be overwhelming.

For much of the history of Christianity, we've tended to have a pretty big separation between our physical-self and our spiritual-self. The physical self has been seen as part of this broken "sinful" creation. Our sexuality, and most everything to do with it, has often been seen as the epitome of our sinful brokenness.

There are a number of the early church fathers we can thank for this interpretation. Many of their sermons and commentaries see the Song of Solomon as an allegory for the relationship between God and God's people, or between Christ and the church.

I'd invite you to read today's passage (and, if you've got the time, the whole of the Song of Solomon) out of our own experience of the joy and wonder we've found in relationship with another.

Where do you see God in the physical and sensual parts of creation?

Prayer:

God, you created me
to be in relationship
with you, and with others.
Thank you for relationships
that are in my life!
For all that they mean to me.
Thank you that my body -
with all of its perfect imperfection
is part
of your wonderful creation.

Alleluia! Amen!

Wednesday

Scripture:

- Genesis 29.31-35
- Song of Solomon 2.8-13
- John 13.1-17

Reflection:

I wonder what it must have been like for Leah. To know that your husband actually wanted your sister more than you... and to have been placed into marriage with him by trickery. To watch him work so he could marry your sister, and then to see them having children when you had not?

I know that I'm simplifying all of the family politics that were involved. I'll never be able to truly understand all of the interrelationships or the social implications. But I can get a sense of the frustration and sadness involved... and the overwhelming joy, when Leah conceived and gave birth to her children.

While my own understanding is different, Leah understood those children as a direct gift from God – and a vindication of her place as Jacob's wife.

Where are the places of loss in your life?

Where are the places of vindication?

Where do you see God moving in both of those?

Prayer:

Holy One -
I am human,
with all my hopes and dreams,
all my losses and nightmares.

Help me to see you -
in my tears,
in my laughter,
in each breath I take.

Help me to know
that I am never alone.

Alleluia! Amen!

Thursday

Scripture:

- Exodus 3.1-6
- Psalm 119.105-112
- Romans 2.12-16

Reflection:

There must have been quite the debate going on in the community of Christ's followers in Rome! In his letter to them, Paul weighs in on a number of topics.

The part of the letter we've got today is a small part of Paul's thoughts on the place of "the law" - the codes of the Jewish people – in the place of the lives of Jesus' followers.

What I find really interesting is that he's not worried about what people hear – but about what they do. He suggested that people could live the law without having heard it – because it was written on their hearts.

There have been some interesting discussions at the Wondercafe about whether or not there are morals & ethics that are universal to all human beings. So far, the debate rages on.

What do you think?

Do you see God's "law" being lived out, even in places where you know it hasn't been heard?

Prayer:

God of the heavens,
God of the earth,
God of all...
may your love be lived,
through me,
through others
throughout the world -
today
and always.

Alleluia! Amen!

Friday

Scripture:

- Deuteronomy 32.1-10
- Psalm 119.105-112
- Romans 15.14-24

Reflection:

"Your word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path" (Ps. 119.105).

For some reason, I've got two songs running around in my head. The first was sung by Amy Grant, and has the above line as its refrain. It talks about a sureness of faith in God that I marvel at.

The second song is by Linnea Good, and has a line, "If only the Bible were a little more clear, then I could figure out what its saying in here."

I love reading scripture. I love opening myself to the possibility that God might be speaking to me through the words and the stories and the songs... but I also know that my understanding (both head and heart) is often dim and diminished. God's word is there, lighting my path – but I sometimes feel like I'm wearing welder's goggles!

Does it matter if I don't "understand" what I'm reading?

God can get through to me, even if I don't understand... right?

Prayer:

God -
when my need to understand
gets in the way,
help me to know in my heart
and in my head,
that you are still here -
loving me in my understanding
and in my not understanding
(and in my mis-understanding, too!)

Alleluia! Amen!

Saturday

Scripture:

- Isaiah 2.1-4
- Psalm 119.105-112
- John 12.44-50

Reflection:

I've found myself being a bit battered this past week. I was challenged by a couple of our siblings in Christ to defend some of my not-particularly-orthodox beliefs.

It started out fine. We chatted. We listened to each other. We pointed out areas of agreement in what we were saying.

The difficulties arose when we started to discuss the areas in which we disagreed. Though all of us were quite passionate about what we believe, I hoped we could disagree in a way that allowed us to respect each other, even if we could not respect each other's beliefs.

Sadly, that didn't happen.

Our conversation moved into language that was extremely judgmental – not just about our beliefs... but about each other.

Now, I've had similar discussions with people who held similar ideas. Because we've been able to discuss without making judgmental comments, we've been able to actually learn from each other.

I wonder if that's part of what Jesus was talking about when he said, "I do not judge anyone who hears my words and does not keep them, for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world."

Prayer:

Open my ears, God – that I might listen.
Open my mind, God – that I might hear.
Open my heart, God -
that I might love.
Today. Tomorrow. Always.
Alleluia. Amen!