

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

(June 2nd to 7th, 2008)

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Monday

Scripture:

- Genesis 4.1-6
- Psalm 69.1-3,13-16,30-36
- Romans 2.1-11

Reflection:

I learned a lot about giving from a fellow in my education program. I'll call him "Colin". He was a recovering alcoholic. He had traveled all across Canada in his search for the right place to be. Along the way he had been down and out, homeless. We were out on the streets of Montreal, going to have lunch, and just outside the restaurant there was a man who needed help. He was asking for some spare change. Most of us turned our faces away and hurried past, but not Colin. He stopped, gave some money and chatted with the man. By the time he caught up with us, we were seated in the restaurant. There he told us some of his story. How some days that little bit of spare change was all he had. How invisible he felt when someone dropped money in his hand, but didn't look at him. About the difference it made to have the person look at him- the impact it had on his feelings when someone spoke to him and actually expected to hear an answer.

He told us that he didn't sleep well at night and he often went to the areas where the people without homes gathered, and hung out with them. When we came out of the restaurant, and during our time in Montreal, Colin called us to giving out of a desire to help. Giving out of love.

Prayer:

Loving God, many of us give grudgingly to others, complaining about the people who make our streets look untidy. We forget how to give in a spirit of love. Help us this day and every day to remember your love for us, that we may see opportunities to pass it on through our giving. May our offerings be acceptable to you. Amen.

Tuesday

Scripture:

- Genesis 4.17-5:5
- Psalm 69.1-3,13-16,30-36
- Romans 3.9-22a

Reflection:

How do you feel when you read a piece of scripture like this one from Paul's letter to the church at Rome? Does it feel like good news, or does it make you want to give up because you'll never succeed? It raises feelings of inadequacy for me. I hear my inner voice saying, "Why bother? You're never going to get it right."

Maybe not, but there is good news here. I'm never going to get it right if I just give up! Scripture like this makes me feel my inadequacy, but it also speaks to me of the love of God. I am God's creation, and so are you. The mystery of why we are created with an internal voice giving us messages is one that I don't understand. But I do understand that we can choose the voice we listen to.

Is it the voice of God, saying, "I love you, and I will help you" or is it quite another voice that you hear? God is pleased, I believe, when our intention is to do good. When we intend only good things for others, in some way that is enough. We learn from others how that might be best done. Sometimes we might get it wrong, but let's not make that a reason no to try.

Prayer:

God of our intentions, we try and some times we get it wrong. We try and sometimes we get it right. Help us to understand what it is that pleases you. Help us to do what we believe you are calling us to in our life and work. Help us when we get it wrong, and when we get it right.

Amen.

Wednesday

Scripture:

- Genesis 11.1-9
- Psalm 69.1-3,13-16,30-36
- Matthew 7.13-20

Reflection:

As a townie through and through, brought up for most of my life in inner city Glasgow, I hesitate to use illustrations from the natural world. Sometimes though, I read something that makes me go there. Today we are talking about fruits in a person's life. "By their fruits you shall recognize them" v20. I wonder about the fruits of my life. Often I have to search hard to find them. It's not that they don't exist, it's that I have to look hard to recognize them. There are good fresh and nurturing fruits, and there are the decaying rotten fruits there too.

It is a good exercise for me to go through them, cleaning out the rotten ones and polishing up the good ones.

The ancients in our Older Testament reading probably hadn't done any housekeeping of their fruits. They had become proud and arrogant. They saw themselves as self made people. They had lost the God-dimension of their lives. If they could build this tower, then everyone else would see how great they were, and how theirs was the right to dominate creation.

What fruits of your life do you want to use to nurture yourself and others?

Are there rotten fruits that need to be cleaned up and thrown away?

Prayer:

Creating God, as we think of the fruits of our lives, be there in the cleaning and polishing. Give us the ability to tell the difference between the good and rotten fruits and to deal with them as you would have us do. Amen.

Thursday

Scripture:

- Genesis 13.1-18
- Psalm 33.1-12
- 2 Peter 2.17-22

Reflection:

Abraham and Lot had both prospered and were enjoying the fruits of their labours. They had much of the material wealth that their culture offered. They were doing well, but there arose a problem. The land in which they lived could not support the number of animals they had. Their herdsmen were beginning to argue about grazing rights. The potential for conflict was apparent. Abraham offered a compromise which Lot accepted.

There is a mighty world food crisis going on in the world. Food prices are rising, and many people in developing countries and right here in Canada are unable to buy the food they need. Children go hungry and the aid agencies are not able to feed the same numbers of people that they could a year ago. We hear of a global food stock of only 60 days. Each "expert" it seems to me has a different explanation, a different way of solving the crisis, and the result is that nothing appears to be happening to address this problem.

Where is the ground for compromise? What is God calling us to do as stewards of the earth? How do we achieve a just sharing of the bounty of the earth?

Prayer:

Open our eyes and our ears to the cries of our fellow inhabitants of this planet, Creating God. Speak in the silence of our hearts and in our raging at injustice, your word of compromise over the competing needs of the inhabitants of the world that we may feed those who hunger and house those without home. Amen.

Friday

Scripture:

- Genesis 14.17-24
- Psalm 33.1-12
- Acts 28.1-10

Reflection:

Shula the wonder dog escaped the other day. These things never happen when I'm expecting them. I had to find her lead, some shoes and a pocketful of cookies before I could go after her. I live on a quiet street, but Shula is never out alone and visions of her being hit by a car were tumbling through my head. As I emerged from the complex with her lead in my hand, I saw two young men coming towards me. As soon as they saw me, they called out to me and I saw that one of them had Shula clutched in his arms. It was a completely unexpected thing to happen. These two young men did the caring and unexpected thing for me and for Shula.

Present day Maltese are known for their courage and hospitality, but it wasn't so in Paul's day. There was great suspicion of strangers, and if people had been shipwrecked, it was thought to be a judgment on them for some sin they had committed. But the islanders did a most unexpected thing. They lit a fire and invited the survivors to come and warm themselves. As we read further, we see suspicion raising its head, only to be replaced by awe.

Where have you experienced the unexpected in your life? Has it happened as a good thing for you? Do you see God's hand behind it?

Prayer:

God of the unexpected, you come to us in many ways, in the guise of people we meet. Often, we are surprised and delighted by the interaction. Thank you for the many surprising ways your love breaks through to us when we least expect it.

Saturday

Scripture:

- Genesis 15.1-20
- Psalm 33.1-12
- Matthew 9.27-34

Reflection:

The details of Abram's life may be vague to many of us, but mostly we have an idea who he is. He is the great Patriarch. The one whose obedience to God was rewarded by generations of descendants as uncountable as the grains of sand on a beach. Abram's faith was rewarded with material goods, and with a sense of God's favour. It can be easy for us to think that it was all sweetness and light. Everything must have been easy for Abram because God spoke directly to him and Abram believed God.

Yet here he is, this great man of faith, feeling a loss of spirit because the promises of God have not yet come to pass. Abram and Sarai are old. God has promised them a child of their own, but how... at their age? I hear a great sense of weariness with waiting for Abram. He believes but he has this great cloud descending on him.

I've been waiting for something for almost eight years now. It is something I believe God wants for me, but it is a long time coming. What do we do when the waiting is long and the event never seems to draw any closer? How do we draw comfort from the feeling that God seems to be content to let us just wait?

Prayer:

God of our wildest dreams and our silliest notions, it is so hard to wait for what seems like eternity for your will to be worked out in our lives. As Abram waited, so we wait. Give us strength for the journey, and hope for the outcome.