

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

(March 17th to 22th, 2008)

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Monday

Scripture:

- Isaiah 42.1-9
- Psalm 36.5-11
- John 12.1-11

Reflection:

But what if Judas was on the right track? That question is always on my mind when I read this Gospel story. What if Judas was right and Jesus' answer is merely one more attempt to spiritualize wastefulness?

It is the same question we need to ask when we talk about redecorating our houses, or our churches, or when a new hospital is built, or a new municipal building, or... At what point does the need to serve balance with the need to celebrate and honour with beauty and artistry?

Each day this week we come closer to the cross. It is a good week to think about how best to honour the body of Jesus – and to ask what that body is.

Prayer:

God of the whole of the broken, the tradition tells us that "the poor of the world are my body". Like Mary of Bethany I want to honour your life and acknowledge your upcoming death. Help me to know the best way to do that. Help me find the balance between beautification and service. Show me how to avoid wastefulness.

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:

- Isaiah 49.1-7
- Psalm 36.5-11
- John 12.20-36

Reflection:

They are challenging, these Servant Songs of Isaiah. Here, in the second of them, the task of the Servant is further explained. Of special note is verse 6 "I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth".

Wow! As if bringing justice and peace and light to our own neighbours wasn't enough we are now being told to bring them to the entire world. And the beginning of the passage suggests that this is why we are here! Not to make a comfortable home, not to raise healthy children, not to make a big footprint, we are here to be light to the nations (which admittedly can include a comfortable home, healthy children and making a big mark).

Prayer:

God who calls each of us to serve, we try hard to be faithful servants. In my living and my serving may I be a person of justice. May I bring your light to the world around me, even as others bring your light to me.

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 50.4-9a
- Psalm 70
- John 13.21-32

Reflection:

“Let those be put to shame and confusion who seek my life. Let those be turned back and brought to dishonour who desire to hurt me.” These words from the psalm express an emotion that many of us can understand. There is something “just” about payback after all.

But what does Isaiah tell us? He tells us about a servant who takes the opposite approach. The servant of God is one who “gave my back to those who struck me, and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard; I did not hide my face from insult and spitting”. Is that what we are supposed to do? That seems so much harder.

Prayer:

God of justice, God who calls us to seek justice and resist evil, where is the line between justice and payback? When is it best to give offenders their due? When is it best to turn the other cheek? Help me to know the best response to seeming insult and vilification.

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Thursday

Scripture:

- Exodus 12.1-14
- Psalm 116.1-2,12-19
- John 13.1-17, 31b-35

Reflection:

On this night, in churches around the world, people gather to share bread and wine “in remembrance of him”. On this night, in many places, people will pause to have their feet washed by a friend. We enter the holiest weekend of the year with shared meals and shared service.

As we prepare to hear again a story of betrayal, trial, execution and hope beyond the grave, we pause to be reminded that the banquet of freedom comes at a price. In response we have to ask what price our freedoms carry, and who has to pay.

Prayer:

God made known in loaf and cup, on this weekend the faith story descends to the depths and rises to the heights. As the story is told again may I find the hope in both the descent and the rising. Remind me that the story is about serving and sacrifice. Remind me also that the story is about hope that defies all odds.

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Friday

Scripture:

- Isaiah 52.13-53.12
- Psalm 22
- John 18.1-19.42

Reflection:

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me!” Not words we expect from Jesus, the one whose connection with God has always seemed so close, so strong. And yet the feeling of abandonment is part of our story. It reminds us that we all have times of darkness, times when it seems hopeless.

“It is finished.” Such a simple phrase. It tells of accomplishment, of finality. Here, today we hear it also as a sign of seeming defeat. Today it often appears that the quest for abundant life may well be finished, stopped in its tracks.

Prayer:

God who hangs on the cross, God who dies in agony, this day we tell a terrible story. I often wonder what the point of telling it again and again is. May the re-telling remind me that the life of faith has challenges as well as rewards. May the cross remind me of the many who fight for faithfulness.

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Saturday

Scripture:

- John 14.1-14
- Psalm 31.1-4, 15-16
- Matthew 27.57-66

Reflection:

And then the tomb was sealed. And for the women hiding in the shadows watching how hard must that have been? The moment of burial has a resounding clang of finality to it.

In some ways this is the longest and darkest day of the church year. This is the day when we knowingly exist in the netherworld between death and life. It is a day of uncertainty, a day of vigilant waiting. And yet it sometimes seems that the waiting is the metaphor for much of our lives. How do we deal with living in the in-between?

Prayer:

God of life and death and what lies in-between the two, help me to live with the uncertainty of life. On the days when death seems stronger than life, remind me that life wins out in the end. On the days when despair rules my heart fill me with hope. On days when uncertainty clouds my vision give me the clear sight of promised life, and that in abundance.

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