

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 31st to April 5th, 2008)

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Monday

Scripture:

- Judges 6.36-40
- Psalm 114
- 1 Corinthians 15.12-20

Reflection:

Many years ago, now, a wise friend pointed this passage out to me while I was in the middle of trying to discern what God was calling me to do with my life at the time. The choices seemed to logically point in the direction of the status quo. But the call to change direction was so intense that I couldn't not ask questions of what was going on. Voices around me pulled me in many directions. Yet I all I could think of was to ask for more clarity - a clearer message from God. Nothing much changed. I didn't want to ask for a sign because I didn't want to test God. My friend simply said, "Are you asking to test God, or to coerce God into doing your will, or are you asking for a sign to check out your discernment of God's will?"

I'm uncomfortable with the idea of asking for such a supernatural sign as Gideon asked for - for fear of it bordering on testing God's willingness to do such things. But when I've asked for 'a' sign, I've usually found them abundant. What about you?

Prayer:

God of our making and calling, give me ears to hear, eyes to see, and a heart to feel the signs of your love and calling to me this day.

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:

- Jonah 1.1-17
- Psalm 114
- 1 Corinthians 15.19-28

Reflection:

I both like and dislike the story of Jonah because it reminds me so much of myself and many (most?) of the trying-to-be-faithful Christians that I meet. Jonah feels a call from God and then runs in the opposite direction. It's also interesting that the calamity that those around him feel (namely, those in the boat) is attributed to be a direct cause of his trying to run away from God. How often have I been bitter and more easily frustrated than normal when I've been avoiding thinking about or doing something about something niggling inside me? Whether it be a call to speak with someone I'd rather not, or a call to take make my views known that won't be popular, or even more profound calls, I'm just not as nice to be around when I'm trying to walk the other way. Have you ever walked the other way? What happened?

Prayer:

God of our making and calling, give me comfort and courage in my fear – especially my fear sometimes of following 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:

- Jonah 2.1-10
- Psalm 114
- Matthew 12.38-42

Reflection:

There's no missing the connection today between the readings from the Hebrew scriptures and the New Testament! Matthew has related Jesus' death and resurrection to Jonah's time in the belly of the fish/monster. For Nineveh, Jonah's truth telling and witness to God's way was enough for them to turn back to lives lived in God. For many, the sign of the empty tomb is not enough - then and now. How do we live in response to the sign? What do we see because of it?

Prayer:

God of the whale and the empty tomb, open me afresh this day and this week to the events of the coming Holy Week, that your signs may be filled with new and renewed meaning for 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.

Thursday

Scripture:

- Isaiah 25.1-5
- Psalm 116.1-4,12-19
- 1 Peter 1.8b-12

Reflection:

All three readings have a theme of praise for God's saving acts, especially from times of conflict. Isn't it wonderful when our fears are relieved and we find ourselves bathed in grace in its many forms. The challenge for Isaiah, the Psalmist, Peter, and us, is to feel the grace and love of God when we are spared from harm from others, without letting it go completely to our heads. Each of these passages also has some degree of an edge of "God loves me/us more." This is tempered by reading further, as we'll do in the coming days. What kinds of situations have you felt saved from? How did/do you feel? What do you think others feel?

Prayer:

You who's very name is salvation, dance with me in my moments of joy at all you've done for me. And keep me grounded in your love for all your creation.

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:

- Isaiah 26.1-4
- Psalm 116.1-4,12-19
- 1 Peter 1.13-16

Reflection:

A sense of being specially touched by God's grace lead all three writers to a sense of chosen-ness and call or commission. This chosen status seems to come from a sense of right relationship with God. I too can feel like my efforts at right relationship are being rewarded when things go well. The trouble is that, well, things don't always go well - even sometimes when I'm really trying hard to get it all right between me and God and the rest of the world.

Perhaps as we approach Holy Week, we'd do well to pay very close attention to the responses of the disciples. And Jesus's response from the cross. And beyond the cross.

Prayer:

I know right relationship with you and your world, O God, makes many things in life smoother most of the time. Help me yearn for that out of my love for you, not my desire for the good life.

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:

- Isaiah 25.6-9
- Psalm 116.1-4,12-19
- Luke 14.12-14

Reflection:

Here at last, we have the reminder of what true gratitude for God's special attention is to evoke in us: consideration for others and God's love for them as well.

Here we have the beautiful words, that rather than destroying our enemies, God is going to "destroy the shroud that is cast over all peoples, the sheet that is spread over all nations." (Is 25:7)

How can we cling to our specialness in the eyes of our divine parent, while also celebrating our holy parent's love for all our siblings? Perhaps a start is to try to love them ourselves.

Prayer:

Mother / Father of us all, shower me with your abundant love until I truly get it - get your abundance of love for all you've created.

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.