

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

(May 19th to 24th, 2008)

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Monday

Scripture:

- Job 38.39-39.12
- Psalm 29
- 1 Corinthians 12.1-3

Reflection:

In the Chronicles of Narnia the characters in this strange and wonderful land are often helped and guided by the mysterious lion, Aslan. He gives gifts that the children can draw on in times of need. When things are at their worst he will intervene, but often in unexpected ways. When this happens, the children and the inhabitants of Narnia remind each other: "Aslan is not a tame lion, you know".

The writer of Job takes us on a hike into the wilderness, as the writer of the Psalm has us watch a windstorm. Both remind us that God is not tame, not domesticated in spite of our best efforts.

Prayer in Action:

Sometime this week, watch trees or bushes moving in the wind. Watch birds soaring on the wind. What do you see? How does the wind speak to you of God and of your relationship with God?

Tuesday

Scripture:

- Job 39.13-25
- Psalm 29
- 1 Corinthians 12.4-13

Reflection:

In the reading from Job, the ostrich and the horse both laugh at fear. The ostrich laughs with no idea what it is up against, deluded about its own abilities. The horse laughs on its way to battle, matching its strength and speed against the challenge of the enemy. How do you face your fears?

I was afraid of squirrels until one day when I was out crosscountry skiing alone, and faced down a cougar. The cougar taught me to laugh at some of my old fears. Through the cougar, the Spirit reminds me of the gifts I've been given before, gifts of courage and strength and honesty that have helped me face my inner cougars.

Prayer:

O God, you are the strength within my strength, yours the grace that helps me stand and face my fears. Thank you.

Wednesday

Scripture:

- Job 39.26-40.5
- Psalm 29
- John 14.25-26

Reflection:

I remember a book title from some time ago: Your God is Too Small. Like many books on my shelves, I don't know if I ever read it, but it's a great title. Similarly I love the hymn "Bring Many Names" (Voices United 268) for the freedom it gives to draw on different images of God. It helps me wrap words around some of the different ways in which I experience God's presence.

Job falls silent in front of the Creator, in an experience like that of the Psalmist in front of the windstorm, where the best response is simple awe.

Prayer:

Read or sing "Bring Many Names" (Voices United No. 268)

Thursday

Scripture:

- Proverbs 12.22-28
- Psalm 131
- Philippians 2.19-24

Reflection:

I hear questions of trust being raised in these readings. The advice from the wisdom writer of Proverbs is to place your trust in people who do not tell lies, and to become trustworthy by committing yourself to honesty. Paul decides to send Timothy to visit the church at Philippi because he can trust him to have the best interests of the church community at heart. The Psalmist paints the ultimate word-picture of trust: a child, asleep in its mother's arms.

I remember praying once before making a major move across the country, saying to God in spite of my fears and doubts, "I trust you". And almost like a voice in my ear, I heard God say "And I trust you."

Prayer:

Loving God, you have entrusted the world into our care. Help us to cradle the world in our arms, the way you hold us. Amen.

Friday

Scripture:

- Isaiah 26.1-6
- Psalm 131
- Philippians 2.25-30

Reflection:

Homesick and barely recovered from an illness that almost killed him, the young man tried to stay by Paul looking after his needs. That was his mission after all. He had been sent there by his faith community and he was ready to stay and carry out the mission, no matter what the cost. But Paul sends Epaphroditus home. He sends him to look after himself, he sends him to receive the love and attention of the community and so be healed. And Paul reminds the community to receive the young man with respect, not treating him as though this return is a failure.

I'm thankful for Paul's wisdom in recognizing that Epaphroditus needed to rest his body and soul. I'm thankful that he sees this rest and healing as an important part of the mission. I hope the community rose to the occasion, and that their welcome helped the young man get over what may have seemed like a failure.

Prayer:

Sing or read Hymn 658, Voices United
"O Love, that wilt not let me go
I rest my weary soul in Thee..
I give Thee back the life I owe
That in Thine ocean depths its flow
may richer, fuller be"

Saturday

Scripture:

- Isaiah 31.1-9
- Psalm 131
- Luke 11.14-23

Reflection:

Where do I find my security? Not in horses, and chariots and a big army perhaps. I trust in my pension plan; I trust in my routines of walking and gym workouts and healthy food; I trust rather blindly that Canada's history of not being a colonial power shields us from the anger of oppressed people in other parts of the world. And yet pension plans fail, our bodies all eventually weaken and die, we are only beginning to come to terms with the effects of colonial power within Canada, and our nation lives with increasing vulnerability in the shadow of our powerful neighbour. Where do I find my security? The writers call us to trust that God is powerfully at work fighting off evil and releasing people from their demons. God's fierce love does not give up even when everything else fails us.

Prayer:

O God, I am in awe before your love. It is as fierce and tender as a parent's love for her child, stronger even than the forces of evil, never gives up. When my fear has hold of me, wake me up from my nightmare. Hold me until my heart beats with the rhythm of yours. May I learn to hear that rhythm running through all my days. Amen.