

Prayer Spaces in Schools

Learning from a prayer space

KS3 – Lesson 2 of 4

Experiencing the spiritual

Learning opportunities for 7-11s on themes about prayer and reflection.

Prayer Spaces in Schools create extraordinary opportunities for children and young people to think about prayer and to consider spirituality in open-minded experiential ways.

This lesson is one of a series written by Lat Blaylock of RE Today and provided free to schools to enable learners to use critical and reflective thinking skills to learn about spirituality, prayer and reflection.



Since 2010 [Prayer Spaces in Schools](#) has been helping people to create space in schools where pupils can pause to reflect or pray.

A prayer space provides a safe place for children to be still, to think and feel, to ask questions, to reflect and to explore prayer for themselves using simple activities that are creative and interactive. Every prayer space is rooted in a Christian understanding of prayer whilst being accessible to people of any faith or belief.

These spaces make a valuable contribution to the wellbeing of pupils, and to the pastoral and spiritual life of whole school communities.

Prayer Spaces in Schools GB is an initiative of 24-7 Prayer, an international movement that helps people to pray.



[RE Today Services](#) supports teachers, schools and others involved in Religious Education by equipping and empowering them to teach about religious and non-religious worldviews with confidence. They offer training courses, professional development, consultancy and a wide range of resources to teachers in thousands of schools of every kind.



We are grateful to the [Westhill Endowment](#) for their generous support which has enabled us to create these resources and to make them available for free.

KS3 Lesson 2 of 4

Experiencing the spiritual




Learning opportunities for 11-14s on themes about prayer and reflection.

Purpose

This lesson plan is written for use after pupils have experienced a Prayer Space.




There is one lesson plan for use before a Prayer Space and two others for use after to help pupils draw out further learning from their experience.

Learning objectives





-  To give learners a way to reflect on ideas about human spirituality drawing on their experience of the Prayer Space
 -  To offer further opportunities to investigate spiritual ideas
 -  To draw together understanding about spirituality and prayer
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Learning outcomes

By the end of this lesson learners will:

-  Have considered a simple model for human spirituality that works for people of all faiths and none
 -  Have reflected on their own understanding of what it means to be spiritual
 -  Be able to connect ideas about spirituality to the experience some people call prayer
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You will need...

-  The accompanying presentation.
-  We've provided printable student response sheets which will need to be printed one for each learner if you use these parts of the lesson.
-  You may wish to give pupils large sheets of paper and pens to be able to record any group discussions.
-  We recommend using sticky notes for the final set of questions.

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Slide notes

Most slides have presenter notes offering supporting information.

Slide 1 – Aims

Aims of these lessons:

-  To provide excellent and respected classroom resources for teachers of RVE / RME / RE to use in lessons when a Prayer Spaces visit is coming, taking place or has happened,
-  To enable teachers and Prayer Spaces volunteers to deliver quality RVE / RME / RE about prayer which connects to the experiences of the Prayer Spaces provision.
-  To enable pupils to think for themselves about prayer and its meanings, and access opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Slide 2 – The learning package

This lesson is part of a larger ‘Prayer Spaces in Schools’ learning package and can be used by teachers and school visitors, especially if they are involved in supporting the school by running a Prayer Space or reflection space.

The lessons:

- Can be taught - with preparation - ‘off the shelf’ using the 4 presentation sequences provided
- Will be understood better by teachers and school visitors if you watch our training recorded webinars from Lat Blaylock of RE today
- Include examples of pupils’ work, art, writing and responses
- Are suitable for use across the UK, recognising what is distinctive about RME / RVE / RE in each of the four nations
- Reference law, guidance and inspection requirements for RE / SMSCD / School Worship
- Use some Prayer Spaces in Schools case studies

Slide 3

An overview of the lesson activities. There's a lot here, so choose the activities that will best help you class to explore the spiritual ideas and prayer connections.

Slides 4 to 8 – for classroom use, start here.

These slides introduce the 'big topic' of exploring spirituality.

Spirituality is a very significant idea for the work of Prayer Spaces in Schools and is also important in schools – for example, OFSTED inspections assess how well schools provide for pupils' spiritual development.

The concept is contested, and different visions of spirituality are found in different communities. For example, Christian spiritualities centre on Jesus' teaching and example, and on forgiveness and faith. Buddhist spirituality makes space for awareness, detachment, meditation and compassion through visions of the Buddha's Dharma.

These and many other different visions are all interesting. But in the context of the school, **descriptions of spiritual life and growth that transcend a single religion and can be seen as human and humane are especially useful.**

The model we use here is inspired by the work of Dr David Hay and Dr Rebecca Nye, and suggests spiritual life is understood in terms of four kinds of relational consciousness.

Slide 4 – A human and humane model of spirituality

Class activity – Start with a quick plenary gathering of ideas.

What do you think of when you hear the word 'spiritual'?

There are no wrong answers - we want to affirm pupils' engagement with the idea as it helps to stimulate the thinking process about spirituality right at the start of the lesson.

Tip – Keep this fast moving - push the pace along if your class will take it.

We're going to be looking at a way of thinking about spirituality that notices all the big relationships in our lives.

Slide 5 – A human and humane model of spirituality

Relating to myself – my inner life

How do we think about ourselves? You might like to pause for a moment for learners to reflect on how they see themselves.

Slide 6 – A human and humane model of spirituality

Relating to others – living in love and community

Who are the people that are most special to us? Family and friends can be some of the best relationships. But we can also get things wrong! Think of one kind thing you did or said to someone that really helped them.

Slide 7 – A human and humane model of spirituality

Relating to the earth – connecting with nature and the planet

We live on an amazing earth. Think of one thing about our earth that has made you go 'Wow!'

We know that although our world is beautiful, tragic things happen, like wars and poverty and environmental damage that make life on earth feel painful. Think of one thing that makes you want to say 'Ow' about our world.

Slide 8 – A human and humane model of spirituality

Relating to the ultimate – the 'Big Beyond'; as some say, 'God'

For many people around the world one of their most important relationships is with the ultimate reality, that which is before all things. For some that will be a scientific idea, for others a sense that all the world is spirit, and for over half the population of the world they would call this 'God'.

Without telling anyone around you, what do you think is the 'big beyond', the creative sustaining force that is in and beyond our universe?

Slide 9 – A human and humane model of spirituality

Another way of visualising these four spiritual relationships is to think of them in four different directions of connection – **in, out, down** and **up**.

In – relationship with yourself

Out – relationship with others

Down – relationship with the earth

Up – relationship with the beyond or God`

Slide 10 – Thinking about the Prayer Space

Class activity – There are three questions to help learners reflect on their experience of the Prayer Space. Begin with discussion pairs, then group two pairs together to share their discoveries with each other and write down what they thought.

What did you like / dislike about the Prayer Space?

The aim is to give you some space in your life to get in touch with your 'spiritual side'. How did that work for you?

What advice would you give to the people using the Prayer Space tomorrow?

Slides 11 and 12 – Revisiting a human and humane model of spirituality

These two slides offer another opportunity to engage with the concept of spirituality that embrace the four spiritual relationships.

Class activity – Explain the four dimensions, in, out, down and up

Try the spirituality chant.

Slide 13 – Spiritual values

Prayer Spaces engage with many spiritual values. What were the main values you thought about in the Prayer Space at your school?

Did you think, for example, about the values of...

Self: hope / inner peace / self respect?

Others: kindness / forgiveness / generosity?

Earth: care for nature / love of animals / green visions?

God: faith / prayer / doubt / the meaning of life?

Slides 14 and 15 – Think about prayer: The big question mark!

Class activity – Distribute printouts of the big question mark.

The template for this is in the accompanying printout. Note that this is A4 size, but if at all possible it needs to be printed at A3 size to give pupils lots of space to write.

In groups of three, Think about the questions they would like to ask God – if there is a God – or an imaginary being that knows everything. Try to think of 20 questions. If there was a ‘Big Questions’ activity in the Prayer Space learners should be able to draw on questions they wrote or read then.

Swap sheets with another group.

Read the questions from the other group and agree on the best three questions, then highlight them.

For each of these three, suggest three possible answers which God or ‘the person who knows everything’ might say.

Write these in the spaces outside the question mark, connecting them with a line to the question.

Pass the question mark back to the group that write the questions and discuss with them: do they like your answers?

Slide 16 – Thinking about prayer: 7-11s asking God some questions.

Class activity – This slide offers an additional opportunity to think about some big questions. Show the slide and give pupils 30 seconds of silence to decide for themselves:

Which of these questions do you like best?

Which do you think is hardest to answer?

Which do you think is most important?

Initiate some class discussion to allow learners to explore their thoughts.

Slide 17 – Thinking about prayer: 7-11s asking God some questions.

This slide is an alternative to Slide 16 and asks the same questions. Use whichever works best for your class.

Slide 18 – Learning creatively: two art works

We work from the view that there is a close frontier between spiritual learning and creativity: the experience of using a prayer space often feels highly creative, and prompts creativity for pupils.

Ask pupils if they made a work of art to show their ideas about spirituality and prayer, what theirs would be like. You may have time in other RE lessons to create this.

Slides 19 and 20 – What does the Bible offer to help us understand prayer?

Read the story from Slide 19. There are additional notes alongside that might help with understanding.

Show Slide 20 and read the possible meanings to the class.

Ask them to rank the six ideas from most important to least important. This could be done in small groups followed by feedback, or as a plenary discussion.

Slide 21 – A Pharisee and a Tax Collector

Use this image as an additional way to think about prayer and Jesus' story.

This brilliant image is freely available from the Christian Art collection at Vanderbilt University, along with 80+ others. It is a good example of global Christian art because it shows the narratives of the gospels from an African setting, in the Mafa region of Cameroon.

<https://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-imagelink.pl?RC=48268>

Slide 22 to 24 – A learning strategy - the washing line

Class activity – You will need to stretch a string across the class for this.

All the instructions are on Slide 22

The quotes are on Slide 23 with additional quotes on Slide 24

Select the quotes that are most suitable for your class

Washing Line – a brilliant class discussion strategy. Prayer is a controversial topic, and in writing these lessons we are pleased to present some activities that ask pupils to use their critical thinking skills. Ideas and materials from different religions and from atheist and agnostic perspectives enrich the learning, which has mind-opening intentions.

Get 6 learners to read these quotations aloud and ask for 'any thoughts' from the class after each one has been heard. If you have time for a longer discussion, use the strategy called 'washing line' where pupils have a name label on a folded piece of paper. String a line across the classroom and sit round it in a circle. 'Strongly Agree' is at one end, 'strongly disagree' at the other.

Read the quotes out twice with a pause for thinking. Ask pupils to hang their name label on the line at a suitable point and sit down and look at the opinions expressed. Any comments?? There will be loads.

This strategy improves participation in class discussion from an average of under 20% of children to usually 60% plus!! Invite comments from 'the quiet ones' and affirm them.

<https://thenounproject.com/icon/clothes-line-6364718/>

Slide 25 and 26 – Final recap on a human and humane model of spirituality

A chance to review again the model of human spirituality with the chant.

Slide 27 – So what did we learn?

Use these prompts for final conversation in pairs, groups or whole class, or for writing if you need it. These provide OFSTED and inspection processes with excellent evidence of pupils' understandings of spirituality, if that is what you need.

This lesson is very full, so do be selective in which parts you use, or spread it over two sessions.