

Prayer Spaces in Schools

Learning from a prayer space

KS3 – Lesson 3 of 4

Investigating prayer with social science methods

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 3 of 4

Investigating prayer with social science methods

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

- For learners to engage with statistical research on people's experience of prayer.
 - Students will undertake their own original research project on prayer.
 - To reflect on people's ideas about prayer including in the light of their own experience of a prayer space.
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Learning outcomes

By the end of this lesson learners will:

- Have reflected on a range of research data exploring public views about prayer.
 - Have conducted a basic first hand research project into people's views on prayer.
 - Have considered their own views on prayer when assessed against research questions that ask people about the impact of prayer on their lives.
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You will need...

- The accompanying presentation.
- Slide 7** – Students will need printed copies of this questionnaire (© RE Today)
- Slides 11 - 15** – If you think the image on screen will be too small to read in the classroom there are printable versions.
- You may wish to give pupils large sheets of paper and pens to be able to record any group discussions.

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How to use these lesson materials

This lesson is very full, so do be selective in which parts you use. Depth is more important than breadth and you may prefer to take just one or two segments and allow good time for your students to explore the ideas and thinking more fully.

Or, break the content up into two sessions.




There is also a homework task which needs to be done in advance.

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
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Slide 3

This slide introduces the ‘big topic’ of investigating prayer with social science methods.

Slides 4 to 6 – for classroom use, start here.

These slides offer a recap of the Prayer Space and a reminder for students of their experience in the space.

Slide 6 – My experience of a ‘Prayer Space’

You may wish to start with this class activity to reconnect learners with their experience of the Prayer Space as they will need to reflect on their insights later.

Class activity – Start with a recap of the Prayer Space experience.

Choose three words that describe your own experience of the Prayer Space. Explain your choice to one other person.

What activity or experience had the most impact on you?

Tip – Keep this fast moving - push the pace along if your class will take it. The purpose at this point isn’t deep learning but to reconnect with their experience.

Slide 7 – Learning by research

Primary research – a prayer questionnaire

This is a homework task so you may want to set this a week before using this lesson. Students ask three adults to complete an anonymous questionnaire about prayer.

There is a printable version of this questionnaire (© RE Today) in the accompanying printouts document.

Slide 8 – Learning by research

Primary research – a prayer questionnaire

Collating the feedback from your class’s questionnaires will take a bit of time.

Findings can be compared with the research data that follows in this lesson.

Slide 9 – Learning about prayer from research – guesswork!

A quick quiz to investigate students’ perceptions about prayer across a range of people groups.

There’s an opportunity for plenary discussion and reflection in the summary question;

Surprises: what did you find surprising or puzzling in the data? Can you explain it?

Slide 10 – Three surveys asked British people about prayer.

Class activity – There are three questions on screen.

Ask students to decide on their individual answers then lead a plenary discussion about their conclusions.

Slides 11 – Does prayer work?

This is a global survey – note that it does not include the UK.

The research graphic is available as a printout in the accompanying resources document.

Class activity – Give students some time to think about what this data represents and to respond to the questions on this slide.

Slides 12 – Does prayer work?

Reflecting on prayer and happiness

This slide references ideas about spiritual life covered in lesson 2 in this series based on research by Dr. Rebecca Nye. If you haven't used lesson 2 it will help to familiarise yourself with this definition in advance as it offers a valuable framework for understanding spirituality in a way that is authentic for people of all faiths and none.

Slide 13 – Does prayer work?

This class activity gets students thinking about the kind of questions that would best reveal British people's views on prayer. Remind them to avoid binary questions with a 'yes' or 'no' answer.

Class activity – In pairs or table groups students decide on the three questions they'd want to include in a short survey of the British public.

Then facilitate a class discussion about the questions. Think about the 'answerability' of the questions; how easy are they to answer. Would any questions put people off answering?!

Can the class agree on their top three questions.

Slide 14 – Does prayer work?

British research data from TearFund & Savanta ComRes about people's views of prayer.

The research graphic is available as a printout in the accompanying resources document.

Slide 15 – Does prayer work?

The research graphic is available as a printout in the accompanying resources document.

There are class discussion questions on the slide.

Slide 16 – Does prayer work?

People were asked which statement came closest to their views of prayer

The research graphic is available as a printout in the accompanying resources document. Questions are on the slide.

Make sure students have time to think about the 'Private question' –

Which of these 4 connects to your experience of the Prayer Space?

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

This questionnaire is available as a printout in the accompanying resources document.

Another piece of primary research, this time for students to complete themselves to clarify and express their own views and ideas about prayer. Make sure that learners are encouraged to offer supporting reasons for their answers.

It may be helpful to agree some ground rules for this part of the lesson so that everyone understands the contested nature of this conversation: from different religious and non-religious worldviews there are many varied perspectives from which to learn.

Results could be aggregated for the whole class and then discussed.

This questionnaire could also form the basis of another piece of research, maybe of others in school.

Slide 18 – Broad views of prayer and spirituality: discuss

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.

The four points on the slide will likely elicit discussion points in groups or whole class conversation. Writing could follow – invite students to write about the two they find most interesting. Depth is more important than breadth.

Slides 19 to 21 – Reflecting on spiritual responses

Two pieces of artwork from 14 year olds.

Give students time to read the artists' statements.

Slide 21 – Reflecting on spiritual responses

Reflecting the young people's artwork and writing get students to think about their own response to these questions ;

Which of these two art works did you like best and why?

Which of the art works says something you agree with?

If you could ask Jenny or Maral questions, what would you ask?

If you created a work of art to express your own visions, experience or thoughts about prayer, what would you make?

Maybe sketch it out?

If your class create their own artwork on this theme you might like to enter them in the 'Spirited Arts' competition run by NATRE

<https://www.natre.org.uk/about-natre/projects/spirited-arts/>

Slide 22 – 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.