

Prayer Spaces in Schools

Learning from a prayer space

KS3 Lesson 4 of 4

A serious discussion of some big issues about prayer

Learning opportunities for 11-14s 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.

Printable classroom materials

These pages go with Slide 13, 'Does prayer work' and Slide 14, 'Investigating prayer with social science methods'



is part of
 **24-7 PRAYER**



Does prayer work?

Thought capture sheet for our prayer 'wheels within wheels' discussion.

There is a 2 sided pdf of the 7 questions which you will need to have downloaded separately and printed out for each learner.

Does prayer work?
Thought capture sheet for our prayer 'wheels within wheels' discussion. Fill in the 14 boxes thoughtfully.

What we discussed:	What other people said:	What I think:
A. "Prayer, basically, doesn't work. Either God is not listening (or does not exist?) Or God is not persuaded to do anything because we ask it. I don't believe in prayer."		
B. "Prayer is not magic, but it is a spiritual practice with some power. You can use prayer to make a difference. I do believe it is not a waste of time and effort."		
C. "The main point of prayer is not to get God to do what you want. It's to find out what God wants you to do, and get the strength and love in your heart to try and do it."		

5

PRAYER IN THREE RELIGIONS: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

What is prayer for Christians?

Summary

Christians sometimes describe prayer as like having a conversation with God. Roman Catholic Christian teaching says prayer is 'the raising of the mind and heart to God'. In prayer many Christians praise God; say 'thank you' to God; say sorry for the things they know they have done wrong; and ask for help for themselves and others.

Prayer is often done with other people. In church services there are always prayers. Some are said together by the congregation, such as the Lord's Prayer, which comes from the teachings of Jesus in the New Testament. Other prayers are said by one person on behalf of everybody. Many worship services

have 'prayers of intercession', when Christians ask God for things on behalf of their community, their local area or the wider world. Christians show that they agree with the prayer by saying 'Amen' together at the end.

Many Christians pray on their own too. Some use set prayers but often they pray using ordinary words, just as if they were having a conversation. Some people kneel for prayers that say sorry, or stand for prayers that praise God. Some Christians put their hands together when they are praying, but many Christians think it does not matter how you sit, stand or put your hands in prayer.

The Gospels give accounts of Jesus' life. In two Gospels (Matthew 6 and Luke 11), Jesus teaches his followers how to pray. This widely used prayer is based on Jesus' teaching:

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.
Amen.

The 'Jesus Prayer' is an ancient prayer that is particularly important in the Orthodox tradition. Christians may recite it over and over again, to help them focus their minds exclusively on God.

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.

St Francis of Assisi (1181–1226) inspired many followers to live simply and love God. His famous prayer is still spoken and sung by Christians today.

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love,
Where there is injury, pardon,
Where there is doubt, faith,
Where there is despair, hope,
Where there is darkness, light,
Where there is sadness, joy.
O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much
seek to be consoled as to console,
not so much to be understood as to understand,
not so much to be loved, as to love;
for it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
it is in dying that we awake to eternal life.

Roman Catholic prayer includes prayers to Mary and to the Saints. Here is a prayer to Mary, based on Luke's Gospel account of Gabriel greeting Mary (Luke 1:21) and on her cousin Elizabeth's greeting (Luke 1:42). It is commonly recited by Catholics at Mass and as part of the rosary.

Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us now and at the hour of our death.

Amen.

Christians praying

Here are some personal accounts of prayer from three Christians.



Alex

As a married couple we always pray at the beginning of the day together. As a family we pray together before the evening meal and before bedtime. On my own I pray just before I start work or in the car driving to work – this is usually general prayer, a simple conversation with God asking him what he wants me to do that day and asking him for help in the things that I am facing. It may well also be saying sorry for times when I have let God down. I also try and pray once a day using a Bible verse – asking what the Bible verse means in general and specifically for the here and now. I talk to God throughout the day – aloud if I'm on my own, or quietly. These prayers of petition or thanksgiving respond to things I hear about or that are happening.

Prayer matters to me because it is the way that I talk with and listen to God, who is Lord, best friend, helper and loving father. I pray because I want to be in a closer relationship with God.

Alison

I pray in the mornings and often in moments during the day. Sometimes prayer is more intentional, like in a meeting that starts with prayer. I love to be at daily prayer at the cathedral; for me, the formal structure is liberating because I can go with the flow, and it sends me on a journey with God. It is also good to be praying with others, and in a building that is steeped in centuries of prayer. I sometimes light candles if I am remembering a particular person or situation.

I love praying with the Psalms from the Bible, because they cover the whole range of human emotions. I like silence too. I name people and situations in prayer, but never try to tell God what to do – just lift them up before God and ask God to do his work.

I pray because this is how we listen to God. In the quiet of prayer, I long for the voice in the silence, nudging, guiding, affirming, chiding ... but just being there, just round the corner, inviting me to join in his work, dream his dreams and live out his hope. I am challenged in prayer but also energised – a recharging of batteries.

Prayer matters to me because without that connection with God I am nothing. We stand on the edge of eternity and don't realise it in the noise of everyday life. I know that this life is finite, but in prayer I am connected with the infinite and know myself to be part of the greater whole.

Dom

When I was growing up, prayer was part of our family life. We would say grace before meals, and we would often pray together as a family. I remember a prayer we used to recite, asking God to bless the members of our family and our friends – we would say them all by name!

We used to go to Mass every week. Prayer at Mass was not usually the kind of thing I had to think about – we recited the words given and someone would be asked to say some 'bidding prayers' each week, to pray for people in the community and about world events.

In my twenties, I made a personal commitment to following Jesus and began to go to a Protestant church. Bible reading and prayer became something I did every day in my 'Quiet Time'. I tried to take seriously St Paul's words about praying continually (1 Thessalonians 5:17). I prayed for God's love and guidance in my own life, and to be able to share that with others. Sometimes I had a strong sense of God's presence and experienced the answer to many prayers for myself and others. Prayer was a way of allowing God to shape my thoughts, attitudes and actions.

Over the passing years, I have prayed less. I don't have a regular time slot for prayer anymore. I still feel comfortable praying, but it is not so central in my life. When something happens, if someone I know is ill, for example, my first response is to pray, and I will pray quite intensely for them. I don't keep up that intensity afterwards, but it feels ok to be in conversation with God like this, like the channel of communication is still open. I know I am not living up to the example of Jesus, nor the teachings of St Paul, but I keep in touch with God.