

Why Pray?

Year Group: Y3 & Y4

A Suggested “Christianity School Development” Unit
for Cambridgeshire



Materials to Support The Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education in Cambridgeshire

For the Teacher - The Christian beliefs and teaching in this Unit

There is another general SDU in this collection on Christian worship for KS1, but although obviously the themes of prayer and worship overlap the units are very different with this one focussing on prayer in far greater depth.

Prayer is all about communication with God with whom the believer is in a friendship relationship – when Jesus gave his disciples a pattern for prayer (which we now call the Lord’s Prayer) he told them to use the familiar Aramaic term “Abba” – Daddy. The Christian believes that God listens to prayer, in fact is longing for His children to talk with Him. This does not mean that prayer should be used as an opportunity to start bargaining with God or laying down a list of expectations (“if you give me.... then I will...”), because God already knows what is necessary for each person. From the point of view of the believer God’s answers to prayer may not always be in line with what they are asking; this is not unanswered prayer, it is rather that the answer is “no” or “wait”. The answers may come through an inner feeling, through a sense of being directed to particular Bible verses, or through something another person says or does (wittingly or unwittingly). You could ask why Christians need to pray if God already knows what they need, but it is a way in which believers are involved with God in action in the world. It is also worth thinking – can someone actually be your best and closest friend if you never talk to them or hang out with them?

Prayer can be silent, or spoken out loud, or in one’s head. It can follow a framework or be free-flowing and extempore; you can use your own words or those of others (i.e. books of liturgy or collections of prayers). A number of aids to prayer can be used to help concentration or to set up a prayer pattern (rosary, holding cross, icons...) but this is personal choice. The position for prayer is unimportant – people may kneel, walk, raise their hands etc, each position has a separate meaning for the individual and they will choose what is right for them – although in services and prayer groups it will usually be laid down that all the congregation responds in the same way in that context (“hands together, eyes closed”).

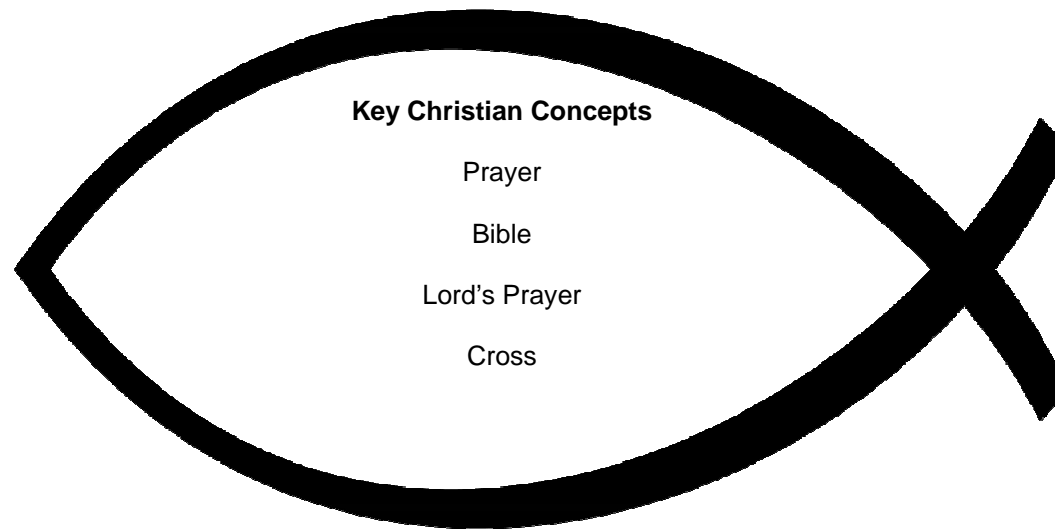
There are many types of prayer e.g.:

- Praise and thanksgiving – the core of Christian worship, telling God how great He is and thanking Him for what He has done for us
- Confession – saying sorry for sin / wrong-doing and asking for God’s forgiveness or help to change one’s lifestyle
- Intercessions – asking (“interceding”) on behalf of oneself or others
- Arrow prayers – many people admit to praying short SOS prayers in times of trouble – even agnostics!
- Chatting – talking through the day with God as you would to a friend

Just being – sitting quietly, wordlessly, in God’s presence, again, as you can with a good friend.

The Bible teaches a number of things about prayer including:

- Luke chp 11 vss 5-8, 11f, chp 18 vss 1-14, God wants to answer prayer just as parents want good things for their children – however he will not give people what is wrong or harmful for them. Keep praying, don’t give up.
- Matthew chp 6 vss 5-8 don’t show off in public when praying, it is better to pray quietly and alone with God
- Romans chp 8 vs 26f, The Holy Spirit will help you to pray when you don’t know how to do it
- Jeremiah chp 29 vs 13 you have to be whole hearted, not half hearted when you pray
- Mark chp 11 vs 24, I John chp 5 vs 14 have faith that you will receive what you pray for – and you will



UNIT TITLE: Why Pray?

Key Question: What is prayer?

Learning Objectives	Suggested Teaching and Learning	Learning Outcomes (Can be written as success criteria)	Points to note
<p>To begin to explore what prayer is</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk together about your experiences of prayer and what you think is happening when people pray. • Agree a set of questions you would like to ask someone to find out more about prayer. Use the presentation at http://www.request.org.uk/unpacked/christian/prayer/prayer.htm to see how many of your questions this answers. Record the results and note which questions still need answering. How are we going to do this? • Brainstorm when are the different times that people may want to pray (e.g. giving thanks, worried, needing guidance) and how they would expect God to answer (e.g. through a reading in the Bible, through their conscience, through thinking something as they pray, through something someone else says to them). You could use the activity at http://www.educhurch.org.uk/pupils/interactive/prayer/prayer1.html for this. • <i>You might like to think together and make a list of the things GOD might want if He was making the prayer list – what would He want for the world...and for you?</i> 	<p>I can pose questions about prayer and begin to suggest different reasons for praying Level 2</p> <p>I can identify reasons why Christians would want to pray and link this to their beliefs about God Level 3</p> <p>I can apply my ideas on prayer by thinking about it from different viewpoints, including different ways the same prayer could be answered Level 4</p>	<p>For many pupils their experience of prayer will be limited to collective worship – this unit may also help the school to assess how it approaches prayer in this context.</p> <p>Note that the RE Quest presentation comes with audio, but the script is also on-line and you can present the powerpoint yourself to direct the learning.</p> <p><i>Note: this has been written as a Christianity unit, but it may be adapted to include examples from other faiths.</i></p>

What do we want from working with this question?

Pupils to begin to think of occasions when people would want to pray and what their expectations are of the process.

Key Question: How do Christians pray?			
Learning Objectives	Suggested Teaching and Learning	Learning Outcomes (Can be written as success criteria)	Points to note
<p>To discover if the position used in prayer is important</p> <p>To experience and analyse an unfamiliar method of praying</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think again about collective worship -when you pray together in a particular place at a set time – are there any limits on how or where people pray? • Look at photographs of people in different prayer positions and decide how they might feel using each one (humble, concentrating, joyous.....) <i>If appropriate</i>, you may wish to experiment with holding a particular position to see how it feels. Understand that no one position is “right” and which is used relates to preference and/or tradition / context. • Can you pray anywhere? Find out about Christian prayerwalking and plan a prayerwalk around your school site (this may be done by writing prayers to be used at each point on the walk or by expressing your ideas in the form “here we think Christians would want to pray about.....”) • OR As a creative response to this question you could make pretzels—the shape of the pretzel is supposed to be praying children’s hands! This is normally something special for Lent, but it’s an opportunity to do some cross-curricular cookery! http://lds.about.com/library/weekly/aa091802a.htm 	<p>I can list different positions Christians could use when praying and respond sensitively to them Level 2</p> <p>I can describe different positions Christians could use when praying and suggest links with different emotions or contexts Level 3</p> <p>I can show my understanding of the different types of prayer by relating these to people’s beliefs Level 4</p>	<p>RE Quest has six different positions for Christian prayer with Bible references and photographs: http://www.request.org.uk/unpacked/christian/prayer/positions/positions.htm there are also different prayers in different churches at http://www.educhurch.org.uk/pupils/interactive/prayer/prayer2.html which is an interactive website.</p> <p>For teachers: http://thinkingdr.wordpress.com/2010/01/31/prayer-hands/ (includes an image which could be used with a class). The forum at http://christian-talk.forumotion.com/t1445-prayer-positions is also useful.</p> <p>There are a number of sites for prayer walking e.g. http://www.anglicanprayer.org/resources/G-46-Prayer%20Walking_Web.pdf</p>

What do we want from working with this question?
Pupils to realise that there is no set method of praying and they must not expect everyone to do it the same way. *(There is an opportunity to compare with other faiths at this point to make the message more obvious.)*

Key Question: What did Jesus teach Christians about praying?

Learning Objectives	Suggested Teaching and Learning	Learning Outcomes (Can be written as success criteria)	Points to note
<p>To use the Lord's Prayer as a vehicle for discovering Jesus' key teaching on prayer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hear the story of Jesus giving the disciples a pattern prayer (the Lord's Prayer). In small groups work on questions about the prayer (e.g. What do we think is the most important part of this prayer? What things for ourselves does Jesus want us to pray for? What does he want us to pray about for the world? Which parts of the prayer do we like the most? Which part is the most difficult to understand or to do? Can we use what we have found out to write a new version of the Lord's Prayer (or re-write some of the phrases of the prayer) so that it is easier for children to understand?) OR use a "prayer hand" to think about the different types of prayer. Find photographs of the Convent of the Paternoster (Jerusalem) which is on the site where Jesus is traditionally said to have taught the Lord's Prayer to the disciples. How do these photographs demonstrate that this is the most popular Christian prayer in the world? Why is this? Listen to the prayer in Aramaic (as Jesus would have originally spoken it) at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qjb5nKDh55k Then find the opening words of the prayer ("Our Father") in as many languages as you can to create a world collage display. 	<p>I can identify phrases from the Lord's Prayer and talk about how easy or difficult I find it to understand Level 2</p> <p>I can describe the message of the Lord's Prayer and identify why it is important to Christians Level 3</p> <p>I can begin to make links between my understanding of the Lord's Prayer and the way Christians believe and act Level 4</p>	<p>The Lord's Prayer is to be found in Matthew chp 6 vss 9-13 and Luke chp 11 vss 2-4. Use modern translations of the prayer to facilitate understanding as well as the version used in collective worship (which may be sung). See ideas at http://www.barnabasinschools.org.uk/writing-your-own-lords-prayer/</p> <p>If you wish to extend work on the Lord's Prayer over several lessons you may like to purchase the Lord's Prayer CD at http://www.churchschoolseast.org.uk/Shop.htm</p> <p>http://www.christusrex.org/www1/pater/index.html will give you the Lord's Prayer in approx. 1700 languages – the Convent of the Paternoster has 140 of these on its walls. See also http://www.prayer.su/other/all-languages.html</p> <p>There's a famous diagram called a "prayer hand" which helps you to use your hands to think about the different kinds of prayer - several variants around e.g. http://ministry-to-children.com/five-finger-prayer/ or http://www.anglicanprayer.org/resources/P-39_Teaching_Children_to_Prayer.pdf or http://www.ely.anglican.org/education/schools/collective_worship/pdf/prayerhand.pdf</p>

What do we want from working with this question?

Pupils to understand that the Lord's prayer is used by all Christians throughout the world and works as a model for all other prayers.

Key Question: What helps people pray?

Learning Objectives	Suggested Teaching and Learning	Learning Outcomes (Can be written as success criteria)	Points to note
<p>To explore the artefacts used in Christian prayer and experiment with them in an appropriate way</p>	<p>Work in small groups on different things (real artefacts if at all possible) which people use to help them pray and present your findings to each other:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> things to look at: candles, icons, crosses, statues something to handle: holding crosses, prayer beads (inc. rosaries), prayer nets something to listen to: reflective music (e.g. Taize), bells something to read: books of prayers <p>How do we think Christians might find these helpful? Which would we choose and why if we wanted something to help us to pray (personal preference – the answer may be “none of them”)?</p> <p>Create something from one of these categories which a Christian could use in personal prayer e.g: crosses; prayer beads; candle holders; compose reflective music or a poem. Think carefully about how it will be used. You may wish to write a prayer to accompany it. Explain your design (assessment).</p>	<p>I can identify different things Christians might use to help them to pray and respond sensitively to them Level 2</p> <p>I can describe why Christians might choose different things to help them to pray and use that knowledge creatively Level 3</p> <p>I can show my understanding of prayer by applying it to the creation of a prayer aid and explaining the detail of my work in Christian terms Level 4</p>	<p>Music from Taize at http://www.taize.fr/en_article681.html</p> <p>Holding cross and rosary http://www.ely.anglican.org/education/schools/collective_worship/pdf/HoldingCrossrosary.pdf</p> <p>Crosses from around the world http://www.barnabasinschools.org.uk/find/crosses/ideas/1</p> <p>Using candles in reflection: http://www.barnabasinschools.org.uk/candle-prayers-for-reflection/</p> <p>Prayer ropes: http://www.barnabasinschools.org.uk/praying-with-ropes/</p>

What do we want from working with this question?

Pupils to respond to the information they have gathered in an empathetic way, thinking about how using the senses in different ways can help a person to focus their prayers.

Key Question: Does God always answer prayers?

Learning Objectives	Suggested Teaching and Learning	Learning Outcomes (Can be written as success criteria)	Points to note
<p>To understand that prayer can be answered in more than one way. (To try and look at prayer from God's point of view!)</p> <p>To answer the question "Why do people pray?" to the individual's satisfaction</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think together about what happens when you ask your parents for something – is the answer always an immediate and unequivocal "yes"? (In what circumstances might it be "no", "wait", "you are not asking in the right way", "your request impacts on someone else", "I have a better idea"?). Apply your rationale to God and people who pray to Him. • Read together the well known sermon story "I sent you a helicopter..." (a version can be found at http://loveundefiled.blogspot.co.uk/2010/03/i-sent-you-helicopter-rowing-boat-and.html). What does this story teach Christians about answers to prayer? • Return to your original list of unanswered questions about prayer and think about whether you have any fresh questions from today's discussion or other sessions. Create an "I wonder" box in which pupils can post an anonymous "I still wonder" question related in some way to this unit's work • Invite in a member of clergy or a local Christian to round off the unit by joining the class for discussion using the contents of the "I wonder" box as a stimulus. 	<p>I can ask questions about prayer and show awareness that prayers can be believed to be answered in more than one way Level 2</p> <p>I can ask important questions about prayer and link answers to Christian beliefs Level 3</p> <p>I can describe what inspires Christians to pray and relate this to their relationship to God Level 4</p>	<p>This key question takes us back to the unit title – what is the point of praying if it doesn't "work"? Probably some children will have experienced praying for something and feeling they are unheard – a grandparent dies, a test is failed etc – what went wrong? Of course it may be that part of the answer is that the person who is praying does not have a relationship with God – they are just praying "in case"!</p> <p>It is possible to find many stories in books and online about prayers being answered – but in this session the input of a local Christian who can be quizzed will have much more impact - someone to talk about their experience of prayers answered (or not). If nobody is available http://www.request.org.uk/issues/questions/question16.htm can be used by teachers as the base for this question.</p>

What do we want from working with this unit?

Pupils to realise that prayer is an important part of a Christian's relationship with God.