



Prayer in Christianity – teachers’ notes

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Overview:

Discover more about prayer in Christianity in the context of Westminster Abbey with this lesson, which is designed to last for one hour. This KS4 lesson considers the nature of public and private prayer using formal and informal prayers along with a detailed examination of the Lord’s Prayer. Aligned to the GCSE specifications, the lesson culminates with a series of knowledge-testing questions and a practice GCSE evaluation question.

SLIDE 3: Explore the location of the Abbey through Google Maps if you have not already done so through the Worship in Christianity lesson resource.

As a Royal Peculiar, Westminster Abbey is neither a parish church nor a cathedral. Instead it is directly accountable to the monarch. The Abbey was rebuilt in its Gothic style by Henry III in 1245AD. Westminster Abbey was a Catholic monastery until the reign on Henry VIII.

SLIDE 4: Pupils will discuss in pairs what they think prayer/Christian prayer is. Share these ideas with the class. Aim to arrive at an agreed class definition for prayer.

SLIDE 5: Use the Images on this slide to highlight some of the examples of Christian prayer.

SLIDE 6: Activity: Activity: In your pairs list as many examples as you can think of where Christians pray in public or in private.

- In a different colour mark whether you think they are praying alone or with other people.
- In a third colour, write in any examples of prayers you know of/ think might be said.

Hand out worksheet. Pupils complete the activity in three parts, first listing their examples, then considering if the prayer would have been said alone or with others, and third identifying any prayers they know of.

Encourage pupils to recognise that the same 'type' of prayer, for example a prayer said during a service, might actually be different depending on which denomination the person belongs to i.e. prayers in Anglican services are different to those in Evangelical services.

SLIDE 7: Public prayers at Westminster Abbey.



SLIDE 8: Private prayer

SLIDE 9: Take pupils through the meanings of formal and informal prayers and the differences between the two. Pupils should then revisit the examples they collected on the worksheet on slide 6 and identify which are: public and formal, public and informal, private and formal, private and informal.

SLIDE 10: Prayer at Westminster Abbey today.

Further information about liturgy and the Book of Common Prayer in the Church of England can be found here: <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/worship-texts-and-resources>

SLIDE 11: Benedictine Prayer

SLIDE 12: The previous slides show prayer at the Westminster Abbey, and the film can help students understand easily. The last part of the film is about communicating with God, which is relevant to the following slide.

SLIDE 13: Activity: Discuss in pairs. Why do you think Christians pray?

Pupils discuss in pairs why they think Christians would pray. Highlight that prayer is always personal because it is a person's connection with God. Communing (coming together) with God is a part of communication with God.

SLIDE 14: Does God answer prayers?

SLIDE 15: Activity: Make a list the things you think a Christian might pray for.

As a class, make a list of the things that pupils think a Christian might pray for.

SLIDE 16 & 17: Activity: The Lord's prayer contains four of the five themes of Christian prayer. Highlight the lines that refer to each theme using a different colour.

The Lord's Prayer: <https://www.churchofengland.org/our-faith/going-church/lords-prayer>

Remind pupils of the themes of prayer on the previous slide. Answers to the question on this slide are found on the following slide.

SLIDE 18: Pupils compare the much shorter version of The Lord's Prayer in Luke with that of Matthew. The prayer in Luke is short but still contains the main themes of prayer. Matthew is longer – which elements of prayer have been expanded on? Ask pupils who they think Matthew meant when referring to 'the evil one'. The version in Matthew is most similar to the modern prayer but uses Luke's reference to sin rather than Matthew's wording of 'debt'.

SLIDE 19: Draw pupils attention to the importance of prayer to the Christian community as a whole, and how The Lord's Prayer can remind the community of its obligations and demonstrate how to live a truly Christian life.



SLIDE 20: Test your knowledge. Answers will include reference to:

1. A personal conversation with God.
2. At home, in a church. (Other examples acceptable)
3. Saying Grace before dinner, saying a prayer before bed. (Other examples acceptable)
4. Set prayers or liturgical prayers (an extra point to those who get both)
5. The Lord's Prayer.
6. To thank God for things He has done, to ask for help with something. (Reference to the other three themes of Christian prayer also acceptable).
7. Because it is a prayer from the Bible that Jesus gave his disciples when they asked him to teach them how to pray

SLIDE 21: Challenge question. "If Christians truly believe in God then they should pray". Do you agree? Explain your answer.

You may want to use this as a practise GCSE evaluation question.

SLIDE 22: Discuss. Why do people sometimes suffer or die despite Christians praying for them? If God is unchanging, what is the point of praying to ask him to intervene in the world?

If time, this philosophical question could be used to provoke discussion.