

Prayer

Christianity Practices

Prayer: communicating with God, either silently or through words of praise, thanksgiving or confession, or **request for help or guidance**.

Types of prayer

Set prayers:

prayers that have been written down and said more than once by more than one person

Informal prayers:

Prayer that is made up by an individual using his or her own words

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. *Philippians 4:6–7*

Nonconformist:

an English protestant who does not conform to the doctrines or practices of the established Church of England

Jesus prayed before he was arrested:

'Abba, Father,' he said, '**everything is possible** for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.' *Mark 14:36*

*He was **praying for support** from God*

Private prayer

'And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others'.
Matthew 6:5

Praying when you want something from God
'**Ask** and it will be given to you; **seek** and you will find.' *Matthew 7:7*

2020: Give two types of Christian prayer. (2)

Liturgical / non-liturgical / Public / **Private** / Prayers of thanksgiving / confession / intercession / formal prayer / **informal** prayer / **prayer which follows ritual formulae** / spontaneous prayer / bidding prayers / prayers for specific occasions or people / communal prayer / **silent prayer** / spoken prayer / **sung prayers**, etc.

The exam board said... *Allow reference to specific prayers, such as the Lord's Prayer / The Jesus Prayer, etc.*

Past Exam Questions

Spec 1: Give two types of Christian prayer. (2)

2019: 'The best way for Christians to reach an understanding of God is by practising prayer.' (12)

2020: Give two reasons why prayer is important for Christians. (2)

2021: 'The Lord's Prayer is the only prayer that Christians need to use.' (12)

Private prayer is...

You pray on your own, often using your own words.

It is important because...

You are able to deepen your connection with God and pray about issues important to you.

Public prayer is...

You pray with others around you

It is important because...

Jesus taught '**For where two or more gather in my name, there am I with them**'. *Matthew 18:20*. Public prayer may also strengthen the Christian community.

What is the important of prayer on...

Individuals:

- *Strengthen faith or relationship with God*

Christian community:

- Reminds them of united purpose

Society:

- *Christians often pray for those who are in need in society*

A **set prayer**: Jesus taught his disciples to pray the Lord's Prayer when he delivered the sermon on the mount. *Matthew 5:7*

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.

2019: 'The Lord's Prayer is the only prayer that Christians need to use.'

Arguments in support

There are two accounts of the prayer in the Bible, and in both Jesus commanded his disciples to use the prayer.

- The disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray as John taught his disciples. Jesus answered: 'When you pray, say ...' – so **Jesus gave a direct command to pray in this way.**
- Jesus tells his disciples not to heap up empty phrases like the Gentiles do, because they think they will be heard for the number of words they use (v.7). He then says that God already knows what you want before you ask him (v.8), implying that most prayer is unnecessary. **Jesus says: 'Pray then like this'** – and the Lord's Prayer then follows / this looks like a direct instruction to pray using only the words of the Lord's Prayer.
- It is held to be the **perfect prayer** also because it **contains all the necessary ingredients: praise, thanks, confession, and asking God for what both the individual needs and what other people need.** (students might illustrate this from the text).
- Most forms of Christian worship include the Lord's Prayer, etc.

Arguments in support of other views

- There are two versions of the prayer: that of Matthew and that of Luke. **They are not identical**: Matthew's version is longer; so if it really is the only prayer a Christian will need, **which** form of the prayer **should be used?**
- The prayer does not appear in Mark's Gospel, which is generally agreed to be the first written gospel / **if it is so important, why does Mark not record it?**
- All the Gospels record occasions when **Jesus prays using words other than the Lord's Prayer** / so if it is the only prayer needed by Christians, why did Jesus use other prayers?
- For example, Jesus prays at his baptism (Luke 3:21) / before he walks on water (Mark 6:46) / at his transfiguration (Luke 9:29) / and he even prays before he tells his disciples how to pray, in Luke 11:1 / in the Garden of Gethsemane he prays three times to be released from the coming suffering / so prayer on many different occasions and for many different needs is indicated by Jesus.
- Perhaps Jesus saw the Lord's Prayer **as the best general prayer**, but **accepted** prayer of **any** kind as appropriate.
- A specific other prayer is all that is needed or particularly important, eg the Jesus Prayer. Some Christians **need** to use **more than just the Lord's Prayer**; for example, Holy Communion/Eucharist uses many different prayers such as the Gloria and topical prayers.
- Saying a grace / prayer of thanks before meals is important to some Christians, so the Lord's Prayer is not the only prayer they need, etc.

More support... For Catholics, it is a **summary of the whole gospel, implying that nothing else is needed.**

- It can be used **both** in **public** and in **private** worship; in spoken form or in private prayer.
- Since it **comes directly from Jesus**, it links all Christians from all times back to Jesus.