

Prayer Jigsaw

1: Set Prayer

Also called liturgical prayer, set prayer follows a set pattern. It takes place in formal worship. The best example in Christianity is the Lord's Prayer (Matt 6: 9-13).

Set prayer is conducted with the church as a group, as part of communal worship. To pray is a positive command in the bible; Christians are instructed to pray.

Some set prayers are seasonal and follow the year round, for example Advent prayers at Christmas, Lent prayers at Easter. In the older churches- the Orthodox and Catholic churches- there are prayers to saints. The Protestant churches rejected prayers to saints as no one is believed to come between an individual and God.

2: Meditation and contemplation

Christian meditation, reflection, contemplation and, in the modern world, mindfulness, are all structured attempts to enter into a mindset allowing an individual to focus on God.

These prayers have developed in various ways in the religious houses (monasteries and convents). For example St Theresa of Avila and Ignatius Loyola developed processes of prayer aiming to lead an individual closer to God.

These types of prayers follow a process of increasing stillness and aim for deepening sense of God. Anyone can follow these processes, not just those dedicated to a religious life. These types of prayers require determination and a time and place set apart.

The rosary can be an aid to contemplative prayer in the Catholic tradition.

3: Informal prayer

Informal prayer is also called extempore, free, non-liturgical and charismatic prayer.

Extempore prayer describes a moment when a pastor or worshipper prays with the congregation in their own way- as the mood takes them, using their own words.

Charismatic prayer is particularly seen in Pentecostal churches. People 'speak in tongues', meaning they speak in languages they do not know, or are overcome or extremely joyful. This is seen as inspiration by the spirit.

4: Jesus' Warning

Jesus warns that there are right and wrong ways to pray. In the passage below the Pharisee and tax collector are both Jews. The Pharisee is a respected teacher of Jewish law, the tax collector is looked down upon because he collects tax for the Romans:

To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable: "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.'

"But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'

"I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted." **Luke 18: 9- 14**