

Reflecting on Prayer: Perspectives and Purposes

Learning objective: To understand the significance of prayer in different faiths and explore how and why people communicate with the divine.

Read each question carefully. Use your knowledge of religious practices to provide thoughtful, well-reasoned answers. Remember to use the vocabulary from the word bank where appropriate.

Prayer is a practice found in many religions, yet it takes many different forms. Some prayers are spoken aloud in groups, while others are whispered in silence. Some believers use physical actions, such as kneeling or lighting a candle, while others focus on inner thoughts and feelings. People pray to express thanks, to ask for guidance, to seek forgiveness, or to find peace during difficult times.

Word bank: gratitude · meditation · intercession · solemn · communal · devotion · reflection · ritual

1. Compare and contrast a communal prayer service with a private, personal prayer. Why might a believer choose one over the other? (3 marks)

2. Max the monkey believes that prayer is just 'asking for things'. Using your knowledge, explain why this is an incomplete definition of prayer. (2 marks)

3. Define the term 'intercession' and explain why it is a vital part of many religious traditions. (2 marks)

4. Justify why some religious traditions insist on specific postures or rituals, such as bowing or facing a particular direction, during prayer. (3 marks)

5. What might happen if a community of faith stopped praying together? Discuss the impact on their sense of belonging. (3 marks)

6. Explain why 'gratitude' is often considered the most important aspect of prayer, even in times of hardship. (2 marks)

Draw: Draw a peaceful space where someone might go to pray or reflect. Include symbols or objects that help create a sense of focus, such as a flickering candle, a book, or a window looking out at nature.



Extension challenge: Research a specific religion's prayer practice (e.g., Salah in Islam, the Shema in Judaism, or the use of prayer beads in Christianity or Buddhism). Create a short 'Guide to Prayer' for that religion, explaining the 'Who, What, Where, and Why' of their tradition.