

Why is prayer important for different Christian traditions?

Ben: Hello and welcome to the Bitesize GCSE Religious Studies podcast. I'm Ben Hurst, a journalist and broadcaster and your host for this series where we're going over the key beliefs and practices for your GCSE exam on Christianity.

I'm joined by the Reverend Pippa White. Hi Pippa - tell us about yourself!

Pippa: Hiya Ben! I mean, if you need someone to help break everything down ready for revision, I'm your girl - as a priest in the Church of England, I spend a lot of my time explaining, and teaching people, all about the Christian faith.

Honestly, I wish I had had a podcast like this when I was doing my GCSEs, but I'm actually old enough that wasn't even an option then. Ha ha! But we're here now, so let's take a look at the beliefs and practices in Christianity, that you might come across in Religious Studies.

Ben: Today we're looking at something that appears in Christian traditions around the world - prayer.

Pippa: It's important to remember that Christianity isn't one single denomination and what I mean by that is there are various branches of Christianity, including Anglican, Methodist, Pentecostal, Baptist, Catholic, Orthodox, and each has its own way of worshipping.

Ben: Before we get into the details, grab a pen and some paper, or your notes app because throughout the episode we'll cover key ideas which you may want to jot down.

Pippa: And stay listening to the end, because there'll be a quick quiz.

Ben: Right Pippa let's get started!

Ben: Pippa the main question we're tackling in this episode is 'Why is prayer important for different Christian traditions?'

Pippa: It's good question Ben. As a Christian, I think of prayer like different parts of a conversation. Let me give you an example, one reason some Christians pray is simply to communicate, to speak to, think about, or even listen for guidance from God. And through that, Christians say they build a kind of relationship with God, showing trust, saying thank you, asking for help when they need it.

Ben: And Jesus prayed as well, didn't he? That's part of it?

Pippa: Yes. In the Gospels, the first four books of the New Testament, Jesus is shown praying often. So us Christians try to follow that example.

Many Christians pray when they're unsure of what to do. They believe prayer helps them find wisdom or guidance when making decisions.

Ben: So prayer is significant because it's an example given by Jesus and it allows communication, relationship and guidance from Jesus, all in one?

Pippa: Yes I think that summarises it.

Ben: And is there a key quote to help explain why Christians pray?

Pippa: Yes, it comes from the Bible, from the book of Matthew chapter 18 verse 20 which says:

"For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them."

This shows that we believe God is present when people pray and worship together.

Ben: To learn more about Christian prayer just search 'Bitesize GCSE Religious Studies, prayer.'

Ben: In Christianity, prayer is one part of something bigger and that's worship. And the hymn we're hearing - that's often heard in some forms of worship isn't it?

Pippa: Yes, *Amazing Grace* is a hymn all about worshipping God.

Ben: Pippa, what is worship?

Pippa: Worship simply means showing love, respect, and devotion to God. Worship can often be a special occasion: something like a Harvest Festival service in the autumn, where we thank God for all the food we've received over the year, and promise to be generous with it. Or, it can be a normal Sunday service, which happens every week, and we remember that God is in the little moments in life, not just the big ones.

Christians can worship in church, at home, alone, in groups. Worship might be in silence or could be really loud - for example with singing, there's a huge variety.

Ben: It's useful to know that Christians use different forms of worship. And we can see that variety when we look at different Christian denominations can't we?

Pippa: Yes - one major form is liturgical worship.

Ben: And what's liturgical worship?

Pippa: Liturgical worship follows a set pattern, so the same prayers, responses, and readings each time. In some churches, like Orthodox or Catholic ones, it may also include the use of chanting or incense. Services often use set prayers, for example the Lord's Prayer, repeated using traditional wording. Have a listen to this reading of it:

Ben: With Liturgical worship, even if you go to a different church, the service might feel familiar?

Pippa: Yes, especially in Anglican or Catholic churches, where the structure - and prayers like the Lord's Prayer - stay very similar week to week. This means the worship will feel very familiar for us.

Ben: The other major form of worship is non-liturgical worship. What's non-liturgical worship Pippa?

Pippa: In non-liturgical worship there isn't a fixed script; leaders choose hymns, prayers and readings to fit a particular occasion or what's relevant to the congregation.

It means the service can reflect what's happening in the community, maybe a celebration, a challenge, or something going on in the news.

Ben: And that means the focus of worship can change from week to week?

Pippa: Exactly. It gives freedom to respond to what's happening in people's lives or in the wider world.

Non-liturgical worship often takes place in many Protestant churches, including Baptist and Methodist congregations.

Ben: Then there's charismatic worship - what happens in that form of worship?

Pippa: Yes. Charismatic worship is common in many Pentecostal and Evangelical churches. Music is central to the service, sometimes led by a band, and the singing may last longer than in more traditional services or forms of worship.

Ben: How do people take part in this form of worship?

Pippa: Participation is encouraged throughout the service. Christians might sing with their hands raised, pray aloud, or respond during the worship.

Rather than following a fixed pattern, the service can change. In charismatic worship there is a strong focus on shared worship, and Christians believe they are being guided and inspired by the Holy Spirit, allowing them to be open to God's guidance during the service.

Ben: And do Christians always have to pray or worship in church?

Pippa: No! So Christians might choose to pray alone, or they might pray in a group which gathers outside of their church. They might worship using silent prayer, or by reading the Bible. So as a priest, we make a promise to God to pray at least twice a day, and for me I often pray when I'm at home, when I'm walking the dog, or when I'm out in nature.

All are personal ways to connect with God without a set structure.

Ben: So those are some ways Christians worship, but they also use different types of prayer, don't they?

Pippa: They do. When Christians talk about types of prayer, they mean what the prayer is for, rather than how it's said. Shall we run through them?

Ben: Yes. And just to say we're not listing these in order of importance, but because this is just a neat way to remember them all.

Pippa: Ok let's start with, A - Adoration.

Ben: That sounds like praising?

Pippa: Exactly. It's all about praising God for who God is - showing love and respect.

Ben: Okay, what's next?

Pippa: C -Confession, this is when Christians say sorry for things they believe they've done wrong and want to put right.

Ben: So, like a fresh start.

Pippa: Yes. Then there's T - Thanksgiving, thanking God for something good, whether that's support, health, friends, or even small everyday things.

Ben: And the next one?

Pippa: Then we've got S - Supplication — asking for help for yourself — and then I - Intercession, which means praying for other people.

Ben:

So, both Supplication and Intercession are about asking for help - one for yourself...

Pippa:

...yes - that's supplication.

Ben:

...and help for someone else.

Pippa:

Yes - That's intercession.

Ben: Also, you've been emphasising the starting letters there Pippa, because those types of prayer spell out ACTS & I - which might be a way of remembering them all...

Pippa: Yeah exactly so:

A - Adoration

C - Confession

T - Thanksgiving

S - Supplication

& I - Intercession

Ben: ACTS & I!

Pippa: Are you ready for a quick quiz Ben?

Ben: Yes - let's see what I've remembered! Grab a pen and paper if you want to play along!

Pippa: Ok here's some quick-fire questions, ready, Ben?

Ben: Go for it!

Pippa: Try this one - What does the term worship mean?

Ben: Worship means showing love, respect, and devotion to God.

Pippa: Ok next - Name one form of worship.

Ben: Liturgical worship. This is when the same prayers, responses, and readings are used each time.

Pippa: Great - and you could have said non-liturgical worship.

Ben: Which is less formal and doesn't follow a set structure.

Pippa: Can you name two types of prayer?

Ben: Adoration and Confession

Pippa: Yes - you could also have thanksgiving, supplication, asking for help for yourself, and intercession - that's asking for someone else.

Ben: Also, we can use ACTS and I to remind us of those types of prayer.

Pippa: And finally Ben, which quote from Matthew chapter 18 verse 20 explains why prayer is so important to Christians?

Ben:

"For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them."

Pippa: Well done remembering!

Ben: Thanks for listening to this episode of the Bitesize GCSE Religious Studies podcast.

Pippa: In the next episode we'll look at how festivals, like Christmas and Easter, shape Christian faith

Ben: Don't forget there are other GCSE revision podcasts available on BBC Sounds, search for 'Bitesize GCSE' to find them. See you next time!