

# Christian Prayer 1

## *What is prayer? What is Christian prayer?*

### *What is prayer?*

Prayer is raising our hearts and minds to God. Though much of the time it can seem like it is *trying* to raise our hearts and minds to God.

Prayer is like other things, such as .

- Mindfulness
- Contemplation
- Meditation

These things can be very good for anyone – and for believers they can be prayer. But very often they are thought of and taught as therapy – something good for us to do for ourselves.

Prayer can be therapeutic too, but it is only prayer when, by it, people seek to raise their hearts and minds to God.

### *Where and when?*

People can pray together with others at ‘set’ prayer times, be that in church, synagogue, or mosque (for example) or with their families or according to school timetable.

Or they can have their own favoured times to pray by themselves - for example first thing in the morning or last thing at night, or while doing the washing up (according to body clock, temperament and circumstance). Or at times that just present themselves - when we have an unexpected long wait for a bus, or sit down for a rest during a long walk, or when we walk on.

Whenever we want to be with God – or to know and give expression to the fact that we are indeed already and always with God – and to commune with him, then we pray.

### *Aids to prayer*

These are almost without number. People kneel, or light a candle or turn down the lights, or read, or use clay or paint, or sing. They use their own words, or texts composed by others and handed on in their religious tradition. All these things and more are tried and trusted ways in which people prepare for prayer, or feed their prayer, and raise their hearts and minds to God...

That said there are a number of basic prayer techniques that are used across religious traditions to help us prepare, to help us quieten down. Sometimes people will even stay with one of these throughout a time of prayer, using it as their way to be with God. Examples of these techniques are given as supplements to ‘Christian Prayer I’.

### *What is Christian prayer*

Christian prayer is prayer offered ‘in’ Christ. By virtue of baptism Christians are made one with Jesus Christ, as members of his Body. And so, Christians can never pray alone: our prayer is always prayed in Christ and in the communion of the Church. Jesus also promises us the assistance of the Spirit, not least for when we do not know what to pray or how to pray. The Spirit interprets the longings of our heart and makes these things known to God.

Even when we pray ‘alone’, we are in good company and well supported.

