

Leading a Session in a Primary & Secondary Prayer Space

Lesson Plan Outline: *Beatitudes*

Choose 4 activities for a primary space and use all 8 activities for a secondary space

The following is an example of how a session within the themed prayer space may look. Throughout the session always use the language of **'Many Christians believe'** or **'As a Christian I believe'** when talking to students.

Welcome

- Meet and welcome the students as they arrive with their class teacher/teaching assistant to the session.
- Guide students to sit down with you somewhere suitable within the prayer space.

Introduction (Approx. 1 - 2 minutes)

- Introduce yourself, and perhaps what church you attend/your connection to the school.
- Ask the other volunteers to introduce themselves and the church they attend/their connection to the school.

Explanation (Approx. 5 - 6 minutes)

- Ask the students if they know what the room is called for this week and what they have been told by their teachers about it. If the school has had a Prayer Space before, find out what activities they took part in last time.
- Explain that the Prayer and Reflection Space is a place where they can have the opportunity to learn about Christian prayer and have the opportunity to pray or reflect **if** they would like to, using the activities to do so **if** they wish. **It is important that no-one feels forced to pray against their will.**
- Explain that this time, there is a theme, to link the ideas together, which is 'The Beatitudes'. **Ask them what they know about the Beatitudes?** Say these are some words that Jesus spoke at the start of the sermon on the mount, which Christians believe are good rules or principles to live life by.

We would suggest that the introduction will touch on some, if not all, of the following points. As you can see, following each suggestion there is an example of something the Prayer Space Leader *might* say. These, however, are only suggestions. *(If this prayer space is happening in a community school, you may need to focus more on the key aspects of prayer, explained in the '1st Prayer Space' lesson plan, or at least recap these)*

What is prayer?

"What is prayer? Yes, prayer is talking to God. And what are you all doing now as I talk? That's right, you're listening. In the same way when people pray to God, they talk to Him to share what's going on in their lives and then people spend time listening to what they think God might be saying to them.

How, when or where do people pray? Yes, sometimes people put their hands together and close their eyes or kneel down. This can help people to concentrate or show respect. But, do you know what? Many Christians believe that they can pray in lots of different ways, they could pray whilst singing! Or when doing some homework. How people pray might depend on how they are feeling, or what place they're in or what time of day it is. They might say sorry, or thank you, or ask God for help. As Christians, we believe that we can pray anytime, and in any place, because God is with us and ready to listen and talk to us all the time and everywhere!"

Why are the Beatitudes important? (You might like to say something like the following, you may want to change the emphasis depending on what activities you have chosen.)

At the beginning of the sermon on the mount, Jesus speaks eight short sayings, all beginning with the word 'Blessed' to the disciples. The Beatitudes give us a picture of the character of Jesus Christ and help Christians to try and become more Christ-like.

Do you think life is always easy? It isn't always is it? And Jesus talks about situations when life can be difficult, but he promises to be with us in all situations. **Do you sometimes need help to do things?** Jesus also talks about how God promises to be with us, helping us, forgiving us when we get stuff wrong. **Do you want to try and live a better life?** Christians believe that we need God to help us become a better us! Today's activities will help us to think about the Beatitudes and how they can help us to become stronger, knowing joy and hope, despite what's going on in our lives.

Explain the themed activities (Approx. 2 - 3 minutes)

- Next, explain each of the activities in the room, the type of prayer or opportunities to reflect (e.g. When many Christians pray they say please and ask God to help them forgive others) and what the activity involves (e.g. In this area you can think about something you could ask forgiveness for, or to ask for help to forgive someone else and write this on the mega-sketcher). Explain that if they forget anything there is an adult in each area to help them (for Primary) or adults around the room (Secondary) that they can talk to.
- **Remember to use language that states the students have the opportunity to respond as a reflective thought or as a prayer. It is up to them how they respond, and they don't have to share their thoughts or prayer with volunteers.**

Setting behaviour expectations (Approx. 1 - 2 minutes)

Primary Prayer Space

- Nine times out of ten we have found behaviour is not an issue at all. However, it is good to set expectations.
- One way that this can be done is by asking them if Christians *have* to use quiet voices to pray. Once you have clarified that sometimes prayer can be loud and noisy, or it can be totally silent as people pray in their heads, or quietly when Christians pray in small groups, make it clear that we will use quiet indoor voices so that everyone has a chance to pray or reflect if they wish to, showing respect to all.
- This should also affect how we move around the space, so therefore we all need to walk between the prayer and reflection areas, not running, so that we are taking care of the prayer and reflection space and each other.

Secondary Prayer Space

- Explain that in the Prayer and Reflection Space everyone is going to be respectful of each other, using quiet voices so that people get the chance to reflect and pray if they would like to. You could mention that the music is playing and if they cannot hear it then they are being too loud as a group and need to lower their voices- this is an easy way for them to judge if the volume level is getting too high.
- Explain that they need to move between the areas calmly and carefully, to respect one another in the space and that there's plenty of time to complete the activities so no need to rush. If they see others waiting to use the area they're in and they've been there for a while, they need to think about moving on to allow others to use it, especially if only two people can be in one area at a time (such as in the Forgiveness Stones area, using the mp3 players). Explain that there should only be up to 4 or 5 students per area at one time.
- Emphasise that they can use the space as they feel comfortable- they could do a few activities or all of them. Encourage them to use good sense in not overcrowding an activity, doing something else and then coming back to that activity if lots of people are there.
- Invite them to calmly and quietly stand up and find an area where they would like to begin. You might find it useful to send the students off a few at a time, to help smooth the transition from the large group to the activities.

Groups

Primary Prayer Space (Approx. 25 minutes)

- The students will then need to be split into groups of three or four and be sent to different activities where the volunteers will greet them and, if necessary, again explain the activity. Each group will spend about five minutes at each activity.
- As you approach the fourth minute of the activity, go around to each group and give a minute warning, this will help them get ready to move onto the next activity.
- Just before 5 minutes is up, go back to each group and ask them to quietly move onto the next activity. We tend to do this instead of announcing this to the whole class in a louder voice as this is a more seamless and quiet way to move the students around the prayer space.

Secondary Prayer Space (Approx. 40 minutes)

- The students will be able to choose which activity they visit first and throughout their time in the space.
- As a leader, it would be helpful for you to float around the room, answering any questions, suggesting an activity to a student if they seem unsure where to go, engaging with students in different areas as you feel comfortable and as the students want to and reminding the students of any behaviour expectations they are not adhering to (e.g. volume level, overcrowding in an area etc.). It may be useful to station volunteers if some areas would benefit from adult support, otherwise ask them to float between activities also.
- Around 15 mins before the end of the session you should walk around the room and give the students a 5-minute warning that you will all be coming back together as a group to end the session.
- Once the 5 minutes is up, quietly go around the room to each activity and asking them to come back as a group again.

Conclusion (Approx. 5 minutes)

Once the class is back as a whole group...

- The students should be given a chance to consider what they did or didn't like or how they felt about the Prayer and Reflection Space and why. They don't have to write something if they don't wish to.
- Older children (from Year 3 and older) can write down their thoughts anonymously on post it notes, noting what they have enjoyed and why, what they've learnt about prayer/reflection or God, how it made them feel and why or an idea to improve the prayer space. Younger children might prefer to discuss their thoughts with you. If possible, it is good to type up the comments and a selection of post it notes from some of the zones to give to the school, as this will provide evidence of spiritual development for Ofsted and SIAMS. We have a report template that you can use for this.
- Finish off by reminding the students that they can **pray or reflect** anywhere and at any time and in lots of different ways, there is no right or wrong way, it is about finding the best way for them. You could challenge them to find some time each day to reflect on or pray about things in a way that works for them.
- Before the students leave, the Prayer Space Leader should, if applicable, invite everyone to the Prayer and Reflection Space during lunch time and/or after school.

- Finally, as the group leave, the adults in the room should make sure that they say goodbye as the students go to ensure that even as they leave, they feel welcome in the space.