

Worship development

3. Prayer

Starter: *[In pairs]* Which famous person would you most like to have a conversation with?

Reading: Matt 6:5-15

Read aloud, then allow time for everyone to re-read it for themselves along with the comment and the personal focus questions – and reflect alone.

Comment: Some forms of public praying do not encourage the congregation to participate. For example, sometimes prayer seems to mean listening to the preacher saying private prayers in public and as such does not enable the people to pray. Sometimes the preacher prays at too great a length in an unordained fashion. The difficulty with these forms of public prayer is that they effectively prevent members of the congregation from making the prayer their own. Public prayer is not necessarily an occasion when one person is listened to exclusively. It can be a context in which the congregation prays together and an opportunity for everyone to offer their praying. Here, silence can become central to the worship: to be silent, to listen for God and to receive from him is an effective and essential way of participating in worship.

Let the People Worship Conference report 1988

Personal Focus Questions:

1. What thoughts come to mind as you read this Bible passage and comment? What might God be saying to you?

2. What style of prayer is most helpful to you when you are in a congregation?
3. How varied is your prayer style within or between different services? How do you choose the style for a particular prayer?
4. Write an original short prayer of adoration i.e. for what God is, not what he does?

Share together in threes the results of your individual reflection. Then return together as a group and share any insights. Now share together in these applications.

Applications:

1. Make a list of differing ways of conducting prayer in worship.
2. What would be the benefits of using different styles of prayer in your services?
3. What barriers are there to using differing styles of prayer? How could these be overcome?

Review *(Individual thought)*

As an individual how will you use the ideas you have heard in this session?

Follow up. If you would like to develop these ideas further then you could organize a workshop with Sandra Clack [01522 509324]. Or you could organize to run the course 'Praying together and alone' available from Peter Relf. [01623 421222]

Worship End with a time of worship using the prayers you have written.