

A REVIEW OF LIFE ON ONE'S PRAYER HABITS

Target Audience:

- This exercise was given to a group of non-Christian College students.
- These notes are the records of that event.
- Suitable for all sorts of people; lay, religious, Christians and others.

Aims of this Exercise:

- To find out the value the group members attach to prayer.
- To ascertain the 'impact' and 'relevance' of their prayer life in their daily living
- To help the participants realize that prayer is a highly 'personal affair'. Each one has to find out 'his/her own personal style' of prayer.
- To learn from one another's experiences on prayer
- To discuss and clarify any doubts the participants may have about prayer.
- To encourage the participants to share with the group the difficulties and problems they face in their prayer life, and to ask for help and guidance.

Uses of this Exercise:

- For a review of one's prayer life
- For a group discussion on prayer
- For a one-day recollection on prayer
- As an introduction for talks on prayer
- As a part of a prayer seminar

Requirements:

- Writing material for all
- A blackboard
- A quiet and peaceful room or chapel

PROCEDURE:

Step 1. Introduction:

- Meeting and greeting the participants
- Singing of bhajans and hymns. Opening prayer

Step 2. Personal Work.

QUESTIONNAIRE:

Answer the following questionnaire.

- I. On an average, how much time do you spend in prayer every day?
- II. Roughly, how many times a day do you pray? Which are those times?
- III. Which is your favorite time for prayer? When do you pray best?
- IV. Where (place) do you pray most of the time?
- V. Why (reasons) do you pray? Or why do you not?
- VI. What are the things you mostly ask God at prayer?
- VII. How do you pray? (The method that helps you most). e.g. from a book, reciting formulae by heart, talking to God, in silence, listening, to or reading sacred texts, singing bhajans or hymns, etc)
- VIII. On what occasions do you feel more inclined to pray? (e.g. when in need, examination days, when sad, when sick, when happy)
- IX. What are the effects of your prayer in your daily life? (e.g. in your work, duties, moral life, honesty, peace of mind etc.)
- X. Does your prayer help you at all, in your relationship with others? (e.g. dealings with your people at home, in the office, friends, neighbors, enemies)
- XI. Do you think that your prayer has any relevance and impact in your cultural, political and social life? (e.g. service, duties or justice towards your nation, political life, civic involvement, scientific or artistic activities) How? Why?

Step 3. Small Group Work. (In groups of 5 or 6 each)

- One member will act as a chairperson or moderator, another as secretary.
- Let the secretary take note of what is being shared, said and discussed.

a. Sharing and Discussion:

Let the members share their replies
Clarifications, discussion and analysis will follow

b. Group Report:

- The group will prepare a ' group-reply' on the following points:
- I. What seems to be collective idea of the group about prayer?

- II. What seems to be the prevalent prayer habits among the group members? Enumerate and describe.
- III. What are the main attitudes of the group members towards prayer? Enumerate and describe.
- IV. What's the value the group seems to attach to prayer? How? Why?
- V. What are the reasons -- why do the group members pray or do not pray?
- VI. What seems to be the most common style or method of prayer among the group members? Why?
- VII. What seem to be the effects of prayer in the personal or private lives of the group members? Work, happiness, duties.
- VIII. What's the relevance and impact of the prayer life of the members to their social obligations? (e.g. service, justice, charity, political involvement, civic duties, social consciousness, cultural interest).

c. Questions on Prayer:

- The group will formulate two or three important questions about prayer that they would like to have clarified or discussed at the general session.

Step 4. General Group Session. Reporting, Input and Discussion.

a) Reporting:

- The secretaries will report on the work and conclusions of their groups.
- A summary of the reports will be written on the blackboard.
- A list of the questions formulated by the groups will be posted on another board or on newsprint.

b) Input: The moderator will now give an input based on:

- The reports from the groups
 - Answering to the questions brought by the groups
 - His own ideas and thoughts: (Suggested ideas)
- Prayer is a very 'personal' affair.... Like one's style of talking, walking, gesticulating. Don't try to imitate the styles of others, search for your own.

- Do not have recourse to prayer just to get something from God, rather, that we may be able to do something good for others. We pray that we may do his “ Will’ not that God may do our “Will”.
- The heart of prayer is to pray with the heart! Prayer is adoration, self-surrender and submission to God.
- Prayer is not an optional thing or just a luxury! It is a real need! It is a necessity of our ‘creaturely’ nature. It is like the breathing of the heart! It’s part of our constitution; we breathe because we are alive, not the other way round. Likewise, in our prayer life.
- It is very important to have ‘ fixed ‘ times and places for prayer.
- If we want to know how much we value prayer, we have to know how much time and effort we invest in it.
- If prayer has no ‘ impact’ in our personal lives, we cannot call it prayer at all, it’s just a waste of time.
- Prayer unrelated to our social relationships and out of context of our civic, political, business, national and cultural life is not worth the name of prayer, it’s just an exercise in self-deception, an ‘escape mechanism’ for shirking pressing and unavoidable responsibilities.
- Prayer is not an egocentric search for some satisfaction but a sincere desire to discern God’s Will for us.

c) **Discussion:**

- After the input the moderator will invite reactions from the audiences
- Let him try to hook them into a serious discussion. Let them bring out their ideas and feelings.

Step 5. Prayer Session:

- Close the event with a prayer session. Either all together or in smaller groups.
- Encourage informality and spontaneity. End by singing bhajans and hymns.