

CHOOSE PRAYER AND REFLECTION GROUPS

What are prayer and reflection groups?

Prayer and reflection groups gather people with common spiritual or religious beliefs for prayer, reflection, and/or study of sacred texts or other writings on ethical, moral, religious or spiritual topics. The act of praying has been around for as long as 5,000 years and is still prevalent today as a means of peace and reflection. Prayer can occur in the form of praise and worship, verbal statements, hymns, or thanksgiving.¹ The purpose of prayer is to gain comfort and connection from the higher power that you are communicating with.

How do people learn prayer and reflection groups?

When praying and reflecting with other people, it is important to find the right people: people who will be able to not just pray for you, but with you. This can look like reaching out to family, friends, or even to pre-established prayer groups in your community.

There are many ways to go about praying in groups. For example, James Banks offers ways to properly pray in a communal setting in his article “Six Keys in Learning to Pray Together”, which discusses prayer groups in a Christian context. Meetings should generally occur on time, give space for everyone to speak, keep prayer simple, encourage gratitude, practice silence, and align with a greater purpose.² These keys will help create a communal and reflective process in any context or setting.

How do people implement prayer and reflection groups?

When people enter prayer groups, they can do so in churches, community centers, friends’ houses, or even online on a Zoom call. Usually, these meetups happen on a routine basis, i.e. weekly or monthly. The purpose of these gatherings is to include people who need to release their problems or desires through prayer and petition amongst people who can relate to them.

For what types of circumstances are prayer and reflection groups suited?

Prayer and reflection groups are well suited for developing positive social and emotional behaviors among people who use it.

Do prayer and reflection groups work for preventing or controlling aggression or violence?

When we pray, we are brought to a state of awe for the one that is receiving our prayers. When we are in a state of reverence, aggression subsides. Studies from the John Templeton Foundation show that being in a state of awe allows for a diminished sense of self and increased connection, mood, and generosity.³ When we practice prayer and reflection, we exercise gratitude, which also comes from awe. Research also shows that people who began to pray for others and themselves displayed more positive regard than when they started.⁴

¹ Prayer. (n.d.). New World Encyclopedia. Retrieved November 22, 2023, from <https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org>

² Banks, James. (n.d.). *Six Keys in Learning to Pray Together*. Strategic Renewal. Retrieved November 22, 2023, from <https://www.strategicrenewal.com/six-keys-in-learning-to-pray-together>

³ Allen, Summer. (2018). The Science of Awe. *Greater Good Science Center*. https://ggsc.berkeley.edu/images/uploads/GGSC-JTF_White_Paper-Awe_FINAL.pdf

⁴ Allen, Summer. (2018). The Science of Gratitude. *Greater Good Science Center*. https://ggsc.berkeley.edu/images/uploads/GGSC-JTF_White_Paper-Gratitude-FINAL.pdf

Where else might I go to learn more about prayer and reflection groups?

- The [Greater Good Science Center](#) studies the psychology, sociology, and neuroscience of well-being and teaches skills that foster a thriving, resilient, and compassionate society.
- [24-7 Prayer](#) offers resources on how to pray and online spaces to join others in prayer in a Christian context.
- [Meetup](#) can help find a prayer or reflection group near you.
- Contemplative Outreach offers [guidance](#) on prayer for the non-religious or non-Christian as well as [sign-ups](#) for online interfaith meditation groups
- This [article](#) offers guidelines on designing a multifaith prayer service

[Peace Through Action USA](#) activates and equips Americans to implement practical peaceful solutions to aggression and violence in their communities and our country. We are a national-scope, charitable, civic and social capital-building organization.

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