



‘HOW TO PRAY’ - SYCAMORE PATHWAY (6 VIDEOS)

The Year of Prayer, with its particular focus on the *Our Father*, presents the Church with a great opportunity to go back to the basics of prayer, as well as to introduce prayer to those who find it difficult or challenging to pray.

ADVENT 2023 – ADVENT 2024

In preparation for the Jubilee Year 2025, the Office for Mission wants to encourage every Catholic during the Year of Prayer to begin reflecting on their own life of prayer: *what they pray, how they pray, and why they pray*. This is for two reasons:

1. To encourage us to deepen our own prayer life and love of God;
2. To help one other person to pray during the Year of Prayer.



Catacomb of Priscilla – Christian Woman at Prayer

WHY SYCAMORE?

The SYCAMORE pathway, ‘How to Pray’, has been designed to provide your parish with a ready-made tool to deepen the prayer life of Catholics, invite others to pray for the first time, and grow a parish’s love and devotion for prayer: in this way, prayer can be a missionary activity.

Spread over 6 sessions - with each session split into bite-size chunks - this course encourages reflection and discussion in response to Fr Stephen Wang’s thought-provoking presentations on the Catholic Faith.

The suggested structure/questions below, with their focus on prayer, can be used alongside those provided by Sycamore: www.sycamore.fm

Please contact the [Office for Mission](#) for further info. **Paul Northam**

INTRODUCTION TO THE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The questions below are suggestions for how you might structure the discussion times during your Sycamore session. Some questions differ from the those given on the video, while others might appear in a different order, to keep as close as possible to the overall theme of prayer on this pathway.

The questions in bold are offered as the key questions, with the others being supplementary, if you still have time in the discussion.

SESSION 1 (#8) THE POWER OF PRAYER

8A: WHAT IS PRAYER?

- ***If you pray, why do you pray? What's your usual way of praying?***
- ***If you don't pray, what holds you back?***

Have you ever prayed or gone to a religious service? What was it like?

8B: DOES PRAYER MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

- ***Do you know other people who pray? Do you know why or how they pray?***
- ***Do you think that prayer can make a difference to people's lives?***

If God is all powerful, why do you think he sometimes seems to ignore our prayers?

8C: HOW TO PRAY.

- ***What do you think about the idea that God is listening to us and wants to answer our prayers?***
- ***What do you think about the idea of praying with other people?***

Why do you think many people find it hard to pray?

What do you think of Fr Stephen's suggestions?: Start to pray; Speak to God as a friend; Visit your local church.

SESSION 2 (#11) THE LIGHT OF CHRIST

11A: THE CHRISTIAN CREED.

- **What do you believe? What does that motivate YOU to pray for?**
- **Have you prayed since the last session? How?**

Does prayer give you sense of connection to those who have prayed and believed in the past?

[Think of some famous logos or advertising straplines. Why do they work? What symbols are used by the different religions? What do they mean? How many Christian symbols can you think of? What does each one represents?]

11B: THE LIGHT OF CHRIST.

- **Have you ever felt the presence of God in your life? What did the experience mean to you?**
- **Where did you learn about Jesus? Where do your ideas come from?**

What comes to mind when you think about Jesus? How would you explain him to someone else? What does he mean to you?

11C: THE HOLY TRINITY.

- **When you pray, do you speak to “God” or to “the Father” or to “Jesus” or to “the Holy Spirit”? Do you know why? What difference does it make to your prayer?**
- **What are your favourite images of God or ideas about God?**

How would you describe God to someone who knew nothing about him?

SESSION 3 (#6) THE BIBLE

6A: WHAT IS THE BIBLE?

- **What are your favourite books or films?**
- **What's your favourite TV series?**
- **What music do you like to listen to?**

6B: CAN WE TRUST THE BIBLE?

- **Have you ever read the bible? Do you think there is good reason to trust it?**
- **Where do you look for guidance or inspiration when you need it?**

Have you read or learnt about any sacred books from other religious traditions?

6C: HOW THE BIBLE CAN CHANGE YOUR LIFE.

- **Do you read the Bible in your own prayer time? Has the Bible ever 'spoken' to you?**
- **If the bible could give you the answer to any question, which question would you ask?**

Do you know any bible stories or stories from other religious traditions?

Have any of these stories helped or inspired you? Which is your favourite and why?

SESSION 4 (#15) THE HOLY EUCHARIST

15A: THE MEANING OF THE MASS.

- ***If God is everywhere, what's the point of going to church on Sundays?***
- ***What is your experience of coming to Mass or to other Christian Sunday services?***

Which parts of the Mass, or which symbols within the Mass, do you find most interesting or helpful?

15B: THE REAL PRESENCE OF JESUS IN THE EUCHARIST.

- ***When are the times that you feel closest to God?***
- ***Have you ever experienced God's presence in Church?***

What do you think about the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist? Do you find it easy or hard to believe? What difference could it make to your life and faith?

15C: THE HOLY SACRIFICE OF THE MASS.

- ***Can you describe any crosses or crucifixes you have seen? What do you think about the idea that Jesus offered his life on the Cross to take away our sins and bring us salvation?***
- ***What do you think about the idea that the Mass is a Sacrifice that unites us with the Cross of Jesus? What difference could it make to your life and faith?***

If you discovered that someone had died to save your life, what difference would it make?

SESSION 5 (#19) HOW TO PRAY

19A: THE AMAZING ADVENTURE OF PRAYER.

- **What are the things that can stop us praying?**
- **What are the benefits of prayer? What difference does it actually make?**

Why do you think people pray? What motivates them to start?

19B: FOUR BASIC WAYS OF PRAYING.

- **Have your prayers ever been answered?**
- **Do you find it easy to talk to God? To say “thank you” or “help” or “sorry”? To sit in silence?**

What's your experience of reading or praying with the bible?

19C: PRAYERS AND DEVOTIONS TO HELP YOU THROUGH THE DAY.

- **What's your favourite way of praying or your most common way of praying?**
- **What advice would you give someone who wanted to start praying?**

Did you pick up any religious practices or devotions at home when you were growing up? What are your favourite religious customs?

SESSION 6 (#20) MARY AND THE HOPE OF HEAVEN

20A: DEATH, JUDGMENT, AND OUR LONGING FOR ETERNAL LIFE.

- ***How do you think we deal with death in our society today? What customs or traditions do you associate with dying and death in your culture?***
- ***What difference does it make to know that we face God's judgment after death? That we have the hope of eternal life?***

If someone invented a pill that meant you would never die, would you take it?

20B: HOLINESS, THE SAINTS, AND OUR HOPE FOR HEAVEN.

- ***Who is your personal favourite saint and why? What is your experience of getting to know the saints and praying to them?***
- ***What do you think of the idea that God is calling you to be a saint? What can you do about it?!***

Can you think of some well-known saints? What are they famous for?

20C: WHAT CATHOLICS BELIEVE ABOUT THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

- ***What practical things could help you grow in your Christian faith at this stage in your life? What resolutions or steps could you take?***
- ***What does the Virgin Mary mean to you personally? How do you relate to her? What has helped you get to know her? What questions do you have about devotion to Mary?***

If you think about heaven, how do you imagine it to be?

Visit the Archdiocese of Birmingham Year of Prayer page for more ideas, resources, and downloads to help you pray!

www.vocations.org.uk/year-of-prayer-2024

Paul Northam Advisor for Evangelisation, Discipleship and Marriage & Family Life. Diocesan Jubilee Co-ordinator.

office.mission@rcaob.org.uk