

Christian Practices



1. Worship

Worship is an act devoted to God to show love and reference for God. Most Christians hold acts of worship, or services, on Sunday of every week as a communal show of devotion. Christians worship to:

- Praise and thank God
- To ask for forgiveness
- To seek God's help for themselves or others
- To deepen their relationship with God and strengthen their faith

Private worship This allows a person to feel close to God in exactly the way they want. It might involve rosary beads, reflection on a Bible passage or personal prayer

Liturgical Worship: This is worship that follows a set structure or ritual. It takes place in a church and is led by the priest. It involves formal prayers with set responses. Bible passages are read out and there may be a sermon. There will be music and hymns. This type of worship happens in the Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Church of England.

Importance: It provides a world wide set order that is familiar to everyone, this can often make worshippers feel more comfortable. The Bible readings follow the Christian calendar and teach Christian history and faith.

Non-liturgical Worship: This is a more informal way to worship. It follows a pattern or order but the elements are tailored to each service. Prayers are often in the leaders own words, the sermon on a topical theme and Bible readings chosen to fit. This worship happens in non-conformist churches e.g. Methodist

Importance: Without set words worshippers can often feel it comes more from the heart. Services can be planned and ordered to a certain theme and more emphasis is placed on the Bible

Informal worship: This is a type of non-liturgical worship that is 'spontaneous' or 'charismatic'. Community or house churches meet in private houses and share food. In Quaker worship it is mainly silent, people speak when moved by God to offer their thought. 'Charismatic' worship may involve dancing, clapping or speaking in tongues.

Importance: This style of worship is similar to the early Christians. Services may have an emotional impact with a feeling of personal revelation from God.

2. Prayer

An example is the Lord's prayer which is the prayer Jesus taught his disciples

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father who art in Heaven
hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
Lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power
and the glory, for ever and ever.
Amen

Prayer is both talking and listening to God- to be open to guidance from the Holy Spirit. It is important because:

- Enables Christians to talk and listen to God
- Helps build a close relationship with God
- Encourages reflection in the middle of a busy life
- Gives strength in times of trouble
- Gives a sense of peace

The Lord's prayer is important because...

- This prayer was given by Jesus and as such therefore links back throughout history
- It has praise, thanks, confession and asking God for the things the worshipper and others need so is a perfect prayer
- It reminds Christians of the importance of forgiveness
- It reminds Christians that God is the Father of the whole Christian community and it creates a sense of unity when everyone in the congregation says it together

3. Baptism

Sacraments are holy rituals through which believers receive a special gift of grace (free gift of God's love). **Catholic and Orthodox Christians** recognise seven sacraments: baptism, confirmation, Holy Communion, marriage, Holy Orders, reconciliation and the anointing of the sick. **Protestant churches** recognise two sacraments- baptism and Holy Communion- because they believe Jesus taught people to undertake these. Some churches, like the **Quakers or Salvation Army** do not see any ritual or ceremony as being a sacrament.

Through baptism a person...

- Imitates Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist
- Becomes a member of the Christian Church entering a new life with Christ
- Receives God's saving grace and the Holy Spirit

Infant baptism. Key elements in the Roman Catholic, Orthodox and the C of E are the priest/minister pours holy water over the baby's head three times and says 'I baptise you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. The sign of the cross is made on the forehead and godparents and parents promise to bring up the child as a Christian. **Infant baptism is important because:**

- Natural for parents to want to bring the child up as a Christian straight away
- Removes original sin and purifies the child
- Gifts of the Holy Spirit allows the child to grow up strong in God's love

Believer's Baptism. This is a ceremony for those old enough to consciously make a mature decision about their faith. The central rituals are the use of water and the Trinitarian formula (Father, Son and Holy Spirit). The subject testifies to why they seek baptism, then declares the repentance of sin and the intention to follow a Christ centred life. Walking down three steps symbolises the end of the old life of sin. Then they are fully submerged in the water three times. The person then leaves by three other steps to start a new life as a Christian. **Believer's baptism is important because:**

- Jesus was an adult when baptised
- Only those old enough to understand should make these promises
- A child might grow up to resent the promises made for them



4. The Eucharist

'For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.' 1 Corinthians 11:26

Holy Communion is a service which celebrates and gives thanks for the sacrifice of Jesus' death and resurrection. It has different meanings for different Christians:

- **Catholic and Orthodox Christians** believe the bread and wine becomes **the body and blood of Christ**. This means Jesus is fully present in the bread and wine. This is a divine mystery that helps believers share in the saving sacrifice of Jesus' death and resurrection.
- **Protestant Christians** celebrate Holy Communion as a **reminder of the Last Supper**. They do not believe the bread and wine becomes the body and blood of Christ. Instead the bread and wine are symbols of Jesus' sacrifice.

Impact of Holy Communion:

Individual: Strengthens their faith and become closer to God. Christian's receive God's grace by joining in the sacrifice of Jesus

Communities: Brings the community of believers together in unity by sharing the bread and wine

Wider society: Acts as a call to love others in practical ways. It encourages Christians to work for justice and equality for all



5. Contrasting ways in which the Eucharist (Holy Communion) is celebrated in Christianity.

Orthodox

- **priest remains behind Royal Doors** for much of the first part of the service; priest comes through Royal Doors, receives **bread and wine from congregation**
- **bread broken into four parts**, (one put whole into the chalice, one for priests and deacons, one is broken up in the chalice for communion and the fourth is cut up but not consecrated)
consecrated bread given to congregation with the wine on a spoon
- **unconsecrated bread given to be taken home** – a sign of being part of the Christian community.

Roman Catholics

- Offerings of **bread and wine brought to the altar**
- The **priest repeats the words of Jesus at the Last Supper** over the bread and wine
- People come forward to receive communion from a priest; **usually a wafer (unleavened bread) and red alcoholic wine** taken from a single chalice blessing
- The priest blesses people and sends them out to live the gospel.

Non-conformist church

- Communion set out on a **communion table – not an altar**
- minister or designated lay person may lead the communion service
- **An open table** – anyone who wishes to can take communion, including children (do not need to be confirmed or in church membership)
- **many different ways of serving communion** –standing round the table, kneeling at the front rail of a church, served in the pews to the seated congregation etc.
- **Congregation might serve each other** as it is passed round.
- **Wine is often non-alcoholic**, often distributed in small cup

6. Pilgrimage

1. Lourdes

- Bernadette claimed she had seen a woman, the Virgin Mary, in 18 visions. In a cave near the River Gave she was told to dig away the growth clogging the spring and drink the water. Her friend bathed her dislocated arm in the water and it was healed.
- Many pilgrims visit Lourdes today- taking part in processions, saying the rosary and mass, touching the walls of the cave (grotto). The sick or disabled go hoping for healing. Water is often taken home.
- Since the first cure in 1858, 69 more Lourdes healings have been declared miracles. Those who may not be physically healed report being spiritually healed.

Importance of pilgrimage

1. Grow closer to God
2. Gives them a better understanding of their faith
3. Helps them feel cleansed from sin
4. Many report being cured from illness
5. Feel connected to the Christian community

2. Iona

- Where St Columba established a monastic community in the 6th century AD. Some people think of Iona as a 'thin place', where the veil between the spiritual world and the physical world is thin. It is a very remote place and windswept, many pilgrims feel like it is a place where nature reveals God's infinite power and presence.
- Iona has a very long history making pilgrims want to visit. Individuals or groups often go home renewed in their faith to live and work in the modern world

7. Festivals

A festival is a day or period of celebration for religious reasons. Festivals help to remember and celebrate the major events in Jesus' life

Christmas

Christmas celebrates the incarnation of Jesus. The specific date is unknown but the Western church chose the 25

December. Christians celebrate this by:

- Nativity scenes show baby Jesus born into poverty
- Carol services with Bible readings remind Christians about God's promise of a saviour and Jesus' birth
- Light as a symbol representing Jesus as the light coming into the world
- Midnight mass reflects the holiness of the night and the joy Christians feel at Jesus' birth
- Christmas cards and gifts recall the wise men's gifts to Jesus
- Christians give to charity to remember God's gift to humanity

Easter

Easter remembers the death and resurrection of Jesus and is the most important festival. Holy week remembers the events that led to Jesus' death and resurrection.

Palm Sunday- Jesus enters Jerusalem. Palm crosses are given out.

Maundy Thursday- Last Supper and Jesus' arrest. Ministers wash the feet of 12 members of the church remembering Jesus washing the feet of the disciples

Good Friday- Jesus was crucified. There are special services and processions led by a person carrying a cross.

Easter Sunday- resurrection. On Saturday night some churches hold a special service to celebrate Jesus' resurrection. **Orthodox**

Christians walk with candles in procession then enter the dark church as if going into Jesus' empty tomb. The priest announces 'Christ is risen!' to which people answer 'He is risen indeed.' Catholics and Anglicans have a vigil that begins in darkness, before the Paschal candle is lit to symbolise the risen Christ. Churches are filled with flowers, services are held at sunrise and shared breakfasts include eggs to symbolise new life.

8. Role of the Church in the local community: Food Banks

The **Church** is the holy people of God, also called the Body of Christ, among whom Christ is present and active. A **church** is a building in which Christians worship

Individual churches help the community by:

- Educating people about Christianity (Bible study)
- Provide activities for younger people e.g. youth clubs

The Church helps the community by:

- Supports local projects such as food banks
- Provides social services such as schooling and medical care
- Campaigns for justice

The Trussell Trust follows key Christian values to help others (Parable of the Sheep and Goats). It is a charity that runs over 400 food banks in the UK. It provides emergency food, help and support to people in crisis in the UK. Non-perishable food is donated by churches, supermarkets, schools, businesses and individuals. Doctors, health visitors and social workers identify people in crisis and issue them with a food voucher. Their aim is bring religious and non-religious people together to end poverty

The Oasis Project is a community hub run by Plymouth Methodist Mission Circuit. It provides an internet café, creative courses, a job club, training opportunities, a meeting place and a food bank.

Spiritual and practical help is given to those in need because of ill health, learning disabilities, domestic violence, substance abuse, low income and housing problems

9. The role of the Church in the local community: Street Pastors

Christians should help others because:

- Jesus taught Christians should help others by showing **agape love** towards them (unselfish, sacrificial love)
- Message of the Parable of the **Sheep and the Goats**
- ***'Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.'*** (James 2:17)

Street Pastors is an initiative started in London 2003 by the Christian charity Ascension Trust. The main aim originally was to challenge gang culture by patrolling the streets in urban areas. The focus then widened to responding to drunkenness, anti-social behaviour and fear of crime. Street pastors work closely with police and local councils.

Parish Nursing Ministries UK are a Christian charity who supports whole-person healthcare through the local church. They provide churches with registered parish nurses who promote well-being in body, mind and spirit among the local community. The nurses help to provide early diagnosis of health problems. They train and coordinate volunteers to help combat loneliness or provide support during times of crisis. They give additional help to the NHS.

10. The place of mission and evangelism

A **mission** is a vocation or calling to spread the faith. The Church has a mission to tell non-believers that Jesus Christ, the Son of God came into the world as its saviour. Christians spread the word through evangelism (showing faith in Jesus by example or telling others). Christians do this because:

- Jesus' instructions to spread his teachings '**To make disciples of all nations**' (the Great Commission)
- **The Holy Spirit at the Pentecost** gave the disciples the gift and courage needed to carry out the Great Commission
- In Matthews account of the call of the first disciples, Jesus says to Simon, Peter and Andrew: '**Come, follow me [...] and I will send you out to fish for people.**' (Matthew 4: 19)

Alpha course

- Alpha is an example of evangelism in the UK
- It was started in London by an Anglican priest with the aim of helping Christians understand the basics of the Christian faith
- The course is now used as an introduction for those interested in learning about Christianity, by different Christian denominations in Britain and abroad
- The organisers describe it as an opportunity to explore the meaning of life through talks and discussions
- Courses are held in homes, workplaces, universities as well as prisons and churches

Should all Christian be evangelists?

YES

- If Christians don't help spread the faith it will die out
- All Christians have received the Great Commission

NO

- Christians who go around evangelising can annoy people so it does not help their cause
- Not every Christian should be an evangelist because some are too shy

11. Church Growth

- The Church is growing rapidly in **South America, Africa and Asia**, but not in the USA, Europe and the Middle East
- Worldwide around **80,000 people** become Christians each day, and over 500 new churches are formed
- The Church's mission **is to make disciples**, not just new believers. This means new Christians are also expected to help spread the faith
- Evangelism should therefore be followed up by **training new converts** (people who decide to change their religious faith) in the way of following Jesus

Ways Christians can spread the faith:

- Sharing what God has done for them with others
- Inviting people to Christian meetings, fellowship meals and social events
- Advertising and using media (such as Facebook, Twitter or Premier Christian Radio)

An example of a Christian organisation promoting evangelism is **Christ for all Nations**. They do this by:

- Holding evangelistic meetings throughout the world, but particularly in Africa
- They are led by the evangelists Richard Bonnke and Daniel Kolenda
- Some of their large open air rallies held in Africa have drawn crowds of up to 1.6 million people
- It is claimed many miracles of healings take place at the meetings
- Christ of all Nations claim that 74 million people have filled in decision cards to follow Christ at meetings

12. The importance of the worldwide Church

The worldwide Church has a mission to **restore people's relationship with God** and with one another (**reconciliation**).

- Christians believe humans were reconciled to God through Jesus' death and resurrection. This means Jesus' death and resurrection helped to restore the relationship between God and humanity which had been broken by sin
- For Catholics the sacrament of Reconciliation (confession) also helps to restore people's relationship with God
- Matthew 5:23-24 teaches that Christians should be reconciled to each other

Reconciliation is therefore an important part of the Church's work. This might mean restoring peace at an individual level or between different religious groups or nations

Examples of groups who work for reconciliation

1. The **Irish Churches Peace Project** brings Catholics and Protestants together in Northern Ireland. The project aims to develop peace and understanding between these two denominations
2. The **Corrymeela Community** brings together people from different backgrounds, including people of different faiths or political leanings. They meet at a residential centre in Northern Ireland to build trust and explore ways of moving from violence away from violence so they can work together constructively



13. Christian Persecution

- It is estimated 80% of all acts of religious discrimination today are aimed at Christians
- This persecution happens around the world but particularly in countries such as North Korea, Somalia, Iraq and Syria
- It might involve; being forced to pay extra tax, job discrimination, being forbidden to build churches, attacks on Christian homes, churches and families including murder

Ways Christians help those who are persecuted:

- Christians have smuggled Bibles into the USSR to strengthen and give comfort to persecuted Christians
- The Barnabus Fund sends more money to support people persecuted for their faith
- Christian Solidarity Worldwide campaigns for religious freedom for all

1. For some Christians persecution can have a **positive effect** as it strengthen their faith and conviction. It allows them to share in the suffering of Jesus ***'I want to know Christ- yes to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings.'*** (Philippians 3:10)

2. The Church believes it is important to **act against persecution** by supporting persecuted Christians wherever possible and campaigning on their behalf ***'If one part suffers, every part suffers with it.'*** (1 Corinthians 12:26)

3. Christians are encouraged to show love and forgiveness to their persecutors ***'Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good'*** (Romans 12:21)

14. Christian response to World Poverty

Why should Christians respond to World Poverty?

- In the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, Jesus told of a rich man who ended up in hell having ignored the plight of a beggar (Luke 16:19-31)
- They follow the teaching and example of Jesus in helping to relieve poverty.
- Jesus told a rich man to sell everything and give to poor (Mark 10:21)
- The Parable of the Sheep and Goats shows Christians have a duty to help others

How do Christians help those in poverty?

1. **Christian Aid** Supports projects to encourage sustainable development and provides emergency relief, such as food, water, shelter and sanitation. Campaigns to end poverty alongside organisations such as the Fairtrade Foundation, and Trade Justice.
2. **Tearfund** Works with over 90,000 churches worldwide to help lift people out of poverty. Supplies emergency aid after natural disasters and conflict. Provides long term aid to help communities become more self-reliant, such as education or new farming equipment. Supported by donations, fundraising events and prayer from churches in the UK.
3. **CAFOD** Works with local organisations to train, supply and support communities to work their own way out of poverty. Gives short term aid such as food, water and shelter during conflicts and disasters. Lobbies UK government and global organisations for decisions that respect the poorest. Encourages Catholic schools and parishes to pray, give money and campaign for justice.