

G. Worship, Prayer & Ritual | Sample Answer

Describe what is involved in a meditation technique that is practised in one of the above world religions and explain why this technique is used as a form of prayer. (2013 Section G [b])

Meditation is a mental and physical course of action that a person uses to separate themselves from their thoughts and feelings in order to become fully aware. All religions practice forms of meditation, although each religion has its unique orientation, drawing on its own special symbols, stories and teachings, favouring certain practices, subjects and goals. I have studied the meditation technique practiced by Christians.

Christian forms of meditation have a long history, though not all practices are accepted universally in all churches. The Desert Fathers, early hermits, used repeated prayer, either spoken or sung, with synchronized breathing to internalize the spiritual truths contained within them. The Eastern Orthodox traditions practice creating and using icons as a focus for meditation. The Jesuit traditions use visualization and imagination to respond in a deeply felt personal way to scenes from the life of Christ and internalize the lessons that can be found within them.

The simplest and most universal form of Christian meditation can be found in the practice of repeating prayers, either individually, together, or in a cycle. The focus is generally directed first towards the heart, producing a deeply felt understanding that suffuses the whole being. Christians who practice meditation are empowered by their experience of an encounter with Christ to act like Christ, to serve as he served, to forgive as he forgave and to bring healing into the lives of those around them.

According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, Christian Meditation serves to deepen Faith in the love of Christ but, ultimately, meditation leads a person to union with him. Meditation with the sacred text is very important for many Christians. Lectio Divina was a form of meditation based on an older Jewish practice of reading scripture aloud and memorising the text while integrating body

and mind in prayer. Lectio Divina today calls Christians to find a quiet place to read scriptures slowly and attentively. The piece is read twice or three times. This leads to a meditation of the text. During this time the person thinks about the meaning of the text and its implications for their lives. This is the moment when the person crosses into contemplative awareness. Contemplation exists when one's needs, hopes and desires are fused into God's love.

Meditation is used as a form of prayer today because in today's world many people feel that their lives are too stressed, and meditation is a way of allowing the mind and body to relax. Christian Meditation serves as a tool to escape from life's distractions and lead a happier and more spiritual life.