

Prayer in America—In Times of Conflict **Group Discussion**

Throughout history, people have turned to prayer in the midst of hardship.

Prayer has brought people together during difficult times throughout history and through recent events, including 9/11 (when church attendance doubled), the war in Iraq, and the Virginia Tech Tragedy.

April 25, 2005—Forty-seven percent (47%) of Americans say that they pray every day or nearly every day. A Rasmussen Reports survey found that 18% say they rarely or never pray.

With today's technology, prayer requests can be shared and passed on to the masses. Websites such as <http://www.invitationtoprayer.org/how.html> and <http://www.pray4va.org/> allow web surfers to share with others, creating a strong-knit prayer community.



What is prayer and why does America pray?

- “Prayer has comforted us in sorrow and will help strengthen us for the journey ahead.” President George W. Bush
- Muslim prayers are one of the duties described in the *Five Pillars of Islam*.
- “The greatest prayer is patience” Hindu Prince Gautama Siddharta, the founder of Buddhism, 563-483 B.C.
- The Mormon Church encourages members to pray from their hearts. Members feel that each prayer should be sincere and should be a conversation with God.
- “Prayer is not asking. It is a longing of the soul. It is daily admission of one's weakness. It is better in prayer to have a heart without words than words without a heart.” Mahatma Gandhi, preeminent leader of Indian nationalism
- “To pray is to pay attention to something or someone other than oneself. Whenever a man so concentrates his attention—on a landscape, a poem, a geometrical problem, an idol, or the True God—that he completely forgets his own ego and desires, he is praying.” Benjamin Franklin
- “Prayer is simply a two-way conversation between you and God.” Billy Graham
- “Prayer is as natural an expression of faith as breathing is of life.” John Edwards
- MSNBC states that “one-third of Americans pray for good health.”

Whether prayer is used as a coping mechanism, uniting people under one purpose, a safe haven or a way to make sense of adversity, those who pray will continue to unite under its strong bond. The spirit of prayer will forever bring hearts together.

Discussion questions for groups and individuals:

How do you define prayer?

How and why do *you* pray?

In what ways has prayer helped you deal with conflict?

How does prayer make you feel?

Do you feel more at peace?

Do you experience a sense of connection and bonding with others?

Do you believe America benefits from prayer?

Please list some specific instances.

United We Stand. What does this phrase mean to you and can you connect it to prayer?

