

Critical Thoughts on the Role of Prayer in Spiritual Care

Kevin L. Ladd

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European Conference on Religion, Spirituality, and Health

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**DEPARTMENT OF
PSYCHOLOGY**

**INDIANA UNIVERSITY
SOUTH BEND**

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

What is Prayer?

1. Communication

2. Connection

3. Multi-dimensional

Local – Non-local

Physical – Supernatural

What is Spiritual Care?

1. What a Pastor does
 - *theistic*
2. Ultimate concerns
 - *life & death*
3. Spiritually sensitive counseling
 - *social credentials*

When is Spiritual Care?

1. Crisis
 - *intervention*
2. Pre-crisis
 - *preparation*
3. Post-crisis
 - *restoration*

Uses of Prayer in Spiritual Care

1. Expectations

- *immediacy*

2. Desires

- *proof*

3. Critical thinking

- *weakened*

4. Entrance / exit

- *official*

Case Study 1

Carl: 75, male, cancer

Low attendance, but friendly

Weekly official visits

“You never prayed with him.”

Case Study 2

Mark: 82, male, unknown disorder

Low attendance, highly critical

Weekly unofficial visits

“Would you like to pray?” “Not if I was in the deepest, darkest hole in the universe.”

“Don’t worry, you’ll experience love. Jesus is waiting. You’ve had a good life.”

For Whom is the Prayer?

1. Care receiver
2. Care giver
3. Pastoral visitor
4. God

Why is the Prayer?

1. Last resort
2. Coping tool
3. Lifestyle

Prayer as Knowing

1. Head (propositional)
2. Heart (implicational)
3. Integration
4. More than Integration

Prayer as *More-than-Integrated* Spiritual Care

1. Visual

2. Tactile

3. Auditory

4. Olfactory

5. Gustatory

Conclusions

1. Importance of multiple dimensions
2. More than integration
3. Necessity for true interdisciplinary work

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