

Scouting and Prayer Donald Bailey

I can remember hearing my schoolteacher read us a Bible story every morning in class, one day from the Old Testament the next from the New Testament. No, I am not that old, but I remember the stories because we had a Jewish boy in our class and when the teacher read from the New Testament this boy would stand outside in the hallway. After the story, she would lead us in prayer.

I also remember when all that changed in the mid '60s—no more prayer and no more Bible stories. Prayer is not allowed even at high school graduations anymore.

But the Boy Scouts of America never backed down on this issue.

You see, the 12th Scout Law states, “A scout is reverent—he is reverent toward God. He is faithful in his religious duties and respects the convictions of others in matters of custom and religion.”

In the Scoutmaster's Handbook, the scoutmaster is encouraged to lead his boys in prayer before each meal, open meetings with prayer, or end meetings with prayer. Or the scoutmaster can designate an individual to lead in prayer. This is what the chaplain does in the troop.

The Scout Handbook under “In Your Church” states that scouts doing their part in their church starts with knowing the teachings and ideals of their religion. But then they must live up to their beliefs in their everyday life. Regular attendance and active participation in religious services and other activities are important. Scouts should help out whenever they can and set a good example for younger members. Leadership experience in scouting helps them lead church clubs and other groups. Doing their duty to God, living up to the Twelfth Law, and taking part in church activities helps their church.

Prayer has been an integral part of scouting. A famous painting by Norman Rockwell shows a group of boys saying grace over their food on a campout. Many other paintings and pictures have portrayed this same theme.

Whenever I have brought up the idea of prayer, no one has ever objected. On a couple of occasions when I was delayed, the group waited until I could arrive and open with prayer.

Was I someone special? Yes, for you see our prayers are Holy Ghost anointed and that is what affects people. We must, as the Scout Handbook states, take an active part in prayer, for in so doing we set a good example for the younger generation to follow.