

All the Prayers of God's People
A Different Five Fingered Prayer Teaching
April 28, 2020

Welcome to Week two of our prayer talk! Last week we discussed what some refer to as the "Children's" Five fingered prayer but is really a simple way to remember to pray in our busy adult lives. This week we will speak about a different five fingered prayer that centers our hearts on how we pray.

Let's begin with the Thumb (closest to you) which is earmarked for PRAISE. Psalm 146 v. 1-2 reminds us to meditate on God's attributes and praise God for history, present, and future. Because the thumb is the thickest finger, it is also a reminder to spend the most time in praise as prayer. Why? Praise gets our minds off of ourselves (Psalm 35:28), praise brings us to a place of humility (Psalm 35:18), praise leaves no room for negativity which draws us away from God (Psalm 103:2-4, Hebrews 13:15), Praise makes room for God's blessings in our lives (Eph 1:3), and Praise invites us into God's presence, refreshing our hearts with God's glory (Psalm 22:3, Psalm 16:11). When we pray, let us begin with praise!

The pointer finger (second finger) reminds us to spend time giving thanks (Eph. 5:20). In Southern Etiquette, we are told not to use the pointer finger but in reality, when we give thanks, the pointer finger points us to God. There are many things to be thankful to God for in our lives, but specifically we are called to give thanks for: God's love (Psalm 106:1), God's provision (Phil 4:6), God's forgiveness (Psalm 103:2-3), God's Word and truth (Psalm 119:62), God's Creation (Psalm 136:3-9), God's people and the church (1 Thess. 1:2, Philemon 1:4), And God's providence (Hebrews 12:28-29). Saying "thank you" hardly seems enough in the face of all God has done (and is doing) but thankfulness bring us out of ourselves and closer to God in all things (1 Thess. 5:18).

The Middle (or tallest finger) represents praying for intercession. Intercession is a fancy word that means praying for others (Ephesians 6:18-19). By being the tallest finger, we are reminded of how important our prayers for others are in our prayer life like a tower to God. Lord, hear our prayers. Jesus commanded us to pray for others in Matthew 5:44 and Luke 6:28, for family, friends and for enemies. By praying for others, we are imitating Christ who intercedes with God on our behalf (Romans 8:34) as well as the Spirit of God (Romans 8:26). By praying for others

and our church, we are participating with God in the ministry of reconciliation and love (2 Corinthians 5:18-20). It also means sharing one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2) and asking for God's intervention in the spiritual and physical healing (James 5:14-16). Included in this intercession is also prayers for ourselves; we know that God hears our prayers and answers our needs (Hebrews 4:14-16).

The ring finger (weakest finger) is our confession finger. We are called to confess our weaknesses and sins (Isaiah 59:2) to God on a regular basis both individually and as a church because we are human and often fall away from God's teachings and guidance (1 John 1:9). Confessions are also scripturally founded and driven. Deuteronomy 6:4-9, the Shema, states "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is One" which is one of the first confessions of who God is in our lives. This is the covenant people affirming who God is in their lives, something we are called to do regularly lest we become the center of our churches and hearts. We also confess because we are intentionally gathered as believers and confessions define what we believe (1 Peter 2:9). Confessions also acknowledge that we as human beings are prone to error and in need of reminders of whose child we are. The Apostles Creed is an example of our claiming that Jesus is Lord from a particular place in historical life that carries into our walks with Christ today. We also confess because faith is intellectual as well as experiential (Eph 4:15), we are called to grow into this faith by testing what we believe against the Word and history. And finally, we confess because we are evangelical in nature (Matthew 28: 19-20) when we are told to "go therefore and make disciples", we share our confessions because we believe in this God who rose from the dead. Confession, while it is our weakest finger, is one of the most necessary prayers for our faith growth.

And finally, the pinkie (smallest finger) stands for petition, 1 Samuel 1:27 says "I prayed for this child the Lord has granted me", so too are we called to make requests of God either for ourselves or others (Phil 4:6). The prayer for illumination before our scripture reading is one example, that God will make God's words and meanings clear. Other examples of petition are asking for things like wisdom (James 1:5), happiness (Psalm 16:11), strength and healing (Matt 9:28-30), adoration and surrender (Romans 12:1), offering up our worry and asking for peace (Psalm 94:19). More specifically, some things we might petition include help in finances and employment (Phil 4:19), things that are lost and cannot be found (Luke 15:8), recovery from illness (James 5:14-15), safe travel (Psalm 121) and our animals (Proverbs 12:10 Job 12:7-10). One of the most well-

known prayers of petitions is the Serenity Prayer (theologian Reinhold Niebuhr) which states “God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference”. Let us bring our needs before God.

This season of quarantine is our call to prayer. Same as last week, you are invited to choose a time each day to practice praying this particular 5 fingered prayer. For beginners, keep it simple and walk through each finger. For long time pray-ers, look up the associated scriptures and offer those to God as well.

Next week we will look at the Lord’s Prayer as a reminder of how Christ shows us how to pray. If you would like to join the prayer team, please send an email or call the church office at SOPC@SOPC.net or 803-772-1761. We will be holding a mid-week prayer session via zoom and you are invited to join us in practicing these prayers together.

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