

03-08-15

## 5 Finger Prayer

*“Don’t pray when you feel like it. Have an appointment with the Lord and keep it. A man is powerful on his knees.” ~ Corrie ten Boom*

*“You may as soon find a living man that does not breathe, as a living Christian that does not pray.” ~ Matthew Henry*

Writer Sonia Weiss writes,

Human beings have searched for understanding since the earliest of times. We were born with inquiring minds and an innate need to understand the “big picture”— how the world around us came to be, and where we fit into the scheme of things. From those earliest of times, we have sensed that the answers lie not in what we can see, but in that which we cannot see. Prayer has been our means of communicating with the greater being or spirit that lies beyond human understanding.

Although we were born with the desire to pray— some call it “being wired for prayer”— prayer frustrates many people. They find it difficult to make time for it. They wonder if they are doing it right, and if they could do it better. Is it better to pray alone or with others? Silently or out loud? Should they kneel, sit, or stand? Should they call that which they pray to “God,” “Goddess,” “Father,” or “Mother”? Does anyone prayer style or any specific posture ensure that they’ll be heard? Does prayer really get them anywhere?

The truth is, there is no one perfect prayer, no perfect way to pray, and no perfect pray-er. In this particular arena, there are no yes-or-no answers, no scales of comparison. There is simply the practice of prayer, in whatever form it takes.

Prayer is often written about in a fairly lofty manner, which can make it seem like we need to be experts at it before we can do it, and that we have to be on our best behavior when we do it. Everyone has to begin somewhere in prayer. In this particular practice, not only are we all beginners, we remain beginners.

Prayer is meant to be a lifelong experience. There is always something new to learn, another path to explore, another door to open. This is what makes prayer both challenging and exciting... even fun.

If you are new to prayer, you may be wondering what it takes to pray. Not much, really. The desire to pray, of course, is a big part of it. The fact that you’re curious about prayer shows that you’ve got this one covered. Prayer also requires having some sort of

a relationship with the Divine, which being curious about prayer also speaks to. The rest of prayer is all about details.

You may also be wondering what you'll get from prayer. Maybe the better question is, what don't you get? Without prayer, we never fully understand what it means to be human, nor do we gain a full understanding of life's big issues – the big picture. We can be good people without prayer. We can be strong and courageous and compassionate. With prayer, we're even better. With prayers, we know where our source of strength is. With prayer, we know God.

The hymn we sung just prior to this meditation was called Stand By Me. "Charles Albert Tindley is known as one of the "founding fathers of American Gospel music." The son of slaves, he taught himself to read and write at age 17. He was a driven young man, working as a janitor while attending night school, and earning his divinity degree through a correspondence course. In 1902, he became pastor of the Calvary Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, the church where he had earlier been the janitor. At the time of Tindley's death, his church had 12,500 members. The Tindley Temple United Methodist Church in Philadelphia was named after him. Tindley's "I'll Overcome Some Day" was the basis for the American civil rights anthem "We Shall Overcome," popularized in the 1960's." Charles Albert Tindley wrote over 60 hymns. Although Tindley's name is not well known, his contributions to music cannot be ignored. His music continues to capture the confident testimony of his life and ministry.

Often we only pray when we need something. "Please God give me..." The other main time we pray is in giving thanks. But when else should we pray? Charles Albert Tindley in this hymn is reminding us that there are many times in which to pray. We can pray when the storms of life are raging, when we are in the midst of tribulation, when we think about our faults and failures, when we are in the midst of persecution, and when we grow older. We have many times and many reasons to pray!

Do you ever have trouble thinking of something to say when you are talking to a friend? I do. I have a friend that I hang out with often and sometimes we go for a long time without either of us saying anything. We just can't think of anything to say. That same thing happens when we are praying. We start to pray and then just can't think of anything to say. Does that ever happen to you? So today, we learned something that will help you when that happens. The Five Finger Prayer gives you distinct things to pray about.

Our James passage goes on to say

*"The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and*

*a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.”*

We might not be Elijah, but our prayers are just as powerful.

So through this Lenten series we see that prayers have meaning, they have momentum, and they have power. Prayer does something to us! It changes us. It often calms us. And it centers us. How do you think it makes God feel?

Ok, let's watch this experiment. Tell me how this makes you feel.

Is it exciting to watch the fizz?

Well every time we pray to God, that's how he feels. He feels excited, because we're building a relationship with him. We're talking to him, we're including him in our lives. Jesus loves us so much and he wants to be a part of our lives.

Now let's be quiet and listen.... What do you hear? Can you hear the fizzing noise?

Sometimes that's how God works. He answers our prayers, but sometimes we have to be quiet and listen.

We might not be Elijah, but our prayers are just as powerful. So we shouldn't let not knowing what to pray for stop us from praying. We should be praying for everything, anyone, at any time! James calls us to remember the suffering, cheerful, sick, and elders in our prayers. Our Five Finger Prayer helps us, to intentionally, remember:

**Thumb** - Pray for **those nearest you** such as your family, parents, siblings, spouse, children, friends and co-workers.

**Pointing Finger** – Pray for those who **instruct, heal and minister** such as teachers, health care professionals, pastors and church workers.

**Middle/Highest Finger** – Pray for **leaders** in business, police and fire departments, military personnel, and local, state and federal government including the judiciary.

**Fourth/Weakest Finger** – Pray for those **sick and in need**, locally, nationally and internationally including the persecuted church and those who have suffered natural and man-made disasters.

**Fifth/Smallest Finger** – Pray for **your needs**.

So when you start to pray and can't think of anything to say or pray about... remember our Five Finger Prayer. And just keep praying! Amen.