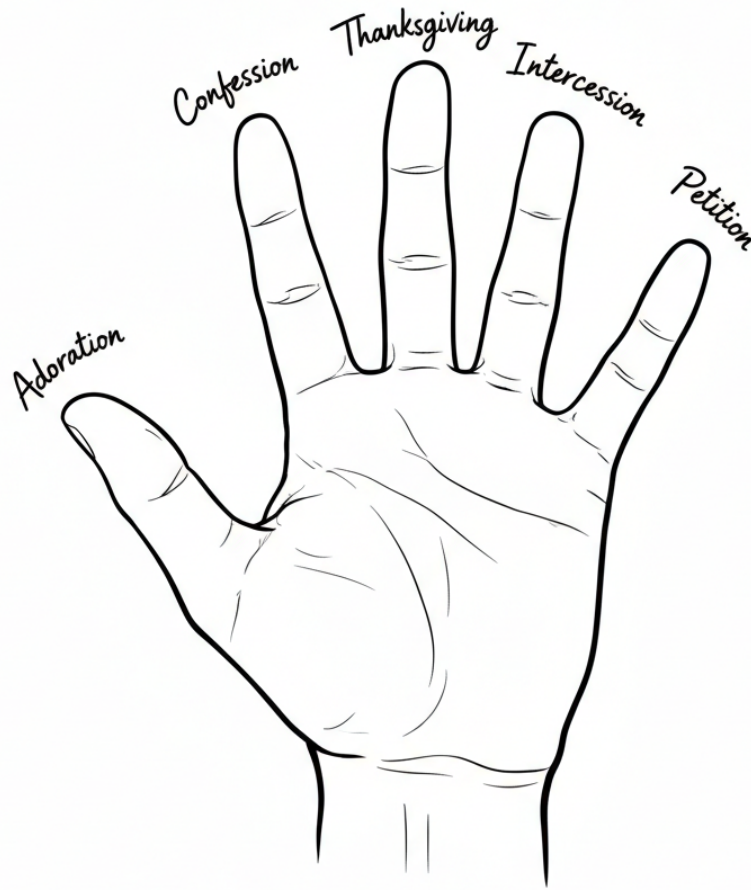


SESSION ELEVEN—PRAYER (II)

1. Last week, we looked at the Lord's Prayer as the model Christian prayer, and at the difference between "common prayer" and private or personal prayer. This week, we look at five basic types of prayer. These can take the form of either formal written prayers printed in a book or informal prayers expressed in our own words.
2. The primary purpose of prayer is to deepen our relationship with God (and not just to ask God for things).
3. The Five Fingers of Prayer (see illustration and notes on following pages) are:
 - Adoration / Praise
 - Confession
 - Thanksgiving
 - Intercession
 - Petition
4. Sometimes these are abbreviated by the acronym "ACTIP." (Think "ACT UP," and change the "U" to an "I.")
5. A healthy prayer life develops and maintains a balance of all five types of prayer.
 - For example, someone whose prayers consist solely of asking God for things (petition) has an unbalanced prayer life and probably needs to develop the other forms of prayer to grow spiritually.
6. A healthy prayer life also balances prayers from a book with prayers in our own words. Praying only from a book can become dry and dull. Praying only in our own words can become self-centered and subject to our changing emotional moods.
7. It is vital to have a personal rule of prayer: that is, to commit to praying regularly.
 - Ideally, we should pray at least daily.
 - It is easiest to set aside a specific place and time for our daily prayers.
 - The place should be quiet and private, where we're unlikely to be disturbed.
 - The time should fit comfortably into our schedule.
 - It is a mistake to leave it until going to bed! Then we are often too tired to have a meaningful conversation with God.
8. A healthy prayer life also makes room to listen to what God is saying to us. ("*Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening*"—I Samuel 3:9-10.) Sometimes we may hear His "*still, small voice*" (I Kings 19:12). Sometimes we may just sense the comfort of His presence. Sometimes, he may seem inexplicably absent. Regardless, it is good to learn to be quiet, for it is in the silence that we often meet God.

THE FIVE FINGERS OF PRAYER

(A.C.T.I.P.)



NOTES ON THE FIVE FINGERS OF PRAYER

1. Adoration. This type of prayer focuses our attention on God. We acknowledge and enjoy God for who He is in Himself. We praise him for his infinite power, goodness, beauty, and truth. This is a good way to begin any prayer: placing ourselves in God's presence and simply resting there.
2. Confession. Compared with God's goodness, we recognize and acknowledge our own moral shortcomings and failures. We ask God to show us our sins, to make us truly sorry for them, to forgive our sins, and to help us avoid sinning in the future. We make this prayer in the knowledge and confidence that Jesus paid the price of our sins on the cross.
3. Thanksgiving. Here we express our gratitude to God for all that He has done for us: creating us, promising us eternal life, sending His Son to die for our sins, and sending His Holy Spirit to make us into the people he has created us to be. We thank Him for all our blessings: family and friends; food, shelter, and clothing; the work He gives us to do and the gifts we need to accomplish it.
4. Intercession. This means praying for others. We ask God to take care of our family, friends, neighbors, and all those who need our prayers. The Prayers of the People in the Eucharist are essentially prayers of intercession: for the Church, the world, the sick, and the departed.
5. Petition. This means praying for ourselves and for our own needs. Notice that this form of prayer comes last. When we ask God for what we want, His answer may be yes, no, or "not yet." Still, God values our honesty and delights in our telling Him our hearts' deepest desires. William Temple (Archbishop of Canterbury during the Second World War) wrote that the prayer "please do for me what I want" eventually needs to become "please do with me what you want." Then, the prayer of petition is transformed into a prayer of self-offering. But still, to get there, we need to begin by telling God what's really on our minds and in our hearts.

EXERCISE

PART 1

Look up the following prayers in *The Book of Common Prayer, 1979*. (If you don't have a hard copy, you may find it at bcponline.org.) Identify which of the Five Fingers of Prayer best matches the specified prayer in the Prayer Book.

Look up in *The Book of Common Prayer, 1979*:

Write the letter from the list below that best matches the prayer:

- | | |
|---|-------|
| 1. Canticle 14, pages 90-91. | _____ |
| 2. Canticle 21, pages 95-96. | _____ |
| 3. Prayer 2, pages 814-815.
(Please overlook the outdated language.) | _____ |
| 4. Number 1, page 836. | _____ |
| 5. Prayer 62, page 833. | _____ |

The Five Fingers of Prayer

- a. Adoration
- b. Confession
- c. Thanksgiving
- d. Intercession
- e. Petition

PART 2

Write a prayer in your own words that touches on and expresses each of the five types of prayer discussed in this session. It should be possible to do this in one short to medium-length paragraph. (I do not need to see this, and you will not be asked to share it with anyone else.)