

**Title:** Five Finger Prayer

**Object:** Praying Hands

**Scripture:** "We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you." (Colossians 1:3)

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 meet with every week and sometimes we go for a long time without either of us saying anything.

Sometimes that same thing happens when I am praying. I start to pray and then I just can't think of what I should say. Does that ever happen to you? Well, today, I want to show you something that will help you when that happens. It is called the "Five Finger Prayer."

First, I want you to put your hands together in front of you as if you are praying. Keep your eyes open so that you can see your hands. You will notice that the closest finger to you is the thumb. Since it is the closest to you, the thumb reminds you to pray for those that are closest to you. Pray for your parents and your brothers or sisters.

The next finger is called your index finger. It is used for pointing. Let this finger remind you to pray for those that point you in the right direction. Pray for your teachers, your brothers and sisters at church and your pastor.

The next finger is the tallest finger. This finger reminds us to pray for our leaders. Pray for the president and other leaders in our government.

The fourth finger is the called the ring finger. Did you know that this is the weakest of all the fingers? Just ask any one who plays the piano and they will tell you that is true. Let this finger remind you to pray for those who are weak or sick.

The next finger is the smallest finger. The Bible says, "Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought." Let the little finger remind you to pray for yourself. Pray that God will make you humble and obedient.

So the next time you are talking to God, and you can't think of anything to say, let the "Five Finger Prayer" help remind you.

Dear Lord, we thank you for prayer. It is good to have a friend to talk to, and You are the best friend of all. Help us to remember this Five Finger Prayer to remember those who need our prayers. Amen.

John 17:1-5

**Title – The Lord's Prayer**

**Opening**

This morning our focus is on prayer. The 17<sup>th</sup> century English Puritan Thomas Watson wrote in his wonderful book, *The Godly Man's Picture*, "A godly man cannot live without prayer. A man cannot live unless he takes his breath, nor can the soul, unless it breathes forth its desires to God." (Page 88) If you have not read this book by Watson, you should. Prayer expresses our longing for God and our desire to hear from God. Christ's teaching about prayer and how to pray is found in Matthew chapter 6. Jesus said, **7 "When you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. 8 So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him."** (Matthew 6:7-8) Jesus is clear; we are to pray from the desires of our soul, not the repetitions written by man. God already knows our needs and desires, but He wants us to reach out to Him and know we are completely dependent on Him for everything, even the air we breathe. I like how Michael W. Smith wrote in his song, "This is the air I breathe, Your holy presence living in me. This is my daily bread, Your very word spoken to me. And I - I'm desperate for you and I'm lost without you." Without prayer with God we starve spiritually and are lost. **Prayer is truly soul food for a believer.**

Jesus instructs us saying, **9 "Pray, then, in this way."** Would you please stand and pray with me, "Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name. **10 Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. 11 Give us this day**

our daily bread. 12 And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 13 And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.” (Matthew 6:9-13)

Please be seated. This is a great model of prayer, but I think it would be better titled “A Disciples’ Prayer” for this morning we will see what I believe is the true “Lord’s Prayer. Here in this model prayer Jesus ends and as we repeat this prayer we end by saying “Amen.” The word is translated not from the Greek, but from the Hebrew אָמֵן Amen (aw·mane) meaning “so be it” or “let it be true.”

Beginning in the Book of Numbers the word “Amen” is found in 113 verses in the Old Testament and then carried over into the New Testament in 141 verses.

There are only 6 Hebrew words, other than proper names, carried over into the New Testament; Amen, Armageddon, Hallelujah, Hosanna, Mammon and Sabbath. Amen had such a strong meaning that it was used in the New Testament right along with the Greek and everyone knew its meaning. When we say this model prayer given by Jesus and end with “Amen” we are saying this prayer and the statements contained in it are to be true in our lives.

Prayer is foundational to every believer’s spiritual existence. Prayer is so important God commands we pray to Him. God told Jeremiah, “Call to Me and I will answer you, and I will tell you great and mighty things, which you do not know.” (Jeremiah 33:3) This is the spiritual life of a Christian, God revealing more of Himself to us so that we might live holy before Him and know His love. The Apostle Paul instructed the saints in Ephesus saying, “With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit.” (Ephesians 6:18) We are to surrender ourselves to the Holy Spirit; let Him rule our lives, decisions and actions and let Him guide us in prayer.

As I thought about how God reveals Himself to us it came to me how simple God must be in His instruction to us. I can only begin to envision the deep of thought that must flow between God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

**God's thoughts are not our thoughts nor are His ways our ways.** If the Scriptures are to be of use to us humans they must be God's thoughts in the very simplest form, otherwise, we would be overwhelmed beyond what I can imagine. This brings us to the most pure example in the scriptures of a direct verbalized communication and prayer between two members of the Godhead recorded in the Bible. John begins chapter 17 straight forward, recording, **1 "Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, 'Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You, 2 even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life. 3 This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. 4 I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do. 5 Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.'"** Jesus' prayer and petition to God the Father continues and is found within His conversation with God the Father written in this passage of John. His prayer continues in verse 9, **"I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours; 10 and all things that are Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine; and I have been glorified in them."** Skip onto verse 17, **"Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth."** Jesus finishes His prayer in verse 24, **"Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world."** (John 17:1-5, 9-10, 17 and 24) **Jesus**

makes His prayer in simple terms so that we can understand, but the ideas He puts forth are profound. If we have difficulty understanding it is because of our fallen nature and sin, not because Jesus did not speak in clear and simple language. This is a wonderful and powerful prayer presented in three parts; Christ's prayer for Himself in verses 1 to 5, His prayer for His disciples in verses 6 to 19 and His prayer for all who believe by faith in Him until His second coming in verses 20 to 26. This morning we will spend our time in verses 1 to 5.

### High Priestly Prayer

As we study these verses I think you will come to see that this is the true Lord's Prayer and the prayer we began with out of Matthew chapter 6 would be better titled "A Disciple's Prayer." The one in Matthew is a model of prayer given by Jesus, but here in John 17 this is the prayer of Jesus. In many bibles this has been given the title of Jesus' "High Priestly Prayer" and so it is. **Jesus intercedes for believers as our High Priest before the throne of the Father.** Martin Luther said of these verses, "This is truly, beyond measure, a warm and hearty prayer. He opens the depths of His heart, both in reference to us and to His Father, and He pours them all out. It sounds so honest, so simple; it is so deep, so rich, so wide, no one can fathom it." The Scottish Reformer, John Knox, had this prayer read to him every day during the final days of his life; he died November 24, 1572. Knox said that these few verses brought comfort and strength as he lay dying.

It is a holy prayer of our Lord Jesus, first for Himself and then for us. John Milton the author of the epic poem *Paradise Lost* may well have been meditating on this prayer of our High Priest Jesus when he said, "What better can we do than prostrate fall before Him reverent, and there confess humbly our faults, and

pardon beg with tears watering the ground?” Have you ever felt this? Have you come before Christ and tread on the holy ground of prayer to the point you want to remove your shoes as Moses did and prostrate yourself? It is a moment like no other. I hope you will have a taste as the great hymn says, “All hail the power of Jesus’ Name! Let angels prostrate fall.” If it is good enough for the angels it should be good enough for us. In awe we need to fall on our faces before a holy God and be transparent with our Creator.

### Prayer of Petition

Now we come to the words of Jesus in verses 1 to 5. Jesus prays that the Father would glorify Him and as a result Jesus would glory the Father. John sets the stage writing, “Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven.” Look at verse one, it says, Jesus “spoke these things,” implies that Jesus had completed speaking the things He wanted to teach the disciples and was now turning to something else, namely, to this prayer. Jesus was “lifting up His eyes to heaven” as a symbolic act. One looks skyward while praying to show that one is giving full attention to God. At this time the common thought was heaven was in the sky. But Jesus was not, through supernatural power, looking into heaven but showing respect and focus.

As Jesus begins speaking in verse one, saying, “Father” and this invokes the imagery that is truly of a son speaking to and seeking a blessing from his father. The tradition from the Old Testament of the father blessing his children, especially the eldest son is brought to life here. Jesus continues, “Father, the hour has come” which is the reason for this whole prayer. The crucial Passover death of Jesus was now at hand and His torture and death is near. The

culmination of His life and calling waits just a few hours longer.

### **Petition – Glorify Your Son**

Jesus says in verse 1, “Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You.” Here Jesus evokes deep meaning in a few words. What does “glorify” mean? The dictionary defines “glorify” to make glorious by bestowing honor, praise and admiration or to elevate to celestial glory. This is our human attempt to define glory and of course it does not do God justice. As I tried to understand Jesus glorifying the Father I became aware conflicts in this passage. Remember I said I believe God must speak so simply to us for us to understand. I found four concepts that appeared at first to be in conflict. First, Jesus possessed glory with the Father before He took on human form. Second, Jesus’ glory is God’s glory – they are one and the same. Third, Jesus did not possess this glory during His incarnation. And yet, and fourthly, there is a sense in which He did possess this glory while on earth because He revealed God’s glory to many people. In John’s recording of the first miracle at Cana we read, “This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.” (John 2:11) So you can see I struggled with, “How can the Lord Jesus have possessed God’s glory, renounced it and yet, have possessed it even while He was in human form? The glory of God is interrelated to His attributes, which include - love, truth, grace, holiness, unlimited power, knowledge and omnipresence. God’s glory defines His attributes. Jesus’ life and ministry exhibits God’s glory. Verse 4 says, “I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do.” Jesus is saying, His life and ministry revealed the characteristics and attributes of God the Father. When the disciples



beheld the Jesus' character at the Cana wedding they saw, at least to a certain extent, both the glory of Christ and therefore the glory of God the Father. As we see Jesus in the scriptures, see Him spiritually in our souls and prayer, and in His changing our lives, and by these we are also seeing God the Father. This then shows us the glory of Christ during His ministry here on earth. But, what about Christ's glory He possessed before His incarnation when He and the Father were One?

### **Petition – Glory Restored**

Jesus' ministry had glorified the Father. Jesus gave spiritual life back to those created in God's image because God the Father "gave Him (Jesus) authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life" in verse two of John 17. Redeemed lives bring God glory. Having eternal life of worshipping God brings both Jesus the Son and the Father glory, for when Jesus ascended to heaven they would truly again be One. During the time of Jesus' earthly ministry their glory was not the same, they were not One in the sense they had been before Jesus' incarnation. Jesus now is asking His proper glory be returned. In verse 5 Jesus asks the Father, "Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was."

During Jesus life on earth He reflected God's glory to mankind. We see examples of how God's glory was reflected by others to people in the Old Testament and they were meant to prepare people for the coming of the Messiah. Jesus the Christ would reflect the glory of God and bring people into a restored relationship with God by their faith in Him. 1 Kings records the history of the transition of the monarchy from King David to his son Solomon. Here we see God's glory as cloud

and light. “And when the priests came out of the Holy Place, a cloud filled the house of the LORD, <sup>11</sup> so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD.” (1 Kings 8:10-11) Jesus’ cloud and light would fill people’s lives and the Holy Place would not longer be in a manmade temple, but in the souls, created by God, of believers in the Christ of God. In Psalm 104 we read of God as light, “Bless the LORD, O my soul! O LORD my God, you are very great! You are clothed with splendor and majesty, covering yourself with light as with a garment, stretching out the heavens like a tent.” (Psalm 104:1-2) God’s glory is light for He reveals truth in a dark world. Jesus said of Himself, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” (John 8:12) Jesus was the Father’s glory on earth and was the fulfillment of the Old Testament’s understanding and promise of God’s glory.

Before Jesus became human He possessed God’s inward glory and outward glory. When He came to earth He laid aside God’s complete outward glory otherwise no person would have been able to be in His presence and live. Jesus reflected the glory of the Father’s true glory so that men might come to see God in a way that they could understand and live physically and be born again to new life living for God’s glory and this would be Christ’ glory when He returned to heaven.

The Old Testament presented a concept of the radiance of God’s glory among His people. “Shekinah Glory” is a transliteration of a Hebrew word meaning “the one who dwells.” They saw God’s Shekinah glory in the pillar of fire and cloud, they saw it in His light above the Holy of Holies and they saw it in the glow on Moses’ face. We see it in Jesus who is exalted and at the right hand of God the Father.

Stephen saw the glory of the exalted Christ, who was again One with the Father at the time he was martyred. We know the “Shekinah Glory” by the Holy Spirit because He is “the one who dwells” within us.

### **Closing**

In this prayer of Jesus to the Father we find Jesus’ desire to return to His full glory and be One with the Father again. That Jesus is at the end of His mission given to Him by the Father. Jesus’ ministry has brought the Father glory by His revealing the Father to mankind and that the Father has given people to Christ for eternity bring Christ glory.

There is one more point I would like to examine. It is that we share in Christ’s glory. We share in Christ’s glory now for as we grow spiritually and become more “Christ-like” we personify Christ’s character that is also the Father’s character. I believe this is what Jesus is saying in John 17:10, “all things that are Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine; and I have been glorified in them (*meaning believers glorify Jesus*).”

What does this mean for you and me? **We will one day behold Christ and the Father as One and see their full glory.** Today, we are to be filled with Christ’s glory through the indwelling of God the Holy Spirit, then our lives – our thoughts, our desires, our actions, our ambitions should show God’s glory to the dark world, just as Jesus did. We are called to give the world true light and a glimmer of God’s “Shekinah Glory.” We need to fall before our holy God and pray with earnest desire that He will continue to change us and we will submit to Him. In John 14 Jesus says, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to

**the Father except through me.”** (John 14:6) It is Jesus’ glorifying the Father, completely fulfilling God’s mission and every detail of Scripture, His death and resurrection and His glorification that the Father’s plan for salvation has been accomplished – there simply is no other way to be reconciled back to God. Jesus gave us a pattern for living and for ministry; self-denial, obedience, yes, even suffering and after these comes glory. By the grace of God may we be proven faithful and fulfill the mission He has given us. May we be just as faithful in fulfilling our mission as Jesus was, not as perfectly as Jesus, but always seeking God’s glory by living and sharing the gospel of Christ. Amen! Remember what Amen means – so be it – may this be true. So I say again, Amen and Amen!