The Prayer Hand Illustration

Getting a Grip on Prayer

There's probably no better "barometer" for indicating the depth of our relationship with God than our prayer life. And yet, many Christians struggle more with this spiritual discipline than any other. Perhaps part of that is due to the fact that our prayer lives become one-dimensional. Too often asking God for "stuff" is as far as our prayers go. No relationship can flourish and grow if it's one-dimensional.

The "Prayer Hand" is a tool Navigators have been using for years to help believers maintain a more rounded prayer life—one that incorporates five distinct elements of prayer and results in a deeper relationship with the Father.



Confession: This type of prayer keeps us honest and humble before God. We acknowledge our sin and agree with God that what we've done is wrong. *If we confess our sins , he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness* (1 John 1:9). This restores our relationship with God.

Petition: This aspect of prayer focuses on asking God to meet our specific needs. It's a heartfelt acknowledgment of our dependence on God to meet our needs. An example of this is when Hannah—who couldn't have children—asked God to give her a child. *I prayed for this child, and the Lord has granted me what I asked of him* (1 Samuel 1:27).

Intercession: This kind of prayer is "others-focused" and emphasizes asking God to meet the needs of others or to intervene in events that affect those around us. The apostle Paul demonstrated what this kind of prayer was about when he told the Ephesian Christians: *And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints* (Ephesians 6:18).

Thanksgiving: Telling someone "thank you" is critical in any relationship. This kind of prayer gratefully acknowledges what God has done for you. Paul urged the Ephesians to practice this kind of prayer, telling them they should be: *always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ* (Ephesians 5:20).

Praise: This aspect of prayer allows us to voice our wonder and awe about who God really is. It is completely God-focused. It's our chance to delight in God. The psalmist captured the essence of this beautifully: *Praise the Lord. O my soul. I will praise the Lord all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live* (Psalm 146:1,2).

Regularly using all "fingers" of the "Prayer Hand" can help you develop a more balanced prayer life and a deeper relationship with God. And the great thing is that you can take this tool with you wherever you go!