

Five Ways to Pray

In 1 Thessalonians 5:17, the apostle Paul says, "Never stop praying." WOW! Do you know anybody who never stops praying? Probably not. But Paul knew that trying to do that helps us be more like Jesus.

Prayer is talking with God. When you talk with God, you can talk the same way you talk with your friends and family. So it's OK to start your prayers with "Hi, God!" instead of using a bunch of fancy words. And you can talk with God about any-

thing. God cares about your math test and the fight you had with your friend, just like God cares about other problems in our world.

Here are some activities that can help you get into the habit of talking more with God.

ILLUSTRATION BY SCOTT HOLLADAY

Prayer Box

Are you worried about something? Most of the time, the things we worry about are things we can't control. Making a prayer box is a good way to practice giving your worries to God.

Find an empty box like a tissue box or a small gift box. Decorate it by gluing on scrapbook paper or construction paper. Add stickers, drawings, words, or patterns to your box.

Whenever you're worried about something, write that thing on a piece of paper and put it in your prayer box. Ask God to help you stop worrying and to trust that God will take care of you. Every now and then, read the things you wrote on the papers, and think about how God has helped you with them.



Prayer Hearts

Sometimes it's hard to remember all the things you want to pray for. My friend Sara keeps a string of hearts in her kitchen. On the hearts she writes the names of people who need prayer. You can make your own prayer hearts by just cutting out heart shapes and taping them to a piece of yarn, or you can make origami hearts like the ones in this picture. You can find instructions for folding these paper hearts at tinyurl.com/origamiheart.



The Five-Finger Prayer

Did you know that looking at your hand can help you pray? It can! Hold your hand out, palm down. Each finger can remind you to pray for a different group of people. Here's how it works:

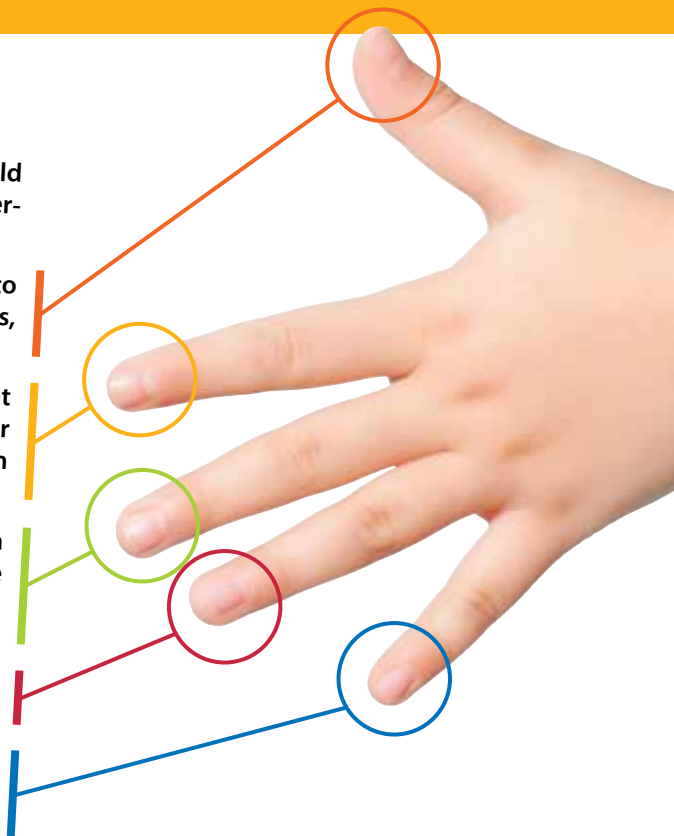
THUMB: your thumb is the closest finger to you, so it can remind you to pray for the people who are closest to you, like parents, brothers and sisters, grandparents, and friends.

POINTER FINGER: Pray for the people who help point you in the right direction: school teachers, your pastor, Sunday school leaders, and other people who teach you or give you advice. Pray that God would help them be wise and patient.

TALLEST FINGER: Your next finger is usually your tallest finger. It can help you remember to pray for people who have authority—people like government officials, police officers, and other leaders. Pray that they would make good decisions and care about the people they lead.

RING FINGER: Did you know that this finger is your weakest finger? Let it remind you to pray for people who are sick, sad, and in trouble.

LITTLE FINGER: Your last finger is your pinkie. After you've prayed for other people in your life, don't forget to pray for yourself! Ask God to forgive the wrong things you've done and help you to be more like Jesus.



Psalm Prayers

Many of the psalms in the Bible were written as prayers to God. King David and other people wrote psalms to praise God, to ask God for help, and even to tell God how angry they were. Writing your own psalm can help you tell God how you're feeling and ask God for help.

Dear God,
I know you are _____
(write words that describe God, such as loving, powerful, kind . . .)

I'm feeling _____
(write what you're feeling right now)

because _____
(describe a problem you're having or something you're thankful for)

Please help me to _____
(write words that ask God for what you need)

Thank you for _____
(write words of thanks)

NOTE to PARENTS: To dig more deeply into the psalms with your kids, check out the e-book *Psalms for Families: Devotions for All Ages* by Robert J. Keeley and Laura Keeley. You can find it for free at worship.calvin.edu (search on "psalms for families") or you can purchase a Kindle edition from amazon.com.

Walking Prayers

Sometimes it's hard to sit still while you pray. If you like to move a lot, try a walking prayer. As you walk down your school hallway, pray silently for the kids and teachers you pass. Remember that every single one of them is struggling with something—even the people who look like they have it all together. Or take a walk in a park or in the woods and pray for God's creation. Or walk around your neighborhood and pray for the people who live there. You can pray a walking prayer any time you're moving around!



Sandy Swartzentruber is a freelance writer and a school library aide. She attends Sherman Street CRC in Grand Rapids, Michigan. She often needs to pray for God's help with things she's worried about.