

GRACE BIBLE TRAINING CENTRE (GBTC)
SCHOOL OF MINISTRY
ARUSHA - TANZANIA

SUBJECT: PRAYER & INTERCESSION

LESSON 3: POSTURES IN PRAYER

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Introduction:

The question people ask always is whether it matters if we sit, stand, walk, drive, kneel or lie down to pray. Should we close our eyes, open our eyes, bow or raise our heads, fold or raise hands up in prayer? Is there an acceptable or Biblical way to pray or should we choose what is convenient for us?

We must be careful however that in seeking to exercise the freedom to adopt different postures in prayer, we should never use postures of other Religions such as Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, etc or those used in meditation such as yoga, etc.

Although prayer is something that is done from the heart, physical posture is an important part of prayer. If words are what you say in prayer, then posture is like how you say it. Physical posture helps to posture our hearts and minds as we pray.

The Bible gives us several examples and varieties of postures in prayer. We can adopt whatever suits us or choose a combination of Biblical examples. Sometimes people adopt certain postures instinctively, and which relates directly to their spiritual moods at the time. There is no use being religious about religion or surrounding our faith with rituals, but to seek to explore the various ways we can approach our heavenly Father in love, sincerity, faith, and in spirit.

The many examples in Scripture of various postures used in prayers tell us of the freedom of expression available to us to use.

1. Standing with hands uplifted and open, heads and eyes lifted up (John 17:1; Luke 9:28-32; 1Timothy 2:8; Job 30:20)

This is the oldest posture of prayer. By praying this way, the believer acknowledges God as external and transcendent and the object of our worship. When we extend our hands especially in worship, it symbolizes our surrender to the Lord.

Hands lifted up and open is a posture of receptivity. We position ourselves to receive what God wants to give His people – His love, unmerited grace, peace, joy, healing, etc.

The posture is used mostly for thanksgiving, blessings, benedictions, and general prayers.

2. Standing with hands clasped at the chest and head bowed (Luke 18:10-13; 1Kings 8:22; 1Samuel 1:26; Mark 11:25)

This posture is for submissive petitions, intercessory prayers and prayers of repentance.

3. Kneeling either with heads up, eyes and hands lifted and open or with heads down, eyes closed and hands clasped (Matthew 18:26; Luke 22:41-44; Daniel 6:10)

This is the traditional posture for requesting favours from a king. It is a traditional posture for prayers of repentance or supplication.

The posture of kneeling, coupled with a humble heart is the most powerful position on earth. Humility honours God and God honours humility.

Other Bible passages to read is 1Kings 8:54; 2Chronicles 6:13; Ezra 9:5; Acts 9:40; 20:36; 21:5; Ephesians 3:14.

4. Lying on the floor or bed (Psalms 4:4; 63:6)

It is used when someone is sick in bed or lying in bed during the night to meditate on the Lord.

5. Prostrating or crouching low, or bowing down to the ground

This is when people place their body fully on the ground with their faces on it and with outstretched hands.

It is a posture of worship, an expression of homage and submission to God (2Chronicles 20:18; Genesis 24:52; Numbers 20:6).

It is also a traditional posture for desperate, repentant and intercessory prayer (Matthew 26:38-39; Mark 14:35).

6. Sitting, heads down and hands clasped or folded (Judges 20:26; Nehemiah 1:4)

In 2Samuel 7:18, King David sat to pray. This is not a very common posture but it is acceptable. It is a posture of someone seeking instructions from the Lord or through His prophet (2Kings 4:38; Ezekiel 8:1; 33:31).