

POSTURES FOR PRAYER

A PRAYER WALK

INTRODUCTION

You're in the Sunday morning worship service and someone says, "Let us pray..."

You've finished your devotional reading for the day and you want to close in prayer...

These scenarios and many others that involve prayer bring about the automatic response of sitting with hands folded, head bowed, and eyes closed. Certainly this posture is appropriate and is an outward symbol of love and respect for God, but there can be so much more when it comes to the outward expression of communing with God. Our posture can assist our attitude and usher us into His Presence.

Prayer is far more than words....it can also involve body language. The definition of body language is the process of communicating nonverbally through conscious or unconscious gestures and movements. Our bodies can underscore or confuse the message we want to convey and when it comes to communing with God our bodies can help us engage our total being in fellowship with God.

This time of prayer is to help you engage all that God has created – your spirit, soul and body. If you are open to some biblically-supported postures, these simple changes may bring a deeper awareness of and intimacy with the Lord. Positioning your body is not a "magic bullet" to deeper communication with the Lord, simply open yourself up to the possibilities as you commune with the Almighty! Begin your prayer walk with this prayer:

"How shall I pray?

Are tears prayers, Lord?

Are screams prayers,

or groans

or sighs

or curses?

Can trembling hands be lifted to you,

or clenched fists

or the cold sweat that trickles down my back

or the cramps that knot my stomach?

Will you accept my prayers, Lord,

my real prayers,

rooted in the muck and mud and rock of my life,

and not just my pretty cut-flower, gracefully arranged

bouquet of words?

Will you accept me, Lord,

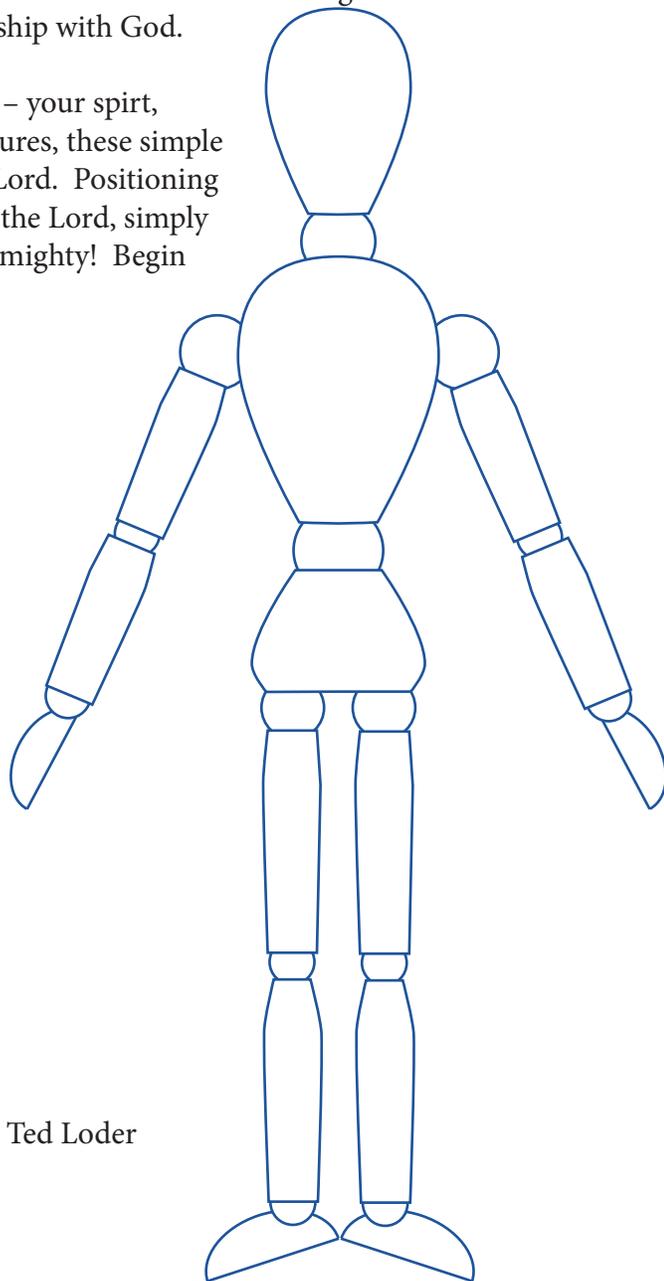
as I really am,

messed up mixture of glory and grime?

Lord, help me!

Help me to trust that you do accept me as I am..."

Guerrillas of Grace, Ted Loder



STATION 1-STANDING

EYES OPEN, LOOKING UP, HANDS UPLIFTED WITH PALMS UP

Standing for prayer with hands outstretched was an original posture when communing with God from earliest biblical recordings. It is called the orans position, from the Latin word for praying. When the worshipper prays in this position there is an acknowledgement that God is superior and we stand in respect before the Almighty. We relinquish our agenda and wait to hear the Lord's agenda and physically open ourselves to His leading. Standing with hands lifted and palms up is a symbol of total abandon to God.

This posture is for thanksgiving, praise, blessing, benedictions and general prayers. This is still the normal position for prayers in eastern churches and in Jewish synagogues, and it is still used in the western church, particularly for – but not exclusive to – the blessing of the Eucharist.

- *“...he (Jesus) took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray. As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus.....they saw his glory and the two men standing with him.” Luke 9:28-32*
- *“After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed.” John 17:1a*
- *“I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer...” 1 Timothy 2:8a*

ACTION

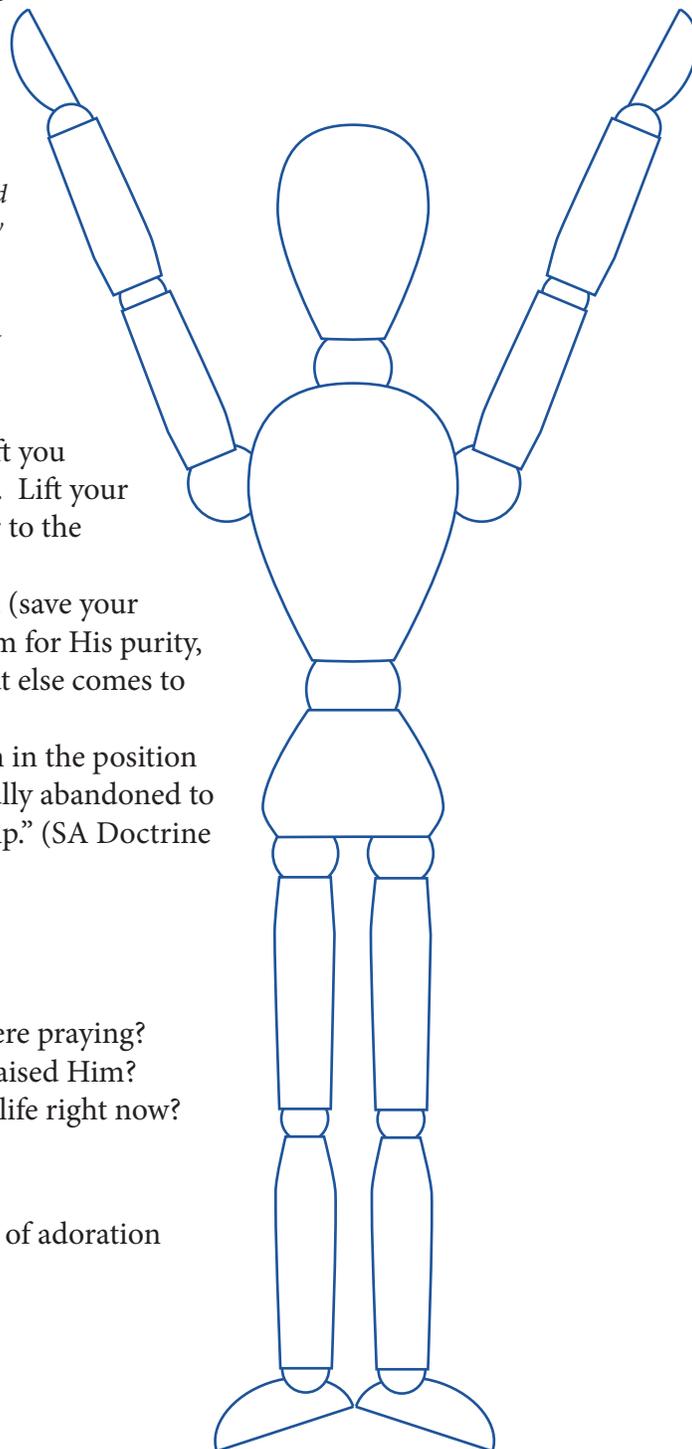
- Stand with feet slightly apart to bring optimum balance. Lift your head and eyes upward as a sign of receptivity and expectation. Lift your hands upward with your palms open as a symbol of surrender to the majesty and omniscience of God.
- Your prayers of praise are to recognize the attributes of God (save your thanks for when you are recounting His blessings). Praise Him for His purity, righteousness, justice, goodness, holiness, compassion.....what else comes to mind?
- Don't rush. If you sense reluctance or awkwardness, remain in the position until you can envision being in the heavenly throne room totally abandoned to praising the Lord – “the only proper object of religious worship.” (SA Doctrine #1).

REFLECTION

- What occupied your mind as you took on this posture?
- Did your body's position help the purpose for which you were praying?
- What character of God most occupied your mind as you praised Him? Why...how does your response to this attribute relate to your life right now?

PRAYER

God Almighty, as I leave this stance of praise may the attitude of adoration linger in my heart and mind throughout this day. Amen



STATION 2 – KNEELING

EYES OPEN, LOOKING UP, HANDS UPLIFTED WITH PALMS UP
OR

LOOKING DOWN WITH EYES AVERTED OR CLOSED AND HANDS FOLDED

This is the traditional posture originated with the requesting favors from a king and so it became the traditional posture for prayers of repentance and supplication. The Council of Nicaea in AD 325 forbade kneeling on Sundays, because penitential prayer was considered inappropriate during a celebration of the Resurrection. In western Christianity, kneeling came to mean simple humility and submission, and so kneeling became the normal posture for most prayers in the west. However, to eastern Christians, kneeling still means repentance or supplication.

“The servant fell on his knees before him. ‘Be patient with me,’ he begged, ‘and I will pay back everything.’ The servant’s master took pity on him, canceled the debt, and let him go.” Matthew 18:26

“[Jesus] withdrew about a stone’s throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, ‘Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.’ An angel appeared to him and strengthened him. And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.”

ACTION

- Kneel down at an altar or in front of a chair. If you want to position yourself in a way that represents open confession and receptiveness to God’s mercy, lean back on your feet to support yourself. Open your palms in front of you to present your true self to the Lord and confess your sin. You may also be led to rest your forearms or elbows on the altar or seat of the chair and fold your hands in a position for prayer.
- However you are led to position yourself, be sure your prayers of repentance and supplication are specific don’t relegate your prayers to a short “forgive me”.

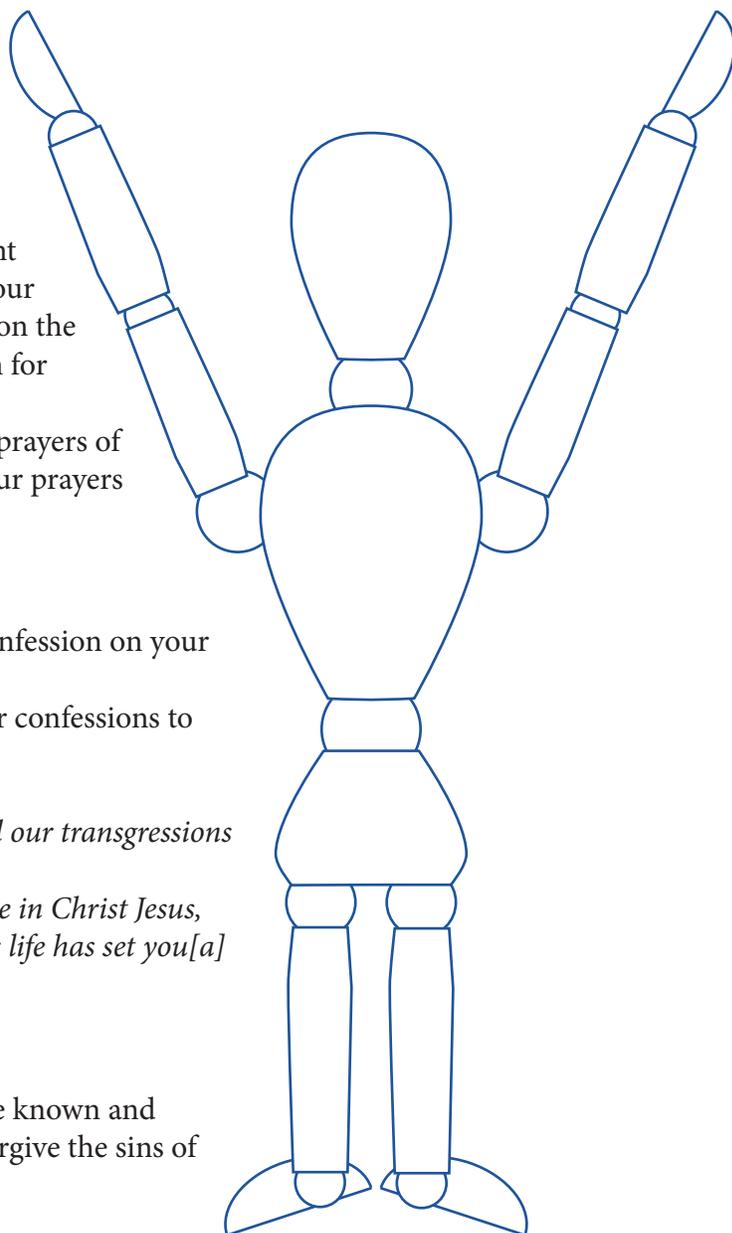
REFLECTION

- Describe your attitude as you came to the Lord with confession on your heart?
- Did you sense God’s mercy and grace as you made your confessions to Him?
- Important scripture to ponder:
“...as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.” Psalm 103:12

“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you[a] free from the law of sin and death.” Romans 8:1-2

PRAYER

Almighty God, my heart is open to you, all my desires are known and from you nothing is hidden. I rest on the fact that you forgive the sins of my penitent heart. Amen.



STATION 3-PROSTRATE

LYING ON ONE'S BELLY, LOOKING DOWN WITH EYES AVERTED OR CLOSED

This is the traditional posture for begging favors from a king when the favors are great and the petitioner is either desperate or has no standing before the king even in the literal sense. It became the traditional posture for desperate, penitential, or intercessory prayer and is still used in eastern churches, which have plenty of room because they don't have pews.

"Then [Jesus] said to them, 'My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.' Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, 'My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.'" Matthew 26:38-39

ACTION

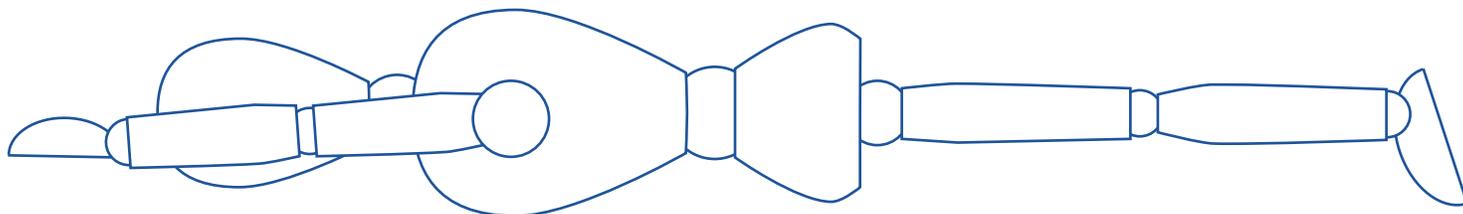
- Get into a position on the floor that will allow you to be horizontal and face down.
- This is not meant to be a comfortable, sleeping position, but one of desperate penitence.
- Stay in the position until any sense of awkwardness has passed.
- Anticipate the Holy Spirit's presence.
- Bring to the Lord your desperate need for cleansing. Be specific.

REFLECTION

- What did the Lord bring to mind as you anticipated His message to you?
- Did your prostrate position help bring your frame of mind to listening to the Lord speak?
- What was the outcome of your time with Him?

PRAYER

Holy One, thank you for the work of the Holy Spirit in revealing to me anything that needed to be brought to light. Thank you for the work of your Holy Spirit does not condemn, but conviction. I lay down my body in response to laying down my will to You. Thank you for never giving up on me. Amen.



STATION 4-SITTING

LOOKING DOWN WITH EYES AVERTED OR CLOSED AND HANDS FOLDED

The Roman Catholic Church invented pews during the Middle Ages, right before the Protestant Reformation. Since the Protestant Reformation was essentially a Christian education movement with very long sermons, the Protestants kept the pews even though they rejected just about everything else they regarded as a ‘Roman invention.’ As a result, sitting has become the normal posture for prayer for many western congregations.

“Then King David went in and sat before the Lord, and he said: ‘Who am I, Sovereign Lord, and what is my family, that you have brought me this far?’” 2 Samuel 7:18

ACTION

- Sit comfortably in a chair with your back supported against the back of the chair, both feet flat on the floor, and hands in your lap.
- Take time to be aware of your body...your heart beat, your breathing.
- Become aware of the presence of the Lord during this time.
- Your posture should take the stress off any part of your body to relieve you to concentrate on your time of prayer.
- Make the Lord aware of your willingness to hear from Him. You may want to begin this time with one of the following:

“Come, Lord Jesus.”

“I am here.”

“Speak Lord, your servant is listening.”

REFLECTION

- Were you able to “center down” to commune with God?
- When other thoughts came to mind, were you able to deal with them? If so, how?
- What did the Lord reveal to you? Ask Him to show you how to move forward from this time of communion with Him.

PRAYER

And now may the spirit which was in Jesus Christ be in me, enabling me to know God’s will and empowering me to do God’s will. Amen.

