

What is Your Attitude & Attitude in Prayer?

1 Cor 14:14-15 & 1 Tim 2:8

Lesson by Lonnie Fritz

In the box to the right – write the attitude (#1) is displayed?

Introduction:

Last week our lesson was on the Power of the Word of God! God's communication to us! It seems only logical to this week talk about the other half of the conversation – Our communication to God via the avenue of prayer. What an incredible blessing for the people of God, followers of Jesus to go into the very presence of God – Heb 4:16 **“So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.”**

I want to introduce our topic this morning with a 3 minute clip from last year's movie call the “War Room” about a believer who went into her closet and prayed and was busy teaching others to pray powerfully. It is a powerful clip and worthy of our consideration.

-Play War Room Clip-

Did you know that an airplane has attitude?

Position of aircraft or spacecraft relative to a frame of reference (the horizon or direction of motion)

- 1. A complex mental state involving beliefs and feelings and values and dispositions to act in certain ways; *“he had the attitude that work was fun”*
- 2. The arrangement of the body and its limbs; *“he assumed an attitude of surrender”* [syn: position]
- WordNet (*Dictionary.com*)

Does your posture in prayer matter?

- However, we teach that one should “bow your head and close your eyes” when you pray... Here are some adorable pictures of our granddaughter Beckett – We often teach our kids to close their eyes, and sometimes fold their hands when they pray.
- My Great nephew- Emmett was feeding his hungry dinosaur apples and blueberries and mushrooms, when all of the sudden, he stopped and dropped everything, folded his hands, and bowed his head, and started to babble his little baby talk prayer.
- So I stopped him, saying, “Emmett, you need to bow your head and fold your hands to pray. Like this, Bud.” And I showed him.
- So he stopped babbling his little babble prayer and just continued stuffing his dinosaur with plastic fruits and vegetables. Then, something smacked me in the forehead: A concept. With my hands folded like a child, and my head bowed. I was doing this wrong. I was teaching him wrong. And for some reason, my mind suddenly echoed with Matthew 19:14. “Let the little children come to me. Do not stop them! For the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to those who are like these children.”
- My, oh my. That landed right on my heart. Tears came to my eyes for a moment. I've always had a hard time praying. I get distracted. I lose my focus. I had considered that my prayers weren't really very respectful or valid if they didn't start with “Dear God” and end with “In Jesus' name, Amen.”

- **Amanda Scheid** I love this Caity! My kids pray looking around and seeing their blessings. Maybe by shutting our eyes so tight we are missing the blessings God is giving us! We should be more like them!!
- Did you know that it is not recorded in Scripture and unknown to the early church is the custom of closing the eyes while folding the hands!
- When I think of contrasting prayers, I think of Nehemiah. Maybe we could look at Nehemiah for answers of attitude and attitude (frame of mind).
- **Nehemiah's first recorded prayer (Neh. 1:1-11) READ**
- ⁴ When I heard this, I sat down and wept. In fact, for days I mourned, fasted, and prayed to the God of heaven. ⁵ Then I said,
- "O LORD, God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps his covenant of unflinching love with those who love him and obey his commands, ⁶listen to my prayer! Look down and see me praying night and day for your people Israel. I confess that we have sinned against you. Yes, even my own family and I have sinned! ⁷ We have sinned terribly by not obeying the commands, decrees, and regulations that you gave us through your servant Moses.
- ⁸ "Please remember what you told your servant Moses: 'If you are unfaithful to me, I will scatter you among the nations. ⁹ But if you return to me and obey my commands and live by them, then even if you are exiled to the ends of the earth, I will bring you back to the place I have chosen for my name to be honored.'
- ¹⁰ "The people you rescued by your great power and strong hand are your servants. ¹¹ O Lord, please hear my prayer! Listen to the prayers of those of us who delight in honoring you. Please grant me success today by making the king favorable to me. Put it into his heart to be kind to me."

- Does it tell of his attitude (posture)? No. Does it tell of his attitude (frame of mind)? Yes!
- Filled with praise, penitence and petition.

- **Praise** - "I pray, LORD God of heaven, O great and awesome God, You who keep Your covenant and mercy with those who love You and observe Your commandments"(1:5).
- **Penitence** - "Both my father's house and I have sinned" (1:6).
- **Petition** - "O Lord, I pray, please let Your ear be attentive to the prayer of Your servant, and to the prayer of Your servants who desire to fear Your name; and let Your servant prosper this day, I pray, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man" (1:11).
- There are times we should kneel before our God with Nehemiah expressing in words the greatness and awesomeness of our God. Our need to ask God for forgiveness by expressing repentance should come from an honest and open heart. It is also important to express our needs, even though He knows our needs, by expressing so in prayer we show our dependence on Him. In this first prayer, Nehemiah poured his heart out to God. We would all do well to on occasion do as he did.

What Attitude is most important?

- **1 Cor 14:14-16** For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. 15 What is the outcome then? I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the mind also; I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the mind also.
- **John 4:23-24** "But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. 24 "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

Even though our posture attitude is not the most important, it often says a lot about why and how we are approaching God. Let's look at some of the different prayer attitudes and what attitudes they reveal.

- **Kneeling**

- **Kneeling:** This was a very common posture to show respect in worship in Old and New Testament times.
- This is the traditional posture for requesting favors from a king, and so it became the traditional posture for prayers of repentance or supplication.
- 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, NIV*
- **The Leper that came to Jesus Mark 1:40** And a leper came to Jesus, beseeching Him and falling on his knees before Him, and saying, "If You are willing, You can make me clean."
- [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 from heaven 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.
—*Luke 22:41-44, NIV*

- **1 Kings 8: 54;**
 - **1 Kings 8:22-24**
 - Then Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the assembly of Israel and spread out his hands toward heaven. 23 He said, "O LORD, the God of Israel, there is no God like You in heaven above or on earth beneath, keeping covenant and showing lovingkindness to Your servants who walk before You with all their heart,
 - **1 Kings 8:54** When Solomon had finished praying this entire prayer and supplication to the LORD, he arose from before the altar of the LORD, from kneeling on his knees with his hands spread toward heaven.

- **Ezra 9: 5;**
 - Because of the sins of the people Ezra prayed a penitent prayer to God:
 - Ezra 9:5-6 **But at the evening offering I arose from my humiliation, even with my garment and my robe torn, and I fell on my knees and stretched out my hands to the LORD my God;** 6 and I said, "O my God, I am ashamed and embarrassed to lift up my face to You, my God, for our iniquities have risen above our heads and our guilt has grown even to the heavens.
- **Dan 6:10**
 - **Now when Daniel knew that the document was signed, he entered his house (now in his roof chamber he had windows open toward Jerusalem); and he continued kneeling on his knees three times a day, praying and giving thanks before his God, as he had been doing previously**
- **Luke 22: 41;**
 - Luke 22:41-42 **And He withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and began to pray, 42 saying, "Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done.**
- **Ac 20:36 & Acts 21:5**
 - 36 When he had said these things, **he knelt down and prayed** with them all.
 - 5 When our days there were ended, we left and started on our journey, while they all, with wives and children, escorted us until we were out of the city. **After kneeling down on the beach** and praying, we said farewell to one another.
- Eph 3:14
 - 14 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father...
- Phil 2:10
 - so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
- **Head Bowed to the Ground**
 - *This is the traditional posture for begging favors from a king when the favors are great and the petitioner is either desperate or has—literally—no standing before the king. 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, NIV

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- **Exodus 34:8**
 - Ex 34:8-9

- 8 Moses made haste to bow low toward the earth and worship. 9 He said, " If now I have found favor in Your sight, O Lord, I pray, let the Lord go along in our midst, even though the people are so obstinate, and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us as Your own possession."
 - **Nehemiah 8: 6**
 - Neh 8:6 Then Ezra blessed the LORD the great God. And all the people answered, " Amen, Amen!" while lifting up their hands; then they bowed low and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground.
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- **Standing**
 - Standing: The person praying stands erect with a slightly bowed head. This was the most common posture in prayer to show respect or pay homage to God. "Then the men turned away from there and went toward Sodom, while Abraham was still standing before the LORD" (Gen 18:22).
 - This is the oldest posture for prayer. By praying this way, the worshiper acknowledges God as external and transcendent. This posture is for thanksgiving, praises, blessings, benedictions, and general prayers.
- **—Luke 9:28-32**
 - About eight days after Jesus said this, he 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 spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem. Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men **standing with him.**, *NIV*
- **Luke 18:10-14**
 - 10 "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 "The Pharisee **stood and was praying** this to himself: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. 12'I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.' 13 "But the tax collector, **standing some distance away**, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!' 14 "I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."
- **Sitting**
- Someone wrote: *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.

1 Chronicles 17: 16-27;

- David "sat" before the Lord when he prayed about the future of his kingdom –
- **Then David the king went in and sat before the LORD and said, " Who am I, O LORD God, and what is my house that You have brought me this far? 2 Sam 7:18 (Records the same event)**

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• Lying Prostrate

- **Prostration:** This requires falling upon the knees, then gradually inclining the body, until the forehead touches the ground. This was an expression of reverence and humility before God. *"And Abram **fell on his face**, and God talked with him..." (Gen. 17:3).*
- Josh 7:6 Then Joshua tore his clothes and fell to the earth on his face before the ark of the LORD until the evening, both he and the elders of Israel; and they put dust on their heads.
- Ezra 10:1
- **Now while Ezra was praying and making confession, weeping and prostrating himself before the house of God, a very large assembly, men, women and children, gathered to him from Israel; for the people wept bitterly.**
- **Mark 14:35**
 - **35 And He went a little beyond them, and fell to the ground and began to pray that if it were possible, the hour might pass Him by.**

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• Uplifted Hands

- Is the practice of "lifting up holy hands in prayer" merely a "Pentecostal" or "Charismatic" phenomenon? Some people think so and are quick to dismiss it for this reason. Others reject it because it seems strange and is different from the traditional postures of prayer. Still, others view it as strictly a cultural practice confined to the first century. Whatever a person's personal opinion might be, we must go to the Scriptures to find the truth and gain a proper understanding.

What Spiritual Value May "Lifting Up Holy Hands In Prayer" Have?

There is a history of the people of God lifting up hands in prayer that we should not overlook. Whatever possible value, if any, the lifting up of hands in prayer has is worth our consideration.

It Was an Outward Expression Used in the Praising or Blessing of God: *“Lift up your hands to the sanctuary, And bless the LORD” (Ps. 134:2). “So I will bless You as long as I live; and in Your Name I will lift up my hands” (Ps. 63:4).*

- 2 Chron 6:12-14
- Then Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the assembly of Israel **and spread out his hands**. 13 Now Solomon had made a bronze platform, five cubits long, five cubits wide and three cubits high, and had set it in the midst of the court; and **he stood on it, knelt on his knees in the presence of all the assembly of Israel and spread out his hands toward heaven**. 14 He said, **“O LORD, the God of Israel, there is no god like You in heaven or on earth,**

It Was an Expression of Their Approval of God and Reverence for Him: *“And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up. Then Ezra blessed the LORD the great God. And all the people answered, ‘Amen, Amen!’ while lifting up their hands; then they bowed low and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground” (Neh. 8:5-6).*

It Was an Outward Expression of Their Desire That Their Prayers Would Be Accepted and Received by God: **Accept my prayer as incense offered to you, and my upraised hands as an evening offering.** (Ps. 141:2; Compare to Eph. 5:2; 1 Pet. 2:5; Heb. 13:15-16).

- **1 Timothy 2: 8 Therefore I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension.**

It Was an Outward Expression of Their Acknowledgment of Their Dependency on God *“... Lift up your hands to Him for the life of your little ...” (Lam. 2:19).*

It Was an Outward Expression of Devoted Hearts to God – A Symbol of Elevated Hearts Toward God: *“We lift up our heart and hands toward God in heaven” (Lam. 3:41).* It did not literally elevate the heart, but served as a possible aid in the concentration of their hearts toward God as they prayed.

In light of these Old Testament examples (**Rom. 15:4**), **perhaps** there is at least the **possibility** (for at least some people), that the lifting up of hands in prayer will help us maintain the right attitude of holiness as we pray (**1 Tim. 2:8**) which is critical to praying prayers that are acceptable to God. *“For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, And His ears attend to their prayer, But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil” (1 Pet. 3:12).*

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- **Walking and the Many Walks of Life**
- I want to close with the example of a praying man that we started with, Nehemiah.
- The second recorded prayer of Nehemiah comes as his employer, King Artaxerxes, notices that that something was wrong. Employers today don't like it when your “personal life” interferes with your job performance. Just think what a king of those days might have done to a servant that was not as happy as he should have been. Many have died for less. King Artaxerxes, however, asks Nehemiah what the problem was, and so he told him about all the troubles of Jerusalem. It is at this point that

the king said to Nehemiah, "What would you request?" **So I prayed to the God of heaven** I said to the king, "If it please the king... (Neh 2:4-5)

- I hope you didn't blink, because if you did you missed the prayer. In the midst of a conversation with the king, Nehemiah says a quick prayer that must have not lasted longer than a second. Sometimes we need to pray like this too. When we are in difficult circumstances, when we need courage to say or do the right thing, when we are thinking about someone that needs our prayers. Not formal, just to the point. Have you ever prayed in your mind for those mentioned in the announcements, as the announcement of their need was being made? Or have you prayed for a brother or sister in the Lord at the moment of finding out their need? Maybe you should say a quick prayer when your children drive a car on the roadways of Southern California. Or maybe we ought to be praying this one word prayer of the apostle Paul, that's right one word. **"Maranatha."** (1 Cor 16:22) Translation, "Lord, come quickly!"

Col 3:17

- 17 Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

1 Thess 5:16-18

- 16 Rejoice always; 17 pray without ceasing; 18 in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

Phil 4:6

- Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

Conclusion:

What would you write as a conclusion to the question, what should our attitude (posture) be in prayer? Does our attitude affect our posture? Does our posture affect our attitude?

While there is no 'official posture' for prayer... The posture reflects the attitude of the one praying. The posture should reflect humility, reverence. Select a posture that you feel comfortable with, that reflects your true state of mind -- Prayer is a state of mind, which can be enhanced by bodily position
