

# Is a prayer position important?



Is there something like a physical position for prayer? Is one position better than another? Which positions does Scripture prefer or recommend? Scripture does not really recommend a specific prayer position, but it does identify some distinct physical prayer positions of different people in the Bible.

You may prefer a different prayer position depending on the situation. Taking a specific prayer position, though, does not make your prayers "better" or "less effective". Someone on a sickbed cannot, for instance, bow down or be able to kneel. God looks at what is in your and my heart when we pray, more than which position we take in prayer. What then is the value of taking a certain position in prayer? When we bow our heads or knees, we portray outwardly something of what we experience in our hearts towards God. Therefore, the outward position we take is also a way to honour God outwardly through what is in our hearts.

With all of this in mind, let us look at some positions and places of prayer in Scripture:

## 1. Anywhere. Any Position

*And on the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made; and we sat down and spoke to the women who met there (Acts 16:13).*

From this verse it seems that people loved praying in nature, but also with others they met during the course of the day. We can ask God for opportunities today to pray for people we might meet in a shopping mall, on the train or in hospital.

**How to do it:** When meeting people, ask them whether they have a specific need. Then ask them if you can pray with them. Another option is to prayerfully watch passers-by, lifting them up in prayer as the Holy Spirit leads you.

## 2. In your heart

*And it happened, as she continued praying before the Lord, that Eli watched her mouth. Now Hannah spoke in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard (1 Sam.1:12-13).*

Sometimes we pray without saying words out loud or maybe without moving our lips at all. Still, God hears our deepest requests when we intentionally take time and effort to set our hearts towards Him.

**How to do it:** The next time that you are involved in a difficult situation at work, in your family or marriage, just pause in your outward posture and set your heart towards God. In a few seconds, make known to Him your dependence upon Him, asking for His intervention in your current situation.

### 3. In the night, on your bed

*When I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches (Ps.63:6).* How many times do you not wake up at night, just to find yourself speaking to God, whether it be out loud or just in your heart?

**How to do it:** Never again let sleepless nights be wasted with rolling from side to side. Consciously set your heart towards God, then hand over those things that keep you awake to Him in prayer. Night-time is often our most wonderful prayer times.

### 4. Bowing the head

*... 'It is the Passover sacrifice of the Lord, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt when He struck the Egyptians and delivered our households.' " So the people bowed their heads and worshiped (Exo 12:27).* When we remember things God has done for us, it is appropriate to bow our heads and thank Him for it.

**How to do it:** Many people visibly bow their heads when praying before a meal. In public this may be a testimony to a passer by. In private, this is still an outward way of honouring God. Do it often and without feeling ashamed or guilty, especially when you know you do it with a clean heart and mind set towards God.

### 5. Bowing the knees

*... Solomon ...he stood on it, knelt down on his knees before all the assembly of Israel, and spread out his hands toward heaven (2 Chron.6:13).*

It is appropriate to bow down in prayer even in the sight of others, in this case a king before his people. Paul also knelt down and prayed with those he was speaking to. (**Acts 20:36**). We often teach our children to kneel at their bedside for prayer.

**How to do it:** When last can you remember yourself kneeling to pray? Often, by just kneeling with your heart set towards the Lord, it is a stance of devotion and prayer too. Prayer does not always involve words. Take time to kneel before the Lord as part of your quiet time in the future.

### 6. Sitting

*Then King David went in and sat before the Lord; and he said: "Who am I, O Lord GOD? And what is my house, that You have brought me this far? (2 Sam. 7:18).* This verse makes one think that David took a physical position of rest to spend time with God. It does not seem as if he was in a hurry to end the conversation. He took time to sit down and speak to God.

**How to do it:** You owe it to yourself to simply take time to sit down and speak to God. You can do this after dressing yourself in the mornings, or even during tea or lunchtime at work. Many mothers often find the resting room a wonderful opportunity to spend time alone with God. Remember, it is not where or how you pray, but rather about the posture of your heart before God.

### 7. Standing

**1 Kings 8:55-56a** *Then he (Solomon) stood and blessed all the assembly of Israel with a loud voice, saying: "Blessed be the Lord, who has given rest to His people Israel, according to all that He promised. King Hezekiah also called the people to prayer in 2 Chron. 29:11; My sons, do not be negligent now, for the Lord has chosen you to stand before Him, to serve Him, and that you should minister to Him and burn incense."* Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, offered him advice to stand before God in prayer about the difficulties of the people of Israel in **Ex.18:19**. Often a congregation will arise

to pray together during a Sunday worship service. A team will stand together to pray in a circle before leaving on an extended mission's trip.

**How to do it:** Corporately, you can encourage people to stand together when lifting up a situation in prayer. Privately, you may choose to stand up during your quiet time when lifting up difficult situations towards Him. Allow the Holy Spirit to lead you.

## 8. Lying down when sick

*In those days Hezekiah was sick and near death. And Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, went to him and said to him, "Thus says the Lord: 'Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live.' "Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed to the Lord, and said, "Remember now, O Lord, I pray, how I have walked before You in truth and with a loyal heart, and have done what is good in Your sight." And Hezekiah wept bitterly (Isa.38:1-3).* Hezekiah was too ill to rise for prayer, but because his prayer was offered from a sincere heart, God heard him.

**How do you do it:** This means when we are sick and even near death, we can still confidently cry out to the Lord to change our situation and set our hearts towards Him. Never think a situation is too far gone to cry out to God for mercy and His intervention.

## 9. Hearts lifted up, and hands lifted or spread out

Everywhere in the Old Testament we read of people lifting up their hearts and hands towards God in prayer, comparing it to a sacrifice unto the Lord. *Let us search out and examine our ways and turn back to the Lord; let us lift our hearts and hands to God in heaven (Lam.3:40-41).* *Let my prayer be set before You as incense, the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice (Ps.141:2).* Paul writes to Timothy in **1 Tim.2:8:** *I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands.* This prompts us to set our hearts right before the Lord, and then be able to lift up 'holy hands' or 'prayer and works' pleasing unto Him.

**How do I do it:** An important part of prayer is to make right what is wrong, whether it be between us and God, or ourselves and other people. Our hands must be clean before God when we pray. Before you pray today, will you not ask the Holy Spirit to show you things that need to be put right, so you can lift up holy hands when petitioning God in prayer.

## 10. In private

Jesus is our most precious example concerning prayer in **Matt.14:23:** *And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there.* Sometimes you really need to get alone with God, away from cell phones, disturbances or responsibilities, even if it can be just for a while. One lady wrote during the war times about a woman with many children who would pull her apron over her head to pray. When she did this, her children knew not to disturb her at all, for she taught them she was spending time alone with God.

**How to do it:** Your circumstances might be challenging, but you can ask the Lord what to do that would fit your specific circumstances. You can take a short walk down the street, close your bedroom door or get up earlier than usual at least once a week. But be alone by yourself to pray.

## 11. Prostrate yourself

*Then Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly to the door of the Tent of Meeting and fell on their faces. Then the glory of the Lord appeared to them (Num.20:6).* What a reward for humbling yourself in the presence of the Lord! We must actually do it more often. We also prostrate

ourselves before God when we know things are on a knife-edge of going wrong, such as Moses did for forty days and nights on behalf of Israel in **Deut.9:25-26**: ... *And I prayed to the Lord, O Lord God, do not destroy Your people and Your heritage, whom You have redeemed through Your greatness, whom You have brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand.* Jesus did the same in His most critical moment in **Matt.26:39**; *He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will."*

**How to do it:** Next time you experience a really difficult situation, prostrate yourself before the Lord in prayer. Remember, it is not about this position, but also about portraying outwardly the earnest request of your heart to a holy God who loves to answer prayer.