

The Language and Posture of Prayer

Don Ruhl • Savage Street, Grants Pass, Oregon • August 14, In the year of our Lord, 2013

I. Questions from Visitors

A. On two different occasions a visitor has asked questions on prayer.

B. First,

“Why do some people pray in King James English? Is this a tradition of men or is this something that is spiritual? Don’t people do things for a reason?”

C. Second,

“I have read where people bowed and prayed and bowed to God in worship? Where does it say to stand and pray?”

II. The Language of Prayer

A. Why do some people pray in the English of the King James Version?

1. The King James translation of the Bible

a) was the language of that day, or

b) even of an earlier age.

(1) Read Psalm 22 and other prayers

(2) in the New American Standard Version, and

(a) you will find that even a modern speech version

(b) sought to retain this language.

B. It seems more holy to some people.

C. It seems more spiritual to others.

D. However, is it necessary?

1. Can God not understand our common English today?

2. If we insist on King James language, why not the original languages?

- a) If not, why not?
 - b) If we stay with English, why not go to the English of an earlier period?
3. First Corinthians 14 shows that we must speak understandable language.

III. The Posture of Prayer

A. What dictates the physical position in prayer?

B. What gestures do you use when you speak?

1. Our posture comes about naturally,
 - a) unless instructed to do so,
 - b) such as when the leader says to stand for the prayer or song, etc.
2. Why do we close our eyes and bow our heads when we pray?
 - a) A sign of humility.
 - b) Easier to concentrate.
 - c) It is our custom.

C. The Bible shows the following postures.

1. Standing

a) First Kings 8

22 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; and he said. "LORD God of Israel..." (1Ki 8.22).

b) See also Nehemiah 9.1-5.

1 Now on the twenty-fourth day of this month the children of Israel were assembled with fasting, in sackcloth, and with dust on their heads. 2 Then those of Israelite lineage separated themselves from all foreigners; and they stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers. 3 And they stood up in their place and read from the Book of the Law of the LORD their God for one-fourth of the day; and for another fourth they confessed and worshiped the LORD their God. 4

Then Jeshua, Bani, Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Bunni, Sherebiah, Bani, and Chenani stood on the stairs of the Levites and cried out with a loud voice to the LORD their God. 5 And the Levites, Jeshua, Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabniah, Sherebiah, Hodijah, Shebaniah, and Pethahiah, said. “Stand up and bless the LORD your God Forever and ever! Blessed be Your glorious name, Which is exalted above all blessing and praise! (Neh 9.1-5).

2. Kneeling

a) First Kings 8

54 And so it was, when Solomon had finished praying all this prayer and supplication to the LORD, that he arose from before the altar of the LORD, from kneeling on his knees with his hands spread up to heaven (1Ki 8.54).

b) Ezra 9.5

5 At the evening sacrifice I arose from my fasting; and having torn my garment and my robe, I fell on my knees and spread out my hands to the LORD my God (Ezra 9.5).

c) Luke 22.41

41 And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and prayed (Luke 22.41).

d) Acts 20.36

36 And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all (Acts 20.36).

3. Laying on the ground with the face to the ground.

a) Mark 14.35

35 He went a little farther, and fell on the ground, and prayed that if it

were possible, the hour might pass from Him (Mar. 14.35).

4. Looking up into heaven

a) Matthew 14.19

19 Then He commanded the multitudes to sit down on the grass. And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitudes (Mat. 14.19).

b) John 11.41

41 Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead man was lying. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me" (Joh. 11.41).

c) John 17.1

1 Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said. "Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You" (Joh. 17.1).

5. Head bowed down

a) Ezra 9.6

6 And I said. "O my God, I am too ashamed and humiliated to lift up my face to You, my God; for our iniquities have risen higher than our heads, and our guilt has grown up to the heavens" (Ezra 9.6).

b) Luke 18.13

13 And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, "God, be merciful to me a sinner!" (Luke 18.13).

6. While seated

a) Matthew 26.20, 26

20 When evening had come, He sat down with the twelve... 26 And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body" (Matt 26.20, 26).

D. What matters the most is the position of the heart before God.

1. This comes out naturally through our gestures or posture.

a) Is one position more spiritual than another?

b) Can we enforce one position over another?

2. Avoid making a show of your physical position in prayer.

a) Matthew 6.5

5 "And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward" (Matt 6.5).

b) Let the posture of prayer

(1) be the natural expression of our hearts

(2) rather than a way of showing men our righteousness.