



Chico Alliance Church
July 23, 2017



“Divine Dialogue” Pt 6 Postures and Passion of Prayer

We have covered significant territory regarding the subject of prayer in five weeks of messages. I have tried to answer some common questions regarding prayer from both descriptive passages (examples of others) of the Bible as well as prescriptive commands related to prayer).

- I. PERSPECTIVE ON PRAYER -- What is prayer?**
- II. PURPOSE OF PRAYER – Why Pray?**
- III. PREREQUISITES FOR PRAYER – Who can pray?**
- IV. PROMISES REGARDING PRAYER – What does God promise to do?**
- V. PURPOSES FOR UNANSWERED PRAYER – Why doesn’t God answer?**
- VI. POSTURES IN PRAYER – What should I do with my body?**

Regarding the subject of communication, research suggests that only 5 percent effect is produced by the spoken word, 45 percent by the tone, inflexion, and other elements of voice, and 50 percent by body language, movements, eye contact, etc. While the Bible rarely commands a specific physical posture or activity related to prayer, we have numerous examples of physical expressions accompanying communication with God. Through various physical postures we communicate attitudes and heart as we talk to God. These are physical postures directly associated with prayer. There are addition physical expressions associated with worship not discussed here.

Positions in prayer shouldn’t be sterile, routine or a “have to”, but should flow naturally as part of our worship to God. How we position our body can enhance our prayers and give them greater expression and definition. They can be a reflection of what is going on in our hearts.

When I grew up it was always, “bow your heads, fold your hands and close your eyes.”
The practical result of those is to show reverence, prevent fidgeting and distraction.

A. Raise Hands

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

Hear the voice of my supplications when I cry to You for help, when I lift up my hands toward Your holy sanctuary. Psalm 28:2

I remember the days of old; I meditate on all Your doings; I muse on the work of Your hands. I stretch out my hands to You; My soul longs for You, as a parched land. Selah. Psalm 143:5-6

My eye has wasted away because of affliction; I have called upon You every day, O LORD; I have spread out my hands to You. Psalm 88:9

So when you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide My eyes from you; Yes, even though you multiply prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are covered with blood. Isaiah 1:15

Moses said to him, "As soon as I go out of the city, I will spread out my hands to the LORD; the thunder will cease and there will be hail no longer, that you may know that the earth is the LORD'S. Exodus 9:29

Just what does this gesture communicate? Probably different things to different people. For some, it indicates an openness to God's will. Others it communicates a concentrated direction of our prayer to God in heaven.

B. Stand

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. 1 Kings 8:22

Standing indicates a respect for authority. We are called to stand when the judge enters the courtroom. People stood when the king entered the room. We can stand in His presence to show respect. The Jews had a practice of standing at the reading of the Word demonstrating respect for God's word.

C. Sit

When I heard these words, I sat down and wept and mourned for days; and I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven. Nehemiah 1:4

Sitting to pray expresses a purposeful concentration. You cease all other activity in order to focus on your conversation with God.

D. Kneel/Bow

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. 2 Chronicles 6:13

When he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. Acts 20:36

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. Daniel 6:10

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. Acts 21:5

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; 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. Ezra 9:5-6

But Peter sent them all out and knelt down and prayed, and turning to the body, he said, "Tabitha, arise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter, she sat up. Acts 9:40

And He withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and began to pray, saying, "Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done." Luke 22:41-42

Kneeling in prayer clearly expresses an attitude of humility and submission. It expresses respect and reverence.

E. Fall on your face

And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will." Matthew 26:39

Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him... saying, Genesis 17:3

When all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, "The LORD, He is God; the LORD, He is God." 1 Kings 18:39

Now it came about when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing opposite him with his sword drawn in his hand, and Joshua went to him and said to him, "Are you for us or for our adversaries?" He said, "No; rather I indeed come now as captain of the host of the LORD." And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and bowed down, and said to him, "What has my lord to say to his servant?" The captain of the LORD'S host said to Joshua, "Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy." Joshua 5:13-15

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. Ezra 10:1

This is an intense form of humility beyond the bowing. It generally expresses deepest reverence and passion. It also expresses repentance before God.

F. Lift up eyes

So they removed the stone. Then Jesus raised His eyes, and said, "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. "I knew that You always hear Me; but because of the people standing around I said it, so that they may believe that You sent Me." John 11:41-42

To You I lift up my eyes, O You who are enthroned in the heavens! Psalm 123:1

Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You... John 17:1

Lifting of the eyes indicates a focused direction of our attention.

G. Beat the chest

"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!' Luke 18:13

This expression appears to be associated with humility and recognition of great need for mercy before a Holy God.

H. Fasting

This is technically not a posture but involves a physical expression.

So I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek Him by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth and ashes. Daniel 9:3

As soon as I heard these words I sat down and wept and mourned for days, and I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven. Neh 1:4

VII. PASSION OF PRAYER

Just as in any relationship, there are levels of communication. Some is practical. Some inspirational. Some intimate and passionate. Nehemiah was an example of various levels. He entered passionate deep and extended prayer and fasting. When confronted with a serious event he shot up a quick prayer. The Bible makes no mistake about the primary place prayer should have in every Christian's life.

A. Devotion to Prayer

rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, Romans 12:12

Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving; praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word... Colossians 4:2-4

Epaphras, who is one of your number, a bonds slave of Jesus Christ, sends you his greetings, always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God. Col 4:12

With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints... Ephesians 6:18

pray without ceasing; 1 Thessalonians 5:17

B. Prayer and fasting

An expression of passionate prayer beyond its frequency is its intensity. At time prayer was accompanied by fasting.

1. The types of fasting

- a. **Extreme fast – no food or water**
- b. **Regular fast – no food**
- c. **Partial fast - refrain from “delicacies” (Daniel)**

Fasting might include abstention from anything to devote our selves to prayer.

2. The duration of fasting

- a. **Forty days**
- b. **Three days**
- c. **One day**
- d. **As a course of life**

in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness— 2 Corinthians 11:27

in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in fastings; 2 Corinthians 6:5

3. The Purpose of fasting

People fasted for a variety of reasons. Following are just some of them.

a. To demonstrate Humility and Repentance

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; 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. Ezra 9:5-6

They said to me, "The remnant there in the province who survived the captivity are in great distress and reproach, and the wall of Jerusalem is broken down and its gates are burned with fire." When I heard these words, I sat down and wept and mourned for days; and I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven. I said, "I beseech You, O LORD God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who preserves the covenant and lovingkindness for those who love Him and keep His commandments, let Your ear now be attentive and Your eyes open to hear the prayer of Your servant which I am praying before You now, day and night, on behalf of the sons of Israel Your servants, confessing the sins of the sons of Israel which we have sinned against You; I and my father's house have sinned. Nehemiah 1:3-6

Now on the twenty-fourth day of this month the sons of Israel assembled with fasting, in sackcloth and with dirt upon them. The descendants of Israel separated themselves from all foreigners, and stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers. Nehemiah 9:1-2

Gird yourselves with sackcloth and lament, O priests; Wail, O ministers of the altar! Come, spend the night in sackcloth O ministers of my God, for the grain offering and the drink offering are withheld from the house of your God. Consecrate a fast, proclaim a solemn assembly; gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land to the house of the LORD your God, and cry out to the LORD. Joel 1:13-14

Then Jonah began to go through the city one day's walk; and he cried out and said, "Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown." Then the people of Nineveh believed in God; and they called a fast and put on sackcloth from the greatest to the least of them. When the word reached the king of Nineveh, he arose from his throne, laid aside his robe from him, covered himself with sackcloth and sat on the ashes. He issued a proclamation and it said, "In Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles: Do not let man, beast, herd, or flock taste a thing. Do not let them eat or drink water. "But both man and beast must be covered with sackcloth; and let men call on God earnestly that each may turn from his wicked way and from the violence which is in his hands. "Who knows, God may turn and relent and withdraw His burning anger so that we will not perish." When God saw their deeds, that they turned from their wicked way, then God relented concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon them. And He did not do it. Jonah 3:4-10

So I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek Him by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth and ashes. I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed and said, "Alas, O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and lovingkindness for those who love Him and keep His commandments, we have sinned, committed iniquity, acted wickedly and rebelled, even turning aside from Your commandments and ordinances. "Moreover, we have not listened to Your servants the prophets, who spoke in Your name to our kings, our princes, our fathers and all the people of the land. Daniel 9:3-6

b. To prepare the heart to hear and obey God's direction

³And Jehoshaphat was afraid and turned his attention to seek the LORD; and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. 2 Chron. 20:3

And while they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." ³Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. Acts 13:2-3

So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed. Acts 14:23

c. For deliverance and protection

Jehoshaphat was afraid and turned his attention to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. So Judah gathered together to seek help from the LORD; they even came from all the cities of Judah to seek the LORD. 2 Chronicles 20:3-4

⁶"Is this not the fast which I choose, To loosen the bonds of wickedness, to undo the bands of the yoke, And to let the oppressed go free, And break every yoke? Isaiah 58:6

²¹Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river of Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God to seek from Him a safe journey for us, our little ones, and all our possessions. ²³So we fasted and sought our God concerning this matter, and He listened to our entreaty. Ezra 8:21-23

When Mordecai learned all that had been done, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the midst of the city and wailed loudly and bitterly. He went as far as the king's gate, for no one was to enter the king's gate clothed in sackcloth. In each and every province where the command and decree of the king came, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, weeping and wailing; and many lay on sackcloth and ashes. Esther 4:1-3

d. To demonstrate extreme sorrow

*¹⁸Then the king went off to his palace and spent the night fasting, and no entertainment was brought before him; and his sleep fled from him. **Daniel 6:18***

For zeal for Your house has consumed me, And the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me. When I wept in my soul with fasting, it became my reproach. When I made sackcloth my clothing, I became a byword to them. Psalm 69:9-11

I am passing like a shadow when it lengthens; I am shaken off like the locust. My knees are weak from fasting, And my flesh has grown lean, without fatness. Psalm 109:23-24

And Jesus said to them, "The attendants of the bridegroom cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, can they? But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast. Matthew 9:15

e. To express devotion, worship and service

*²And while they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." **Acts 13:2***

And there was a prophetess, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years and had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, and then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple, serving night and day with fastings and prayers. Luke 2:36-37

f. To gain God's ear

"Behold, you fast for contention and strife and to strike with a wicked fist. You do not fast like you do today to make your voice heard on high. Isaiah 58:4

g. For Healing

*Then your light will break out like the dawn, and your recovery will speedily spring forth; and your righteousness will go before you; the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard. **Isaiah 58:8***

Then his servants said to him, "What is this thing that you have done? While the child was alive, you fasted and wept; but when the child died, you arose and ate food." He said, "While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, 'Who knows, the LORD may be gracious to me, that the child may live.' "But now he has died; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him, but he will not return to me." 2 Samuel 12:21-23

But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth; I humbled my soul with fasting, and my prayer kept returning to my bosom. Psalm 35:13

h. To feed the hungry

*Is it not to divide your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into the house; when you see the naked, to cover him; and not to hide yourself from your own flesh? **Isaiah 58:7***

i. To develop self-control

j. Not a source of pride or a pry bar to twist God's arm.

'I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.' Luke 18:12

4. The Manner of Fasting

Whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites do, for they neglect their appearance so that they will be noticed by men when they are fasting. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. "But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face so that your fasting will not be noticed by men, but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you. Matt 6:16-18

5. The Fruit of Fasting

Then your light will break out like the dawn, and your recovery will speedily spring forth; and your righteousness will go before you; the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard. Then you will call, and the LORD will answer; you will cry, and He will say, 'Here I am.' If you remove the yoke from your midst, the pointing of the finger and speaking wickedness, and if you give yourself to the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then your light will rise in darkness and your gloom will become like midday. And the LORD will continually guide you, and satisfy your desire in scorched places, and give strength to your bones; and you will be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water whose waters do not fail. Those from among you will rebuild the ancient ruins; you will raise up the age-old foundations; and you will be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of the streets in which to dwell. Isaiah 58:8-12

The first step is to ask God to stir a passion for prayer. That passion may find expression in any number of physical expressions.