

Growing Spiritually as an Elder

Body Prayers



The body is involved in all prayer that we do, yet often without focus upon that aspect of prayer we fail to receive the blessing of it in our lives. Below are suggestions for body prayers in three categories:

- 1) Positions for prayer*
- 2) Attention to our bodies' gifts*
- 3) Listening to body messages*

Positions for prayer

What does your body position in prayer convey about your relationship to God? Try several of the positions for prayer listed below and see if this changes your prayers. You might take turns looking at each other in these positions and see what you observe by seeing them. You might assume these positions and see what emotions arise in you.

- 1) Sitting, head bowed
- 2) Sitting, head up and eyes open
- 3) Standing, head bowed, eyes closed
- 4) Standing, head level and eyes open or closed
- 5) Standing, head up toward ceiling/sky, eyes open OR eyes closed
- 6) Kneeling, head bowed, eyes closed. Try this with head level OR up also and eyes open.
- 7) Standing, sitting OR kneeling with arms raised above your head and open hands
- 8) Sitting with hands in your lap, palms up OR palms down OR one of each.
- 9) Lying on your back eyes open OR eyes closed
- 10) Lying on your front, forehead to the floor (used by ancient mystics to block distractions).
- 11) In the group standing in circle, facing inward OR try facing outward.
- 12) In the group holding hands or arms around each other, or arms raised above your head and holding hands.
- 13) In the group in a circle hold you hands so your palms are next to, but not touching each other. Can you feel each other without touching?

What other positions can you think of to try? What do you learn about God, your relationship to God and yourself from this?

Attention to our bodies

- 1) Move through your body giving prayers of gratitude for each part and the function that it plays in your abilities to live and praise God.
- 2) Imagine or see with your inner eye the power, light, love of God flowing through your body pouring from the heavens through you into the ground or flowing up through the ground up into the sky. This washing in the spirit can cleanse our souls with love.
- 3) Lay your hand on your chest and listen to your heart beat. Hear God saying “I love you” or “I am with you” with each beat.
- 4) Listen to your breath and feel the spirit of life, God’s spirit, within you. Give thanks for your life with each breath. Release all that needs to be let go in your spirit as you breath out. Breathe in and say “Thank you.” Breathe out and say “Thank you.” Create a rhythm breath prayer that speaks to your heart.

Listening to body messages

- 1) Anoint each other with oil or water or face paints by placing a cross on the forehead of someone and saying something like “Peace of Christ be in you.”
- 2) Look deeply into the eyes of each person present with quiet music or silence. See God in the eyes of one another.
- 3) Listen to a scripture or poem and move your body in a way that the passage calls for in you. For example, a passage on pain may cause you to feel like hugging yourself and closing off. A scripture on reconciliation may call you to give a hug to someone in the group.
- 4) When praying for each other by name, assume a body position that your prayer invites you to assume. For example, when praying in gratitude, lay a hand on the shoulder of the person. OR when praying in community, holding hands.
- 5) Create a body sculpture to make a point about a scripture or need of the group. For example, holding hands with the group, tie yourselves in knots and pray in that position for resolution to a difficult problem. This works well because the group can feel the desire to stay connected right next to the stress of staying in the position in which they have become entangled.

