

## **KNEELING IN PRAYER-**

### **THE ONLY WAY TO PRAY IN WORSHIP**

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*"I have received letters questioning me in regard to the proper attitude to be taken by a person offering prayer to the Sovereign of the universe. Where have our brethren obtained the idea that they should stand upon their feet when praying to God? One who has been educated for about five years in Battle Creek was asked to lead in prayer before Sister White should speak to the people. But as I beheld him standing upright upon his feet while his lips were about to open in prayer to God, my soul was stirred within me to give him an open rebuke. Calling him by name, I said, 'Get down upon your knees.' This is the proper position always. . .*

*"To bow down in prayer to God is the proper attitude to occupy. . . Both in public and private worship it is our duty to bow down upon our knees before God when we offer our petitions to Him. This act shows our dependence upon God." -2 Selected Messages? 311-312*

**The title is what this study is all about: Kneeling is the only proper way to pray, when you are worshipping God. You may think that is not true. But the facts, from God's Word, are clear and to the point.**

**Indeed, this is one of the most forgotten truths today, yet one of the most consistently shown in Scripture.**

**Let us be serious now: Do you really want to worship God? Are you really in earnest about speaking with Him, doing His will, and going to heaven?**

**Someone will say, "Ah, this is legalism!" Men may ridicule it as they wish, but, frankly, do you really want to please God and worship Him the way He told you to? Or do you want to do it your own way?**

**If you are more intent on pleasing God than pleasing men, then you will want to read this study. The facts are simple, direct, and to the point.**

"O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker."-Psalm 95:6.

In spite of the lax "do whatever you want" attitude of Western civilization, throughout the world pagans worship their gods, either by kneeling or falling on their faces. In Bible times, the people of God did likewise. They were worshiping their Creator.

We are told that we are always to kneel in prayer; we are also told that we do not need to always kneel in prayer. We are also given examples of both positions in prayer. Which is correct? How do we harmonize the two concepts?

The solution is quite simple, and it agrees with every statement in the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy: When you are in an act of public, group, family, or private worship of your Creator, you are to descend to your knees when you pray to Him-unless it is not possible to do so or you are physically incapable of it.

But, when you are not worshipping God, you do not need to kneel when you pray. Many times throughout the day it is not practical or feasible to kneel when sending up prayers of thanks or requests for help.

That is a summary of the principle. Now let us examine the statements-and see how they harmoniously agree with it:

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#### WHEN YOU DO NOT NEED TO KNEEL IN PRAYER

First, let us look at the exceptions. There are times when you do not need to kneel in prayer. You will notice that, in each such instance, God is not being directly worshiped: (1) When we pray throughout the day as we go about our work. (2) At mealtime, before we eat. (3) During a consecration call at the close of a meeting. (4) As we lay in bed sick or about to drift off to sleep. Other practical examples could be cited.

#### 1 - AS YOU PRAY THROUGHOUT THE DAY

In God's Word, we are repeatedly urged to pray frequently, even unceasingly. But we need not be on our knees all day long. God never called us to monasticism. We have a work to do for Him and others in the home and in the community.

"God in His providence does not permit us to know the end from the beginning; but He gives us the light of His Word to guide us as we pass along, and bids us to keep our minds stayed upon Jesus. Wherever we are, whatever our employment, our hearts are to be uplifted to God in prayer. This is being instant in prayer. We need not wait until we can bow upon our knees, before we pray. On one occasion, when Nehemiah came in before the king, the king asked why he looked so sad, and what request he had to make. But Nehemiah dared not answer at once. Important interests were at stake.

The fate of a nation hung upon the impression that should then be made upon the monarch's mind; and Nehemiah darted up a prayer to the God of heaven, before he dared to answer the king. The result was that he obtained all that he asked or even desired."-3 Bible Commentary, 1136/ 1:52:0.

"In the work of heart-keeping we must be instant in prayer, unwearied in petitioning the throne of grace for assistance. Those who take the name of Christian should come to God in earnestness and humility, pleading for help. The Saviour has told us to pray without ceasing. The Christian cannot always be in the position of prayer, but his thoughts and desires can always be upward. Our self-confidence would vanish, did we talk less and pray more."-3 Bible Commentary, 1157/1:3.

"The way to the throne of God is always open. You cannot always be on your knees in prayer, but your silent petitions may constantly ascend to God for strength and guidance. When tempted, as you will

be, you may flee to the secret place of the Most High. His everlasting arms will be underneath you."- Counsels on Health, 362:2.

"We cannot always be on our knees in prayer, but the way to the mercy seat is always open. While engaged in active labor, we may ask for help; and we are promised by One who will not deceive us, 'Ye shall receive.' The Christian can and will find time to pray."-Counsels on Health, 423:1.

"The reason why so many are left to themselves in places of temptation is that they do not set the Lord always before them. When we permit our communion with God to be broken, our defense is, departed from us. Not all your good purposes and good intentions will enable you to withstand evil. You must be men and women of prayer. Your petitions must not be faint, occasional, and fitful, but earnest, persevering, and constant. It is not always necessary to bow upon your knees in order to pray. Cultivate the habit of talking with the Saviour when you are alone, when you are walking, when you are busy with your daily labor. Let the heart be continually uplifted in silent petition for help, for light, for strength, for knowledge. Let every breath be a prayer."-Ministry of Healing, 510:1-511:0.

"Pray in your closet, and as you go about your daily labor let your heart be often uplifted to God. It was thus that Enoch walked with God. These silent prayers rise like precious incense before the throne of grace. Satan cannot overcome him whose heart is thus stayed upon God."-Steps to Christ, 98:3-99:0.

"All your good purposes and good intentions will not enable you to withstand the test of temptation. You must be men of prayer. Your petitions must be not faint, occasional, and fitful, but earnest, persevering, and constant. It is not necessary to be alone, or to bow upon your knees, to pray; but in the midst of your labor your souls may be often uplifted to God, taking hold upon His strength; then you will be men of high and holy purpose, of noble integrity, who will not for any consideration be swayed from truth, right, and justice."-4 Testimonies, 542:3-543:0.

"We may speak with Jesus as we walk by the way, and He says, I am at thy right hand. We may commune with God in our hearts; we may walk in companionship with Christ. When engaged in our daily labor, we may breathe out our heart's desire, inaudible to any human ear; but that word cannot die away into silence, nor can it be lost. Nothing can drown the soul's desire. It rises above the din of the street, above the noise of machinery. It is God to whom we are speaking, and our prayer is heard."-2 Selected Messages, 316:3.

"We may constantly seek the joy of His presence. We need not be all the time upon our knees in prayer, but we may be constantly asking for His grace, even when we are walking on the streets, or when we are engaged in our ordinary daily duties. We may constantly keep the mind ascending to Christ, and He will freely impart to us of His grace."-Our High Calling, 148:2.

"Man cannot bow upon his knees in the streets and in the market place to offer up his prayers to God, but never forget, wherever you may be, that there is a God upon whom you may call for wisdom."- This Day with God, 232: 1.

"We must pray constantly, with a humble mind and a meek and lowly spirit. We need not wait for an opportunity to kneel before God. We can pray and talk with the Lord wherever we may be."-3 Selected Messages, 266: 1.

## 2 - CONCLUDING A CALL TO CONSECRATION

In the text of Amazing Grace, p. 91, we are told this: "Both in public and in private worship, it is our duty to bow upon our knees before God when we offer our petitions to Him." The footnote at the bottom of the page says this: "There are instances where Ellen White stood at the desk while offering prayers of consecration during church services" [emphasis theirs].

There is no contradiction between the statement and the footnote. The "instances" referred to are prayers concluding consecration calls (see below). There are no instances in which Ellen White (or God's people in Bible times) practiced or approved of standing or sitting prayers (for those physically fit, of course) during worship.

STANDS DURING CONSECRATION, THEN KNEELS FOR PRAYER-"It is not always necessary to bow upon your knees in order to pray. Cultivate the habit of talking with the Saviour when you are alone, when you are walking, and when you are busy with your daily labor."-3 Selected Messages. 267:2.

"At the close of my discourse. I felt impressed by the Spirit of God to extend an invitation for all those to come forward who desired to give themselves fully to the Lord. Those who felt the need of the

prayers of the servants of God were invited to make it manifest. About thirty came forward. .

"At first I had hesitated, wondering if it were best to do so when my son and I were the only ones whom I could see who would give us any help on that occasion. But as though someone had spoken to me, the thought passed through my mind. 'Cannot you trust in the Lord?' I said, 'I will, Lord.' Although my son was much surprised that I should make such a call on this occasion, he was equal to the emergency. I never heard him speak with greater power or deeper feeling than at that time. .

"We knelt in prayer. My son took the lead and the Lord surely indicted his petition; for he seemed to pray as though in the presence of God."-3 Selected Messages, 268, 2-4.

COMES FORWARD FOR CONSECRATION, THEN (BECAUSE CROWDED) SEATED FOR PRAYER-"I invited those who desired the prayers of the servants of God to come forward. All who had been backslidden, all who wished to return to the Lord and seek Him diligently, could improve the opportunity. Several seats were filled and the whole congregation was on the move. We told them the best they could do was to be seated right where they were and we would all seek the Lord together by confessing our sins, and the Lord had pledged His word. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful, and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (John I :9)," -3 Selected Messages, 267:3-268:0.

AUDITORIUM FULL, SO ASKS CONGREGATION TO RISE FOR DEDICATION, THEN PRAYS WHILE STANDING-"I invited all who wanted to give themselves to God in a sacred covenant, and to serve Him with their whole hearts, to rise to their feet. The house was full, and nearly all rose. Quite a number, not of our faith were present, and some of these arose. I presented them to the Lord in earnest prayer, and we know that we had the manifestation of the Spirit of God. We felt that a victory had indeed been gained,"-3 Selected Messages, 268: 1.

RISES FOR DEDICATION, THEN PRAYS WHILE STANDING-"Now we ask you to seek all the heart. Will those who are determined to cut loose from every temptation of the enemy, and to seek for heaven above, signify such determination by rising to their feet? [Nearly all of the congregation present responded.]

"We desire that every one of you shall be saved. We desire that for you the gates of the city of God shall swing back on their glittering hinges, and that you, with all the nations who have kept the truth, may enter in. There we shall give praise and thanksgiving and glory to Christ and to the heavenly Father evermore, even forever and ever. May God help us to be faithful in His service during the conflict, and overcome at last, and win the crown of life eternal.

"[Praying] My heavenly Father, I come to Thee at this time, just as I am, poor and needy. and dependent upon Thee. I ask Thee to give this people the grace that perfects Christian Character,"-3 Selected Messages, 268:5-369:2.

"Who now, I ask, will make a determined effort to obtain the higher education. Those who will, make it manifest by rising to your feet. [The congregation rose.] Here is the whole congregation. May God help you to keep your pledge. Let us pray.

"[Praying] Heavenly Father. I come to Thee at this time, just as I am, poor, weak. unworthy, and I ask Thee to impress the hearts of this people gathered here to-day. I have spoken to them Thy words, but. O Lord, Thou alone canst make the work effective,"-3 Selected Messages, 269:3-4.

"May the Lord help you to take hold of this work as you have never yet taken hold of it. Will you do this? Will you here rise to your feet and testify that you will make God your trust and your helper? [Congregation rises.]"-3 Selected Messages, 269:5270:1.

The principle is simple enough: When we come to God, pleading for forgiveness and acceptance He meets us where we are. Then, having entered His kingdom as His subjects, we then come, at times of worship-and, kneeling, meet Him where He is: the great King and ruler of the universe!

### 3 - PRAYER AT MEALTIME

At the end of the above 3 Selected Messages chapter, there is a footnote which indicates that they did not kneel at the White home when they gave thanks for the food. Here is the entire footnote:

"That Ellen White did not intend to teach that on every prayer occasion we must kneel is made clear both by her words and her example. To her there was no time or place where prayer was inappropriate. Her family testified that in her home those at the dining table bowed their heads and not their knees. She was not known to kneel for the benediction at the close of services she attended. The earnest

counsel on kneeling would seem to have its principal application in the worship services in the house of God and in family and private devotions at home. In public ministry there were times when she stood for prayer. -Compilers. "-Footnote, 3 Selected Messages, 270.

The "benediction" prayers and "times when she stood for prayer" "in public ministry" were cited in that footnoted chapter (3 Selected Messages, 266-270). In this section of the study, we have quoted them. In each instance, a call to consecration was given; they were not worship prayers.

We have been told that a seminary student obtained permission to research in the E.G. White vault, to locate every instance in which Ellen White stood for prayer in the pulpit. Later, his rather small compilation of instances was included as chapter 30 (pp. 266-270) of 3 Selected Messages. You have just read what he discovered. It consistently refers to a prayer of consecration following an appeal, when the worship service has concluded.

## -2- THE PROPER POSITION DURING A WORSHIP PRAYER

Whenever we are worshiping God, whether it be in church, in groups, with our family, or alone, - we are to kneel when we pray. This is not my counsel to you; this is God's directive to you.

There will, of course, be exceptions: Perhaps you are having family worship as you are driving in the car, Perhaps you are ill and in bed or physically unable to kneel. Many other situations could be cited in which you are worshiping God alone or with your family.

The following are clear and unequivocal: "Both in public and private worship, it is our privilege to bow on our knees before the Lord when we offer our petitions to Him. Jesus, our example, 'kneeled down, and prayed' (Luke 22:41). Of His disciples it is recorded that they, too, 'kneeled down, and prayed' (Acts 9:40), Paul declared, 'I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ' (Ephesians 3:14), In confessing before God the sins of Israel, Ezra knelt (see Ezra 9:5). Daniel 'kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God' (Daniel 6: 10),

"True reverence for God is inspired by a sense of His infinite greatness and a realization of His presence. With this sense of the Unseen, every heart should be deeply impressed, The hour and place of prayer are sacred, because God is there: and as reverence is manifested in attitude and demeanor, the feeling that inspires it will be deepened, 'Holy and reverend is His name,' (Psalm 111:9) the psalmist declares. Angels, when they speak that name, veil their faces. With what reverence, then, should we, who are fallen and sinful, take it upon our lips!

"Well would it be for old and young to ponder those words of Scripture that show how the place marked by God's special presence should be regarded. 'Put off thy shoes from off thy feet,' He commanded Moses at the burning bush, 'for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground' (Exodus 3:5). Jacob, after beholding the vision of the angels, exclaimed, 'The Lord is in this place; and I knew it not, This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven' (Genesis 28: 16,17).

"The Lord is in His holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before Him' (Habakkuk 2:20)," -Gospel Workers. 178-179.

"I have received letters questioning me in regard to the proper attitude to be taken by a person offering prayer to the Sovereign of the universe. Where have our brethren obtained the idea that they should stand upon their feet when praying to God? One who has been educated for about five years in Battle Creek was asked to lead in prayer before Sister white should speak to the people. But as I beheld him standing upright upon his feet while his lips were about to open in prayer to God, my soul was stirred within me to give him an open rebuke, Calling him by name, I said, 'Get down upon your knees.' This is the proper position always.

" They stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep' (Acts 7:59-60),

" 'When we had accomplished those days, we departed and went our way; and they all brought us on our way, with wives and children, till we were out of the city: and we kneeled down on the shore, and prayed' (Acts 21:5).

" 'At the evening sacrifice I arose up from my heaviness; and having rent my garment and my mantle. I fell upon my knees, and spread out my hands unto the Lord my God, and said, a my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and

our trespass is grown up unto the heavens' (Ezra 9:5-6).

" 'O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our maker' (Psalm 95:6).

" 'For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ' (Ephesians 3:14). And the whole chapter will, if the heart is receptive, be as precious a lesson as we can learn,

"To bow down in prayer to God is the proper attitude to occupy, This act of worship was required of the three Hebrew captives in Babylon. But such an act was homage to be rendered to God alone the Sovereign of the world, the Ruler of the universe; and these three Hebrews refused to give such honor to any idol even though composed of pure gold. In doing so, they would, to all intents and purposes, be bowing to the king of Babylon. Refusing to do as the king had commanded, they suffered the penalty, and were cast into the burning fiery furnace. But Christ came in person and walked with them through the fire, and they received no harm.

"Both in public and private worship it is our duty to bow down upon our knees before God when we offer our petitions to Him. This act shows our dependence upon God.

"At the dedication of the Temple, Solomon stood facing the altar. In the court of the Temple was a brazen scaffold or platform, and after ascending this, he stood and lifted up his hands to heaven, and blessed the immense congregation of Israel, and all the congregation of Israel stood. .

" 'For Solomon had made a brazen scaffold, of five cubits long, and five cubits broad, and three cubits high, and had set it in the midst of the court: and upon it he stood, and kneeled down upon his knees before all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven' (2 Chronicles 6: 13).

"The lengthy prayer which he then offered was appropriate for the occasion. It was inspired of God, breathing the sentiments of the loftiest piety blended with the deepest humility.

"I present these proof texts with the inquiry, 'Where did Brother H obtain his education?'-At Battle Creek. Is it possible that with all the light that God has given to His people on the subject of reverence, that ministers, principals, and teachers in our schools, by precept and example, teach young men to stand erect in devotion as did the Pharisees? Shall we look upon this as significant of their self-sufficiency and self-importance? Are these traits to become conspicuous?

" And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess' (Luke 18:9-12). Mark you, it was the self-righteous Pharisee who was not in a position of humility before God; but standing in his haughty self-sufficiency, he told the Lord all his good deeds. 'The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself' (Luke 18: 11); and his prayer reached no higher than himself.

" And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for everyone that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalteth'(Luke 18:13-14).

"We hope that our brethren will not manifest less reverence and awe as they approach the only true and living God than the heathen manifest for their idol deities, or these people will be our judges in the day of final decision. I would speak to all who occupy the place of teachers in our schools. Men and women, do not dishonor God by your irreverence and pomposity. Do not stand up in your Pharisaism and offer your prayers to God. Mistrust your own strength. Depend not in it; but often bow down on your knees before God, and worship Him.

"And when you assemble to worship God, be sure and bow your knees before Him. Let this act testify that the whole soul, body, and spirit are in subjection to the Spirit of truth. Who have searched the Word closely for examples and direction in this respect? Whom can we trust as teachers in our schools in America and foreign countries? After years of study shall students return to their own country with perverted ideas of the respect and honor and reverence that should be given to God, and feel under no obligation to honor the men of gray hairs, the men of experience, the chosen servants of God who have been connected with the work of God through almost all the years of their life? I advise all who attend the schools of America or in any other place, do not catch the spirit of irreverence. Be sure you understand for yourself what kind of education you need, that you may educate others to obtain a fitness of character that will stand the test that is soon to be brought upon all who live upon the earth. Keep company with the soundest Christians. Choose not the pretentious instructors or pupils, but those who show the deepest piety,

those who have a spirit of intelligence in the things of God.

"We are living in perilous times. Seventh-day Adventists are professedly the commandment-keeping people of God; but they are losing their devotional spirit. This spirit of reverence for God teaches men how to approach their Maker -with sacredness and awe through faith, not in themselves, but in a Mediator. Thus man is kept fast, under whatever circumstances he is placed. Man must come on bended knee, as a subject of grace, a suppliant at the footstool of mercy. And as he receives daily mercies at the hand of God, he is ever to cherish gratitude in his heart, and give expression to it in the words of thanksgiving and praise for these unmerited favors. Angels have been guarding his pathway through all his life, and many of the snares he has been delivered from he has not seen. And for this guardianship and watchcare by eyes that never slumber and never sleep, he is to recognize in every prayer the service of God for him.

"All should lean upon God in their helplessness and daily necessity. They should keep humble, watchful and prayerful. Praise and thanksgiving should flow forth in gratitude and sincere love for God.

"In the assembly of the upright and in the congregation should they praise the Most High God. All who have a sense of their vital connection with God should stand before the Lord as witnesses for Him, giving expression of the love, the mercies, and the goodness of God. Let the words be sincere, simple, earnest, intelligent, the heart burning with the love of God, the lips sanctified to His glory not only to make known the mercies of God in the assembly of the saints but to be His witnesses in every place. The inhabitants of the earth are to know that He is God, the only true and living God.

"There should be an intelligent knowledge of how to come to God in reverence and godly fear with devotional love. There is a growing lack of reverence for our Maker, a growing disregard of His greatness and majesty. But God is speaking to us in these last days. We hear His voice in the storm, in the rolling thunder. We hear of the calamities He permits in the earthquakes, the breaking forth of the waters, and the destructive elements sweeping all before them. We hear of ships going down in the tempestuous ocean. God speaks to families who have refused to recognize Him, sometimes in the whirlwind and storm, sometimes face to face as He talked with Moses. Again He whispers His love to the little trusting child and to the gray-haired sire in his dotage. And earthly wisdom has a wisdom as it beholds the unseen.

"When the still small voice which succeeds the whirlwind and the tempest that moves the rocks out of position, is heard, let all cover their face, for God is very near. Let them hide themselves in Jesus Christ; for He is their hiding place. The cleft in the rock is hidden with His own pierced hand while the humble seeker waits in bowed attitude to hear what saith the Lord unto His servants. "-2 Selected Messages, 311:1-316:1.

"When the minister enters, it should be with dignified, solemn mien. He should bow down in silent prayer as soon as he steps into the pulpit, and earnestly ask help of God. What an impression this will make! There will be solemnity and awe upon the people. Their minister is communing with God; he is committing himself to God before he dares to stand before the people. Solemnity rests upon all, and angels of God are brought very near. Every one of the congregation, also, who fears God should with bowed head unite in silent prayer with him that God may grace the meeting with His presence and give power to His truth proclaimed from human lips.

When the meeting is opened by prayer, every knee should bow in the presence of the Holy One, and every heart should ascend to God in silent devotion. The prayers of faithful worshipers will be heard, and the ministry of the word will prove effectual. The lifeless attitude of the worshipers in the house of God is one great reason why the ministry is not more productive of good. The melody of song, poured forth from many hearts in clear, distinct utterance, is one of God's instrumentalities in the work of saving souls. All the service should be conducted with solemnity and awe, as if in the visible presence of the Master of assemblies."-5 Testimonies, 492:3-493:0.

"Be waiting, watching for every opportunity to present the truth, familiar with the prophecies, familiar with the lessons of Christ. But do not trust in the well-prepared arguments. Arguments alone is not enough. God must be sought on your knees; you must go forth to meet the people through the power and influence of His Spirit. "-2 Bible Commentary, 1004/1:0.

"The Lord has given you talents to use, and in using these talents as He intended they should be used, you will have increased aptitude and wisdom and clear spiritual eyesight to understand His work. Your mind and eyes must watch for His appearing, your ears open to hear the faintest whisperings of His voice. Your knees He has made; use them in kneeling in prayer. "-That I May Know Him, 328: 1.

"In these perilous times, those who profess to be God's commandment-keeping people should guard against the tendency to lose the spirit of reverence and godly fear. The Scriptures teach men how to

approach their Maker-with humility and awe, through faith in a divine Mediator. Let man come on bended knee, as a subject of grace, a suppliant at the footstool of mercy. Thus he is to testify that the whole soul, body, and spirit are in subjection to His Creator."-Amazing Grace, 21:2.

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#### OTHER EXAMPLES OF KNEELING IN PRAYER

Many instances could be cited when God's people worshiped God together or alone-and knelt to pray. Here are some of them:

"It was in a lonely, mountainous region, the haunt of wild beasts and the lurking place of robbers and murderers. Solitary and unprotected, Jacob bowed in deep distress upon the earth. It was midnight. All that made life dear to him were at a distance, exposed to danger and death. Bitterest of all was the thought that it was his own sin, which had brought this peril upon the innocent. With earnest cries and tears he made his prayer before God. "-Patriarchs and Prophets, 196:3-197:0.

"And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all. And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him unto the ship."-Acts of the Apostles, 396: 1.

"The apostle's heart was touched with sympathy as he beheld their sorrow. Then, directing that the weeping friends be sent from the room, he kneeled down and prayed fervently to God to restore Dorcas to life and health."-Acts of the Apostles, 132:1.

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#### THE PROPER POSITION DURING PERSONAL WORSHIP PRAYER

We are told that, whenever possible, our knees like Daniel's-are to bow in personal worship to God. See the later section, "Frequency of Worship Prayer" for more on this.

"Both in public and private worship it is our duty to bow down upon our knees before God when we offer our petitions to Him. "-2 Selected Messages, 312:7 [Gospel Workers, 178:2 almost identical].

"This spirit of reverence for God teaches men how to approach their Maker-with sacredness and awe through faith, not in themselves, but in a Mediator. Thus man is kept fast, under whatever circumstances he is placed. Man must come on bended knee, as a subject of grace, a suppliant at the footstool of mercy."-2 Selected Messages, 315:0.

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#### THE BIBLE ON THE POSITION IN PRAYER

In the Bible, men generally knelt or fell on their faces when they prayed to the God of heaven. The harmony on this point is as remarkably consistent as is the truth about the seventh-day Sabbath being the only true weekly Sabbath of the Lord. If we keep the Bible Sabbath, we surely ought to kneel when we pray in worship to our Creator!

(The exceptions, of course, were when men prayed as they went about their work, suddenly encountered an emergency, or were situated in such a way that they could not kneel.)

Here are some of the passages where men of God knelt; there are others:

In Genesis 24:12-14, Eliezer prayed at the well for help, and Rebekah arrived "before he had done speaking" (24: 15). There is no indication that he knelt. But, when he learned it was Rebekah, a kinswoman who was arriving, he bowed in a prayer of worship.

'And the man bowed down his head, and worshipped the Lord. "Genesis 24:26.

He probably knelt or fell on his face during this prayer. Rebekah was so startled that she ran home. Similar phrasing formulas ("bowing in worship") are given three times in Exodus, and probably always indicate kneeling or falling on the face in a worshipful prayer. Here they are:

'And the people believed: and when they heard that the Lord had visited the children of Israel [by sending Moses to deliver them], and that he had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads

and worshipped."-Exodus 4:31.

"It is the sacrifice of the Lord's passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses. And the people [as they realized they were about to be rescued from Egyptian domination] bowed the head and worshipped."-Exodus 12:27.

In the above passages, the phrase, "bowing," is used. But they were probably all bowing with the face to the ground. The word, "bow in prayer," in the Bible, probably means to kneel with one's head on the ground.

'And Moses [as the Lord passed by] made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped."-Exodus 34:8.

Here are additional passages, in which God's people bowed on their knees in prayer:

"And at the evening sacrifice [Ezra, having learned of the apostasy of his people] . . . fell upon my knees, and spread out my hands unto the Lord my God."-Ezra 9:5.

"O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker."-Psalm 95:6.

"Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime."-Daniel 6:10.

God's people in New Testament times also bowed on their knees in prayer. The crucifixion had not freed them from that duty:

'And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge."-Acts 7:59-60.

"Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed."-Acts 9:40.

"When he [Paul] had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all."-Acts 20:36.

"We departed and went our way; and they all brought us on our way, with wives and children, till we were out of the city: and we kneeled down on the shore, and prayed."-Acts 21:5.

"I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."-Ephesians 3:14.

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#### MORE ON THE POSITION IN PRAYER, IN THE BIBLE

Perhaps by now, you recognize that the above passages do not necessarily mean just "kneeling," but may indicate kneeling with the face down -even to the ground. In some instances, the seeker after God lays prostrate-flat-on the ground while praying.

There are two principles here: First, we are not told that we must do this: kneeling alone is acceptable when we worship God.

Second, there seems to be a pattern when people fall prostrate on the ground, or bow with their faces to the ground: They are either in the immediate presence of God or believe that they are.

"[At the burning bush, when God made His presence known] And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God."-Exodus 3:6.

"And Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped."-Exodus 34:8, "And Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they fell upon their faces: and the glory of the Lord appeared unto them,"-Numbers 20:6,

"And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What said my Lord unto His servant?"-Joshua 5:14.

"And Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground: and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell before the Lord, worshipping the Lord,"-2 Chronicles 20: 18.

Sometimes when one passage speaks about "kneeling," another clarifies it as meaning bowing with the face to the ground. Here are three descriptions of Christ's first prayer in the Garden:

'And He [Christ] was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed."-Luke 22:41.

'And He went a little farther, and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless; not as I will, but as thou wilt," -Matthew 26:39.

'And He went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him,"-Mark 14:35.

Paul adds this comment:

"Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him," Hebrews 5:7.

In the Bible, we are only told that Solomon knelt and prayed (2 Chronicles 6: 13-14; cr. 1 Kings 8:22). But, in an inspired commentary on that event, we are given more detail, and told how that worship prayer was conducted:

"Solomon then knelt. . . and . . . lifting his hands toward heaven, while the congregation were bowed with their faces to the ground, the king pleaded [in prayer]."-Prophets and Kings, 40:1.

Other examples could be cited. In the Bible, the word, "kneeling," meant entering into a position of deepest worship before the Lord our Maker. When there was sufficient depth to the experience, an even more reverent expression occurred.

Let us now behold how Christ prayed in the Garden:

"His prayer is heard. While He is bowed in lowliness upon the stony ground, suddenly the heavens open, the golden gates of the city of God are thrown wide, and holy radiance descends upon the mount, enshrouding the Saviour's form. Divinity from within flashes through humanity, and meets the glory coming from above. Arising from His prostrate position, Christ stands in godlike majesty," Desire of Ages, 421:1,

"He went a little distance from them-not so far but that they could both see and hear him-and fell prostrate upon the ground, He felt that by sin He was being separated from His Father,"-Desire of Ages, 686:3.

"Behold Him contemplating the price to be paid for the human soul. In His agony He clings to the cold ground, as if to prevent Himself from being drawn farther from God, The chilling dew of night falls upon His prostrate form, but He heeds it not. "-Desire of Ages, 687:2.

"Turning away, Jesus sought again His retreat, and fell prostrate, overcome by the horror of a great darkness. The humanity of the Son of God trembled in that trying hour. He prayed not now for His disciples that their faith might not fail, but for His own tempted, agonized soul, The awful moment had come-that moment which was to decide the destiny of the world. The fate of humanity trembled in the balance,"-Desire of Ages, 690:2.

Few in Old Testament times knew how to pray as Elijah did. We have this description of him in prayer:

"So Ahab went up to eat and to drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees."-1 Kings 18:42.

"He [Elijah] then intercedes in behalf of sinning, apostate Israel. In the most painful position, his face bowed between his knees, he most earnestly supplicates God to send rain. He does not become impatient and faithless because the Lord does not immediately give the token that his prayer is heard. He continues in earnest prayer, sending his servant seven times to see if God has granted any signal."-3 Testimonies, 282:2.

"Elijah humbled himself until he was in a condition where he would not take the glory to himself. This is the condition upon which the Lord hears prayer, for then we shall give the praise to Him." 2 Bible Commentary, 1035:1 [also read the next paragraph].

"Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months.

"And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit."-James 5:17-18.

Before concluding this section, it is of interest to note that, when men were in the presence of God (or thought they were), they would fall at His feet. They were not necessarily praying, but were in deepest worship.

Apparently this happened to Ezekiel, for he was afterward strengthened to arise to his feet (Ezekiel 2:1-2). He again fell on his face (3:23) and, once again, was raised to his feet (3:24). Compare Mark 5:22; 7:25; Luke 8:41; 17:16; John 11:32; Acts 10:25; 26:16.

Both Daniel and John the Revelator fell at the feet of an angel, thinking he was God. (Interestingly enough, in both instances we are elsewhere told that the angel was Gabriel.)

"So he came near where I stood; and when he came, I was afraid, and fell upon my face: but he said unto me . . . Now as he was speaking With me, I was in a deep sleep on my face toward the ground. But he touched me, and set me upright."-Daniel 8:17-18.

"And I fell at his [the angel's] feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren."-Revelation 19: 10 [repeated in 22:8-9].

Both John and Ellen White described an experience of coming into the presence of Christ:

"And when I saw Him [Christ], I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last." Revelation 1: 17.

"I tried to shield myself from His [Christ's] gaze, feeling unable to endure His searching eyes, but He drew near With a smile, and, laying His hand upon my head, said: 'Fear not.' The sound of His sweet voice thrilled my heart with a happiness it had never before experienced. I was too joyful to utter a word, but, overcome with ineffable happiness, sank prostrate at His feet.

"While I was lying helpless there, scenes of beauty and glory passed before me, and I seemed to have reached the safety and peace of heaven. At length my strength returned, and I arose. The loving eyes of Jesus were still upon me, and His smile filled my soul with gladness. His presence filled me with holy reverence and an inexpressible love. "-Early Writings, 80:3-81:0.

#### -7- PROBLEM PASSAGES

There are several passages, which may appear to contradict the Scriptural rule that we should kneel when worshiping God. These are instances of standing prayers. Let us examine each of them:

##### - 1 - NEHEMIAH IN PRAYER

There are several instances in which God suddenly spoke to men, and they answered Him. One example would be when the Lord spoke to the child Samuel as he lay in bed. But such occurrences, obviously, are not worship prayers.

Then there are instances in which men, in times of great emergency, cried to the Lord. One example would be Sampson, as he stood by the pillars, just before pulling down the temple of Dagon. He was not engaged in worship, but crying for help.

Another would be Nehemiah, when he darted a prayer up to God before answering the question of the King, before whom he stood. The Spirit of Prophecy highly commends Nehemiah's action. In the midst of his ongoing work, and in a time of emergency when he needed just the right words and response, -he quickly sent up a prayer for guidance. It was an emergency situation; he was in the middle of his work, and did not need to kneel.

'Another question [from Artaxerxes] gave the opportunity for which Nehemiah had long waited: 'For what does thou make request?' But the man of God did not venture to reply till he had sought direction from One higher than Artaxerxes . . . 'I prayed,' he said, 'to the God of heaven.' In that brief prayer Nehemiah pressed into the presence of the King of kings and won to his side a power that can turn hearts as the rivers of waters are turned.

"To pray as Nehemiah prayed in his hour of need is a resource at the command of the Christian under circumstances when other forms of prayer may be impossible."-Prophets and Kings, 631:1-2.

Our kind Father is very practical, and He neither expects nor requires changed body positions when we pray in the midst of our daily duties. He is more concerned that we keep praying as we work!

Keep in mind that the Scriptural plan is that we should bow on our knees in prayer during worship, if at all possible. When emergencies arise or as we go about our daily work, we are not in a worship situation and we can pray as we sit, stand, or while resting.

But there are three special passages, which some consider to be problems. They appear to violate the rule to kneel during worship prayers:

## 2 - SOLOMON AT THE TEMPLE DEDICATION

Here is the problem passage, as presented by those who declare it is all right to stand to pray in worship to God: 'And the king turned his face, and blessed the whole congregation of Israel: and all the congregation stood.

'And he said, Blessed by the Lord God of Israel, who hath With his hands fulfilled that which he spake with his mouth to my father David, saying, Since the day that I brought forth my people. .

" . . [Prayer] . .

"Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the Lord filled the house."-2 Chronicles 6:17:1.

As the argument goes, the above passage indicates that Solomon stood when he prayed at the dedication of the Temple. This passage has been cited as evidence that it is not necessary to kneel during a worship prayer.

However, when we look more closely at this, and its parallel passage in 1 Kings, we find that Solomon did, indeed, kneel during this prayer. In addition, we will learn that, while he kneeled, all the congregation fell on their faces.

Here is this closer analysis:

First, Solomon blessed the congregation. We are told that he stood while doing this (2 Chronicles 6:3-11 and 1 Kings 8:12-21).

When the blessing was concluded, King Solomon remained standing (2 Chronicles 6: 12; 1 Kings 8:22). Then he began the dedicatory prayer. But did he first kneel before giving that prayer?

(1) The beginning of the prayer: It is true that 2 Chronicles 6:12 and 1 Kings 8:22 tell us that Solomon was standing when he was about to begin his prayer. But many people overlook the fact that 2 Chronicles 6:13 says he then knelt to begin the prayer, So he did kneel during that prayer,

"For Solomon had made a brazen scaffold, . . and upon it he stood, and kneeled down upon his knees before all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven. And said. . "-2 Chronicles 6:13-14.

(2) The end of the prayer: It is true that 2 Chronicles 7:1 does not say what his position was when the prayer ended, But 1 Kings 8:54 clearly states that he had been kneeling during that prayer! 'And it was so, that when Solomon had made an end of praying all this prayer and supplication unto the Lord, he arose from before the altar of the Lord, from kneeling on his knees with his hands spread up to heaven. And he stood, and blessed all the congregation of Israel with a loud voice,"-1 Kings 8:54-55.

(3) It should not be surprising that the mention of Solomon's getting on his knees should have been omitted in one or the other of those parallel passages, There is evidence of other omissions: For example, 2 Chronicles 7:1 does not mention the final blessing of the people, which is recorded in 1 Kings 8:55-61.

(4) The Spirit of Prophecy clearly, in the most definite words, clarifies the matter: Solomon and all the people stood as he blessed the people. Then, we are told, he knelt-and, with him, all the congregation knelt also:

"Upon this [platform] Solomon stood and with uplifted hands blessed the vast multitude before him, and all the congregation of Israel stood.' [He blessed them] . . Solomon then knelt upon the platform, and in the hearing of all the people offered the dedicatory prayer. Lifting his hands toward heaven, while the congregation were bowed with their faces to the ground, the king pleaded. ."Prophets and Kings, 39:2-40:1 [cf. 2 Selected Messages, 312:8-313:2],

"King Solomon stood upon a brazen scaffold before the altar and blessed the people. He then knelt down and, with his hands raised upward, poured forth earnest and solemn prayer to God while the congregation were bowed with their faces to the ground. After Solomon had ended his prayer, a miraculous fire came from heaven and consumed the sacrifice."-Story of Redemption, 194:3.

(5) After concluding a description of that entire worship service, several pages later Ellen White returns to one aspect of the service, in order to emphasize it more strongly: the fact that the great Solomon kneeled to pray. According to her, this act of kneeling on his part, revealed a genuineness to his Christian experience. Then we are told that we today must also kneel, lest we lose the sense of God's holiness and

majesty.

"The humility of Solomon at the time he began to bear the burdens of state, when he acknowledged before God, 'I am but a little child' (1 Kings 3:7), his marked love of God, his profound reverence for things divine, his distrust of self, and his exaltation of the infinite Creator of all- all these traits of character, so worthy of emulation, were revealed during the services connected with the completion of the temple, when during his dedicatory prayer he knelt in the humble position of a petitioner. Christ's followers today should guard against the tendency to lose the spirit of reverence and godly fear. The Scriptures teach men how they should approach their Maker-with humility and awe, through faith in a divine Mediator. The psalmist has declared:

" 'The Lord is a great God, and a mighty King above all gods. . O come, let us worship and bow down: Let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.' Psalm 95:3-6.

"Both in public and in private worship it is our privilege to bow on our knees before God when we offer our petitions to Him. Jesus, our example, 'kneeled down, and prayed.' Luke 22:41. Of His disciples it is recorded that they, too, 'kneeled down and prayed.' Acts 9:40. Paul declared, 'I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.' Ephesians 3: 14. In confessing before God the sins of Israel, Ezra knelt. See Ezra 9:5. Daniel 'kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God,' Daniel 6: 10.

"True reverence for God is inspired by a sense of His infinite greatness and a realization of His presence. With this sense of the Unseen, every heart should be deeply impressed. The hour and place of prayer are sacred, because God is there. And as reverence is manifested in attitude and demeanor, the feeling that inspires it will be deepened. 'Holy and reverend is His name,' the psalmist declares. Psalm 111:9. Angels, when they speak that name, veil their faces. With what reverence, then, should we, who are fallen and sinful, take it upon our lips! "Well would it be for old and young to ponder those words of Scripture that show how the place marked by God's special presence should be regarded. 'Put off thy shoes from off thy feet,' He commanded Moses at the burning bush, 'for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground,' Exodus 3:5. Jacob, after beholding the vision of the angel, exclaimed, 'The Lord is in this place; and I knew it not. . This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven,' Genesis 28:16-17." Prophets and Kings, 48:1-49:1.

### 3 - THE PHARISEE ON THE STREET

Another example cited as evidence that it is not necessary to kneel while praying, is the fact that Jesus Himself spoke of standing in prayer: "Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them. . When thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets. . And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward,"-Matthew 6:1-25.

Now, really, who wants to use the hypocrites as an example for how he should pray during worship! Jesus was not recommending the actions of the Pharisee.

### 4 - THE PUBLICAN

Then there is the parable of the Pharisee and the publican, who were praying in the temple: "Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other publican.

"The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.

"And the publican, standing far off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner!"-Luke 18:10-13.

In this instance, the publican was standing, praying, and doing it in church. And Jesus commended him. Is this, at last, an exception to the rule? . Believing that Scripture is always consistent with itself, let us examine this passage more closely:

(1) The man was in the process of coming to God. He did not know how to properly approach Him. If a pagan sat or stood, while in sincere prayer for forgiveness of sin, -would not Jesus commend his prayer and receive him? Of course, He would.

(2) The contrast in the parable was between the Pharisee who knew so much truth, who prayed "to himself," not to God in heaven, vs. the heathen publican who, in utter genuineness and humility of spirit,

pled with God for forgiveness. -And, as a result, he was justified! (Many spend years trying to figure out the meaning of "justification by faith," yet this poor man received it within a few minutes!) "I tell you that this man went down to his house justified!" (Luke 18:14).

(3) The publican prayed the prayer privately in church. It was not a worship prayer; it was a plea for forgiveness and acceptance.

(4) This prayer is like those which Ellen White conducted at the conclusion of public meetings, in which she called for individuals to dedicate their lives to God-and then led them in prayer while standing. Such prayers are not prayers of worship. They are prayers of repentance and surrender. (However, the statements quoted earlier indicate that, when practical, she preferred to have the audience kneel during such a prayer, But it was in no way required.)

So we find no instances in the Bible when God's faithful ones prayed a worship prayer to Him while standing or sitting. Why then do moderns do it? Convenience and appearance-the same reasons they sprinkle their babies, go to church on the first day of the week, and carry around beautiful Bibles, which they rarely open.

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#### FREQUENCY OF PERSONAL WORSHIP PRAYER

How often should we pray during the day? Here are some interesting statements, which also reveal how often we should, if possible, worship God on our knees each day:

"Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime,"-Daniel 6:10.

"Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice. "--Psalm 55:17.

"In following Christ, looking unto Him who is the Author and Finisher of your faith, you will feel that you are working under His eye, that you are influenced by His presence, and that He knows your motives. At every step you will humbly inquire: Will this please Jesus? Will it glorify God? Morning and evening your earnest prayers should ascend to God for His blessing and guidance. True prayer takes hold upon Omnipotence and gives us the victory. Upon his knees the Christian obtains strength to resist temptation."-4 Testimonies, 615:4-616:0.

"The father who is the 'house band' of the family will bind his children to the throne of God by living faith. Distrusting his own strength, he hangs his helpless soul on Jesus and takes hold of the strength of the Most High. Brethren, pray at home, in your family, night and morning; pray earnestly in your closet; and while engaged in your daily labor, lift up the soul to God in prayer. It was thus that Enoch walked with God. The silent, fervent prayer of the soul will rise like holy incense to the throne of grace and will be acceptable to God as if offered in the sanctuary. To all who thus seek Him, Christ becomes a present help in time of need. "-4 Testimonies, 616:1.

"Your mind was given that you might be keen to discern your God-given opportunities. Your ears are to listen for the commands of God. Your knees are to bow three times a day in heartfelt prayer. Your feet are to run in the way of God's commandments. Thought, effort, talent, should be put into exercise, that you may be prepared to graduate into the school above and hear from the lips of one who has overcome all temptations in our behalf the words: 'To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne.' 'Thus saith the Lord of hosts; If thou wilt walk in My ways, and if thou wilt keep My charge, then thou shalt also judge My house, and shalt also keep My courts, and I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by.' Revelation 3:21; Zechariah 3:7. If you do not co-operate with the Lord by giving yourself to Him and doing His service you will be judged unfit to be a subject of His pure, heavenly kingdom." Testimonies, 298:0.

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#### OTHER POSITIONAL ASPECTS OF PRAYER

Here is additional helpful information about the best positions during prayer, when others are present. Our Father kindly helps us understand better ways of praying:

"The long prayers made by some ministers have been a great failure. Praying to great length, as some do, is all out of place. They injure the throat and vocal organs, and then they talk of breaking down by

their hard labor. They injure themselves when it is not called for. Many feel that praying injures their vocal organs more than talking. This is a consequence of the unnatural position of the body, and the manner of holding the head. They can stand and talk, and not feel injured. The position in prayer should be perfectly natural. Long praying wearies, and is not in accordance with the gospel of Christ. Half or even quarter of an hour is altogether too long. A few minutes' time is long enough to bring your case before God and tell Him what you want; and you can take the people with you and not weary them out and lessen their interest in devotion and prayer. They may be refreshed and strengthened, instead of exhausted. "-2 Testimonies, 617:2.

"When Christ taught the people, He did not devote the time to prayers. He did not enforce upon them, as did the Pharisees, long, tedious ceremonies and prayer. He taught His disciples how to pray: 'And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him. After this manner therefore pray ye.' "-2 Testimonies, 580:3-581:0.

"But many offer their prayer in a dry, sermonizing manner. These pray to men, not to God. If they were praying to God, and really understood what they were doing, they would be alarmed at their audacity; for they deliver a discourse to the Lord in the mode of prayer, as though the Creator of the universe needed special information upon general questions in relation to things transpiring in the world. All such prayers are as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. They are made no account of in heaven. Angels of God are wearied with them, as well as mortals who are compelled to listen to them.

"Jesus was often found in prayer. He resorted to the lonely groves or to the mountains to make His requests known to His Father. When the business and cares of the day were ended, and the weary were seeking rest, Jesus devoted the time to prayer. We should not discourage prayer, for there is far too little praying and watching thereto. And there is still less praying with the Spirit and the understanding also. Fervent and effectual prayer is always in place, and will never weary. Such prayer interests and refreshes all who have a love for devotion.

"Secret prayer is neglected, and this is why many offer such long, tedious, backslidden prayers when they assemble to worship God. They go over in their prayers a week of neglected duties, and pray round and round, hoping to make up for their neglect and pacify their condemned consciences, which are scourging them. They hope to pray themselves into the favor of God. But frequently these prayers result in bringing other minds down to their own low level in spiritual darkness. If Christians would take home the teaching of Christ in regard to watching and praying, they would become more intelligent in their worship of God."-2 Testimonies, 581 :2-582:2.

"And let not those who kneel round the family altar put their faces in their hands and in their chair when they address God. Let them lift up their heads and, with holy awe and boldness, come to the throne of grace."-Adventist Home, 435:3.

"Let not those who kneel around the family altar put their faces in their hands close down to the chair when they address God. Let them lift up their heads and with holy awe speak to their heavenly Father, uttering their words in tones that can be heard."-6 Testimonies, 381:4.

"I am pained as I see how little the gift of speech is appreciated. In reading the Bible, in engaging in prayer, in bearing testimony in meeting, how necessary is clear, distinct utterance! And how much is lost in family worship when the one offering prayer bows the face down and speaks in a low, feeble voice! But as soon as family worship is over, those who could not speak loud enough to be heard in prayer, can usually speak in clear, distinct tones, and there is no difficulty in hearing what they say. Prayer that is thus uttered is appropriate for the closet, but not edifying in family or public worship; for unless those assembled can hear what is said, they cannot say Amen. Nearly all can speak loud enough to be heard in ordinary conversation, and why should they not speak thus when called upon to bear testimony or to offer prayer?

"When speaking of divine things, why not speak in distinct tones, and in a manner that will make it manifest that you know whereof you speak, and are not ashamed to show your colors? Why not pray as if you had a conscience void of offense, and could come to the throne of grace in humility, yet with holy boldness, lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting? Do not bow down and cover up your faces as if there were something that you desired to conceal; but lift up your eyes toward the heavenly sanctuary,

where Christ your Mediator stands before the Father to present your prayers, mingled with His own merit and spotless righteousness, as fragrant incense. "-Counsels to Teachers, 241: 12.

"Prosy, sermonizing prayers are uncalled for and out of place in public. A short prayer, offered in fervor and faith, will soften the hearts of the hearers; but during long prayers they wait impatiently, as if wishing that every word might end it. Had the minister making such a prayer wrestled with God in his chamber until he felt that his faith could grasp the promise, 'Ask and it shall be given you,' he would in his public prayer have come to the point at once, asking with earnestness and faith for grace for himself and his hearers."-Gospel Workers, 179:2.

#### -10- CONCLUSION

We have found the inspired statements to be both clear and consistent. There are different types of prayer at different times. We can generally pray in any position. Our Father is far more anxious that we pray than what our position may be when we do it.

Yet there is a strong exception to this: He requires that we get on our knees, as the very minimum, when we are worshiping Him. As with all His other requirements, this one is for our best good. You have read the statements and know, by this time, why it is for our best good.

Only the humble who have learned to obey God's words, will go through to the end. They alone will obtain the victory over sin; they alone will erelong stand on the sea of glass-there to fall before Him and worship Him, as they did on earth.

Many years ago, in 1965, an earnest Christian friend told me this: "I stand when I speak to an equal. I get on one knee, when I speak to an earthly ruler. I get on both knees when I speak to God."

#### -11- WHEN EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW

Oh, thank the Lord, that the day is coming when every creature in the universe will bow the knee in prayer to God! Let us now-before that time-begin. Only the wicked will wait until later to do it. Those who worship their God appropriately now will do so with thankfulness-now and later. Those who wait till after probation-will do it in terror.

Why is it that, in this world, men and women hesitate to kneel before God? Yet the time is coming when every knee shall bow in solemn worship.

"I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear."-Isaiah 45:23.

"As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God."-Romans 14:11.

"Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. "-Philippians 2:9-11.

"As if entranced, the Wicked have looked upon the coronation of the Son of God. They see in His hands the tables of the divine law, the statutes which they have despised and transgressed. They Witness the outburst of wonder, rapture, and adoration from the saved; and as the wave of melody sweeps over the multitudes without the city, all with one voice exclaim, 'Great and marvelous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints'; and, falling prostrate, they worship the Prince of life. "-Great Controversy, 668:4-669:0.

"Satan sees that his voluntary rebellion has unfitted him for heaven. . His accusations against the mercy and justice of God are now silenced. The reproach which he has endeavored to cast upon Jehovah rests wholly upon himself. And now Satan bows down and confesses the justice of his sentence."-Great Controversy. 670:2.

#### -12-

#### APPLICATION

After concluding this study, those whom it was shown to in advance said that it was insufficient: There also needed to be suggestions as to how to adapt the Bible/Spirit of Prophecy pattern to the situation we find in our church services now.

The present writer has had some experience with dealing with that. So here are several suggestions: "There are generally four prayers during worship services in our churches.

THE SILENT PRAYER—The first is a silent prayer by those on the platform, just after they enter:

Here is the first part of the traditional church service:

(1) Those leading out in the service enter the platform, and (2) the audience stands respectfully as those on the platform kneel in silent prayer. Then all stand and sing the doxology together. (3) The speaker steps forward and gives a prayer while everyone stands.

Let us consider how the silent prayer relates to the Bible-Spirit of Prophecy blueprint:

The present writer found no instance in Scripture in which the leaders of a worship group prayed to God-while others stood about them, or in front of them. We rarely find such conduct even outside of a worship gathering! When a Christian kneels down to pray about an important matter, fellow Christians in the room do not stand around him! They kneel with him.

The minister (or other speaker) is supposed to be the one who will speak words from God's Word to the people in that worship service, and he is kneeling to re-establish that vital contact-before bringing God's message to the people.

Why would the congregation be standing at such a solemn moment! He has entered the presence of the God of heaven-and there they are, standing like soldiers at attention! Why? Who told them to do that? God's Word surely did not.

The theory, that they are "showing respect," is a fallacious one:

(1) They are not showing respect for the act of prayer. If they really believed that the mouthpiece of God was on his knees beseeching the King of heaven for help, -the congregation would be on their knees also, adding their silent pleas to his! To merely stand there is ridiculous.

(2) For the same reasons, they are not showing respect for the minister, the event, for God, or themselves. The minister needs their concerted, though silent, prayers also at such an important time. The event demands it. Reverence to God requires that they get on their knees, for they are in His presence while His servant is praying! Lastly, the Bible pattern is that "all ye are brethren," All are to kneel and plead for Christ's help in this service. For the congregation to stand while the speaker kneels is akin to the papal concept that only certain people can approach God on behalf of the rest.

That initial silent prayer is quite obviously a worship prayer. Not even the heathen in Arabia or India stand during their worship prayers!

Keep in mind that many in the audience know of friends who need spiritual help at that gathering. They should be on their knees praying silently as those on the platform do. The congregation will also know about visitors there that day, who need special prayer. We should not expect those on the platform to know all these needs. United prayer is always more powerful. Why rob the congregation of an opportunity to pray, as is done during the traditional initial silent prayer?

What should be done to solve this problem? The answer is that everyone in the auditorium, who is physically able to do so, should kneel and silently pray at the same time that those on the podium do.

THE INVOCATION-The invocation is also a worship prayer. It should be given while kneeling! It is true that this could produce the effect of an "updown-up-down" pattern: The ministers enter and everyone up; the ministers and people kneel -and It everyone down; everyone rises to sing the doxology up; everyone kneels for the invocation-down again. This smacks of the mindless traditional forms we see when we attend a Catholic mass: up, down, up, down. A meaningful church service should have a calm, worshipful atmosphere and a purposive flow. Everything that is done should have a reason, and it should be a reason based on obedience to God's Word.

What is the solution? The solution is to rearrange the order of service. Here is a revised first section of the worship service: (1) Someone comes out onto the platform and gives the name of the speaker for that morning, the purpose of the offering, announcements of coming events, but not the worship hymn numbers. (These will be posted on a front wall. No announcements will be given during the worship service.) (2) Everyone arises as those who are ministering enter. (3) Following the lead of the speaker, all kneel together for silent prayer. All are silently praying for God's blessing on that meeting and on those in attendance. (4) Then, while all are still on their knees, the speaker prays aloud, giving the invocation. (5)

All arise together and sing the doxology.

How very nice, orderly, and meaningful such an order of service is!

#### THE OFFERING PRAYER AND WORSHIP PRAYER

The central portion of worship is also important. Here is the middle part of the traditional church service: (1) Announcements are made of coming picnics, movies, and whatnots. (2) Perhaps a Scripture reading, (3) followed by an opening hymn. (4) The offering prayer is given (while everyone is sitting, many of them fumbling for their wallets or purses!). (5) Then the offering is taken, (6) followed by the pastoral prayer (during which all kneel), (7) special music, (8) and the sermon.

We did not mention the timing of the music; that is generally done all right-when it is proper music and properly played. The organist and pianist often provide a more worshipful atmosphere than do the speakers, with their standing prayers, announcements of coming shows, long ingathering pleas, and jokes in the pulpit.

In this normal arrangement, the only kneeling prayer in the entire church service is the pastoral prayer. What decadent lives we live! Little wonder we have no spiritual power! We have forgotten how to pray to our God!

We will get down on our knees to change the crankcase oil, plant beans, or pull weeds. But we sit or stand in prayer, showing how little respect we have for the act of entering our Creator's presence! Many of God's professed people only kneel in prayer one time a week-during the pastor's prayer at church. Pitiful. Such pathetic living produces spiritual misery; and, to make matters worse, many blame their kind Father for the daily trials they face all alone. They are like orphans, wandering through life.

How can we improve on this?

We would do it by a little rearranging, combining the offering and pastoral prayer, and changing the pattern at the close. We need to make it worshipful and more in harmony with God's Word. Of course, only those will kneel who are able to do so: Here is a revised middle section of the worship service:

(1) Scripture reading, if it is desired (we would recommend it). (2) The worship hymn. (3) Without any announcement at this time, assistants quietly begin taking the offering, starting from the front. (4) When the offering has been taken, the pastor arises and calls the people to the worship prayer. He may mention the needs of certain ones who are sick or injured. Then all kneel, and the pastor prays earnestly (earnestly!). During that prayer he mentions in passing the offering which was just taken. (5) Special music. (6) The sermon.

You will note that, in this revised format, the name of the opening hymn has been changed to the worship hymn, for that is what it is. The pastoral prayer is now the worship prayer. The worship hymn, prayer, and sermon constitute the worship gathering.

Let us now consider what occurs after the sermon is concluded:

THE CONSECRATION PRAYER-You will recall the footnote, quoted earlier, which said that Ellen White gave benedictions while standing. The present writer found not one statement about her giving a benediction! Perhaps on occasion she did, but that is not what was in the statements. Every instance cited, in which she gave a closing prayer of any sort (standing or kneeling)-was a dedicatory prayer following a consecration call; it was not a benediction, which is just a routine, concluding prayer to end the service.

Here is the last part of the traditional church service: (1) Closing hymn. (2) Someone asks everyone to stand, and then he gives a quick prayer. (3) The meeting adjourns.

How can this be done better?

Here is a revised final section of the worship service: (1) The call is given. (A call for souls to come forward and accept Christ for the first time. This is followed by extending the call, to make it a consecration call for the others. When possible, they can be asked to press to the front, but this may not always be feasible.) [Alternative: On some Sabbaths, have a consecration call; on others have the audience give testimonies.] (2) Next comes an earnest consecration prayer (kneeling or standing). (3) A closing hymn, if desired (or a couple stanzas of a song can be sung softly during the call to come to the front). (4) If desired, the speaker could bless the congregation with God's favor and help through the coming week. (5) The meeting is adjourned (while those who have made an initial, or special, decision meet with the pastor in back).

When it is thought best to do so, the audience is asked to kneel for this prayer. By this kneeling re-

sponse, they can more wholeheartedly pledge their personal acknowledgment of love and devotion to God. But kneeling is not a necessity, for this call and consecration is not part of the main worship service. The people are not worshipping God, but initiating or renewing their acceptance of Him as their Lord. Ellen White apparently had them kneel when the auditorium was not crowded. We do not know, but it may also be that she had them kneel when most of those in attendance were Advent believers. Keep in mind that she frequently spoke to large audiences, primarily composed of non-Adventists.

Obviously, the above conclusion to the service lends itself well to bringing your friends to the service, so they can accept Christ and begin Bible studies. We are told that, in every audience, there are souls who want to come to Christ.

An alternative to the consecration call would be to invite the audience to stand and give testimonies of their experience and love for Jesus. This is a sweet experience, one which the early pioneers deeply appreciated.

You will notice that we have eliminated the benediction. Actually, the traditional concluding prayer is not one! A "benediction" is a blessing on the congregation, pronounced by the speaker at the beginning or close of the service. It is Biblical. But a true, brief Biblical benediction could be given at the close of the worship gathering. A true benediction—a blessing upon them—would cheer the hearts of the departing congregation and encourage them for the oncoming week.

If you will study the blessing uttered by Solomon in the Bible (2 Chronicles 6:3-11; 1 Kings 8:14-21), you will find that it was given while he and all the congregation stood, and that it primarily consisted of praising the Lord for His protecting care.

THE ENTIRE SERVICE—Here is this entire suggested, revised order of worship service. It is not stuck in concrete, so do what you want with it: (1) Someone comes out onto the platform and gives the name of the speaker for that morning, the purpose of the offering, announcements of coming events, but not the worship hymn numbers. (These will be posted on a front wall. No announcements will be given during the worship service.) (2) Everyone arises as those who are ministering enter. (3) Following the lead of the speaker, all kneel together for silent prayer. All are silently praying for God's blessing on that meeting, and on those in attendance. (4) Then, while all are still on their knees, the speaker prays aloud, giving the invocation. (5) All arise together and sing the doxology.

(6) Scripture reading, if it is desired (we would recommend it). (7) The worship hymn. (8) Without any announcement at this time, assistants quietly begin taking the offering, starting from the front. (9) When the offering has been taken, the pastor arises and calls the people to the worship prayer. He may mention the needs of certain ones who are sick or injured. Then all kneel, and the pastor prays earnestly (earnestly!). During that prayer he mentions in passing the offering which was just taken. (10) Special music. (11) The sermon. (12) The call is given. (A call for souls to come forward and accept Christ for the first time. This is followed by extending the call, to make it a consecration call for the others. When possible, they can be asked to press to the front, but this may not always be feasible.) [Alternative: On some Sabbaths, have a consecration call; on others have the audience give testimonies.]

(13) Next comes an earnest consecration prayer (kneeling or standing). (14) A closing hymn, if desired (or a couple stanzas of a song can be sung softly during the call to come to the front). (15) If desired, the speaker could bless the congregation with God's favor and help through the coming week. (16) The meeting is adjourned (while those who have made an initial, or special, decision meet with the pastor in back).

Here it is again, as a word outline:

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Enter / Silent Prayer - all arise, then kneel

INVOCATION - still kneeling

Doxology

SCRIPTURE

WORSHIP HYMN

OFFERING taken

WORSHIP PRAYER - all kneel

SPECIAL MUSIC

SERMON

CLOSING HYMN

CONSECRATION CALL

or TESTIMONIES

DEDICATION PRAYER - stand or kneel

BENEDICTION (if desired)

There are definite advantages to an order of worship, as suggested above. First, it is more Biblical. Second, because it is more simplified, it is likely to be more quiet and reverent. Third, it is definitely more purposive and worshipful in all its parts.

It rather quickly becomes a ritual to do something just to do it. In this revised arrangement, the opening silent and invocational prayers have become meaningful. The announcements are banished from the interior of the service. Most or all the prayers are kneeling, without a up-down-up-down routine. The entire service lends itself to a worshipful atmosphere. It all becomes a meaningful experience. But, beware, the heart must be in it, and the prayers must be sincere-or even the best service becomes a dead gathering.

If you believe you may have a difficult time getting the brethren to modify your local church service, try for just these two changes:

1 - All kneel for the silent prayer, and switch the two items which immediately follow it, so everyone can remain kneeling for the invocation: (kneeling: silent prayer and invocation; standing: doxology).

2 - Either kneel for the offering prayer or place the pastor's prayer immediately after the offering, which had no prayer preceding it.

Here is a final suggestion. One of the most worshipful services the present writer ever saw, was conducted by a pastor who let a few moments of time elapse between events. Someone was not always jumping up to start the next item on the worship agenda.

May the Lord bless your efforts, as you seek to worship Him in accordance with His commands.

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