

## The Vast Menu of Prayer

**Introduction:** Today we take a very practical look at prayer. Things like the posture of our body or where we pray can have a huge impact on our focus and overall experience of prayer. If you've felt like you've been a rut in your prayer life or if you just sense a need to spice it up a bit, we trust that today's study will help. With this study, we conclude our sermon series on prayer. Of course there is still much to learn about prayer, but we trust that you have grown in your own experience of prayer through this study - that you've experienced a deepening prayer life.

**Opening Discussion:** Steve said:

Imagine living in a home where you had plain oatmeal for breakfast every single day. . .no brown sugar, no walnuts, no fruit, no milk, no raisins – nothing but oatmeal. Now imagine if you also had plain oatmeal for lunch every single day. It gets worse. You also have plain oatmeal for supper every single day. Imagine what your life would be like if there was only one bland thing on the menu. You might lose some weight, but any sense of anticipation or enjoyment would be gone.

When it comes to prayer sometimes we have the idea that there's only one thing on the menu: sitting completely still with our eyes shut. Not surprisingly, quite often there is very little sense of anticipation or enjoyment in prayer. When there's only one thing on the menu, that's quite common.

But what if you could look forward to a rich variety of experiences in prayer? What if there were a vast menu from which to choose when it came to prayer? What if you looked forward to times of prayer much like you look forward to bacon and eggs and waffles and a reuben sandwich and chicken alfredo and jambalaya and butter pecan ice cream? (These are a few of my favorite things.) When you read through the Bible, you find great variety when it comes to posture, place, the number of people present (from private prayer large gatherings), and types of prayers. There really is a vast menu when it comes to prayer.

1. Where would you rate your own prayer experience on the following scale?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
outmeal prayer experience					vast menu experience				

**Variety in Posture: Read Dan. 6:10, Ps. 28:2; 1 Tim. 2:8; 2 Sam. 7:18; Matt. 26:39**

2. What various postures of prayer are seen in these passages?

3. How might the various postures affect one's prayer experience?

4. How often do you utilize a posture other than sitting in a time of prayer? What value have you found in other prayer postures?

Steve said:

We often make prayer a completely mental activity without involving our bodies at all. Hanson argues rather convincingly that we were never meant to deny our bodies in prayer; rather, our bodies were meant to be an asset in prayer. Sitting, standing, keeling, raising our hands, lifting our eyes to heaven, lying face-down before God, etc. are all ways to involve our bodies in expressing ourselves to God. It's been said that 50 to 60% of communication is body language. That's something to consider even in our communication with God. I mention all of this to suggest that we need to find ways of praying that involve our bodies. We need to see our bodies as an asset in prayer instead of a liability.

5. What is one thing you would like to begin doing regarding posture to more often use your body as an asset instead of a liability in your prayer life?

### **Variety in Place: Read Acts 3:1, Matt. 14:23**

6. What kinds of places for prayer are seen in these passages?
7. How can having a dedicated place of prayer be helpful?
8. How can praying outside be helpful in our praying?
9. What places have you found to be most helpful to you own prayer life?

### **Other Types of Variety in Prayer:**

10. Steve mentioned other areas of variety in prayer (praying alone and with others; prayer and fasting; spontaneous prayers and written prayers, etc.). What has been your experience with some of these other areas of variety?

Steve said:

In light of the fact that there is a vast menu when it comes to prayer, my strong encouragement to you is to develop habits of prayer that fit your schedule, your body, your mind, and your walk with God. Granted, sometimes prayer is hard work, but you don't get any extra points for being miserable during prayer. I'd encourage you to move forward in faith in your prayer life, finding times, places, and modes of prayer that help you enter into God's presence. We have to assume that the commands, "pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17) and "devote yourself to prayer" (Colossians 4:2) are possible to obey. Let's trust the Holy Spirit to lead us into deeper, more effective experiences in prayer.

11. What is one thing that you want to do to "move forward in faith in your prayer life"?