

STAY AWAKE

BODY PRAYER

Try Body Prayer

Elizabeth J. Canham

In order to move the focus of our prayers from asking to listening, we need practices that enable us to still body as well as mind. If our bodies are tense or if we are agitated, it is likely that our minds will be unfocused. The Hebrew people prayed with their bodies; and many of the Psalms were written for processions, dance, and ritual drama. We too can embrace body prayer and discover how it leads us into stillness of mind. . . .

The following exercise can become a helpful, regular prelude to listening prayer.

- Begin with a few stretches reaching up, opening the arms, and then placing your open hands together in a posture of receiving. Repeat the stretches several times and pay attention to your breath. Allow your breathing to become deeper and slower.
- When you are ready, sit in a comfortable chair that offers good back support, and place your feet on the floor with your hands open in your lap. Continue to observe your breathing, and become aware of how your body feels.
- Begin relaxing by focusing on your feet and gradually moving up your legs, torso, neck, and head, consciously relaxing each area. Sometimes you will notice that tension or pain exists even after relaxation; in your mind go back to that place, tighten the muscles around the pain center, and then let go.
- By this time your regular breathing rhythm will help you to be still, and you can begin to repeat the phrase: “Be still and know that I am God.” It is helpful to speak aloud if it does not disturb anyone else. Be still. . . . Be. . . .

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The Lord's Prayer Made Physical

For people who like to be active, combining movement an prayer makes sense. Try this version of The Lord's Prayer choreographed as a neck and shoulder stretch by Wendy LeBolt, a **devozine** writer and Upper Room Books author.

