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John's Vision

Praying with Our Bodies

Revelation 1:9–20

A number of years ago, I realized that some people use their bodies in prayer in creative ways that go beyond kneeling. I was leading a worship service at a women's retreat and, to my surprise, many of the younger women cupped their hands as I said the words of the benediction. It looked like they wanted to catch those words and hold onto them.

Perhaps they always cupped their hands like that on Sunday mornings at church, but I had never noticed. After that retreat, I began paying attention to the way people, particularly in the younger generations, used their bodies in worship. I saw a variety of hand motions and positions that paralleled the words of prayers and songs. I also saw people kneeling at unexpected times in the worship service, swaying in time with the music and sometimes even dancing in the aisles.

GROUP DISCUSSION. List the ways you have used your body in prayer and worship. What emotions and inner attitudes does each body posture communicate to you? Are there ways you would like to express aspects of prayer and worship with your body, but are unable to?

PERSONAL REFLECTION. Spend some time moving your body, experimenting with positions of your hands, arms and whole body. Observe the inner experience that accompanies the outer movement. How are these inner experiences related to prayer?

A powerful vision causes John to use his whole body in worship. John's prayerful response to the vision can inform the way we pray and help us to use our bodies more comfortably as we come before the Lord. *Read Revelation 1:9–20.*

1. How does John describe himself and his situation (vv. 9–10)?
2. Of all the components of John's vision of Jesus, which are most striking to you?
3. What do you think is significant about John's physical response to this vision (v. 17)?

4. What is significant about Jesus' physical response to John (v. 17)?
5. Jesus gives more than 3 reasons why John does not need to be afraid (vv. 17–18). Paraphrase these reasons.
6. Which of these gives you the most comfort?
7. Jesus gives John a command and an explanation in verses 19 and 20. If you were John, what questions would you have after hearing Jesus' words?
8. Go back over the whole passage, looking for all the places where the five senses are evoked.
9. How would you like to engage your five senses and your body more frequently in prayer? Brainstorm the ways that could be done.

Spend some time thanking God for your body and for each of your five senses. Ask God to help you engage your whole being in prayer and worship.

Now or Later

Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron, led the women of Israel in a joyful dance with tambourines after God led the people of Israel through the Red Sea. Read Exodus 15:20–21. Use your body to express what you're feeling to God: fear, hope, joy, thankfulness, desire.

Read Psalm 47 and notice any connections between the psalm and John's vision. Then read the psalm a second time slowly, praying the words and praising God. When you pray the first verse, clap your hands.

Has this study on prayers of the New Testament changed your perspective on or practice of prayer? If so, how? Spend time discussing as a group what you've learned or journaling about it on your own.

FOR THE CREATIVES ☺

If you were going to create a piece of art based on what John saw, what medium would you choose and why?

What colors would you use?