

Psalm 95:6 says, ***“Come, let us worship and bow down, Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker.”*** Bowing and kneeling have long been associated with worship and reverence (see [2 Chronicles 6:13](#); [Psalm 138:2](#); [Daniel 6:10](#)). In fact, the Hebrew word for ***“worship”*** actually means ***“bow down.”*** But is bowing or kneeling the only posture we are to take in [worshiping](#) or [praying](#)?

The first instance recorded in the Bible of bowing in reverence is in [Genesis 18:2](#) when the three heavenly visitors came to Abraham. He knew they represented God, and he bowed to the ground in welcome. A few generations later, Pharaoh, king of Egypt, ordered all Egyptians to bow to Joseph as a sign of respect for the former slave promoted to second-in-command ([Genesis 41:42–43](#)). So, very early in human history, bowing or kneeling came to represent taking a humble position before someone of greater importance.

Bowing and kneeling before rulers and false gods had become commonplace by the time God gave the Law to Moses. God wanted to set some new boundaries about the worship owed to Him. The second commandment says, ***“You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything. . . . You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God”*** ([Exodus 20:4–5](#)). God reserves any form of worship for Himself, and bowing down before someone or something else as a form of worship is forbidden. In [Revelation 19:10](#), John falls at the feet of the angel who was explaining a vision to him, but the angel immediately corrects him: ***“Don’t do that! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers and sisters who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God!”***

Bowing and kneeling were not the only postures adopted by worshipers in the Bible. Moses and Aaron fell facedown before the Lord, and His glory overshadowed them ([Numbers 20:6](#)). Ezekiel fell facedown in grief, crying out to the Lord, and the Lord answered him ([Ezekiel 11:13–14](#)). The Levites were to ***“stand every morning to thank and praise the LORD. They were to do the same in the evening”*** ([1 Chronicles 23:30](#)). King David ***“went in and sat before the Lord”*** to pray ([2 Samuel 7:18](#)). Jesus ***“lifted His eyes toward heaven”*** when He offered His longest recorded prayer ([John 17](#)), and Paul exhorted ***“men everywhere to pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or disputing”*** ([1 Timothy 2:8](#)). According to the Bible, there is more than one right posture for worship or prayer.

While physical representations of worship are important, and our entire being should be engaged in worship of God, the posture of our hearts is of more importance than the position of our bodies. When the posture of our hearts is humility and awe, our bodies often yearn to express that in physical ways. Kneeling, bowing, lying face down, bowing our heads, and lifting our hands are all physical expressions of the attitudes of our hearts. Of course, without a corresponding heart posture, the physical actions are empty showmanship. [Psalm 51:17](#) eloquently summarizes God’s desire for our worship: ***“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.”***

True worship is a lifestyle, not an activity. While dedicated times of intense communion with God are vital to our spiritual health, we are also told to ***“pray without ceasing”*** ([1 Thessalonians 5:17](#)). Our bodies are to be living sacrifices ([Romans 12:1–2](#)) and our hearts filled with ***“psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father”*** ([Ephesians 5:19–20](#)). Our hearts can be in a continual state of worship and prayer, even as we go about our days. A. W. Tozer wrote, ***“The goal of every Christian should be to live in a state of unbroken worship.”*** When that is the goal of our lives, kneeling, bowing, lying prostrate, and walking down the street are all postures of prayer and worship that are pleasing to God.

References: Various searches on the internet