

# LIFTING UP HOLY HANDS

1 Timothy 2:8



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*All scriptures are NKJV unless noted otherwise.*

**Should we, or shouldn't we, raise our hands in prayer, praise and song to YHVH? Does your church group allow it, encourage or discourage it? See what God's Word has to say about raising up our arms in prayer, praise and worship.**

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Hello and welcome everyone to Light on the Rock. This is Philip Shields welcoming you to enjoy our free messages and insights from the Word of God. Be sure to let others know about us if you benefit from our teachings.

**When people are singing praises and worship songs to the Almighty, what happens in your congregation? Does anyone raise his/her hands in praise while singing or while praying?**

**Do you ever do that? Would you be comfortable raising your arms in prayer? Or are you doing it routinely now?**

I was raised both ways. As a child I attended my father's Pentecostal services until I was 12 where lots of people raised hands in song and prayer. But in my mother's Sabbath-keeping church, no one did. And frankly if anyone did, someone – a deacon perhaps – would have discouraged raising hands in song and worship in church services.

So I want to talk about this today. Even among Sabbath-keeping groups, many attending among the Hebrew Roots groups and Messianic groups will raise hands.

## **WHY do we need to consider this?**

- So we see what the Bible actually says about it  
I've found over the years that people practice or don't practice, believe or don't believe something – because of *tradition*; because of the way they were brought up – and not always from what the Bible says.
- **So we feel free to do it, or NOT to do it**  
I don't see a command for or against this in the Bible, but it is certainly discussed.

- We also will study this today so we understand WHY scripture says what it does about raising our hands in church while singing or praying.

And I will say this too: consider this message a planting of a seed. You may or may not be ready to receive what I'm about to show, but I hope you will at least consider God's word on it and accept a seed being planted. Sometimes we're not ready to fully accept or receive a new concept, but hopefully we can accept the power of a planted seed.

### **LIFTING UP HOLY HANDS**

I suspect that this topic has become so ingrained in us to either raise our hands in prayer and worship --or *not* raise our hands-- *that it will be hard for anyone to change, unless we are truly convicted to let Scripture guide and lead us.* I hope you're one of those willing to let God's spirit lead you into all truth.

Remember – if scripture teaches something, it doesn't matter who does it or doesn't do it – what matters is what scripture says. So many feel that raising hands in church is “such a Baptist/Pentecostal thing” and so shy away from even considering it.

So what do we read in scripture?

#### **1 Timothy 2:8**

***“I desire therefore*** that the men ***pray everywhere, LIFTING UP holy hands,*** without wrath and doubting” (KJV almost exactly same)

#### **1 Timothy 2:8 Complete Jewish Bible**

“Therefore, it is my wish that when the men pray, no matter where, they should lift up hands that are holy – they should not become angry or get into arguments.”

#### **1 Timothy 2:8 NIV**

**“I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer,** without anger or disputing.”

Paul seems to equate lifting of hands (Plural) with prayer, which he desired people do much more. No hint from Paul here of being against lifting hands in prayer.

Let's see other examples:

#### **King David says in Psalm 41:2:**

“Let my prayer be set before You as incense,  
**The lifting up of my hands** as the evening sacrifice.”

Plural – hands – both hands.

When the Jews returned to Jerusalem from Babylon, we read in Nehemiah 8:6, pertaining to ALL the people, including women and children present (v.2) as Ezra the priest led them in worship:

#### **Nehemiah 8:6**

And Ezra blessed YHVH, the great God.

Then all the people answered, "Amen, Amen!" while lifting up their hands.  
And they bowed their heads and worshiped YHVH with their faces to the ground.

Are you starting to be convinced?

**We also know the story of how Aaron and Hur lifted up Moses' arms** during the battle with Amalek in **Exodus 17:8-13**. When Moses' arms were raised in petition to YHVH for victory, the Israelites prevailed. When he dropped his arms in fatigue, Amalek had the "upper arm". Thank Yah that there were men ready to support Moses when he was tired. May we also be there for one another, raising each other up in prayer to our heavenly throne of grace.

**Here's one way I understand this matter of raising arms in church: We are Abba's children, no matter how old we are.** (Story in the audio about the US soldier coming back from Afghanistan... wife and children arriving and walking rapidly to meet him, and the sheer delight of the youngest, running to Daddy with her arms outstretched.)

Have you ever watched a three-year old or even a six-year old rushing to their beloved father whom they haven't seen for a while? They run towards him with arms raised, as Daddy is bending down to pick them up. That's my picture. I think of praise and worship like this. We are his children; He is our Abba, our dear father. We're thrilled with Him, and so we reach up to Him, even as He is reaching down to us.

Another one: I remember my own daughters – and later my son – when they were little. If they got scared of something or someone, they would run to me (or their Mom) with their arms raised, wanting us to pick them up and assure them that everything was alright.

Are we perhaps doing that very same thing with our heavenly father when we raise our arms? Aren't we acknowledging him as the One we seek and adore?

So here are a few more instructions from God's word. I use NKJV throughout. However, I use the original Hebrew "YHVH" where they say "the LORD".

**Psalm 28:1-2**

"To You I will cry, O YHVH my Rock: Do not be silent to me,  
Lest, if You are silent to me, I become like those who go down to the pit.  
2 Hear the voice of my supplications when I cry to You,  
**When I LIFT UP MY HANDS toward Your holy sanctuary."**

**Psalm 134:1-2**

"Behold, bless YHVH, All you servants of YHVH, Who by night stand in the house of YHVH!

**LIFT UP YOUR HANDS in the sanctuary, and bless YHVH".**

**Psalms 63:3-4**

"Because Your loving kindness is better than life, My lips shall praise You.  
Thus I will bless You while I live; **I will LIFT UP MY HANDS in Your name.**"

Are you seeing that scripture clearly teaches us that the man after God's own heart – King David – set us HIS example of raising his hands in prayer and praise? It says "bless God" and we do that by praising him.

If you were with King David back then – and see him lifting up his hands in worship – would you have followed his example? Or not?

When we worship with King David in the new kingdom of God, *we WILL see him raising his hands in worship and prayer.* Will you and I follow his example at *that* time ...or not? If so, why not *now*?

**GETTING STARTED may not be easy if not used to it**

Starting to do something you've never done before is not easy, especially in front of others in a church service. If you're being convinced and convicted that maybe you should try this, should do this, this is what I did:

- I started becoming more comfortable with this years ago by doing it privately at first, in my own bedroom when I prayed by myself, until I got used to it.
- Then I tried it in church – "trying it out" with church groups who were also doing it.
- Then in other groups, where only 1-2-3 were doing it, I raised one hand up to my shoulder level.
- Now I do it frequently, hoping my example will encourage others. If the praising is particularly good, both hands go up – above my head.

**MORE Examples**

Solomon must have often seen his dad doing this, so Solomon also raised HIS arms in prayer at the dedication of the temple:

**1 Kings 8:22**

Then Solomon stood before the altar of YHVH in the presence of all the assembly of Israel, **and spread out his hands toward heaven;**

We'll see that Solomon started by standing, as he spread out his hands to heaven, then knelt down humbly before his God and spread out his hands.

**2 Chronicles 6:10-15 – Solomon speaking...**

"So YHVH has fulfilled His word which He spoke, and I have filled the position of my father David, and sit on the throne of Israel, as YHVH promised; and I have built the temple for the name of the YHVH God of Israel.

11 And there I have put **the ark, in which is the covenant of YHVH** which He made with the children of Israel."

(**2 Chron 5:10** says nothing was in the ark by this time except the 2 tablets of the commandments Moses received from Got at Mt Horeb (Sinai). Continuing in 2 Chron 6:12 now...

**12 Then Solomon stood before the altar of YHVH in the presence of all the assembly of Israel, and spread out his hands** 13 (for Solomon had made a bronze platform five cubits long, five cubits wide, and three cubits high, and had set it in the midst of the court; **and he stood on it, KNELT DOWN on his knees before all the assembly of Israel, and spread out his hands toward**

***heaven***); 14 and he said: "YHVH God of Israel, there is no God in heaven or on earth like You, who keep Your covenant and mercy with Your servants who walk before You with all their hearts...."

If you think you'd feel self-conscious and uncomfortable – and have never raised your hands before in worship, it may take a while to feel comfortable. But once you get the hang of it, you'll find it expresses your joy and gives a great connection to the Almighty!

- So start by doing it in private, in your own room as you pray privately at first.
- If you attend where others already are raising hands in worship, it should be easy to try it at services with them.
- If this is not being done where you worship, perhaps begin by lifting up your hands to your chest/shoulder level and see how that is perceived or if anyone says anything. Have the above scriptures ready, if you are questioned.
- If it is forbidden in your congregation, that's a shame. Maybe it's time to worship somewhere else. Don't cause offense; just move to a group that welcomes worshiping with raised arms – as Moses, David, Solomon, Paul, Nehemiah and the people then, and more – all did.

I'm not saying everyone or anyone has to raise their hands in prayer. But I am saying neither should it be forbidden.

This is a most personal choice, a personal decision -- and surely church leaders should let their brothers and sisters worship as each is led in his or her heart by God's Holy Spirit in them. Try it. It adds a whole new dimension to your worship. Remember, we are His children. Abba seems to enjoy seeing His children raise their arms up to Him as we come to Him in song, praise and worship – just like that young little girl running with her arms outstretched to her army dad returning safely from Afghanistan.

So give it a try and let me know how it went.

So **LET ME NOW briefly bring up something else:** Have you ever in praise and beseeching, ever in prayer *laid yourself out flat out on* the ground, face to the floor in worship? I recommend this in private in your own bedroom for now, when you are beseeching our God for something especially critical and earnest and urgent. Or when you are deeply repenting of a recent egregious sin, or even if you just want to praise and worship deeply.

**2 Chronicles 7:1-3**

When Solomon had finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of YHVH filled the temple. 2 And the priests could not enter the house of YHVH, because the glory of YHVH had filled YHVH's house.

**3 When all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of YHVH on the temple, they bowed their faces to the ground on the pavement, and worshiped and praised YHVH, saying:**

"For He is good,  
For His mercy endures forever."

So praying in a prostrated position – flat out on the ground – is recorded for us in the Bible under very special circumstances of God's revealed glory and presence.

When I do this, I do it in my bedroom, privately. I have not done it in public prayer except one time among others.

**Leviticus 9:23-24**

And Moses and Aaron went into the tabernacle of meeting, and came out and blessed the people. Then the glory of YHVH appeared to all the people, 24 and fire came out from before YHVH and consumed the burnt offering and the fat on the altar. **When all the people saw it, they shouted *and fell on their faces*.**

**Numbers 16:19-22**

And Korah gathered all the congregation against them at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. Then the glory of YHVH appeared to all the congregation.

20 And YHVH spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, 21 "Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment."

**22 Then they [Moses and Aaron] fell on their faces, and said, "O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and You be angry with all the congregation?"**

This happened again among a large group, when God's glory fell down in fire on Elijah's sacrifice at Mt. Carmel:

**1 Kings 18:38-39**

Then the fire of YHVH fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood and the stones and the dust, and it licked up the water that was in the trench. **39 Now when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, "YHVH, He is God! YHVH, He is God!"**

There's another example in **1 Chronicles 29:19-20** when the assembled people prostrated themselves before YHVH in King David's last days.

Now I don't do that in public or in a church. At a profound time with God's glory present, the people in those days past – did it. They did in David's day, Solomon's day, Elijah's day. So be willing to do it if the glory of God is apparent and all are doing it. It's OK. It's Biblical.

**So two things:**

- The Bible is full of examples of God's children raising their hands in prayer and praise. I recommend you do so too. There are more. In the book of Lamentations 2:19 and Lam 3:41. In Lamentations, it was about deep repentance and beseeching God's mercy as God was strongly correcting the Jews and sending them into captivity in Babylon.

**Lamentations 3:40-42**

Let us search out and examine our ways, and turn back to YHVH;

**41 Let us lift our HEARTS and hands to God in heaven.**

42 We have transgressed and rebelled; You have not pardoned.

- The Bible also talks to us about praying in deep devoted praise, adoration, repentance or times we are fervently beseeching God – while we are completely prostrated, flat out, on the floor in total submission. Try that too, in your own bedroom. It's OK – as shown by Biblical example several times!

I suspect you will experience a new level of closeness to your Creator and Maker. Go ahead, it's in the Bible. Paul, remember said he hoped people everywhere would pray and lift holy hands to God – **1 Timothy 2:8**

Closing prayer