

PRAYER

Week #7 of a series on "Unity's Foundational Teachings"

Wednesday, March 6, 2024

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When you hear somebody speaking in a foreign language or a language you don't understand, do you assume that it's a language? Or do you just assume they're babbling?

I want to talk about language and communication tonight. I want to talk about prayer and the way that we talk with and to God.

You know, there's some interesting languages in our world. There's Silbo Gomero, a language spoken in a Spanish island of La Gomera, and it's all made up of whistling. Right? Can we imagine a whole ... You know, how many guys got slapped on that island before they worked that one out, right? [Congregants laugh] Sorry! [Turns to address soloist Kirsten Plambeck]: You know, you build this up and I take us right down to the gutter, right?

In Piraha, a language that 350 people speak in the Amazon, it's the most unique sentence structure. There's no sentence structure. The linguists believe it's the most unique language in the whole world. And Taa, a Croatian language spoken in Botswana and Namibia, there are -- depending on the dialect -- there's either 164 consonants or 87. Right? And Ubykh, a recently extinct language, there are only two vowels and 84 consonants. In Zulu, a unique language spoken in Africa, there is a click that represents a consonant, and it requires the speaker to move their mouth in a certain way to produce a sound. Right?

So there are amazing ways that we know how to communicate as humans. Is that true? And yet, what I want us to really look at is: How is it that we are communicating with God? How many of you speak more than one language? Are fluent in more than one language? Right, one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, 10 of us? Fabulous, right? And I want us to really look at how we are communicating with God. And especially in our times of prayer.

You know some of us pray, and I call those the shouters. You know, the ones that pray very loud, because God is getting old. [Congregants laugh] His hearing isn't what it used to be. And so, you know when they pray they pray very loud so they make sure that God gets them, that they hear it, right? And then some of us pray and we're the flatters. You know, we say things like, "*God, you're so good; you're so wonderful; please give me what I want.*" Right? It's the idea that if you kind of butter God up a little bit, you can slide in a couple of requests on the back side.

And then there's the bargainers. They say, "God, if you give me what I want, I promise that I will be a better person; go to church; be nice to my spouse." Whatever it is, right? And it's a barter system. It's: you give me what I want, and we'll make a deal. And then there is the repeaters. And the repeaters just keep saying it over and over again because they are persistent, right? They will keep saying it over and over again until they get what they want.

And then my favorite is the pathetic prayer. The pathetic prayer says, "*I'm so unworthy; I'm such an awful person, but please have pity on my soul.*" Right? Now, you don't have to raise your hand with which one you identify most with, right?

But I also want us to look at how Jesus taught us to pray. He was very simple. He said, "*Ask believing that you will receive.*" So simple! "*Ask, believing that you will receive.*" And sometimes that's really hard! Because if you're asking, you don't always believe. If you're asking, you don't always feel like it's already a given that you're going to receive. But he was very clear: "*Ask, believing that you will receive.*"

In Unity, we call it affirmative prayer. And affirmative prayer is a positive statement of truth that is simple and clear. A statement may be, "I receive only good" or "Health is my nature." And what happens is as we move in an affirmative prayer, we move our thoughts off of the problem and onto a more elevated positive outlook.

"I am healthy."

Will you say that with me? [With congregation]: *"I am healthy."*

"I am whole."

Together: [with congregation] *"I am whole."*

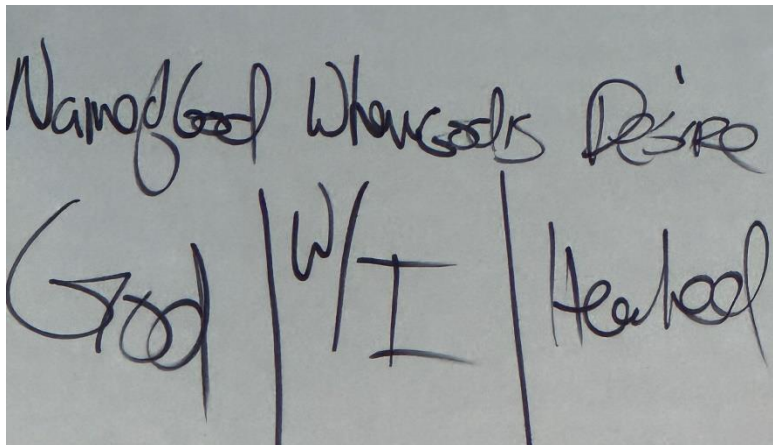
"I am divinely guided."

Together: [with congregation] *"I am divinely guided."*

"I am prospered."

Together: [with congregation]: *"I am divinely guided."*

So here's the test -- four-part test. When you say *"I am healthy,"* is that a positive statement of truth? Yes. Is it simple? Yes. Is it clear? Yes. Is it acknowledging that God is within us? Yes.



You know, Stretton Smith gave us the three-column prayer. And I love this three-column prayer, because Stretton says that every prayer -- the most effective prayer -- just has three elements, right? It has the name of God. It has where God is. And what we are praying for: the desire.

Okay, so somebody give me a name of God. [Congregant: "God."] God! Okay; thanks, Sue. Keep it simple, okay? God, right? But we could say

Spirit; we could say Divine; we could say Universe; we could say Force ... We could give whatever name -- Yahweh -- whatever name you pick: the name of God.

Now, God is where? Everywhere, but also within us, right? Within, right? So God within.

Now somebody give me a desire. [Congregants shout out] Healed. Okay.

So let's do this: *"God within me heals me now."* And it never gets more complicated than that! And you can pick whatever name for God that you want. And it's within, around ... but it's usually within. The name of God -- Spirit -- within heals me. Spirit within prospers me.

And when we look at this process -- this three-column prayer -- what we see over and over again is: most of us are making prayer more complicated than it needs to be. That prayer really is building a relationship with the Divine so that we can become more conscious of God.

Do you ever have a friend or a family member that talks at you? No. Have you ever? Everybody's experienced that. You may be at a party or whatever, and the person is just talking ... not with you; like, they're just talking at you. And you could almost be anybody, right? They're just talking at you.

And I want you to see that, for sometimes, that's how we treat God. Like we're so committed to what we want to get across to God -- what we want to say in prayer -- that we're not listening at all! We're just giving God our list of everything that's wrong or everything that needs to be fixed or everything we want, and we're not listening. But part of our developing this relationship that we have with the Divine is slowing down and learning to speak God.

And I really believe that we have the ability at a soul level to speak the language of God. And that's not a rational thought, but our soul knows how to slow down and speak directly to the presence and power of God. And as we do that, we begin to download God; we begin to experience God in really wonderful and powerful ways. But it's probably not through our rational mind. That when we're just talking at God, we're doing that from our mind; we're doing that from our rational mind. And we're giving God all of our stuff -- all of our expectations, and how it's supposed to look and what we want God to do.

But there's a moment when our mind becomes still and we communicate with God soul to soul. Where we begin to download the Divine in greater and greater ways. And that each one of us has a way that God speaks to us. Some of us are just pure "knowers." We just know -- we have an inner sense of just knowing-- what we're being guided or directed to do. Some of us are feelers. And we get a gut feeling and we just feel that presence of God, or we feel what the right choice is. Some of us actually see things and some of us hear things.

But what I want you to see is that your soul is actually designed to communicate with God. And then ideally, that is what prayer is. And most of us have had years of experience in trying to pray from our rational mind. But for prayer to truly be effective, we have to go much deeper than that.

So I want to read it out loud. a section about Charles Fillmore. Now, Charles Fillmore is the co-founder of Unity. He and his wife, Myrtle -- about 150 years ago, they started Unity. And it began -- as many of you know -- it began because Myrtle Fillmore had a healing need. She had TB; she had tuberculosis. And she was at the end stages of that disease, and she was about to die. And they began a work. And Myrtle would go and pray every night for two years. And she developed this prayer consciousness and then what began ... then she was healed.

And that was kind of outside the world that Charles hung out in. Like, it didn't make sense to him how somebody could be healed just because of prayer. And then not only was she healed, but then people began to come to her in the evening and sit around her kitchen table. And she would pray with them, and they would be healed. And that really kind of freaked him out. And it doesn't say that -- the exact word -- in any Unity publication, but it really was kind of ... And I want to read from *The Story of Unity: The Early Years*.

Charles Fillmore had come about slowly to accept what to his wife had been an instant and overwhelming revelation. "Although ..."

And I want you to hear this!

"Although I was a chronic invalid, seldom free from pain, the doctrine did not at first appeal to me."

Now, as a child, he had polio. He had one leg that was significantly shorter than the other leg. Every step he took, there was pain. Now, his wife gets healed. He's watching neighbors and friends of the family come in, and they pray and they're healed. They're changed. And yet, Charles doesn't know how to integrate that, right? It just ... it's too much. It's too big of a thing.

And so, even though he could absolutely be benefited by the work that his wife is doing in the kitchen every night, does he go into the kitchen? Right?

To Myrtle, the realization of the Truth about herself and her relationship to God was a sudden flash of inspiration. She had a new conviction, a burning flame of faith. Charles had a different kind of mind. He thought of himself as a hard-headed businessman, and he had a family to provide for. And he was reluctant to let his business friends and associates know that he was interested in this new-fangled religious idea such as his wife had. Still, because he was a practical man, when he saw the living tangible results of his wife's faith -- he saw bodies rebuilt, crippled limbs renewed, sight restored -- he could not help but become interested.

It wasn't quick. Us, as men ... were not always the brightest, but eventually we get there.

Charles was not one to take things on blind faith. He had an inquiring, scientific mind. When he saw the healings that were coming forth as a result of his wife's prayers, he began to question why this could be. If people were being healed, there had to be a reason for the healing. He commenced to inquire into the reason. He read all the books that he could find on the subject. Where courses were available, he took them. The Fillmores studied with Joseph Adams, who had published a metaphysical journal called "The Truth Gleaner" in Chicago. And when he came to Kansas City, they went. They went to Chicago to study with Emma Curtis Hopkins.

And at first, Mr. Fillmore was mentally disturbed by the many conflicting statements about Truth made from various teachers. He could not understand why there should be so much divisions and schools and such an assortment of opinions about this exact science. He said, "The muddle was so deep ..."

[Laughs] I love that line, right?

"The muddle was so deep that for a time I was inclined to ridicule, yet I could not get away from the evidence of a great power back in the flood of contradictory statements." There might be a doubt as to which one of these teachers was right, but as for the results, there could be no doubt whatsoever. His eyes could see the results of a great power.

About his doubt, he wrote, "I noticed, however, that all the teachers and writers talked a great deal about the omnipresent, omniscient God who is Spirit and accessible to everyone. I said to myself, 'This is Babel. I will go to headquarters. And if I am Spirit, and this God that they talk about is also Spirit, then we can somehow communicate or this whole thing is fraud.' I then commenced sitting in the silence every night at a certain hour and I tried to get in touch with God. There was no enthusiasm about it."

Right? [Laughs] Just straight up, man.

"There was no enthusiasm about it; no soul desire, but a cold, calculating business method. I was there on time every night and tried with all conceivable ways to realize that my mind was in touch with Supreme Mind. In this cold intellectual attitude, one can easily understand why I did not seem to get great conscious results. But I kept at it month after month, mentally affirming words that others told me would open the way until it got to be a habit, and I rather enjoyed it.

"However, a time came when I began to observe that I was having exceedingly realistic dreams. For months, I paid no attention to them. My business at the time, being of the earth earthy -- buying and selling real estate. The first connection that I observed between my dreams and my affairs was after a closing of a purchase of a piece of property, I remembered that I had a dream about this whole transaction some months before.

"After that, I watched my dreams closely and found that there was a wider intelligence manifesting in my sleep than I seemed to possess in my waking state, and it flashed over to me that day that this

was the mode of communication that had been established in response to my desire for information from headquarters. This had been kept up ever since with growing interest on my part, and I could fill a large book with experiences. Everything which is necessary for me to know has been shown to me, and I have times without number been saved from false steps by this monitor. Again and again, I have had mapped out the future along certain lines for months and even years ahead, and the prophecies have so far never failed me, although I have sometimes misinterpreted the symbols which are used."

"Set aside ..."

This is his closing comment ...

"Set aside time every day – a definite time -- and pray whether you believe it or not. Take a statement of Truth and repeat it over and over. And it doesn't matter that, at first, you do not believe it to be true. If you will persistently affirm Truth, even though you do not at first believe it, you will find that your prayers have power. Faith is like a mustard seed. It will grow. Pray, pray, and keep praying; affirm, and yet affirm once more. Your persistent prayers will succeed."

It's a pretty strong statement, don't you think? And the idea is that I want us to really look at the language that God uses.

Now, does that mean that everybody who starts praying is going to get vivid dreams that are prophetic and talks to them about their business and what's in store? No! But I do believe that, as we make prayer a daily and regular part of our daily practice, you will quickly realize how God speaks to you. And God will not speak to you in vague ways that make no sense. God is specific! That, when you believe that God will guide you and direct you, and when you put that to work -- when you actually begin to live your life based on that guidance -- you find that God is incredibly active: specific; to the point. And you will actually know things that there's no other way that you could know them but through prayer!

Through prayer, a rational conscious mind aligns with the infinite Mind of God. We start to download Divine Mind. Most people go to God and they ask for stuff. But the true purpose of prayer is learning how to download the infinite Mind of God.

You know, when we look at our world today, you know, there's so much talk about AI and, you know, Google has all the answers to whatever questions you want to ask. And what I want you to see is: I believe that technology always catches up with prayer consciousness. It does! And I believe that, as spiritual beings, we have not yet fully activated or accessed all that God could download to us.

In all of our lives, we could live more guided, more directed, more at peace. We could actually live a more harmonious spiritual life, but it requires that we put ourselves in a place that we quiet our rational mind so we can download the Divine. And for most of us, that's a little scary. Because we want to be in control of our life. We want to do what we want to do! And the idea of every day or every night putting yourself in a place just to be open and receptive to whatever God wants to download -- whatever God wants to reveal: whatever prophecies, whatever understanding, whatever wisdom -- that's enormous.

Like, when you look at all the ways that Charles Fillmore downloaded the Divine -- all the books that he wrote; all the spiritual wisdom that has come through this man -- simply because he put himself, on a daily basis, in the presence of the Divine and was willing to receive what God offered him.

And, of course, because he's a businessman, what is the thing that caught his attention first? [Congregants shout out] Success! He began to notice when the downloads were about his success on buying and selling property, and he paid attention to that. Because we all have our area that gets our attention.

So you ready for your homework? [Congregant shouts loudly: "Yes!"] Well, thanks, George. [Congregants laugh] I owe you a buck after the service is over.

Okay, so here's the deal. You know, I believe there's a place in our spiritual life where we're acquiring spiritual principles. We're acquiring spiritual understanding. We're acquiring a spiritual practice, if you will. And that's good! It changes things. When we go from negative thinking to positive thinking, it changes things! When we understand spiritual principles and spiritual laws -- and begin to use spiritual principles and spiritual laws -- it changes things! Our life gets better.

But it's not the whole deal. The really good news -- the really big deal -- is when, every day, you start to deep listen to God.

Now, it doesn't mean you can't start by saying, "Okay, God, these are all the things I want you to take care of. These are all the things I want." You start there, right? "Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah." But it shouldn't end there! Like, the thing that becomes truly transformative in our spiritual life is when you actually start downloading the Divine and become conscious of it. See, I believe that your soul is always downloading the Divine, but we're not always conscious of it. When we actually become conscious of it, it has the potential to really change our life.

So how much time do you need? Well, 10 minutes; 20 minutes; 30 minutes. If you spent that much time every night with the soul desire of connecting with God, I think you would be surprised how quickly you feel like you're downloading greater wisdom into your life; greater love; greater joy; greater peace; greater healing.

And I really want us to hear this because, for many of us in this room, this is our next step. Like, not just to assume or assimilate more spiritual principles, but to download the Divine. To download the wisdom that God wants to offer you. Because that's the thing that's going to change everything! To the degree that you're willing just to put yourself in a receptive place in the morning or in the evening -- doesn't matter which -- but every day. And just say, "Spirit, what do you have for me? Spirit, what do you have for me?" And I think over time, you're absolutely going to be amazed at what God reveals.

Now, is this an instant process? No. Will this take some time? Like, if you're learning a language -- if you're learning Spanish or French -- does it take some time before you can actually communicate on a level that you're not just asking for toast or where the bathroom is? Right?

So in the beginning of a foreign language training, it's very simple. There's not a lot of complexity in the conversation. And it's the same is true for Spirit. When you begin this process of prayer, there's not a lot of complexity. It's just connecting. It's like you're building the connection. You're building it so that you actually become conscious of what's actually happening.

But over time, Spirit can download some pretty complex ideas and wisdom and guidance. And you can actually know that you know. You can actually get a sense, "Oh, this is the direction life's going to take me." You might actually know a year or two years out when things are coming toward you, so that you can prepare yourself for all the changes that may be coming; or the information that is going to be coming; or what you need to do for healing; or for a blessing in your life.

And it's all there, but it doesn't happen in two-second conversations at 90 miles an hour before you hit the wall. wall. You know, we've all had that prayer. You know, it's, "God help me!" just before you crash. But if we would have had six months or a year ahead before that, and just say, "God guide me. Holy Spirit, I'm listening," how many crashes in our life simply would never have happened because we would have known months beforehand.

"Holy Spirit, I am listening."

Together: [with congregation] *"Holy Spirit, I am listening."*

One more time: [with congregation] *"Holy Spirit, I am listening."*

Will you join me in prayer?

And I invite you to open your mind, your heart, your soul to the activity of Spirit. And just listen. Sit yourself down. You know, Fillmore suggested that we begin to affirm statements of Truth. You might say, "I am one with God." And you might allow that affirmation – *"I am one with God"* -- to be the opening salvo, the opening experience. *"I am one with God."* And then when you notice your mind begins to wander in any direction, you just bring it back to, *"I am one with God."* And then you just drop in. There will be a night where you just drop in and you realize that something special just happened. You might be healed or blessed, or you might feel the presence of God in a brand new way. And that statement, *"I am one with God,"* is no longer just words. words, but it's an experience.

"I am one with God."

Together: [with congregants] *"I am one with God."*

In the name and through the power of the Living Christ, we give thanks. And so it is. Amen.

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