

Last week we discussed **Matthew 6:8** – “Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.”

Who should we not be like?

Luke 11:1 – “One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.”



Andrew Murray (1828 – 1917) was a South African Dutch Reformed minister and mission organizer. Murray considered missions to be "the chief end of the church."

“Yes, to pray. This is what we need to be taught. Though in its beginnings prayer is so simple that the feeble child can pray, yet it is at the same time the highest and holiest work to which we can rise. It is fellowship with the Unseen and Most Holy One.”

What is **Murray** saying about prayer? What is the difference between prayer as a child and prayer as an adult?

“It is on prayer that the promises wait for their fulfilment, the kingdom for its coming, the glory of God for its full revelation.”

Murray says that God is waiting on our prayers. Have you ever thought of your prayers as having the power of God’s plan?

“It is only the Spirit of God that can enable us to do it right. How speedily we are deceived into a resting in the form, while the power is wanting. Our early training, the teaching of the church, the influence of habit, the stirring of the emotions – how easily these lead to prayer which has no spiritual power, and avails but little.” What is **Murray** saying about our praying style and habits?

“We have read in your Word with what power your people of old used to pray, and what mighty wonders were done in answer to their prayers.” What wonders is **Murray** referring to that the early followers of Christ were able to perform through prayer? (page 2)

“Lord teach us to pray.” Yes, us, Lord; we offer ourselves as learners; we would indeed be taught by you.”

What is another consequence **Murray** is telling us about prayer? Have you ever experienced this?

“It can only be learned in the school of much prayer, for practice makes perfect”. What is he saying we need to do in order to learn?

“He teaches, by giving not only thoughts of what to ask or how to ask, but by breathing within us the very spirit of prayer, by living within us as the Great Intercessor.” Who is Murray referring to here? How can we receive this Intercessor?

“Jesus never taught his disciples how to preach, only how to pray.” Why is this?



Elton Trueblood (1900 - 1994) was a Quaker educator and founder of the Yokefellow movement. In the 1950s, he served as a senior advisor to President Dwight D. Eisenhower, who created a post for him as Chief of Religious Information at the U.S. Information Agency (which included oversight of the *Voice of America*). *Time* magazine profiled him in this role on March 15, 1954. Trueblood was primarily hired because of his 1951 book, *The Life We Prize*, which laid out a systematic philosophy of America's civil religion.

...“Pray then like this.” The strongest reason for supposing that he (Jesus) was not providing a stereotype, to be memorized and used on all occasions, is that he had just warned his followers, when they prayed, not to “heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do.”

What is **Trueblood** telling us about what Jesus was saying about prayer? What are “empty phrases”?

“The formation of official prayers to be rattled off, frequently with no concern for their meaning, is one of the most common features in the history of religious practices, some of which are included in “Gentile” religions.” What is he saying about empty prayer?

Gentile: a person who is not Jewish, referring to anyone belonging to “the nations” outside of the Jewish people or Israel.

Originating from Hebrew (*goy*) and Greek (*ethne*) terms meaning “nations,” it primarily denotes someone who does not share in the covenant, ancestry, or religious practices of Judaism.

If Jesus includes the Gentiles with the Jewish people to become Christians, why is he concerned about them “heaping up empty phrases” in their church prayers? What are some examples of this in our Christian churches and religions today?

Trueblood goes on to say this is “One of the chief ways to deny Christ...”. Why does this deny Christ?



Pope Benedict XVI (1927 - 2022) was German cleric Joseph Ratzinger and served as pope from 2005 – 2013. Ordained as a priest in 1951 in Bavaria, Ratzinger embarked on an academic career and established himself as a highly regarded theologian by the late 1950s. Following the death of John Paul II on April 2, 2005, a conclave elected Ratzinger as his successor on April 19th. He chose Benedict XVI as his papa name. Benedict's handling of sexual abuse cases within the Catholic Church and opposition to usage of condoms in areas of high HIV transmission was criticized by public health officials, anti-AIDS activists, and victims' rights organizations. Benedict's writings were prolific and generally defended traditional Catholic doctrine, values, and liturgy.

“Our praying can and should arise above all from our heart,...” “It can and should be a wholly personal prayer. But we also constantly need to make use of those prayers that express in words the encounter with God experienced both by the church as a whole and by individual members of the church.” “For without these aids to prayer, our own praying and our image of God become subjective and end up reflecting ourselves more than the living God.” What does **Benedict** fear about personal prayers? Why would he fear this?

Psalms 6:8-9 – “Away from me, all you who do evil, for the Lord has heard my weeping. The Lord has heard my cry for mercy; the Lord accepts my prayer.”

Philippians 4:6 – Paul wrote: “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.”

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Miracles Performed by the Apostles

- **Healings:** Peter healed a man lame from birth (Acts 3:1-11) and Aeneas, who had palsy (Acts 9:33-34). Paul healed a crippled man in Lystra (Acts 14:8-10), cast out a spirit of divination (Acts 16:16-18), and healed many on Malta, including Publius' father.
- **Raising of the Dead:** Peter raised Tabitha (Dorcas) from the dead in Joppa (Acts 9:36-41). Paul raised Eutychus, who fell from a window (Acts 20:9-12).
- **Super Natural Events and Protection:** Peter was rescued from prison by an angel (Acts 12:7-17). Paul and Silas experienced an earthquake that opened prison doors while they were praying and singing (Acts 16:25-26).
- **Miracles:** Peter's shadow was associated with healing (Acts 5:15). Paul's sweatbands or aprons, when transferred to the sick, resulted in healings and the departure of evil spirits (Acts 19:11-12).

Miracles by Early Christians

- **Exorcisms & Deliverance:** Early records indicate Christians frequently delivered people from evil spirits and healed diseases in the name of Jesus.
- **Miraculous Cures:** Early Christian records mention a devout woman, Innocentia, who was cured of cancer after a dream instructed her to seek a newly baptized woman to make the sign of Christ upon the area.
- **Raising the Dead:** Church father Irenaeus noted that in his time, deceased individuals were sometimes brought back to life through the collective, fasting prayer of the local church.

These miracles were rarely for personal gain, but rather to show the power of God. The miracles were done by Christians, but they always gave the glory to Jesus.

What effect do miracles have on those witnessing them?

What effect do they have on the one conduiting the power of God?