

THE POWER OF POSITIVE, AFFIRMATIVE PRAYER

Week #3 of a 4-Week Series, "Unity Basics"

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Okay, everyone. So tonight we continue our "Unity Basics" series with "The Power of Positive Prayer." Everyone say that fast: the power of positive prayer. See, it's a tongue twister!

As I mentioned two weeks ago, positive affirmative prayer is how Unity – it's our foundation. It's how we got started. And that's because, in 1886, Myrtle Fillmore, our co-founder, heard the words from Dr. E.B. Weeks, *"You are a child of God; therefore you do not inherit sickness."* And she took it to heart and she took it to meditation. She took it into affirmation. And from that came an international spiritual movement now alive for 137 years. And it started with prayer.

And not just any prayer; affirmative prayer. It was not begging. It was not pleading. It was not praying to a Santa Claus God (*"Please give me."*) It was not praying to a Superman God (*"Please save me."*) But it was coming from a realization: as an expression of the Divine -- of God itself -- that we, too, have the power to heal ourselves and heal our lives. That when we pray from this inherent divine essence that we are, while also knowing our connection to an intelligent universal life energy, then amazing miracles can happen.

In Unity, we pray from this consciousness of oneness: a consciousness of being connected to a part of the Allness of life.

Charles Fillmore, Myrtle's husband, co-founder of Unity, defined prayer as *"the most highly accelerated Mind-Action known."* The most highly accelerated mind action known.

And famous Unity minister/author Eric Butterworth wrote, *"if you can just get into the flow of the universe within you, you will experience an immediacy of the presence of God and a clarity of mind."*

Because, again, in Unity we pray from our divine identity, our divine nature. So, we tap into our spiritual qualities -- these inherent spiritual abilities that are within each and every one of us. Not something we need to obtain or gain or try to strive towards, but the qualities that we all have already within us.

And then we pray. We pray with the thought: *"God is love, so I am love, and therefore I can express love in the world."* Or it can be as simple as, *"I claim my divine love."* Or, *"I claim divine love as my true nature now."*

And then we live those words. That's our fifth Unity principle. I claim divine love as my true nature, and then I live it. I become a living prayer. My life becomes a living prayer. It's about the action on; becoming that which you are praying about.

In the book, "Teach Us to Pray," Charles and his second wife, Cora Fillmore, they tell us that the most effective prayers are those in which we rise above our human thinking. Rise above our human limitations. Even rise above time and space. And we contact God-Mind, Universal Mind, Divine Intelligence, Presence (with a capital P).

And remember in the Bible, Jesus says, *"The Father and I are one,"* meaning we -- each one of us -- are one with Infinite Presence, Infinite Love, Infinite Wisdom, this Divine Intelligence. Each one of us, one with.

Cora and Charles also wrote in "Teach Us to Pray" -- and I'm going to change the words just a little bit -- but they say, *"God is power; we are powerful. God is wisdom; we are wise. God is substance; we are form and shape. God is love; we are loving. God is life; we are the living. God is Mind; we are the thinker."*

In other words, we are what God is. And not from a place of ego! Let your ego go. You're not a god, but you're an expression of a living, loving Presence. And you contain everything that this God Intelligence contains.

Therefore, we focus on our I AM statement. What are you putting behind your I AM? Because you're going to hear it. The Universe will hear it. A simple prayer format that can be used; we stick in what Unity teaches our 12 spiritual powers or abilities, spiritual qualities. We can place those into a simple prayer -- such as this on your screen -- that we were doing in our meditation tonight, as well:

God is _____.
So I am _____.
Therefore, I can _____.

So again, an example. So maybe you're having a hard time with a family member. You want more harmony there. So, we look at that spiritual quality of love, which means to harmonize with, unify with, to remember our oneness with.

And so we would put in:

God is love.
So I am love.
Therefore, I can be a loving presence and bring harmony into this relationship.

I can do that because that is who I am. At my core, at a soul level, that is who I am. That is my divine essence. **The affirmation becomes the prayer.**

So, let's try a little bit of this now. You're going to repeat after me:

"God is love, so I am love."

Absolutely. You can bring loving presence into any space you're in.

"God is peace, so I am peace."

Yes, you can bring peace to every interaction, every communication you have.

"God is wisdom, so I am wisdom."

Yes, you are intuitively wise. You can tap into that intuition and make the best decisions for yourself in any situation. One more:

"God is life, so I am life."

Yes, you are! You create, you express, you grow. That's tapping into God life and allowing that God life -- that Divine Intelligence -- to continue to grow and spread.

We also have a more formal prayer practice that we teach all of our licensed teachers and ministers.

It's Unity's five-step prayer process. It's here on the screen:

First, relax.
Next, focus.
Meditate.
Realize.
And then gratitude.

Relax, focus, meditate, realize, gratitude.

So, we do this each time we have a prayer or meditation. We start with what? A breath, right? We take that breath. We **RELAX** into just this time, this space. The next breath. We let go of the worries. We let go of the stress, anything that comes before that moment. And you might even want to place a slight smile on your lips because it tells your nervous system you're safe. *"I'm safe here."* So, placing that smile

on your lips. Not to cover up anything, but just to relax into that moment. And we continue to follow our breath.

And then the next step: **FOCUS**. So, we focus on that divine light within us. And this is where that affirmation is helpful. We say an affirmation or maybe just one word: "Peace." "Peace; be still." Or, "God is peace; I am peace. I am peace filled."

And then we enter into **MEDITATION**. That's really a time of silence. So, in Unity ... You know, some people say, "Well, what's the difference in Unity between prayer and meditation? Because it sounds a lot the same." And you're right; it does sound the same, because it's pretty much the same. One is just longer than the other one. So, in prayer, we won't spend maybe as much time in silence vs. meditation, you would spend a lot more time in silence. But we enter then into the silence.

And it's okay if your mind wanders. Because a lot of people say, "Well, I can't meditate. I can't go into the silence. I'm not good at it. I do it wrong." And that's just not true. Your mind will wander. That's how our minds are built. So as long as you just say, "Hey, mind, you're doing what you're supposed to do. You're wandering. Come on back now." And you just come right back to your breath. Breath comes in, breath goes out. And you focus on that one word or your affirmation. But just returning back to your breath and your word, being in the stillness,

And then realizing. That next step: **REALIZE**. To know I am one with all of life. I am one with God. I am loving awareness. I am peace. You realize it; you know it.

And then we get to **GRATITUDE**, the fifth step in the prayer. And we pray with gratitude in mind all the time. Every prayer: gratitude.

Here's what Charles and Cora wrote. I'll share it with you here on the screen to follow along. They wrote, "Christian metaphysicians find that words that express thanks, gratitude and praise release energies of mind and spirit. And their use is usually followed by effects so pronounced that they are quickly identified with originating words. Effect being merged with cause."

So, we end every prayer with thanks, knowing that we've started that manifestation process. That we know everything is unfolding for our highest good before our eyes can see it; before our ears can hear it. That's also part of that realizing part. And we give thanks for all those realizations. We give thanks again and again. And even -- whether it's a prayer or ending your prayer time with, "Thank you, I am so grateful," or just, "Thank you." It could be a simple and effective prayer -- just, "Thank you" -- or it can be a powerful way to end your prayer.

And to know ultimately that prayer changes us. Prayer changes the one who prays. Again, this is what we teach all of our licensed teachers and ministers. Prayer changes the one who prays.

And I think when we're praying with someone else, what they're feeling is that Peaceful Presence. They're feeling that higher vibration, that prayer consciousness. But first, we change ourselves.

I wanted to find some real-life examples of prayer and how effective it is. And so, this first one was really powerful. It's about a mother's prayer during a medical crisis. It reads:

When doctors diagnosed Mira's young son with a serious illness, her world collapsed overnight. Endless hospital visits, sleepless nights, and fear of the unknown became her daily reality. With no medical certainty, she turned to prayer, not with confidence, but with desperation. She prayed daily: sometimes silently, sometimes through tears. While the healing process was slow, Mira noticed something unexpected. Her anxiety reduced. Her strength increased. Even doctors remarked on her calmness during the toughest updates.

That's a great story that reminds us that, even though prayer may not remove our challenges instantly, it does give us that emotional strength to endure with a calm faith.

And here's what science -- because, you know, I love the science and spirituality intersection! And here's what science says about praying and how it changes us. This is from SCIENCEINSIGHTS.org. They looked at many different studies on prayer, and here's what they summarized:

Prayer does appear to change the brain and body of the person praying. Brain imaging studies show that prayer produces real neurological activity in the person praying. A study using brain scans found that personal improvised prayer activates the same brain regions involved in social cognition, the areas where you use when you're thinking about another person's thoughts, feelings, and intentions.

They continue:

This tells us something important. For people who believe in God, personal prayer engages the brain as a genuine social interaction, not just a rote mental exercise. The brain treats it as a conversation with another mind.

Isn't that amazing?

Science has also found that prayer lowers inflammation, improves our sleep, boosts immunity, reduces anxiety and stress, and rewires our brain.

They concluded:

For many people, prayer functions as a form of contemplative practice with measurable physiological effects.

I mean, if someone told you, “Here, take this pill. It's going to lower your inflammation, improve your sleep, boost your immunity, reduce your stress and anxiety,” many of us would probably take it, right?

All we're saying here is prayer.

And this is something that the Fillmores knew. They knew that. And we're discovering more and more that Mind-Body connection. And it starts with the words that we say to ourselves.

Remember, Myrtle half her life had heard, “*She's frail; she's weak.*” That's what she was saying to herself. And then she changed: “*No, I'm a child of God. I do not inherit sickness.*” The words we say to ourselves make a difference.

And this is another science discovery. It supports what the Fillmores discovered -- that our brains are wired for repetition. And here's the thing, everyone. It's not specific for positive or negative. It's purely what you repeat is what gets wired into your brain. That's the neuroplasticity. New pathways, always at work, always being built in our brains.

So, repeat what you do want, not what you don't want. We use the creative power of our words and our word thoughts -- also known as positive prayer and affirmation -- to create our life experiences.

Here's another real-life example of that. It reads:

Years of misunderstanding had created deep distance between a father and a daughter. Conversations ended in arguments. Silence replaced love. Counseling failed. Emotional walls remained high. The daughter began praying daily, not for the relationship to be fixed overnight, but for her heart to soften.

I want us to really hear that. So often we pray for it to be fixed. But here she was praying for her heart to soften. It continues:

Over time, her reactions changed. She listened more. She judged less. Months later, one honest conversation opened a door that had been closed for years.

What a wonderful reminder of how prayer can transform relationships by first transforming the heart.

And it reminds me of what Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh once said: *"When we send the energy of love and compassion to another person, it doesn't matter if they know we are sending it. The important thing is that the energy is there."*

You know, with my own experience with prayer -- and I knew energy was there, and it was so impactful. I know I've probably shared this story before, but it's so worth repeating. It was the beginning of 2013. I was waiting for kidney surgery at USC. My local doctor wanted me at USC; they had state-of-the-art laparoscopic surgery that no one else but maybe a couple other places in the world were doing. And it was scheduled for the end of May.

Well, at the beginning of May, my kidney had a whole other plan. And the pain would not stop, and it was excruciating. It was a collapsed ureter. And so it's very similar to a kidney stone, if you've ever had a kidney stone. It's extremely painful. Now, with kidney stones, liquids sometimes will help and get the kidney stone out. But with this, a collapsed ureter, liquids actually cause your kidney to swell up even more and cause even more pain.

So, I'm at my local hospital. I'm in excruciating pain. In fact, the nurse is saying, *"I have never seen such pain in someone's eyes before."* My doctor really wanted me to get transferred to USC. She was really hoping that they could squeeze me in for a major surgery.

And then my minister at the time, Rev. Mollie Rocky, she came in to my room. I'm laying there in excruciating pain, even with the pain meds. And first she called Silent Unity, Unity's 24-hour prayer ministry. And she put the woman on speakerphone. And I got to hear this calm voice. And I know that Silent Unity prays over every prayer that comes in, whether it's by phone, email, text messages now. And they hold those prayers for 30 days.

And so, I heard her calm voice, and I knew that prayer would be continued for the month. But Rev. Mollie also told me something else. She said, *"Our prayer chaplains, our prayer team, they're praying with you."* And I have to tell you that through my time in the hospital, I was so thankful to know that others were praying when I could not pray. I was in too much pain to pray. But I just had this visualization of almost being lifted up above my hospital bed -- above the pain, if you will -- with their prayers. Their prayers were holding me. Their prayers were like a blanket of comfort and strength throughout that experience to me. It really helped with that experience to know, when I couldn't, someone else was there doing the prayer work.

And that's a question I've been asked before in the past. You know: Does prayer only work when it's just me? Because in the Bible, Jesus says, *"Where two or more gathered, there I am in the midst of them."* And my response is this: prayer is energy. It's creative energy. It's the power of the Word. It's the creative power of the Word. You're sending a message. You're sending a vibration through the atmosphere.

So, one person can pray and that will be felt. And when many people come together to pray, well then there's even more prayer energy being sent out. So often I think of it as a bird. One bird flies through by your head, you might feel that. But if a flock of birds come through and come right by your head, you're really going to feel that. You'll definitely feel that breeze. It's very similar.

Myrtle Fillmore wrote in her book, "How to Let God Help You," she said this about praying together. You can follow along on your screen:

"When we come together in the Spirit, we are all one in the true place of the Most High. Our words become charged with great healing power. As they go forth, they can do mighty works. When we pray together in omnipresence, we lose sight of everything but the One Presence. We recognize only the spiritual Source of all things."

So prayer -- whether by ourselves or with others -- it keeps our eyes on that spiritual Source of all things; the spiritual truth; possibility versus the human experience, the five senses experience. Prayer lifts us up to that higher level of seeing and believing.

So tonight, what we're learning is that prayer isn't about convincing God or changing God's mind. Prayer changes our mind. It changes our awareness. It changes our hearts. It changes the way we see ourselves and the world around us.

The Fillmores understood something over 137 years ago that science is now confirming: that what we consistently hold in consciousness shapes our lives. Our repeated thoughts create neural pathways. Our words matter. How we talk to ourselves matter. Our gratitude matters. Time in the silence matters.

When we pray from our divine identity -- from that awareness that *"God is love, therefore I am love; God is peace, therefore I am peace; God is wisdom, therefore I am wisdom."* When we pray from that knowing, then we begin living from our divine nature instead of reacting from fear.

And prayer doesn't change every circumstance overnight, but it does have the power to change the individual who's praying overnight. And when we change, our experience of life changes. That's the real miracle.

So, this week I have an invitation for us. It's a simple invitation. I'm extending it to myself, as well. Before you reach for your phone in the morning -- that's going to be a hard one for me. [Congregants laugh]

Before you reach for your phone in the morning; before you look at the news, scroll social media, look at the calendar; let everything tell you how your day is going to go or be before the worries start to set into your day ... Instead, I want you to pause. Take a breath. Remember you're a spiritual being. And then choose one spiritual quality that you want to embody that day. Maybe it's peace. Maybe it's strength. Order.

And then create a simple prayer by affirming -- as we go back to our screen:

God is _____.
So I am _____.
Therefore, I can _____.

Even right now, choose one word, and now quietly to yourself say it:

God is _____.
So I am _____.
Therefore, I can _____.

That's how we start our day. Because, just like Myrtle Fillmore discovered all those years ago, the power has never been somewhere "out there." It's always been within you. And every time you pray from that awareness, you awaken a little more fully to that divine life already expressing as you. You're not separated from God. You're an expression of God. It's from that awareness that anything is possible.

That's the power of positive, affirmative prayer. And that's our invitation for the week, everyone. Blessings!