

Ethiopian Eunuch

Joe Slater

Does the title make you think of Acts 8 when Philip taught and baptizeded the Ethiopian queen's treasurer? That was a great event, but there is another Ethiopian eunuch in Jeremiah 38. Both men trusted and obeyed God.

Judah's evil king Zedekiah hated Jeremiah for speaking the truth about the impending destruction of Jerusalem. Zedekiah allowed his princes to lower the prophet into a miry dungeon where they intended to leave him to die a slow, miserable death.

Look at the first four letters of the word **dungeon**. Imagine the foul smell as well as the complete lack of sanitation, food, water, or a place to sleep.

Having heard of Jeremiah's plight, Ebed-Melech, an Ethiopian eunuch who served the king, appealed to Zedekiah on Jeremiah's behalf. *"My lord the king, these men have done evil in all that they have done to Jeremiah the prophet, whom they have cast into the dungeon, and he is likely to die from hunger in the place where he is"* (Jeremiah 38:9). The king listened and gave Ebed-Melech thirty men to help lift Jeremiah out of the dungeon.

The king might just as easily have had Ebed-Melech thrown into the dungeon with Jeremiah. Why would this Ethiopian eunuch risk his own life to save the prophet? Obviously, he had put his trust in the one true God Jeremiah served. And the Lord rewarded him. *"I will bring My words upon this city for adversity . . . But I will deliver you in that day"* (39:16-17).

Thanks be to God for two Ethiopian eunuchs who heard God's word and put their obedient trust in Him. Go and do likewise!

PRAYER, NOT MAGIC

"And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him" (Matthew 6:7-8).

Magic was serious business in the ancient world of the New Testament. In reading Acts, you will encounter sorcerers, magicians, fortune-tellers, and exorcists. In Acts 19 in Ephesus, those who turned to Jesus burned their expensive magic books. Part of magic was belief in powerful incantations and spells. These were based on the idea that if you knew the right words, and said them in the right way, the gods would bless you or curse your enemies.

Jesus does not warn us about long-winded prayers in Matthew 6; after all, He prayed all night at times. Rather, we are not to be like pagans, with their magical views, when we pray. The true and living God is our Abba Father, who doesn't respond to magical words, but responds to us when we pray.

To be sure, there is power in prayer, but the power isn't in us or our words. The power of prayer is in the Almighty Father to whom we pray. Prayer is powerful because God is powerful! When James tells us, *"The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective"* (James 5:16), he is not telling us to search for a righteous prayer warrior (which an elder should be), but, rather for us to be righteous. That's not to be morally perfect, but to be in a right relationship with the Father, to whom we pray.

In the end, prayer is about relationship, not words. The comfort Jesus gives is that our Father knows us, loves us, and invites us to those sweet hours of prayer."

--Tim Kelley (Littleton, CO)

Raising Children To Be Christians (And Keeping Them Faithful)

We speak of growing up in the church, but no one really grows up in the church. It is more correct to say that our children grow up among the church. Most of our converts are the children of our members and many are not remaining faithful. Winning our children to Christ and keeping them in the fold must be a priority! How do parents and churches do this? Here is a place to begin.

Consistent Living

Children know hypocrisy when they see it. If we are pious on Sunday and prodigal on Monday, they see our inconsistency in bold letters. If Christ isn't revered on Monday, Sunday is only a pitiful attempt at deception. When having money and things is more important than the fruit of the Spirit, our children see.

Consistency in Teaching

"These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up" (Deuteronomy 6:6-7). Is the Bible part of your daily conversation with your children? Is it incorporated into the everyday life in your household? Do you talk about Bible classes and sermons?

Comment Positively About Church

If you roast elders and ministers for Sunday dinner your children will learn to criticize church leaders. A continual diet of harsh, critical comments will teach the child to be cynical about the church's leaders and its mission. *"Whatsoever is noble...whatever is pure...lovely...admirable...excellent or praiseworthy, think about such things"* (Philippians 4:8).

Make your home a greenhouse for faith in Christ to grow and for love of Christians to thrive!

--Paul Woodhouse (via Sayre, OK)