

Secret Place of Prayer

Part 4: Go to your Inner Room

Key Scripture:

"And when you pray, you are not to be as the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners, in order to be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will repay you." Matt 6:5-6 (NASB77)

Portion for the Journey:

The Sermon on the Mount is the first teaching Jesus gave on prayer. If we want to have an effective prayer life, heeding His teaching on prayer is vital. He gives some very clear directions to help us to break free from "religious praying" to the reality of relationship with the Father!! If we are going to walk as believers, it is worth our time to study to show ourselves approved...

Matthew 6:5-6 comes from Jesus' well-known message, "The Sermon on the Mount." This teaching was given close to the beginning of His ministry. When we read our key scripture in the context of The Sermon on the Mount, we can see Jesus wanted to make it clear how to separate traditions and religious practices from the vibrant life of prayer He wants us to have in His Kingdom. As always, He cuts straight to the heart of the matter...our heart and our motives!! We might be able to fool others regarding our spiritual state and maybe even ourselves, but we can never fool Jesus. He instructs us not to be concerned with outward show or what others think when we pray. The world is full of darkness, illusions and deception and even our own hearts are deceitful so that we cannot truly know them. The Kingdom of God is full of light, truth and grace. The inner room is the place where the secrets of our heart are revealed and purified by God. Isa. 29:13 (NASB); Jer. 17:5-10 (AMP) **John** 3:18-21; Job 36:22; Isa. 30:20; Matt. 11:29; Ps. 119:99

If our hearts are not pure, our prayers will be ineffective. James 4:3 warns "You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend *it* on your pleasures." When we come into the Presence of the LORD for prayer, ask Him to show us anything that would hinder our prayers from being answered. We can come boldly into the Light and ask Him to show us where we are conformed to man's traditions and allow Him to transform our thinking through His teaching by the Holy Spirit and His Word. Heb. 4:16; 10:22; James 4:8

Digging Deeper in the Word

"Moreover, be holding your mind on the matter of not practicing your correctness of thinking, feeling, or acting before men in order to be attentively viewed by them as a spectacular performer....whenever you are praying, you shall not be as the actors on the stage of life, because they are fond of praying in the synagogues and while standing at the corners of avenues in order that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward and the receipt for the same in full. But, as for you, whenever you are praying, enter into your secret and well-guarded place, and having closed your door, pray to your Father in secret." Matt. 6:5-6 Wuest's Expanded Translation

Jesus knows we are particularly vulnerable to certain forms of sin when we pray. Let us take some time to meditate on the Key Scripture passage for this lesson and allow Him to speak to us regarding our heart motives:

v. 5 *“And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others.”*

Insincere Prayers: God is not impressed with our eloquence or the number of words we use when we pray. Some of the most heartfelt prayers may not even be in human words, but from the deepest groaning of our hearts or the lifting of our hands to the LORD. God knows our hearts and He is able to evaluate whether our prayers are from duty, prayers learned by rote, or prayers to impress others. When we approach His throne, we need to have an awesome reference for the One to whom we speak! Ask the LORD to root out all hypocrisy in our lives.

Hypocrite: (5273) A pretender, actor, dissembler, to assume a false appearance, to conceal the real fact, intentions, motives or sentiments under a pretense or appearance. A hypocrite hides or conceals his true opinions or dispositions under a false identity. Originally, the word described Greek actors who wore elaborate masks to play various roles. As an actor played a part for the crowd in order to hear their applause, the hypocrite performs his religious duties to receive his fellow man’s approval. Hypocrisy has two basic elements: 1) desire for notice and commendation by men, 2) pretense and falsity of someone who does not want to be holy before God, but only to appear holy before men. Jesus rebuked the Pharisees who were doing the right things but for the wrong reasons. Hypocrisy is often referenced in the context of false teachers and false prophets aka “wolves in sheep’s clothing. Mark 7:6

v. 5 *“...that they may be seen by others.”* Performance before others kills true grace before the throne of God. It is very easy to slip into performance when praying in a group. We need to be very sensitive to make sure we are not speaking to those around us or trying to impress them, rather than God. Jesus makes it clear that while the prayers of the hypocrites might impress those around them, the prayers would be empty and with no lasting value. Any reward they receive from those who are impressed with their praying will be the only reward they receive! “Prayers intended for the ears of others will never reach the ear of God.” (Unknown)

v. 6 **“When you pray:** He is now speaking with reference to His disciples. Note He says, “when you pray,” not if you pray! Prayer is intended to be part of the life of all believers. Prayer is not just a designated “calling” of certain members of the body of Christ.

There are many definitions of prayer. When we look at meanings of the Greek words used for prayer, we learn very little about prayer. Prayer is meant to be simple, there is no hidden or deeper level of praying. God’s first priority in prayer is that of a living and true relationship with Him. Prayer is the means by which we draw near to God and become one with Him. It is an expression of our unity and love relationship with God. It is the place of Affirmation of God’s purposes and our participation with His plans and purposes on earth. As we come into oneness with the Father, we achieve singleness of purpose. We learn the most about prayer by praying! It is our investment in God’s Kingdom. **John 17**

Vine’s Dictionary of Old and New Testament words provides the primary words for prayer used in the New Testament:

1. proseuchomai (4336), proseuche (4335), euchomai (2172), euch (2171) From the same word family, these words are used most commonly to make general reference to prayer to God. The word for “pray” used in this passage is “proseuchomai,” It means ‘to pray toward God, earnestly, to supplicate, to

worship.” Webster’s 1828 Dictionary defines ‘supplicate’ as ‘to entreat with humble, earnest prayer, to beseech, to implore, to petition with earnestness and submission.

2. Deesis (1162) – stresses requesting from the sense of need, a wanting, asking, ENTREATY (an urgent prayer, earnest petition, pressing solicitation, and supplication.) It is also used at times to refer to requests from man to man. Luke 2:37; Phil. 1:4

3. Enteuxis (1783) is translated "prayer" in 1 Tim. 4:5; see INTERCESSION (to mediate between two parties, to stand in the gap. The regular word for a petition to a superior. Primarily denotes "a lighting upon, meeting with, a conversation." It is a technical term for approaching a king, and so for approaching God. 1 Tim. 2:1 (i.e., seeking the presence and hearing of God on behalf of others).

4. Entynchano (G1793) primarily "to fall in with , meet with in order to converse;" then, "to make PETITION (to ask, urge, press, supplication, especially from an inferior to their superior)" especially "to make intercession, plead with a person," either for or against others, Acts 25:24, "made suit to (me)," "have dealt with (me)" Rom. 11:2, of Elijah in "pleading" with God, "makes intercession to", Rom. 8:27, of the intercessory work of the Holy Spirit for the saints; Rom. 8:34, of the similar intercessory work of Christ. Heb. 7:25.

5. hyperentynchanō (G5241) "to make a petition" or "intercede on behalf of another" (*hyper*, "on behalf of," is used in Rom. 8:26 of the work of the Holy Spirit in making "intercession"

6. aītēma (G1550) from *aiteō*, "to ask" is rendered "PETITIONS" in 1 Jo. 5:15

7. hiketēria (G2428) Heb. 5:7, see SUPPLICATION. The feminine form of the adjective hiketerios, denoting "of a suppliant," and used as a noun, formerly "an olive branch" carried by a suppliant (hiketes), then later, "a supplication," used in Heb. 5:7. In the Sept., Job 40:22; Job 41:3). The olive branch was submitted as a symbol of victory, peace, and purity. When the dove returned to Noah the second time, she held in her beak the olive leaf, as on the first time, he put out his hand and took her into the ark himself.



v. 6 Jesus said, "When you pray, enter into your closet (or inner room or inner chamber.) The word in the Greek is "tameion" (5009) which means literally the storehouse, or storage chamber, inner room of a house where one’s treasure is kept, a secret chamber, one’s private chamber, closet or well-guarded place. It represents the inner sanctuary or the secret place of the Most High. Contained in the definition of the word is the idea of a place one goes for privacy or where one cannot be easily seen. This word comes from the same root for "cut or separate."

In medieval times this word is used to describe the innermost chamber of a castle, also called "the keep," which was considered to be the most well protected location in the castle. It was the place where the treasures were stored, and where the women and children hid when the castle was under attack. The keep was the stronghold of the castle. It was also the Lord’s private chamber and residence. Just outside of the keep would be the disarming room where those entering the keep would remove their weapons of defense.

In modern times, many wealthy people have a “safe room” built into their homes which are meant to be virtually impenetrable from the outside. There have been several movies made around the theme of a

safe room. How does understanding the meaning of this word for “inner room” paint a different picture from our contemporary closets filled with clothes and shoes?

Questions for meditation and prayer:

1. The instruction to enter our closet can be taken both literally and spiritually. Are we willing to let the LORD into our most hidden part of our heart, our innermost being? What does this mean on a practical level?
2. Ask the Lord to show you anything in your heart that would hinder your prayers from reaching His ears. If we confess our sin before the Lord, He is faithful to forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Bible teachers from previous generation used to speak about the need to “keep short accounts with the Lord.” This means to confess our sins immediately as they are revealed so we are always in a position for effective prayer when the need arises. The need to keep short accounts is also vital as the day of Jesus return is unknown and could come when we least expect it.

The following are particularly identified as sins that will cause the Lord not to hear our prayers. Ask the LORD to show you if any of these are present in your heart and to give you grace to overcome these sins.

- a. Doubt or unbelief: James 1:6-7
- b. Pride: Job 35:12
- c. Lack of compassion for poor and needy: Prov. 21:15; Isa. 58:6-12
- d. Cherishing sin in the heart: Ps. 66:18-19; Prov. 15:8; Isa. 1:15

2. “close the door.” Why do we close a door?

- That we are not seen by men.... To eliminate performance. In Matt. 6:1 He says “Beware (take heed) of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; the word for “to be noticed” or “seen” is “theaomai” (2300) means ‘to place steadfast, searching gaze upon an object in order to attentively behold, to wonder, view or contemplate. It indicates a sense of wondering consideration, involved in careful and deliberate vision which interprets the object. To cause to be seen and to desire with the eyes.’ The object of our attention should be God, and not men!! When we do our works to be seen by men, we seek to make them focus their attention upon us, to like us!! Jamison Faucett Brown defines this as “speaks of self-glorification, ostentation, taking care to be recognized by men...” A noun “theatron” comes from this verb, and is source of our word “theater.” It means, “to be an actor in a theater, to make a public spectacle, to put on a spectacular performance.” (Strong's #2302, see also 2301). Jesus is saying, "Don't make a theatrical show of your religious activity." "Don't parade your piety." We are to bring glory to God in all that we do!

It is very easy to enter into a spirit of performance, if you are looking for attention, acceptance, praise of men. Corporate prayer and worship is excellent and desirable, but we can only truly stand before God in the presence of men, when we have made it a practice to seek Him in the secret place when we are alone. We can manifest Him before men only to the extent that we have sought Him alone in our quiet times apart from men. We need to enter the congregation of the Body of Christ and walk before the unsaved with fear and trembling, praying that He will allow us to keep our focus upon Him. We will be less easily impressed by men when we are more impressed by God.

Doors are used in many places in the Word. In the Old Testament the “door” was the point of entry into the Jesus refers to Himself as the Door by which we enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

- The first mention of a “door” was then God warned Cain that sin was crouching at his door and he must master it. Gen. 4:7
- The next mention of doors is Noah and his family entered the ark, the Lord Himself closed the door so they were protected from the tempest. The Amplified version says, “...and the Lord shut him in and closed [the door] round about him.” Not only did He close the door, He surrounded the ark! Gen. 7:16 (AMP)
- Lot’s door kept out the wicked men of the city who wanted to have sex with the angels who came to save his family. These men groped about but could not find the door! Gen. 19:6-11
- The Lord instructed the Israelites to apply the blood of the Lamb over the doors of their homes to keep out the angel of death on the night of the Passover. Ex. 12:22
- The blood sacrifice for atonement of sin was offered at the door of the tabernacle. The altar of burnt offering was at the door!
- The Hebrew word for door is also translated “gate.” It was used frequently to the gates of the city, which was the seat of justice where decision-making and transactions took place. It was a place of influence and prestige where the elders of the city met to hold court.

Why do we close doors?

- **Doors represent a place of transition.** We “close the door” when we leave one situation or direction in life, sometimes by choice and sometimes under the Lord’s direction. Jesus called us to count the cost and be willing to leave everything for the sake of knowing Him. There is a saying, we are either all in or all out. If we want to be all in with the LORD, we will close the door to our old life and not look back!
 - **We close the door to separate ourselves from the outside.** We withdraw ourselves from looking to man or to the world. As believers we are called to come out and be separate. We go into our prayer closet to be alone with God, where we can impress no one but God.
 - **Closing the door removes distractions.** Closing the door is symbolic of making the choice to be with the LORD and close the door to those things that would try to change our focus on Him. One of the biggest thieves of time alone with the LORD are the distractions of entertainment, electronics and social media. It is so easy to lose oneself for hours in television or the internet! If we want to have true time in the Lord’s presence, we need to silence all outside distractions.
 - **A closed door hides us from the world.** It allows us to interact in privacy and without outside intrusion. A closed door is like a “do not enter” sign that prevents unauthorized entry from intruders. The encounter Lot and his angelic guests experienced, showed the power of a closed door to keep out the darkness of those in the city. These evil men could not find the door! Gen. 19:6-11
 - **Doors are closed for our protection.** When the large doors to a castle are closed and locked, those inside are barricaded against attacks from their enemy. It is a safe and protected place.
3. "...and when you have shut your door, ***“pray to your Father who is in secret...”*** (Krypto) Describes the manner of our giving and the heart motive of our prayers, but also directs our attention to God’s hidden presence. *The Bible Knowledge Key Word Study* describes this “secret place,” as “the sphere of God’s presence, it is a hidden reality. Though present and real, it is spiritual and unknown to most people.”

The Secret Place of the Most High is the dwelling place of His presence. The Lord invites us to come into His Secret place and to have sweet fellowship with Him and to receive His counsel and direction. In the Secret Place we come to know Him and walk fully in His will.

What is God speaking to you through this Lesson?

Ask the Lord to search your heart and show you any hindrances that are keeping you from entering into the Secret Place to pray to your Father? Are you closing the door to distractions, to appearances, and simply pouring out your heart to your heavenly Father?

Responding to God: Go into the quietest spot you can find. Close all the doors and talk to Him about what you have learned in this lesson!