

DEVELOPING YOUR SECRET CLOSET OF PRAYER

Matt. 6:6 "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet"

enter - aorist imperative active tense
tense - aorist - action as being accomplished by subject
mood - imperative - makes a demand on the will of the reader to obey the command
voice - active - indicates the subject produces the action

closet - A place of solitude where we can withdraw and shut out the world and commune with God. It's a place of silent retreat from the world, a place of entrance into the eternal

A secret closet - a well guarded place where things of value were placed. A place, if not guarded, that thieves would plunder. It is a place where our spiritual lives are strengthened and revived.

A place where our private prayer life is developed, a place where Satan will do all he can to keep us from entering. "One's spiritual life will never rise above the practice of one's private prayer life." It's a place of solitude where God refines us, molds us, and prepares us to fulfill His purpose for our lives. God will use these private times alone to develop our Christian character.

The spiritual disciplines of giving, praying, and fasting are in secret. Those who parade their piety forfeit their reward.

Matt. 6:5-8 Is a powerful prescription that teaches crucial principles for our private prayer life.

1. Teaches us how to pray
 - a. Warns us how not to pray
2. Promises a reward
 - a. Not the applause of others
3. Favor of God
 - a. For those who get it right

What is prayer?

A dialogue between God and a believer, which includes both talking and listening to God. Sometimes our prayers are just vain repetitions, a monologue of just talking but seldom listening to His instruction. Could it be that what God has to say to me is much more important than what I have to say to Him? He delights in our sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving, but for many, listening to and discovering His voice is almost nonexistent in their communication with the Great Creator.

What prayer is not: What I can get from God.

Prayer is to be an intimate and personal relationship with our living God in which the believer comes to want only what God wants for him, nothing more, nothing less. We need to yield to God's desire by dying to our own agenda. (Luke 9:23) This must be built into our prayer life by actually participating in our own funeral on a daily basis. Dying to self is a daily imperative that must be an integral part of our closet time. This requires a daily commitment of time in solitude with a holy God.

Prayer is not what I can get from God but to have my heart so radically changed by Him that I come to want only what God wants for me, nothing more, nothing less.

The central issue is solitude with God. There are things God only shares in secret, and there are some secrets that are only heard in solitude with Him. The secret closet is the place where God builds His character within our hearts. Private discipline that prepares us for public life. Our spiritual life will never rise above the practice of our private prayer life!

God's Promise: "Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."

The enemy of our souls, the author of all doubt and discouragement, will do everything possible to make us think that private prayer is a waste of time. Satan hates prayer, particularly the "closet life" of the believer. This is why the discipline of the secret closet is so difficult to maintain, for our flesh wars against it.

Do you have a place which is a special meeting site for intimacy with God? Do you have a place which is holy ground? Do you have a place of solitude? Do you have a secret closet of prayer?

If the answer is no, you need to buy a copy of "Developing Your Secret Closet of Prayer" by Richard A. Burr, Christian Publications. The above material was adapted from the introduction to the book. In my opinion, it is one of the very best books ever written on prayer.

PREPARATIONS FOR THE SECRET CLOSET

Principle One: Make an appointment with God

Principle Two: Select a location

Principle Three: Consider your posture

Principle Four: Prepare your heart

- a. Ponder the throne room of God
- b. Reflect upon the eternal view of life
- c. Consider God's attributes

Principle Five: Submit to God, Resist the enemy

- a. Express your desire to worship and serve God only
- b. Voluntarily submit to His authority
- c. Acknowledge your dependence upon Him
- d. Express your desire to live a Spirit-filled life
- e. Ask the Holy Spirit to guard your mind

Our great need is for all God's people to experience revival. The word "revival" means "bringing back to life", implying that one has experienced previous "life", that is, has been born again and has walked in the Spirit, but now desperately needs spiritual restoration. Therefore revival is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, in concert with prayer and the Word of God, that ushers into a Christian's heart wave upon wave of obedience and causes the believer to be flourishing in the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23)

Corporate revival always begins with personal revival - specifically, the revival of ones heart in the secret closet of prayer. The following principles outline the preparations needed to establish an effective prayer life that will lead to personal revival -- all by the grace and mercy of our faithful God!

Principle One: Make an appointment with God

The first and foundational principle in implementing your closet of prayer is to establish an appointment with God. Jesus recognized that apart from the Father He could do nothing. (John 5:19) This is illustrated in Mark 1:35, "and in the morning rising up a great while before day, He went out and departed into a solitary place and there prayed". Our early morning appointment with God must be a non-negotiable in our daily schedule.

Why this prayerlessness?

Richard Burr says, "I have come to believe that self-sufficiency is the chief cause of this sin of prayerlessness. And, of course, it has its roots in pride - that ungodly annoyance that is spawned in the residue of my old nature, the flesh."

Principle Two: Select a location

Matt. 6:6 indicates it is 1. a solitary place where you will be 2. undisturbed to avoid distraction 3. unheard to experience liberty of spirit and 4. unobserved to avoid ostentation. Psalm 37:7 encourages us to develop a listening ear to discern His will, purpose and direction for our life. There are some things that God only says in secret, and there are some secrets that are only heard in solitude!

Principle Three: Consider your posture

One of the tragedies in our society today is the absence of the fear of God. Our culture has become so casual and shameless that strands of this dreadful disease have spilled over into the church. A casualness with God tends toward carelessness and compromise, which invariably leads to carnality. The posture of your praying can reveal your attitude of heart toward God. Psalm 95:6 My posture before God needs to be reverent and humbly communicating a desperate need for a fresh touch from the Almighty.

Principle Four: Prepare your heart

Internal preparations that prepare me for effective communion with our Lord:

- a. Ponder the throne room of God
Isa. 6:1-3; Rev. 4 Read and pray through all verses and you will capture a good glimpse of the glory that is awaiting you in the throne room of heaven. The setting of the throne room is awesome! Yet even more astounding is God's invitation for us to approach Him with freedom and confidence - all because of the blood of the Lamb. Heb. 4:16
- b. Reflect upon the eternal view of life.
We need to become visionary Christians by allowing the Master to write this eternal view of life across the tables of our heart. Pray through Ps. 138:1-8; Rom. 8:31-39.
- c. Consider God's attributes
We must never forget who this is that has invited us to have intimate fellowship with Him. This is failure to understand the awesome wonder and reverence that is due His name. How comforting to know that our Lord Jesus Christ has the power and authority to take all tragedies of the past or present and by His abounding grace turn them into triumphs. II Pet. 1:3

Principle Five: Submit to God, Resist the enemy

James 4:7 is one of the most significant Scriptures in the entire Word that deals with victorious living.

- a. Express your desire to worship and serve God only.
It is the conscious acknowledgment before God that the desire of my heart is to worship and serve Him throughout this coming day.
- b. Voluntarily submit to His authority.
Complete submission to the Lordship of Christ relinquishing all rights and authority to ones life . We are called upon to daily participate in our own funeral, to consider ourselves dead unto the world and alive unto Christ. The goal is not what I can get from God but to have such an intimate and personal relationship with Him that I come to want only what He wants for me, nothing more and nothing less. This definition in and of itself speaks of the necessity of dying to self and submitting to His will.
- c. Acknowledge your dependence upon Him.
John 15:5 "Apart from me you can do nothing". We must constantly remind ourselves of this truth.