

# Acid Test Series 6 of 8 - Get Back to the Closet

by Al Whittinghill

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of secret prayer, solitude, and prioritizing our private life with God to have a deep and intimate relationship with Him.*

**Duration:** 45:07

**Scripture:** Isaiah 64:7, Jeremiah 2:32, Matthew 6:5-6, Mark 6:6

**Topics:** "Christian Life"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of giving time to the Lord through prayer. He highlights the potential impact of dedicating just one hour a day to God, which can equate to 45 full working days in a year. The speaker emphasizes that when we prioritize other things over God, we are investing in things that are not important in the eyes of God. He encourages believers to spend time communing with God, as it will enable them to feel and understand the sorrows of the world in a deeper way. The sermon also includes examples of children's prayers that demonstrate their innocent and genuine faith in God. The speaker concludes by emphasizing that prayer is not about impressing God with eloquent speeches, but rather about having a genuine dialogue with Him and trusting in His love and willingness to help.

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## Transcript

Well, it's great to see you here tonight. I wanted to share with you at the outset of tonight's word about prayer, our third in a four-part series ending next week, the little thing I found some weeks ago that really blessed my heart. It was a collection of children's prayers, and it's from a magazine that I was reading, and just listen to this from Wendy, age six.

God, who do you belong to, kids or grown-ups? You have to pick one. No halvesies with flowers, signed Wendy, age six. And then here's one from Violet.

God, I always spell your name in my alphabet soup. Violet, age nine. These are real letters.

Listen to this one. Dear God, why do so many persons who began with the letter I fight in wars? Iranians, Iraqs, Israel, Indians, you name it. Is it just an accident? Maybe you should check on it.

It gives all the I people a bad name. Best wishes, Ingrid, age nine. For God, why not try the gardens of Eden's again? Ever thought about it? This time you could try it without the apples and snakes.

Very best wishes to you, Kim, age ten. Dear God, how long did it really take you to make the first people? Do you feel like you rushed too much? Keith, age ten. Dear God and your disciples, please forgive me for not being a better listener at church, but it's hard to learn about you all at once.

Hello, Carmen, age ten. Gets better even. Dear God, I am sorry.

I like to do religious things, but fasting is where I draw the line. A man has to take a stand in life. Neil, age ten.

God, when you found Mary for the virgin birth and you decided she should have Jesus in the manger, what I want to hear is whether there were any other finalists. Hello, God. Brittany, age eight.

And then just for this one, the last one this week, Jesus, you must have got a big smile on your face when you found out you were resurrected. I was glad when I heard about it, too. Love, Frank, age eight.

Now, why do those little prayers seem so precious to us? Why do they seem so special? And they delight us. We kind of laugh at them, though, because you see, we hear something in them that's real and special and just transparent. And it is such a joy to hear that.

But now we would never play like that, would we? Because we've become sophisticated and we've learned how to pray and kind of, you know, from other people. Consequently, when we look at these prayers, we kind of look at them and we can say, well, we know a little better than that. Have you ever really thought about how Father God, who is much higher than we are compared to these could look at our prayers? But you see, God is looking for the same thing in our prayers that you heard in those prayers.

Something refreshing, something right down where you really, really live. Sometimes the deepest truths in the Bible elude us because they're so simple. We overlook them.

We just jet right over them. Now, this is our third week. The first week we talked about the priority of prayer and we started with the Lord.

Teach us to pray the priority of prayer. And we saw that it's God's priority for prayer, for individual and for the church. Last week we looked at the power of prayer and we saw that all success in spiritual things depends upon prayer and that it is God's way for the church to do her greatest work.

Service is simply picking up the spoils of victorious prayer. But tonight I want to talk about the privilege of prayer. And maybe that word seems like a strange word to you personally, when you talk about prayer, the privilege of prayer, because to you, prayer doesn't really seem like a privilege.

It may seem more like a pain. It's something that you don't delight in. It's rather a duty.

It's something that when you think about you feel guilty that you don't do more of. Maybe you don't enjoy prayer. Maybe you endure it.

You may do it, but you endure it. Well, instead of a blessing, it may have become a burden to you. Well, I want to read a scripture in Matthew chapter six with you.

If you'll turn there and the Lord really ministered this scripture to my heart several weeks ago, as I went away with him and he took me to this passage and really spoke to my own heart. And I want to read with you, Matthew chapter six, beginning in verse five, Jesus is speaking. And he says, and when you pray,

thou shalt not be like the hypocrites are for, they love to pray, standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets so that they can be seen of men.

Verily, I say to you, they have their reward, but you, when you pray, enter into your closet. And when you have shut your door, pray to your father, which is in secret and your father, which sees in secret shall reward you openly. But when you pray, do not use vain repetitions like the nations or the heathen do, for they think they shall be heard for their much speaking be not ye.

Therefore, like them for your father knows what things you have need of before you ask him father, I ask you to bless these words and bring to our soul, our spirit, that word of life that will give us what you died to present to your church, victorious prayer, deep, intimate fellowship. And this kind of prayer that we read about at the very beginning of tonight, that delights our heart and yours. We pray it in Jesus name.

Amen. Before we go to our text, I want to say that real prayer is very, very personal and it's a family time of father with his children. Now, one of the key thoughts in Matthew chapter six is we have a father and another key thought that's repeated over and over is a secret life, a life in secret.

And the whole context of this chapter is a life lived for the eye of God. And so before we begin, let me say to truly pray as God, the father intended for us to pray, we must be born into his family. It's a family time situation and you must be cleansed by the blood.

But when I am cleansed by the blood of Jesus, the blood is on me and the blood is on the throne. I can come boldly to the throne and the father sees the same blood and says, you belong together. You're of Royal blood.

It's a right relationship with God. That is the foundation and strength of all prayer. That's it.

That's what made these prayers so precious because they were children talking to a father. And we have a perpetual audience with the king of the universe and open door right into the throne room of God. This is where angels cover themselves not to wilt in that holy light and they fall down.

We come and contemplate freely on our knees what angels desire strongly to look into. And they cry, holy, holy, holy. And we as simple children just come right into the throne room of God.

I heard a story about a king in England who was a very temperamental king, very powerful, but he had a glorious throne room and whenever he was in a bad mood, heads would roll. If you ever walked into his throne room without being invited, especially when he's in a bad mood, he would send you out and have your head cut off. Well, one day he was fit to throw things at people and the guards were walking around with itching necks.

And as they were there, this, this noise was out on the outside of the throne room and the doors burst open. And in comes this little boy with mud all over him, just like a little person off the streets. And they say, oh no, somebody tell him not to.

Before they can do anything. This child runs into the throne room with mud all over him, slinging mud, tracking tracks right across the marble floor. And he runs right up to the king.

The men are going like this and he jumps into the king's lap, gets mud all over his clothes and they can hardly look. And the king puts his arms around this little boy and says, son, I am so glad to see you. Have

you had a good day? You see, being the prince changed everything where others would fear to come in.

This little bold boy comes running right in. Why? Because he's in the same family and this is not the king only to him. This is his father.

This is his daddy. And you see this king welcomed him. And so it is with us that we can come boldly to the throne of grace.

We can come with muddy feet, clay feet, right to the very throne of holy God. And you'll find that he yearns to take you to his bosom and spend quality time with you. There is no reluctance on his part.

He yearns for intimacy. In fact, that's the thing he wants more than anything else. And I would say to you tonight, let this birth hope in you.

Let the fact that God wants to be in intimate fellowship with you, birth hope, because you don't have to twist his arm. He is seeking you. And so the angels are amazed at our privilege.

They see someone like me come into the throne room of God and they say, can you believe it? Amazing grace that such a one is that can come right to the throne of grace and they praise him and they're astounded at our privilege. I think the only thing that astounds the angels more than that is the fact that we don't come. They see us like little children down here, trying to bang a square peg in a round hole.

And they say, look at them. Why don't they go ask their father? Why don't they go ask their father about this thing? How to do it? The angels are amazed at what we can have for free. And they, they long for us to do it.

Now God himself longs for us to take up this privilege. He's amazed that we don't. The angels are amazed and father.

God is amazed back in the old Testament in Isaiah chapter 59. God saw in verse 16, there was no man. And he wondered the word in the Hebrew means he was astonished that there was no intercessor.

He's astonished. God was astonished with the open door that he gives to his children, that there wasn't someone there praying. And he says again in Isaiah 63, I looked to see if there was someone to help, but there was no one.

I wondered, I was astonished that there was no one there to uphold. God was astonished in Mark chapter six, verse six. It says that Jesus looked around and he marveled at their unbelief.

The word is, uh, to be astonished, marveled, to be, to be alarmed, to be amazed at the fact that people are so slow to believe God. Now, all of that was before the cross. All of that was before the Bible was canonized together for us by the spirit.

All of that was before the resurrection. All of that was before Pentecost. If he was astonished, then what do you think he is now with the Bible in our hand? Jeremiah two, verse 32 is the lament of the Holy spirit.

He says, my people have forgotten me days without number days without number. My people have forgotten me. And then he says in Isaiah 64, verse seven, there is none says the prophet that calls upon thy name.

There is no one get this, that stirs up himself to take hold on you. You see, that's what I believe God wants us to do during these weeks to stir ourselves up, to take hold upon God. God wants you to get ahold of him.

He wants you to lay hold of him in prayer. So from our text tonight in Matthew six, I want to look at three key ingredients that will restore prayer to its rightful level in the life of one who has become drudgery instead of a delight. It will restore this to you.

If you will see prayer in this dimension and in this Matthew chapter six, we see three keywords. The first keyword let's read verse five. When you pray, thou shall not be like hypocrites are two faced people.

They love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets that they can be seen of man. Verily, I say to you, that's their reward. They have it.

The praise of men, but you, when you pray enter into your closet and when you've shut your door, pray to your father, which is in secret and your father, which season secret shall reward you openly in this chapter. As I said, secret is a key word. It's used when they talk about giving and when they talk about praying and when they talk about fasting, each one says your father in secret sees don't do these things.

So men can evaluate or be impressed, but your father is in secret. And so the first keyword, if you want your prayer life restored and brought to what God wants is secrecy, secrecy. Now the word here for secret is crypto crypto, like cryptographic message.

It's hidden. It's, it's, uh, it's inward. It's even used in some places of the new Testament for like the spiritual part of man, the hidden part it's translated, but it means secret, like, uh, like unknown to the, to the common eye.

It's not just laying on the surface and what this secret means. It's a life that is lived before just the eye of God alone, just before his eye unto him three times in this chapter, open reward is promised to secret faith, open reward. God will reward you openly.

If you sow in the closet, you will reap in public. But if you don't sow in private, you'll never reap in public five times in the chapter. We're told not to be seen of men, not to be seen of men.

When you give, don't let the, the, your right hand know what your left hand is. Don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. I can't remember which hand is in ignorance, but anyway, the point is, uh, this kind of prayer, the secret prayer dies when it's exposed to the glare of a man's gaze.

It dies. It's secret prayer. It says here, enter into your closet.

That's secret prayer. Closet is the word tamey on, tamey on it's used four times in the new Testament. And this word is translated in different ways, a private family, inner closet, like your messy closet that nobody ever sees.

You hope that private closet. Secondly, it's translated like a secret chamber that you take a honeymoon in. And thirdly, it's translated like a treasure vault where you keep all your valuables.

And it's just for you alone. It's a private place. When you enter into your closet secretly, that's your place, that place of secrecy, the closet, it suggests here.

It's a definite place. Do you have a place to meet with God? You see, what you need to do is make an altar. The family altar will alter the family, but the personal altar will alter you.

And you need a place throughout the scriptures. There's a place to meet with God. And the saints of old always had what they called a twisting place, a trusting place where they would always get along with God that was reserved for prayer.

Do you have a place like that? Enter into your closet, a definite place to meet with God. I'll tell you, I was away on that retreat and the words that the Holy Spirit laid on my heart were these get back to the closet. Five words.

And I pray. I know not like the Lord wants me to pray, but I'll tell you this. The Lord raked my heart over his coals and said, get back to the closet, get back to the closet and tell my church the same thing.

Get back to the closet, trust in the secrecy of a hidden life with God secret. It says in verse six here that your father, he says, it says first he is in secret. And secondly, your father sees in secret.

He's in secret and he sees in secret now to the Hebrew mind and to the Jewish people, to whom he was speaking. This suggests that secret place. In the tabernacle called the Holy of Holies, he dwelleth in the secret place of the most high shall abide under the shadow of the almighty, the inner sanctuary, that room that nobody ever went in except for God.

He lived there. It's his closet. It's his place.

So when you come into your secret place, your hidden sanctuary, the place where you meet with God, it suggests that you dwell in the shadow of the almighty. You have made the Lord, your, your dwelling place. Now, a secret kind of prayer is the first kind of prayer to go when you get busy.

No way, miss. How about some old minds? It's true. Being in the closet seems like such a waste of time.

Now it's so unproductive. Haven't we thought that I thought it, I said it. But this attitude is the reason we're so impotent, because we think we have to always be doing something.

The secret of all failure may be the secret, the failure of secret prayer. Listen to what Oswald Chambers said. The central thing in the kingdom of Christ is a personal relationship, a personal relationship to himself, not public usefulness to make a relationship of intimacy.

Of course, we do more than just be in the closet, but you'll never have a holy life without it. And so the secret of Christianity is Christ in secret, living a life before God, when no one else can see, but him. When your pastor walks by, you suddenly change.

Well, that's not a life in secret. That's a life lived for man. So the power of my public life must flow from the, from the, from the beauty of my private life with God.

And the man who prays in public will have a hollow ring to it. If he doesn't also propel it from his closet in private. And so a pragmatism and a lust for results has bred endless energy and activity that have never been birthed in God.

And they have robbed the church of its private life with God. Many, many people have buried their spirituality in the grave of their activities. Almost always the reason that men fall in public is because

before then they have failed in private.

They have left the closet. So God has a secret service. I heard about a man that died about 12 years ago in February.

They carried him out of his house. He had been a missionary 30 years before that in Israel and come home for health reasons. They made him come home.

He said, I want to stay and leave my bones as a testimony to the Lord, but they made him come home. And so when he left his little house on that stretcher with the blanket pulled over his face, it was the first time we've been out of his house in 12 years. His name was Rex.

He wouldn't even let you take his picture. This man had not slept one night in 30 years. He hadn't left his house in 12 years.

What did he do? He slept in the daytime. He stayed up night after night and he prayed. He was a hidden one.

He was a secret one, a man of the closet. And let me tell you when he died, I believe it was a serious loss to the church and our nation as if some great preacher or the president died. People like that are very, very rare.

Do you have a secret life with God that no one knows about, but you and him, much like there are things that you and your wife share that no one knows about, but you and her, do you have that kind of secret life with God secrecy? You got to get back to it, get back to the closet. The second word in these verses in Matthew chapter seven is also in verse six. And the word is suggested when it says, enter into your closet and shut the door.

Solitude is the second word. Shut the door solitude, forget everything else. Shut out the world and shut in yourself with God.

Seclusion might be another way to put it alone with God, not just a secret place, but alone with God. You see in the holiest of all, that was suggested under secrecy. Only one person ever went at a time ever, never were there two people in God's presence, only one God deals one by one.

And in this verse six, you will see eight times that singular pronoun is used. Jesus, you, when you pray, enter into your closet. And when you have shut your door, pray to your father, that's in secret.

And your father should you open eight times in one verse. He uses that singular pronoun. You he's trying to emphasize to us that the most important time is time alone with God.

Many of you admire Dr. Oldford. Well, he, in a message once I heard him say, he asked Vance Havner. Vance was older.

He asked Vance Havner when offered was young. He asked Vance Havner. He said, Dr. Havner, what is the secret for a young man, a life with God, a great walk with God? And Dr. Havner said in his own way, solitude, young man, solitude, solitude, time alone with God, the most important thing in your life, the time exposure of the soul, the film of your soul to the face of God.

Be still and know that I'm God. The Psalm 46, 10 says, be still and know that I am God. That's why your closet will either be the best place on earth or the worst place on earth.

There'll be no neutrality when it comes to the closet, but God is best known in silence. He is best known in that secret place in the closet with the door shut. But you know what? We're so busy.

Fear seems to stalk most hearts as the silence of eternity soaks in. We get awkward even in a room full of people. When this silence, we feel very, very awkward.

We don't know how to handle the creativity of God's kind of silence. People have been scratching their head. There was silence in heaven for about the space of a half an hour.

I don't know, but I believe it may be the time of just combined glory to intercession. I don't know what that means, but that's just my own opinion. But silence makes us face reality.

That's why we don't like it. Even as Christians, we get in our car, we slap in some tape. I'm serious.

There's very few times in our lives when there's absolute silence. Be still and know that I am God. We cover reality with noise.

Hearts shrink back from being alone with God. You know why? Because reality is revealed in secret. Who can dwell in his presence? Who can dwell in his shadowless light? Only the man who's being willing to be reduced to nothing but grace.

And from my smitten heart with tears, the song we sang to wonders, I confess the wonders of redeeming love in my unworthiness. When we get alone with God, we are no longer all the things we've convinced ourselves that we are. We're just needy people.

Nobody can strut into our prayer into the prayer closet. We are naked. We're just people, gloriously unsophisticated.

And our prayers, compared to his understanding, are very, very puny. But you see, in his presence, in his light, we see light. We see sin's enormity, and we see our deformity.

And we're reduced to total trust and dependence as a child on God. There's a gray test of solitude. Hypocrites seldom pray in private.

It's always got to be with other people around because we don't realize it, but we're doing it to reinforce our own idea of ourself. Everything that is vital to godliness is nurtured and nourished in the closet air. Everything that will make you grow as a Christian comes from your closet alone.

Prayer is the roving room of the soul. It's like the it's like the locker room for life. God puts on us his his anointing, his spirit, the sensitivity of God.

He says, smell the fragrance of Christ. Taste and see that the Lord is good. Senses become strong.

Look and see who the Lord is. Learn of him. And and we put on the Lord Jesus Christ.

God always says, hide thyself before he says, show yourself. He said it to Elijah. He said it to Moses.

He said it to Paul. He says it to every man almost in the Bible that you can see. Hide thyself.

And then once you heard something in the closet, then he says, go watch. I've spoken to you in darkness. Go out and proclaim that what you hear in the closet, shout on the rooftop.

But too many people are out proclaiming and shouting. They haven't heard anything or seen anything. And that's why God says so much of it's a tingling symbol.

It's got to be built upon reality and and prayer in our life. We learn the art of thinking about God only. It's called a single eye in this chapter.

Matthew six. And it's not just passive kind of waiting in his presence. It's an exercise in keen attention.

Every faculty of the soul is two ears, one mouth. And we're listening. Lord, speak.

I'm listening. Oh, the richest man on earth is the man who has a listening heart. Solomon said, Lord, give me wisdom.

The Hebrew means a listening heart. And the Lord says, because you've asked for this, I'll do it. That's why we call him the Bible, because he heard God and then he wrote it down.

He should have lived it out a little more in his everyday life. He blew it. But he was a wise man because, you see, he spent time listening.

We've got to get in the closet and take every thought captive. Shut the door and take every flipping thought and bind it and focus our attention and behold the beauty of the Lord and and meditate in his word and contemplate his holy character and consecrate to his glorious will right in his presence. Intimacy takes time.

Any of you that have been married know that it takes time. You don't just become intimate by living together. You've got to have time communicating solitude, the cornerstone of all holy living solitude with God.

This kind of prayer will either keep you from sin or sin will keep you from this kind of prayer. You can't stand the heat. We'll never be able to live in God's presence in the prayer closet if we're tolerating things he hates.

We just won't go in secret. You see secrecy. It's time to get alone in the secret place at the most time in solitude, completely alone.

And the third word is sacrifice, sacrifice. You say, where do you get that in that verse? Because four times in three verses that we just read, the Lord says, when you pray, when you pray, not if, when. And the Lord again expects us to pray.

He is saying, I expect this kind of prayer. And you see, pray to your father. I expect this kind of secret solitudinous prayer.

When, when, when, when, when, when you pray, not if. And so this means that if this is not happening, I must make time. I'll never find time.

Hey, the devil will keep you so busy. He makes sure you never find time. You have to prioritize and make time because Jesus said when, and when something comes like this, it means that something else must

go.

Something else has got to go in your schedule. I tell you, God told me two weeks ago, it had to go out of mind and I didn't like it, but you know what I'm starting to because I see the trade is so puny on my part compared to what he is going to give me. As I dare to sacrifice the dearest idols that I may have ever known and get along with him, he will reward me openly.

And I will see the power of God. We've got to quit giving God our leftover time. Most people are so used up after work.

They have no time for prayer alone with God intimacy takes time. And whatever is done without our hearts just done by routine, whatever's done without heart in the Christian life is done in darkness, darkness. It must have heart.

So we've got to offer sacrifices of Thanksgiving, the fruit of our lips, giving praise and honor to his name. See, there were two altars in the tabernacle, one in the outer court where sacrifice was done for me. The blood was shed that was brass and it meant judgment.

The fire fell and the blood was shed. It's out in public one for me in public, but the other altar that was an altar also was a golden altar. And that was sacrificed by me in private, the altar of prayer, golden altar of incense, where prayer ascended before God.

He that cometh to God must believe that he is and that God is a rewarder of those who casually inquire after him, diligently seek him, which would describe your life, which would God say diligent search or casual slouch? Which one would it be not to condemn anyone, but to convict us and have it correct us by faith? We must give ourselves. Did you know that if you gave one hour a day for three hundred and sixty five days, that would be the equivalent of forty five, eight hour working days in a year. You figure it out.

And if you gave two hours a day to the Lord for a lot for the next forty years, if you have them, it would be the equivalent of adding ten full years of productivity to your life. Ten years, two hours a day. Think of it.

And we say, Lord, there's just not enough time. There is enough time to do what he says do. The problem is when we put other things in that he says aren't important.

Wood, hay and stubble. And so a man who spends time communing with God will see and feel the sorrows of the world in an acute way. He will begin to feel like God and he will begin to hear.

Thou have awakened me morning by morning. You let me hear. You've given me the ear to hear the learning, it says in Isaiah chapter 50.

Then he says, you've made my tongue to speak. Let me tell you, hearing precedes speaking. God says that a listening, hearing heart is the foundation of speech and he wants us to hear that which you hear in secret and shout upon the housetop secrecy, solitude and sacrifice.

The whole thing's got to be in perspective, though, because he says when you pray, don't use vain repetitions like the heathen do vain repetitions. That means empty words. It sounds awesome, doesn't it? To say secrecy, solitude, sacrifice.

Oh, I could never reach to that. But here again, we're getting down right to reality. When you pray, be like a child back to simplicity.

Don't use empty words. What's that? Words without heart. When you come before the father, don't try to give him advice.

Don't kind of twist his arm. God listens to the language of the heart. You know, my kids, we get on the floor, we pray.

And and one of them several years ago had this habit, really concentrating. You know how kids are. You're sitting there thinking about something real hard and they're trying to join in.

And I would see them putting prayers together, but they'd say, father, would you just bless and then name this thing? And then they go, they're thinking, they're smacking the lips, going, father, bless Bill. You know, just really thinking. And I said, this is strange.

Listen to this. And you try hard not to laugh because, father, I just love you. And and but, you know, the amazing thing is God was listening to her heart.

And it was so amazing because I saw such powerful answers to prayer. And I said, wow. And I got along with God and I said, Heavenly Father.

And you know what I found out? It didn't work for me. You know why don't you? Because moving your lips is not what makes prayer work. He's listening to the heart of my precious daughter, just like he hears the heart of those things I read tonight.

A sob can be eloquent to our Heavenly Father. You're talking to a father, a sob, tears and prayer go together and power liquid prayer. It's called by the old saints.

God, it says in Psalm 56, keeps our tears in his bottle. I kid my wife and say that my angel with my bottles got a little in hers is carrying that big. But it's like diamonds.

The Lord catches them and puts them in the bottle and they're in his book. Psalm 56 says a sob can be eloquent. God knows our cry.

I have five kids and I can tell you each one like tonight. I mean, I was going absolutely bonkers because they were outside my study. As I said, they had chickenpox.

Remember four of them? It looks like a leper colony and they're walking around. And I'm a little distracted right now, but normally I can tell you by their cry, whether they're hungry, whether they need a spanking, whether they need to be cuddled. I know their cry.

And I'm going to tell you what our Heavenly Father knows your cry. And all he wants is for you to come alone in secrecy, in your closet, in solitude and very simply and sacrifice of what you think is important to spend time with him to maybe all you can do is sob in his presence. But I'll tell you this.

It means a lot to a father. Maybe all you can do is sigh. You don't cry.

You can sigh or as the scriptures say, groanings that cannot be uttered, groanings. All you can do is get before God. You're hurting so badly.

Well, get in his presence and groan like Paul. I prevail in prayer until Christ be formed in you. Some of history's best prayers have been prayed from which end corner.

Maybe you feel like a basket case. That's OK. Moses was a basket case and he made good.

I mean, he was a great man of prayer, a sob or a sigh or pure silence. You don't even know what to do. You come before God and you're in a father.

You don't know what to say. It's just pure silence. But I'll tell you what, silence to a father is absolutely encyclopedic.

I tell you, in my case, that's when I really get worried when my children come and sit down and just be quiet. Boy, I start probing, what is it? What is it? What's on your heart? Tell me this. Tell me.

You see, when you come before God, it's a whole lot better that your heart have no words than your words just have no heart. He listens to the heart. He is waiting for you, friend, to pour out your heart before him.

He wants you to pour your heart out. Your father knows what things you need before you ask. Well, then why come? Because he loves you.

He wants to spend time with you. He wants to be with you. That's why he says get alone in secret in the closet and sacrifice.

And we don't have to impress him. That means I don't have to make a speech to him. It's not just a nice shopping list I'm giving him.

It's a it's a dialogue of listening and then speaking. And I'm going to tell you what, to a father, a cry is more powerful than a polished speech any day. If I were out in the woods with my little son, Ben, and we saw a snake over there and he was right over there by Ben, Ben, that snake went and I was up like this ready to strike him.

And my son says, daddy, daddy, a snake. Can you imagine me saying now, son, I told you to call on me like this when you were in trouble, dad, there is a reptile here. You know, you didn't quite use the right language or say something like this, son, do you really believe that your daddy's going to come help you? I'll tell you what, on the strength of the fact that I was responsible for him as my son, I would go over there with my boots and I would turn that reptile into a snake pudding.

I would stomp him. And I'm gonna tell you what, when I, when that snake rears his head in your daily life, you don't have to sit there and stream scripture verses together and say it just right and have perfect faith. You need to go and fall before your father in secret along with him and say, father, a snake.

And I'm gonna say what he'll make snake stew of him. He will turn on him. He wants you to come and pour your heart out before God.

I want to encourage you tonight that Jacob's ladder rests with his end in the closet and his top part reaches the very throne of God. Jacob's ladder with angels descending and ascending. And he is Jacob's ladder.

Our Lord, Jesus Christ. Get back to the closet tonight. You say what you say is like a foreign language to me.

That's why you're so weak and miserable. If you can say that, get back to the closet and God will bless your life. Secret prayer, unveiled face, get honest, get real, get specific.

He says, when you pray, pray like this and you get specific. Our father, which art in heaven, get specific. If you do this, it'll change the lines of the world, the worry into the shine of the Lord.

You'll come out and you'll not even know your face is shining and you'll change the pressure of circumstance for the presence of Christ in your daily life. It'll be glorious and you won't even know that your face is shining. Bold, childlike honesty, total helplessness, uncomplicated commitment, the simplicity that is in Christ.

Doesn't it sound good to think you could just dump all the burdens and the agonizingness of it and just run and fall before the father and say, I don't know how to even say it. I don't know how to say scriptures, but what I just want to lay in your presence. Well, they that wait upon the Lord will renew their strength, return to the rest.

Oh, my soul, it says. So if you really want to put feet to your faith, get on your knees, get on your knees, get alone with God, get back to the closet, be simple and trust him. Prayer is the soul's sincere desire, uttered or unexpressed.

The motion of a hidden fire that trembles in the breast. Prayer is the burden of a sigh, a falling of a tear, the upward glancing of the eye when none but God is near. I'll tell you, God wants to change each of us by quality time in secret, in solitude, in the closet, sacrificially spending time in his presence, simple childlike faith.

And he'll reward you openly. He'll reward you openly. He'll reward you openly, but it takes an act of will and keen attention.

The question is, if you know these things, will you do them? Jesus said, if you did, you'd be happy, but will you do it? I hope you will. That's why we're here. Well, let's pray together.

Father, we know that you're longing to put it into our hearts to have quality time with you. There are other things in the way we must confess them as sin and distraction and worthless playthings of dust. And whatever stands between us in our closet, ultimately will end up fighting against us.

May we tonight be willing to sacrifice for the win that you expect of the closet. May we trust your word like a child and absolute trust, knowing that if we do come to you in secret in our closet, trusting you, you will do more than you've said to us. You always do.

And much more than we even dreamed of. Show us the keys to this closet tonight. And may people in this room be deeply encouraged in their spirit to act on these words.

May they carve out of a full schedule time with God permanently. And we know this will alter their way of life, but it will also open them up to you in a fresh new way. I pray tonight for real commitment in this next moment.

Father, tonight you see on the altar in the invisible, those gifts that have been sucking the life out of us. We're laying them down. We ask you tonight to put into our hearts your faithfulness, that we might seek you with our whole heart diligently.

With all of our heart consistently, insistent, persistently calling upon the name of the Lord and you showing us great and awesome things that we've never known until now. Lord, I pray your spirit will bear

witness with these words tonight and make them living truth in the soul and hearts of these people. And may there be permanent change because of an act of faith on a word received.

And we pray it in Jesus name. Amen.

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