

The Ingredients of Closet Prayer

by Al Whittinghill

The sermon emphasizes the importance of knowing God intimately and having a right relationship with Him through prayer and consecration.

Duration: 1:03:16

Scripture: Isaiah 45:11, Matthew 6:33, Luke 18:1, Ephesians 5:20, Colossians 4:2, 1 Thessalonians 5:17, 1 Timothy 2:8

Topics: "Private Prayer"

Description

The video is a sermon on the importance of prayer in the Christian life. The speaker emphasizes that prayer is essential and nothing else can take its place. They quote various scriptures that highlight the significance of prayer, such as praying without ceasing and giving thanks in everything. The speaker also mentions the power of prayer and how it aligns with God's will and purposes. They encourage the audience to actively engage in prayer and to have faith in God's ability to answer their prayers.

Transcript

Well, we've been hearing some wonderful things. I just want to say that that deep inner stirring that we're feeling, and I say we, is a very thrilling thing because God is giving us a hunger and a thirst for righteousness that He intends to fill, but God gives a burden and we must give the discharge. God gives conviction and we've got to give the response.

God moves on us and we need to say, be it unto us according to your word. We must act on the word that we hear, and I pray that this morning you will purpose, by the grace of God, to act on all that He's saying to you. I wonder if you'd dare to receive these truths we've been hearing in your heart and say, Lord, let it be unto me according to your word.

The theme of our conference is in everything by prayer. In everything by prayer. The Bible also says to pray without ceasing.

It says watch in prayer and continue in the same with thanksgiving. In everything, give thanks. Men ought always to pray and not to faint.

I will therefore, says the apostle, that men pray everywhere so that they may know the scriptures are full of superlatives about prayer in everything for all things, and there's nothing else that will take the place of prayer in the Christian life except for prayer. Nothing. Absolutely nothing will fill that place in your heart

and life that God intends to occupy.

Dwight Moody said once behind every work of God, there's prayer. You can trace it to prayer. John Wesley said that God has chosen in his sovereignty to limit his workings on earth to our prayers.

God rests his predetermined will and purpose on the faithful heart cries of the church according to his will and through his name. And we must be faithful to pray. He says, whatsoever you ask anything you ask, you can demand as you're due.

You tell me what to do. Isaiah, he even says, Thus saith the Lord concerning the works of my hands, command ye me. He is longing for us to not tell him to do what he doesn't want to do, but in faith notify him that we have come by grace to see his heart and say, do it.

He's waiting for the church to agree with him, to work together with him in prayer. And there is absolutely nothing outside the reach of prayer except for what's outside the will of God. God says everything in his plans and purposes are well within our reach of prayer.

Now, before we go to our text this morning, I just want to say the key to everything in my life and yours as a Christian is knowing God, knowing him intimately. And this means not just academically or being able to process the truths of God and repeat them, but knowing him and his feeling, his character and his person and and the intimacy that comes when you spend time with him. Intimacy takes time and without intimacy, excuse me, without time, you'll never develop intimacy in a marriage when time disappears together, intimacy grows distant and the wife and you begin to feel perhaps awkward at certain times of trying to communicate.

You don't know where you're coming from. We need a cultivated consecration with the Lord. And so the law of all fruit bearing across the street and around the world is an intimate love relationship with Christ intimacy with him.

Now, I want to go to Matthew chapter six for our text and deal with what we've been talking about this morning. I believe the Lord has put these messages together. There was not any serious effort at all to coordinate these messages.

We always trust the Lord to put them together. And I did not know that Ian was going to speak on how to have a quiet time this morning. I knew he wanted to this weekend, but I didn't know the timing of it.

And I'm delighted that Gary shared about God recovering in him his closet time. He had devotions in an inconsistent way. He had read many books, but God, a year ago, recovered his time in the closet.

And that's a wonderful thing. Now in the sermon on the Mount, Matthew five, six and seven, we find a bottomless well in chapter five. You contrast verse 16 when it says, let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your father in heaven.

Contrast that verse 16 before men, the public testimony and witness of a Christian. That's what chapter five is about. It deals with relationships and attitudes that are experienced in public and out contrast that verse 16, your light shine before men so that they can see with chapter six, verse one, take heed that you do not your arms before men so that they can see.

See, there's two aspects here. One is a testimony. That's the fruit of a holy life in public.

And the other in chapter six is the root of a holy life in public. And if the root dies, the fruit will cease. Eventually, there's no question about it.

In chapter five, you see public display, whereas in chapter six, you see private devotion. And I believe that's a wonderful order right in the middle of these chapters, chapters five and seven. God puts the spinal cord of it all, and it's the private life with God.

Public is in chapter five and public is in chapter seven, but right in the middle, running right down through the middle of our lives must be private, intimate and alone with God. Now, Robert Murray McChain, you've heard him referred to as being affected by Andrew Murray. He also died at the age of twenty nine, excuse me, by David Brainerd.

He also died at the age of twenty nine and affected many, many people. But he said this. He said what a man is on his knees before God.

That's what he is and nothing more. That's what I am. That's what you are.

When I come before God, that's who I am. Now, in Matthew chapter six, we go to our message for this last session this morning, the ingredients of closet prayer, the ingredients of closet prayer, the ingredients must be of God or the cake won't rise. You can throw in man's ingredients.

You know, God's cakes are different than ours. In men's cakes, you got to have leaven or they won't rise in God's cake. She got to leave the leaven out or it'll stay on the ground.

It's got to be without leaven, sincere and pure and right. Be wearing of leaven and all hypocrisy in the life and chapter six deals with leaven and hypocrisy and is saying what you are in private. That's what you really are.

Now, let me then, before we read this together, part of these verses say real prayer is personal. It's a family time father and children together and to truly pray as father. God intends for us to pray.

You must be born into his family. You must be born by the spirit of God into his royal bloodline through the blood of Christ, cleansed by his blood bodies washed in pure water. That's what it says over in Hebrews chapter 10.

Just listen to this as it talks about the way into the throne room of God, the throne of grace, before which were to come boldly. It says in Hebrews 10, 19, having therefore brothers boldness to enter into the most holy. That means the throne room of God, by the blood of Jesus Christ, by a new and living way which he has consecrated for us through the veil, that that barrier that's temporary in the Old Testament in the Holy of Holies through the veil.

That is to say his own flesh. We have a high priest over the house of God. Let us draw near then with a true sincere heart in a full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, meaning with blood and our bodies washed with pure water.

Hold fast the profession of our faith. Prayer is personal, and so a right relationship with God is the strength of prayer. It is the foundation of all growth in prayer.

Of course, in prayer you'll find a more right relationship with God. It's an amazing cycle, indeed, that keeps growing. We have an open door policy with our Lord to the throne room of God.

He says, Come anytime you welcome. Come boldly to the throne of grace. You can find grace and obtain help and anything you need in a time when you need it, which is all the time as you pray without ceasing income.

Your father longs to spend quality time with you. He longs to. He yearns to.

He wants to spend time. There's no reluctance on his part this morning. If there's any problems in prayer, it's all on my part.

It's all on my part, and it can be resolved because it's the will of God. And so you can see these things through. He yearns for intimacy with you, and I urge you to let that birth hope in you to let that birth a new beginning in you to say, Lord, from this day on, my life will be different.

The angels are amazed that we can come before God with such an open door policy. They look and they must marvel that we're welcomed into the throne room of God. The only thing that amazes them more than we can come all the time is surely the fact that we don't do it.

They see us trying to put the square peg of our life into a round hole of God's will, and it won't work until he knocks off the rough edges in prayer. He's got to work in our lives. God longs for us to take the privilege of prayer, and one day we're going to marvel at our neglect of this great, great privilege and responsibility.

Our theme verse says, be anxious for nothing or be careful for nothing, but it really carries with it. This don't be distracted by anything. Don't be distracted, but but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God.

I'm thinking of those verses before we read Matthew six. I will get there in Isaiah fifty nine when it says God is looking in a day of apostasy. He's looking out through that nation and he says he looked and he saw that there was no man.

Isaiah fifty nine sixteen. He wondered that there was no intercessor. The word wonder means to be astonished.

God looked and he was astonished that in the light of the times there was no one to stand in the gap in the book of Ezekiel chapter twenty two verse thirty. God says, I sought for a man among them, someone to stand in that gap, that breach between the visible and the invisible. I was looking for a man to take up the hedge to to fill in the gaps between God's will and man's rebellion and to be an intercessor.

But I found none. One is a search and the other is a sob. God says, I found none.

He's surprised in another place in Isaiah. It says in sixty three five of Isaiah, God says I looked and there was no one to help. I wondered that there was none to uphold the word wonder means to be astonished.

God actually is astonished in case you think that's an Old Testament phenomenon in the Gospel of Mark, chapter six, verse six. It says Jesus marveled at their unbelief. He was amazed.

Now that's amazing when you think of God being amazed, he marveled. It really means to be astonished with amazement. He was amazed at how slow we could be.

Now, I don't know the depth of that, but I think it's amazing that God could ever be amazed at my unbelief. That's amazing. And brother, he's amazed at your reluctance and my reluctance to pray.

And all of that, all of that was before the cross that I just quoted you. And all of that was before the Bible. All of that was before Pentecost and the church history of blessing and revival.

He was amazed. What would he be now? He's astonished. Then he says in Jeremiah chapter two, verse thirty two, he says, my people have forgotten me days without number days without number.

He says Isaiah sixty four verse seven. There is none who calls upon thy name, who stirs up himself to take hold of God. It literally means there is no one who is stirring up his inner man to seize hold of Jehovah.

In the New Testament, it says the same thing. There is none who seeks after God. No, not one.

Romans three. You see, that means as God wants to be sought after, the best saint who has ever lived, that has the most amazing prayer journey you've ever read, has missed it as he could have had it. Even that is yet imperfect.

God has more. There's always more. So God is looking for men here to stand in the gap.

Now, in our text in Matthew six, there are several things in this text. Three times in this chapter we see that God promises a secret life, open reward, a life in private. He says, I will reward you.

He talks about the three ingredients of a real devotional life. We only deal with prayer, but he talks about when you give and when you pray and when you fast, not if, but when he says, when you pray, when you give and when you fast five times in this chapter, he says this phrase not to be seen of men, not to be seen of men. You see, it's the life.

It's the same in private as, as it is in public. So I want to give you reading in verse, we'll begin in verse five and we'll read down through verse eight and part of verse nine, the ingredients of closeted prayer, verse five. And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites are.

They love to pray, taking the off of standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets so that they can be seen of men. Verily, I am saying 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, which is in secret and your father, which seeth in secret shall reward you openly.

But when you pray, do not use vain repetitions or empty words repeated over and over like the nations or heathen do. They think they will be heard for their much speaking, but do not ye therefore be likened to them. Someone once said they felt that the key verse in the sermon on the Mount might be that right there.

Don't you be like them. Don't be like them for your father knows what things you have need of before you ask him after this manner. Therefore pray you.

And then he gives us the disciples prayer. We call it the Lord's prayer, but the Lord's prayers in John 17. This is the disciples prayer that he gave to us to pray.

And it contains so much in here. The first ingredient of closet prayer to implement what you've heard Ian preach on and Gary testify about. And last night, a call to the first ingredient you'll find in verses five and six of this Matthew six.

And that is secrecy, secrecy. All of these begin with an S secrecy. Secret is the key word.

I think of this chapter and it's the beginning of closet prayer. The word secret here is crypto. Crypto.

If you've been in the army and studied codes or if you know about codes, it's crypto means hidden. If you study cryptographics, I think that's what they call it. It's deciphering that which is hidden.

And that's what this means. You see, Jesus did this and we read this morning in Luke chapter five, how that Jesus had secret places in the mountains. Luke five, verse 15.

Listen to this so much. The more there went a fame of Jesus and great multitudes came together to hear and that the goal, listen to be healed by him of their infirmities. And he withdrew himself to the wilderness and prayed.

And the word is plural wildernesses, which means he did it over and over when the crowds came and the ministry was pressing. Jesus withdrew himself to secret to the eye of father alone. And this kind of prayer, closet prayer dies when it's exposed to man's gaze.

Now, I want to say here we've had a long night and a long morning and I am certainly not saying this reacting to any of you because I felt the same way last session. Some I felt a tiredness creeping over me. If you are tired, then it won't bother me the least bit if you have to stand up right where you are instead of nodding off.

I mean, I mean, I'm not trying to be rude, but if you find yourself nodding and it's a terrible feeling. I remember once I was traveling with this man of God I admired for years and I was traveling with him to a seminary and he was preaching and all these men were looking at me. How did he get to travel with him? And I was on the front row and I've been up praying for these meetings right in the middle of his message.

I felt myself nodding off and I said, God help me, because, because I knew that was a bad testimony. And, uh, and I know how you might feel, but just stand to your feet or smack yourself on the cheek or ask the guy beside you to slap you or something. He might've been waiting for the opportunity.

Uh, nevertheless, uh, whatever. Or ask him to kiss you. That would keep you awake.

There that that's incentive. Keep awake. Secrecy, secrecy.

The word here in these verses says enter in to your closet. Taimion is the word for closet. Taimion.

And it's used only four times in the new Testament. This word for closet. It's used in several senses.

It's a private family only closet, kind of like some folks have a laundry room. They never let anybody in because that's what they're really like. And you never let anybody see that because it's just for the family.

Well, this is the word for Taimion, a private place where the real things that are a family go on in. It's it's like the roving room of the soul. Well, the word Taimion is also used for a honeymoon chamber where a bride takes his, uh, where the bridegroom takes his bride and has a honeymoon.

That's a Taimion. That's a closet. That's a special place for romance.

It's a place for reality and a place for romance. It's also used for storehouse where you keep the necessary things such as food or or family supplies. Or it's also using the sense of treasure vault, treasure vault where you keep your if you keep gold coins or something where you keep them back in the back and

nobody.

It's your treasure vault, your Taimion. And that's really the word Jesus used for the prayer closet. It's connected back with Isaiah when it says in the Old Testament, chapter 26, for the bride to enter into your chambers and hide yourself from the indignation until it's overpassed.

It's the place alone with God. It's like the ark. It's the secret place where you go and you're hidden with God, the hiding place.

You are my hiding place. It's secret, but the real sense of this word closet, it's a definite place like Ian spoke of. I love the way the Lord puts these things together.

It's a place that you have. That's a definite place that you've set aside what they used to call trusting place years ago. We got too busy to have one.

John Wesley's mother had 19 children. She was a wealthy woman. I understand it had some help in the home as well, but 13 children of them lived.

Nineteen six didn't make it, but but 13 did. And she had regular times with God. And you know what I've heard she would do? She would throw her apron over her head.

That was her secret place. And the children said, when you see mother with the apron over her head, don't mess with her because that's she's not to be bothered. I mean, they'd be all in trouble if you mess with mom when you took the apron off her head, a secret place.

Maybe she started in the frustration that it ended up in romance with the Lord. But it's a secret place. Your father, which is in secret, he will see in secret.

Now, this suggests this word secret to the Hebrew mind, the secret place of the most high, that inner room in the temple or the tabernacle that nobody ever saw, except it's where God was in the outer court was the public worship in the inner court. The holy place was for priestly worship and service, but in the holiest of all the secret place of the most high, where the throne of God was, where the mercy seat was that we're told to come boldly to by the blood in through the veil into the holiest. Only God was there.

He said, I will meet with you from the mercy seat from between the cherubim where the blood covers the law. I will meet with you there. That's the secret place.

And if you dwell in the secret place of the most high, you will abide under the shadow of the almighty. That's what the promise is. Now, secrecy is an important part of prayer.

Then absolutely. I remember that a couple of years ago, as I was just getting into my 40s pretty well, I began to have what people often have, not a crisis, but an evaluation. You begin to look back at how the last 20 years went so fast and you realize that in the next 20 years will be gone just like that.

And I remember some of the best times of my life have been when I've gone away and really gotten quiet. I remember in seminary when I went away to a place called Glen Rose, I took a jug of water and a loaf of bread and went away for three days seeking God about my marriage situation. I was a single man at the age of 29 and I was saying, Lord, do you want me to be single? What is it? You know, I still have a desire for a wife, but I'll live with that.

But show me. And and I wanted the ministry the Lord had for me. And I wanted to move where he said move if it's overseas or here, whatever.

And I went away and it was really hard for me to to be alone with God after about a day and just fasting because I wanted to hear a human voice. I wanted to. But I went away to the secret place and God gave me the outline of really what I'm still experiencing.

I mean, I wrote it all down, just like you heard David talk about. I wrote it down about. He said, get ready for a move and a mate in the ministry, not necessarily in that order.

You say he's pretty specific. Yes, God wants to be specific. And and I've looked back at that.

And it's helped me for years. So naturally, a few years ago when I was turning at this point, I said, I think I'll get alone with God. And so I didn't take any food.

I went out to that place out in Lithuania called the monastery. I would recommend their theology. I love the people out there, but it's a great place to get along with God.

And I'll tell you, as I was there, I had great anticipation of God speaking to me. I took a lot of all those things that you saw in listed devotional books and folders and all the things that I was expecting God to speak and give me an outline again, like he did of how to have the next 20 years for him. And I remember I just great expectation, like some of you have this last night was in my heart, and it's almost as if like God was just saying, here it comes, here it comes.

I've been waiting almost a day and nothing had happened and I couldn't figure out I wasn't hearing anything. And it was like I was just great and almost like a stenographer waiting for the Lord. I was just it was almost ridiculous.

And it's like the Lord said, you want to know how to see your life blessed and changed more than anything else for the next 20 years. Here it is. Are you ready? I was ready to write like crazy.

I heard him say five words. Get back to the closet. Get back to the closet.

Yes, go on. That's it. What? That's it.

I came all the way out here. Yes, that's it. You had to get quiet long enough.

Get back to the closet. You see, secret prayer is the first kind to go when things get busy. Now, unless some of you are feeling pretty good about your devotions, I want to say this kind of prayer I'm not talking about when you get up for 10 minutes or 15 minutes.

And in the day, sometimes you pick up my utmost for his highest or still higher for his highest or highest of all for his highest. You can pick up all the books you want, but this and have some sentimental thoughts about God and get blessed. You know what I'm talking about, how how we feel like we get up and say, Lord, I'm going to read and we and we read a few chapters and have some sentimental thoughts toward God and he blesses us.

That's good. I'm not saying that you shouldn't have that, but that's not this kind of prayer. I'm talking about secret prayer that's unhurried and unflurry.

Maybe people would say being in the closet seems like such a waste of time, though, with all there is to do. You ever said that I've said that. And you know what? That's the exact reason we're so unproductive because we said that it seems like such a waste of time.

I'm I'm more practical than that. We're impotent because our closet seems to us a place of contraction. I have to do it instead of a place of expansion.

Lord's opening up the whole thing to me. We're too busy for the best. And we've left ourselves just going along, counting our blessings and gleefully counting additions to the church instead of entering into Canaan's promises of prayer, multiplying and multiplying and multiplying.

Oswald Chambers again said the central thing in the kingdom of Christ is a personal relationship to Christ himself, not public usefulness to man. It's a relationship to God. The secret of Christianity is Christ in secret intimacy.

I fear, holy brothers in Corinth, says Paul, that by some trickery, some spellcasting that the devil would corrupt your pure minds like he did Eve away from that simplicity that's in Christ. I've married you to Christ. I want to present you as a pure virgin, but you are busy with all that surrounds you and you're not living in that holy watch.

Watch and pray, says Jesus, so you don't enter into temptation so that you can have the reality focused and burned into your retina of mine. You see, the power of your public life flows out of the fountain of your private life. A stream will never rise above its source, and the source of our praying without ceasing is a time alone with God and secret time alone with God and secret pragmatism and a lust for results and nickels and noses has bred endless energy and activity that's never birthed in the New Testament in the church in our day.

God wants us to wait upon the Lord and seek his counsel. I'll tell you, it's easy to bury your spirituality in the grave of your activities. You can bury it.

The reason that men fail in public and disappoint the church. They fall in public because they failed in private. You can search and you'll find they left their closet and they started thinking it was academics and theology and all.

It's not theology that gives power. It's neology, neology. That's what will give the power to everything we know.

I'm not minimizing theology. After you heard me preach, you may think I don't think it's very important, but I think it's important. God has a secret service and little hidden ones praying.

Hyde was a if you can get a book by about him, get it. They after he died, they examined him and his but his heart had moved over from from the agony and the distress of pressure in his prayer closet beside his bed on the hardwood floor. They found grooves that were there in the hardwood floor where he would pray.

And as he would pray, he would be praying like this in his knees and just going like that, had worn slots in the hardwood floor beside his bed. The Apostle James, it is said that he would go. The first pastor of the Church of Jerusalem, the James, he he would go in and he would spend hours on his knees before God alone.

And when he died, church history says his knees resembled that of a camel. Camel knees. Oh, camel knees.

What a great name it would be. Let me ask you, do you know this kind of heroic secret prayer, secret prayer? That's the first thing it must be secret. If you want to have a closet life, that's the first word secrecy.

Second word, solitude, solitude, solitude is in verse six. Again, it says, but you when you pray, enter your closet and when you have shut your door, pray to your father and your father should reward you eight times in one verse. The Lord Jesus uses the singular pronoun for you.

You think he's trying to get something across you individually, singularly by yourself? He says, shut the door. You shut out the door. You lift up your heart.

You lift up your eyes. You open your Bible alone with God's solitude. Love always seeks solitude.

You know, love is conspiratorial. I heard someone say once it's always conspiring to get alone with its object, love, love always wants to be alone. Somebody says, well, I'm so busy, all of my prayer has to be done on the run and we justify that I pray in my car.

That's my time alone with God. Well, if you call that solitude on 285, you're crazy. But but that's not what it was talking about in the book of Mark.

It talks about how the Lord Jesus did it. Mark chapter one, verse thirty five. Listen to this.

It says in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out and departed into a solitary place and there he prayed. He went there because it was secluded and alone. You shut the world out.

You shut yourself in. You see, in the holiest fall, in the secret place, nobody ever went in there except for the high priest once a year. And he went alone.

If more than one went in, they'd all be dead. It had to be alone. And that's the picture here that we are talking about.

Jesus is saying, I want this to be alone. Time exposure of the soul. All of God's great men have had it.

John the Baptist grew up in the wilderness. Moses spent 40 years in the wilderness. David was a shepherd in the wilderness.

Saul said, what do you want me to do, Lord? He says, get alone in the wilderness for three years. He was alone in the wilderness. Joseph went to the prison in solitary confinement.

Elijah spent time years by the brook Cherith and alone with God. God's men have to be alone with him in solitary confinement with God. I remember asking Dr. Stephen Oldford if this is true, because I'd heard it for so long when when Dr. Oldford was younger.

He's 73 now, but when he was younger, he asked old Vance Havner. He's got some books up there. You should buy them.

They're great books. Anything he writes by Dr. Havner was a dear friend of mine in Greensboro. And after his wife died, I remember whatever he said, you should listen to it.

Dr. Oldford went to him and he said, he said, Dr. Havner, can you tell me the secret for a young man like me younger than you? What's the secret of having a life with God? And old Vance looked at him and said, solitude, young man, solitude, solitude. That's it. That's the second ingredient.

Be still and know that I am God. Your prayer closet will either be the best place for you on Earth or the worst place on Earth. You see, God is known best in silence and he discloses himself.

But you know something about being alone with God? Fear stalks the human heart. In the solitude alone, you know why we don't like quiet. I mean, even Christians, they get in their car and they put in.

I mean, all the Christian knowing music. And I mean, I love music. I love it.

Don't get me, Vince. Don't don't take it. I'm I'm saying I listen to Vince and all these, but I tell you what, how many times do you really have where there's absolutely no noise? None.

We can't stand it because, you know why? Silence makes us face reality. That's really true. Men cover reality with noise.

Hearts shrink from being alone with God. Reality is revealed in secret. The Bible says who can dwell with the everlasting burnings? Who can ascend into the hill of the Lord? He who has clean hands and a pure heart that has not lifted up his soul to vanity or sworn deceitfully with his lips.

This one can do it. And only him. You can't get along with God if you're not willing to be searched, if you're not willing to be searched and shown and have your heart and hand and eyes and ears examined by God and and you can't fellowship with him.

Daniel was so blameless that his enemies could find nothing against him except for his prayer life. That's a great thing. It's the test of solitude.

You see, this is why hypocrites seldom pray alone. This is why prayers that are pretense require an audience. Oh, thou God of Rehoboam, Jeroboam and Jehoshaphat.

Oh, thou who hung the heavens upon nothing. Oh, lead God and direct us. I mean, I'm telling you, we have such stock prayers.

Oh, Lord, I want you to bless your gift and your giver and lead God and rectify the best of sick and afflicted and be with those who can't be here today. And we want to forgive our many, many sins, many, many sins. I'm telling you, we can really belt it out.

But we we need to get alone with God and let him put on the coat of real prayer, real prayer. Everything vital to godliness is nourished on closet air. It feeds on the closet atmosphere where we're alone with God.

When he says, hide thyself, that's what he said to Elijah in chapter 17 of first Kings. He says, hide thyself in chapter 18. He says, show yourself.

But God always says, hide thyself. And after you've hidden yourself and been alone with God, it'll be harder to show yourself than it was before you hid yourself because you realize there ain't no self to show. And if self is showing you're in trouble, it needs to be the Lord Jesus Christ that showing when we're alone with God, we learn the art of thinking of God alone.

That means a single eye that the scriptures talk about. This is an exercise, as we heard. It's an exercise in keen attention, not just passive dog waiting there saying, what is God saying? It's a keen attention.

You see, attention is an act of will. Concentration is sustained attention. And I get along with God and I concentrate and I consecrate and I focus in on him.

And as I do and as you do, it becomes what the scriptures say, waiting upon God. Thought becomes personal with God. Motives are challenged.

Personality is disciplined. Pretense is stripped away. Discipline is established.

Hypocrites are revealed and pride is exposed and actions are weighed. And God shows us that we can be his channel and riverbed for light and truth. And so we come to meditate in his word and behold the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his holy throne room of him.

And we consecrate to him and contemplate his character. You see, this kind of prayer is more observatory than oratory. It's watching, it's listening, it's more listening than listing one, two, three, one, two, three.

It's just waiting, as David said, upon God, just getting in his presence. And you know what? This kind of prayer will either keep you from sin or sin will keep you from this kind of prayer. And you'll settle for just reading a little snatches of this and that and having sentimental thoughts about Jesus.

Just a little talk with Jesus made it right. Or, you know, that's not exactly true. It may be initially when you don't know anything, but you need time alone with the Lord Jesus Christ alone in silence.

Heaven will seem nearer. Christ will seem dearer and his will become clearer as you get alone with God. And there'll be a sense of divine all that sends you out of your closet and you will be in the fear of the Lord all the day.

The fear of the Lord is to hate evil and to be astonished at his majesty and his his presence, silent surrender. He will give to us speech that which you hear in your ear in what the closet go out and shout on the roof, go out and shout it upon the rooftop. And so the first then is secrecy.

The second is solitude. And you say, oh, Al, some of you aren't standing up. You're getting sleepy.

I can see you nodding off. Hit the guy beside you. Don't let him sleep because it's not that kind of solitude I'm talking about, brother.

Secrecy, solitude. That's hard for me, Al. With my schedule, that's the third word.

Sacrifice, sacrifice. And that's back in the gospel of Matthew, chapter six. You read in verse six, it says, and in verse seven, it says, when you pray, not if four times in three verses, he says, when you pray, you see, if you go back to your house and your same environment, your same job, your same schedule, your life will not change unless you change your time.

You're going to have to make time. You'll never find time. You're going to have to prioritize the revelation God saying, I want time with you and you're going to have to get out your hatchet and for something good to come.

Something else has got to go and it may be something good. Don't let any man in this room say he doesn't have time for this kind of prayer who still has time for leisure activity or sports. Just don't say it.

Just say it's not as important to me as the things I recreate with. I need recreation physically instead of spiritually recreation. I must make time.

This means sacrifice. I've got to quit giving God leftovers. First Peter, chapter two, verse five says that we are a priesthood.

We are to offer up to God spiritual sacrifices by Jesus Christ. The picture is that of that Old Testament tabernacle and temple. We are born into the high priest family, like Aaron's family in the Old Testament, and we have been washed and sprinkled with blood and the oil of God is on our ear and on our thumb and on our feet, which show hearing and doing and walking.

And we are clothed in pure linen, clean and white, and we go out before the people to meet their needs and in before God to hear his will. And we are supposed to offer up spiritual sacrifices. There's two altars in the temple.

If you've ever studied the tabernacle, you'll know this. If you haven't, then you need to, because it'll open the Bible to you in the outer court, in the public arena. There's a sacrificial altar made of brass where blood is shed.

Sacrifice is for me in public. It's the lamb. And that's what Jesus did on Calvary.

That's the altar. He died on Calvary's altar before the eyes of history. For me, that's the first altar in God's temple.

But the second altar is inside and only priest can go there. You can't go in there. If you're just out in the outer court, you have to be born into the right family and cleanse and be washed of your spots.

If you try to go into this place without without being cleansed, God says you'll die. You can't do it. You come into another altar, not made of brass, which is a picture of judgment, but of gold.

And as you're there at that golden altar, it's the golden altar of incense, which is prayer. Let my prayers come before you as incense. It's the altar of prayer.

And at that altar of prayer, it's called the altar of prayer. Alter means sacrifice. And let me ask you, what's it costing you to have time with God? You see, in the outer court, he dies for me.

He pays the price in the inner court. The priest pays the price. He pays the price and he offers up spiritual sacrifices.

Gather my saints together unto me, those who made a covenant with me by sacrifice. Psalm 50 sacrifice. You see, whatever is done without your heart.

Is done in darkness. Did you know that? It's got to have heart in it. It's got to have purpose and you in it.

Otherwise, it's the gropings of a blind man trying to feel his way through service. We must offer sacrifices in prayer. God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him, not casually inquire after him.

So we've got to give ourselves rather even cost sacrifice. Did you know that if you gave one hour a day for three hundred and sixty five days to God, did you know that's the equivalent? You put it together of forty five full working days. Forty five full working days, one hour a day in prayer to God.

Canada, Brian, you scratched your eyebrows, you counted up. It's true. Get this one.

This is really scrunched your eyebrows, scrunched your whole forehead to two hours a day, two hours a day given to God over the next forty years. If you have it. It's like adding ten solid years to a man's life, ten solid years of productivity, two hours a day we tithe.

I hope we tithe our funds. But do you tithe your time? It says bring your tithes into the storehouse, not just tithe. It's the it gets us.

It's the it's not just money. It's you. So a man who spends time communing with God will see and feel the sorrows of the world in a new way.

And God will punctuate your silence and your secrecy and your with with the feeling heart of God, secrecy, solitude, sacrifice. Now that that sounds so so heavy. So a man who spends time communing with God will see and feel the sorrows of the world in a new way.

And God will punctuate your silence and your secrecy and your with with the feeling heart of God, secrecy, solitude, sacrifice. Now that that sounds so so heavy. I just don't know.

Secrecy, solitude, it sounds awesome and deep. But you've got to see the whole thing in perspective. That's why the fourth words there and the fourth word is simplicity.

Simplicity sounds deep, the secrecy and solitude, mighty, great, deep things. But it's simple. Matthew chapter six, verse seven, it says, when you pray, don't use vain repetitions or empty words as the nations do.

They think that much speaking will impress God. Don't be like them. Here's your father knows already the things you need before you ask him.

It's gloriously uncomplicated. It's a child to father. It's a sincere faith.

Don't just come with man's memorized prayers. Come before God and wait until he gives you what he wants you to pray about. You get along with God this afternoon, go out beneath the tree and get on your face.

I mean, close everybody out. If you can find a place, get out there and say, God, do you have anything to say to me? Do you have anything that you want to say to me based on what I've heard? Lord, I'm listening. And when he shows you a door that he wants to talk about and go through, you pray that way and you watch, you watch and take you by the hand and simple, simple power and take you through what he wants you to pray about.

Pour your heart out. I often say in church meetings when we start to pray and people often they pray the same thing. This person prayed with the almost exact same word.

Nine people do it. You haven't gotten anywhere. I say agree with that man and then pray your own heart words and pour your heart out before God listens to the language of the heart.

Not the lips. I remember when little Elizabeth first started to pray and she couldn't really string scripture verses together. She's one of my daughters.

We'd always get on the floor and praying and she could just barely say some things, but she knew enough to really pray. But it wasn't even major, major repetitions or phrases. And I remember we'd get on the floor and pray and I would pray for something like, say, a missionary need.

And she wouldn't know how to really agree with me, but she'd pray that same thing very simply. She might say something like Mommy, feel better or something like that or or Daddy, good job or something like that. It was just so precious.

And and she was really thinking, you know, how little kids are when they think they just they're too. And she'd go, Mommy, feel better. You know, she would smack her lips thinking so hard, you know, it's kind of a little mannerism that she had.

She'd say, bless the gospel. And you know what? I was just almost dying laughing because it would get to be a little pattern. And but I saw God answering her prayers in an awesome way.

Awesome. And I said, man, wow, look at what God is doing for that little girl's prayer. So I got along with God and I said, Father God, I mean, I don't know why you think it's so funny.

I mean, most of us have to work through the fact that we think that moving our lips makes prayer work. It doesn't make prayer work. I mean, you can go or you can say blah, blah, blah.

But that's not what God listens to. He listens to the language of the heart. And sometimes you feel like you can't even talk and you come before God and all you can do.

It's just fall down before him like you heard about Ian's wife, Dorothy, she can't even pray Jesus. I remember, you know, just falling before him. It's like one of the words for weight.

There's 18 Hebrew words for weight in the Old Testament. Now it's about waiting before God. One of them means to come before with an inward whale.

The other ones mean all kinds of things like to come and draw near and unite with in essence and substance. Another means like to know and all kind. But that one that really grips me is in astonished silence.

Another is an inward grief and whale. God says do that when you can't even do anything else. You come and you fall down and say, God, I don't want to be here today.

I'm angry at you. I'm mad because this happened. But oh God, I know in the heart of hearts that it's wrong to feel this way and change my heart.

Lord, I'm helpless to even pray right. Deal with me, oh God. You see, your father knows.

Your father knows. And when you come before him, a sob can be eloquent, liquid prayer, liquid prayer. God keeps our tears in his bottle, it says in Psalm 56.

He keeps them there. You know that prayer is the greatest power in history. God is going to reveal it one day.

It's greater than armies. It's amazing. Did you know that in Revelation chapter five, it says when the lamb comes and they're worshipping him and praising him, there are people beings there around the throne that have vials and they're full of incenses, it says.

And you know what it says? They are prayers of the saints. They're stored up and I can just see those saints who prayed him over the years. God didn't answer my prayer.

No, he kept it in his bottle. He kept it up when you pray for thy kingdom to come and your will to be done. He's saving it.

And if you read with awe in the book of Revelation, you will see right after that, that a figure comes to the golden altar, it says. And if you know the language of prayer in the Old Testament, the altar prayer, that's the place of prayer. It's the one that Moses was told, make it like the original, make the one on earth like the throne room in heaven.

Jesus Christ comes to the golden altar of prayer where he's ever interceding before the throne of his father. And there it says he takes coals. You know what those coals are? If you know the tabernacle, you will.

It's those you take a little thing about the size of a human heart called a sensor. And you go out to the altar outside where the fire from above was fire that judged Jesus Christ, the lamb of God, public sacrifice. And you take that into the private solitude, secret place of prayer and their incense.

You'd put on that fire. It would come up like his name is like an ointment poured forth and the passion and the fire from above would give that. And, you know, as that happened, God would hear God would hear.

And so, you know, that in the book revelation, when he comes there, he takes that sensor of passion and he throws it out on the earth and the vials are poured out. Vials are poured out. It's all the prayers of all the church of all the ages and the fire of God's wrath.

He's judging the earth in a day to come by prayer. So there's nothing wasted. Time with God is never wasted.

It's our most productive time. It's simple. Come.

And he already knows those who sow in tears will reap in joy. They'll reap in joy a sigh. It talks about a groaning that cannot be uttered in Romans eight.

You come before God and all you can do is just wail. You know, some of history's best prayers have come from wits in corner. The old saint said, when you get to the end of your rope, you find all you have to do is pull it and it'll ring the bell in heaven.

You pull the rope and it'll ring the bell in heaven. And God will say, come to the aid. Silence can say everything to God, the father, and when my children get quiet, they can come and ask me for things that I know they need.

And I, you know, I can maybe not even listen, but when they come and when my daughter came into my study and sat there and began to look at her feet in the chair because she was hurting, I start listening. You know, I start probing and silence can say it all to a loving heavenly father. Our prayers are like incense that connect the visible and the invisible.

On the other side of the veil, our prayers unite heaven and earth, secret prayers, solitude prayers and sacrificial prayers that cost and that are heroic and simple prayers. As a child, it's a wonderful thing. You know, God sees the prayer of a little widow, like an incense in the closet, a little wisp of white purity coming up and he goes.

And I see looking at Atlanta, what's coming up before God? You know, you see the contrast, like a big field of tires that are burning and it's black belching, smoke filling the heavens and like in Kuwait, blackness across the sky from belching oil fields. And that's what the world is offering up to him. Just belching promises, wives and husbands screaming and and people cursing and the nightclubs and all the noise.

That God hears and we have the privilege of offering up incense, a sweet aroma and a fragrance to him. He wants you to pour your heart out. You don't have to give God advice.

You don't have to come before him and give a speech to him. All you have to do is come and pour your heart out. You have two ears and one mouth, and that means twice as much listening as speaking.

He wants you to pour your heart out. And you know what? He doesn't care if you know how to string all the scriptures together and everything. He just cares about you being his child.

If my son Ben was out in the woods with me and old rattlesnake reared his head up and he was just over there and he says, Dad, a snake, a snake. I said, son, you didn't use the word reptile like I told you to rephrase that. You know, you didn't use the right words, rephrase that.

And then I'll maybe think about helping you or son. Do you really believe that your dad loves you and he'll come and help you when you ask him? No, I tell you, my son is asking me. He's my son.

He's my responsibility. I'm a sub creator. God let me birth him into this world.

And I whether he's good or bad, whatever, he's in the family and I'm responsible for him. And that snake's after my son. And that snake is dead meat.

And I tell you what, when you come before your heavenly father, you may not be able to put a polished phrase or say it just right. But when you just think to come. It's mighty, it's mighty, it's mighty with him simply just come, just come last word.

Secrecy, solitude, sacrifice, simplicity. But yet the last word is specifically, specifically in verse nine, it says, after this manner, pray ye. And then he gives the Lord's prayer or the disciples prayer.

He talks about his will being done. He talks about his word. He talks about his way.

Specific prayer gets specific answers. When was the last time, brother, that you ask God for something specific that couldn't have happened any other way except God do it? And he did it specific prayer. What do you believe in God for today that takes a miracle to answer? What are you claiming of his promises that apart from him, all is lost? You see, all of it is based upon his character, specific prayer.

Up to now, he's talked about how to pray. Now he says what to pray, pray like this, you know, keep that prayer list, keep the prayer list, and then you can go back and you will be amazed at what you prayed about and forgot that you can go back and say, God, you did this. You did this and faith will grow.

Keep a prayer list. You see, Jacob's ladder rests right down in the place of prayer. Nathaniel, when you were under the fig leaf, that's the prayer closet.

I saw you. That's the prayer place. And that's why he says, my Lord and my God, because you see, he he saw him in the place of prayer.

Jesus saw him and he knew he was God. Joy comes when you know that God's answering your prayers. These things have I spoken unto you that your joy may be full, Jesus says after he talked about asking anything in his name.

Concentration will shift if you make a specific prayer from the worry of the world to the worship of the Lord and your your days will be spent in praise instead of worry. An unveiled face of Jesus in secret will change you as you make your prayer specific. You know, if the devil had his way and he had ten atomic bombs and he could use them on any place he'd ever like to, do you know where I think he'd drop him? It wouldn't be big.

The biggest churches, it wouldn't be something so outward. I think he'd use his ten bombs on the ten most effective prayer closets on Earth today, wherever they are. He certainly would know the devil has some men he fears in Acts 19 when the demons are coming out.

Jesus, we know and Paul, we know. But who are you? Paul, we know. You know why they knew Paul? Because back in Acts 9, this is 19, 10 chapters before, after he'd been praying all his life, Pharisee kind of prayers after he got knocked off his high horse and God burned eternity in his eyes, he went to a street called Straight and spent time alone with God.

And God said to Ananias, it says, go to a street called Straight, you'll find Paul there. Again, a term of astonishment. Behold, he's praying.

Well, he'd been praying all his life, but suddenly now he's really praying. He's really praying. And from that day on, he never lived a day without real prayer.

Behold, he is praying. Let me ask you, do you have a private life with God? Do you have a private life with God? Can I ask you, how is it with you and the heavenly father? Have you prayed more than just the shell kind of prayers? Have you really unburdened your heart and gotten dead set real with him and been honest? Have you been too busy for the best? Are you really? I am bankrupt and I'm tired of giving excuses. Lord, teach me to pray.

Give me closet time with you. You know what? That's one of the quickest prayers he'll ever answer. He'll do it if you'll act on what you're praying and you'll cooperate.

I confess prayerlessness as sin. Lord, I'm no longer going to rob you of time and prayer. Are you willing to get real and get honest and get alone and get specific? Because if you are, your wife will thank you.

Your children will thank you. And you can become a catalyst for prayer in this desperate day.

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