

# Prayer in the Secret Place

by Gerhard Du Toit

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*Gerhard Du Toit emphasizes the transformative power of prayer, particularly in the secret place, as essential for personal revival and intercession.*

**Duration:** 32:33

**Scripture:** Matthew 5:3-12, Matthew 6:5, Matthew 6:9-15, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 7:7-8, Matthew 7:24-27

**Topics:** "Prayer Life"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a personal experience of encountering a group of black men in Africa who invited him to pray on a mountain. This experience led to a powerful spiritual awakening in his church, where people were deeply moved by God's presence. The speaker emphasizes the importance of genuine prayer and seeking God's face, rather than simply giving Him information. He also highlights the responsibility believers have to possess a deep relationship with God in order to effectively minister to others.

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## Transcript

It's a real privilege to share in these mornings with you as we, some of these mornings, I'm not sure I can look at this wonderful subject of prayer in the time that we have available. And I want to say to you at the outset, you know, when it comes to times like these, these are very precious times to me. I personally would rather just let us spend the time in prayer.

But I often say to myself, if preaching could bring revival, the world would have been saved. And we hear so much preaching these days in so many different ways, and yet sometimes it seems to me that it's doing so little to us as God's people. But if you've got your Bible with you, turn with me, if you will, to that very well-known passage in Matthew chapter 6. Matthew chapter 6, and just for the sake of time, let's break into that chapter and read from verse number 5. Matthew chapter 6, verse number 5. The Lord Jesus said, And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are, for they love to pray, standing in the synagogues and the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men.

Verily I say unto you that they have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou shalt thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward the opening. But when ye pray, ye start vain repetitions as the heathen do, for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

Be not ye therefore like unto them, for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask Him. After this manner therefore pray, Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen. Let's just bow for a moment of prayer, shall we? Our Father, we thank you so much this morning for the tremendous way that we have sensed thy presence with us from the very beginning of these sessions together.

Thank you this morning that the presence of God consistently break our hearts as your people. Thank you, Father, that when God's presence comes to us, is there a sense in which it is easy for us to humble ourselves before you. And we praise you this morning that this ministry of humbling ourselves is not only a discipline, but it is a disposition in our relationships with God.

And Lord, we just pray that as we gather together in this hour to seek the face of God, we ask that you will pour out upon us a spirit of prayer and intercession, and that we and our hearts will be so deeply stirred that it will somehow transform whatever we're going to do in the rest of this day into an attitude and a life of intercessory prayer. Cover us under your precious blood, we pray, because we ask it in Jesus' precious name. Amen.

You know, there are two subjects that are very close to my heart, if I'm allowed to say this, and the first subject is the subject of revival, and the second subject is the subject of prayer. And as I've studied the history of revivals of religion, if I come to the conclusion that behind any movement of the Spirit of God, as far as I can gather, has there been people who saw this tremendous responsibility and saw the tremendous things that God can do as a result of intercessory prayer. And twice in my life have I had the privilege to be at a place where God poured out His Spirit in revival blessing.

And I'm sure you recognize this morning that revival is not a series of special services, but revival is what Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones speaks of when God comes and it's an organized disorder. And all those movements have come as a result of intercessory prayer. And I think there are some wonderful biblical examples of that.

And just recently I began to look at this great subject again, especially in Matthew's Gospel. And I know this morning when we studied the subject of prayer, is there the possibility that we can differ in our definition of what prayer actually is in the Bible. And I don't want to try and put a cap upon what prayer is here and what prayer is there, but it's tremendous to see that as you study God's Word, the incredible emphasis that God in His Word is putting upon our responsibility when it comes to prayer.

Now if you look at it in the Old Testament, we need to recognize the distinction between prayer and the Old Testament and the New Testament. First of all, because of the redemption work of Christ and Calvary. Those Old Testament saints did not have the privilege that we have when we come into God's presence to pray in the name of the Lord Jesus.

I don't think this morning that they had the clarity or the witness of God's Spirit in their hearts when God, when they prayed through as we would have in our New Testament concept of the Word. And because of the work in the ministry of the Holy Spirit, of course, is there a distinction. Because in the New Testament we have the Spirit of God dwelling in our hearts in a tremendous sense, maybe far more so than that within the Old Testament.

But if you study prayer, for instance, in the first five books of the Old Testament, you will discover that prayer is given to us in the concept of a dialogue. And I think one of those most classical examples for us is in Genesis 18. You remember when Abram came into God's presence? There is a tremendous principle there that I would like to mention to you this morning because my brother and sister, when Abram began to pray, he did not speak to God necessarily about the sin that was so relevant within the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, but he came to God on the basis of those in Sodom and Gomorrah who were righteous in the sight of God.

And you remember as he spoke to God and as he addressed God, that he said to God, he said, if we will find fifty righteous people within the city, will you destroy the city? And you remember that tremendous conversation as it were that took place. And I would like to share with you this morning because sometimes I think we have such an amazing concept of our responsibility in prayer. My brother and sister, I believe this morning that God answers prayer not necessarily because we are praying.

In other words, I don't think that God is obliged to answer our prayers. But folks, I believe today that God answers prayer because he is a covenant keeping God. You see, he must stay true to his word.

And if we fulfill the conditions of that which he has said to us in his word, God is going to listen to us and he is going to answer prayer. If you look at prayer, for instance, in the historical books of the Old Testament, you will discover that quite often you come across the phrase that the Bible says, they cried unto the Lord. And when you look at prayer in the Old Testament prophets, you quite often will discover the little word, the burden of the Lord.

You come across the little word that breaks my heart again and again, and it's the little word, O. When you sense those Old Testament prophets being aware of this incredible burden of God, somehow finding themselves responding to the burden of God, and pray and persevere and prevail and supplicate until they got through to God. If you look at the New Testament, and that's what we will be concerned with in many of these studies these mornings, it's quite amazing for us to see that in the four Gospels, does the Bible give us a tremendous insight in the prayer life of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now maybe I should say to you, I've just been studying Matthew's Gospel on a flight from Toronto back to our house outside of Vancouver, and I was fascinated in my heart to discover that in Matthew's Gospel, are there something like 17 prayers that people actually pray.

And three of those times that I discovered, it was the Lord Jesus Christ Himself who prayed. He prayed, for instance, in Matthew chapter 11, then He prayed again in Gethsemane, and then He prayed in the cross, and those something like 109 words of the prayer of the Lord Jesus, or the prayers of Christ, and the Gospel of Matthew, has got some tremendous things to say to us. One of the things that touched my heart on a very deep level was the tremendous relationship that has been revealed to us as the Saviour prayed.

You know, out of that 109 words or so, well you discover about 13 times that He addressed His Father as, Thou, as Thee, as O Father, or as O God, which became a tremendous challenge to my own relationship with God. But you know, the thing that fascinates me was the people that prayed. If you look at the lives of those other people that prayed, those people came on the basis of a specific need to the Lord Jesus.

And the majority of those people that came to the Lord Jesus in Matthew's Gospel, if I'm allowed to say this, came to the Lord Jesus on the basis that there was a physical healing. Something that they wanted the Lord Jesus to do. Something that they desired within their hearts, that they heard about the Lord

Jesus, and when they heard about the Lord Jesus, they came to the place where they said to the Lord Jesus, We want you to do that.

And it's amazing that every one of those people that came to the Lord Jesus to ask Him something, that when they came to the Lord Jesus with a right motive, do we discover that the Lord Jesus did not send them empty away. Which was a tremendous encouragement, of course, to my own heart. But what I want us to do in these few minutes that we have available, I want us just to look at one or two of the things that Christ said in Matthew's Gospel, about our responsibility and prayer.

And my brother and sister, when you look at Matthew chapter 5 and Matthew chapter 6, you will discover that the Beatitudes of Matthew chapter 5, that the Lord Jesus is giving unto us some wonderful aspects of what Christian character is all about. And in the rest of Matthew's Gospel, is He trying to communicate to us, how Christian character manifests itself in Christian conduct. In other words, what I'm trying to say to you is that, in the first number of verses, is He speaking to us about what I would consider as imputed righteousness, that brings us to the right relationship with God.

And the rest of the Sermon on the Mount, is He dealing with the concept of imparted righteousness, how we are going to live as a result of the fact that we have become righteous in the presence of God. And He gives us three wonderful ways in which He wants us to live. And the first is our responsibility in the life of intercessory prayer.

And what did the Lord Jesus say? He turned to His disciples and He said to them, when you pray. In other words, my friends, He did not say to them, now if there is a slight possibility that you are going to spend time in my presence, this is the way that I want you to pray. It was a definite statement that came from the heart of Christ that He was expecting from every one of us to spend time within the presence of God.

You know, I never learned the principles of prayer in any theological school, although I learned wonderful things there, of course, but I learned the principles of prayer on a mountain in our farm in Africa. And I will never forget the night when those five black Presbyterian church, black Presbyterian ministers knocked at my window on a Friday night, about nine o'clock, it was so dark, I could hardly see my hand in front of my face. And when I opened the curtain of the window there, they stood, and it was so dark, you know, I could hardly see their faces, but because they were as black as Africa, but I saw the white teeth and they said to me in the African dialect, and they were saying to me, we are going to this mountain to pray.

And as we were walking that night, this mountain was about a mile and a half from our farmhouse in the northeastern Transvaal of southern Africa. And as we were walking, I got hold of this black man and I said to him, I said, Petros, I said, how are we going to spend a night in the presence of God? You see, I could not comprehend how would it be possible for us to humble ourselves before God, for God's spirit to search our hearts and for us to sense a spirit of intercession and find ourselves interceding and waiting upon the presence of God. This black man turned to me and he got hold of me and he looked at me and he said to me, white man, he said, you've got a problem.

I said, what is it? He said, your problem is you are in a hurry tonight. And he said, you are going to experience that God is not in a hurry. And my brother and sister, I began to recognize that these were men who have developed the discipline in their lives to spend time in the presence of God.

I came across that statement some time ago by that amazing man, Leonard Raven, and you know what he said? He said, so many of our prayer meetings today have become nothing else, nothing else than a

dumping ground of our spiritual diseases. I remember many years ago listening to Dr. Alan Redcroft in Britain, and this is what he said. He said, so many of our times of prayer today is nothing else than giving God so much information that God knows himself.

And my friends, I wonder this morning if I may ask you, it's maybe the testimony of our prayer lines this morning. It's exactly as the little girl used to sing when she said, I so often say my prayers. She said, but do I really pray? May I ask you this morning, my brother and my sister, do you and I have a time that we discipline ourselves, where we set ourselves aside and we spend time, effective time within the presence of God, somehow just taking time to seek the face of God? You say, well why is it necessary? Because folks, God has given to us a spiritual constitution.

And my spiritual constitution as a believer brings to my life a sense of responsibility because I can't impart to people that which I do not personally possess in my relationship with God. So he's expecting from me to spend time in his presence. The most wonderful thing about the Bible is the fact that it's not my responsibility to find out how much time you spend in prayer.

Because the Bible does not say to us that God wants us to spend so much time in prayer. But you know what the Bible does say? The Bible is saying unto us, pray without ceasing. And my friends, that does not mean that as a believer, it's God expecting from me to spend 24 hours a day on my knees before God necessarily.

But I think what Paul is speaking about, he's speaking about that time in my life during the day when I spend time in God's presence and somehow God opened the heavens above, come to my heart and for the rest of this day is there resting upon my life this wonderful relationship of interceding in the presence of God. I read a wonderful statement the other day by Dr. Stephen Alford and this is what he said. He said, if someone would come to you and ask you, how do you know if the spirit of prayer is resting upon your life? And he made this statement, he said, this is how you're going to recognize that.

When someone comes to ask you if that spirit is resting upon your life, it will simply means that any person can come to you any hour of the day or any hour of the night and ask you to pray with them and you will not feel uncomfortable. And I wonder too this morning, my brother and my sister, do you and I know something of this kind of a lifestyle and the society in which we are living? Do you know I'm meeting people like that? And as I spend time with those people, you are hardly in the presence of those people when they want to talk about the things of God. Because God has given to them a spiritual constitution.

And my brother and my sister, God has given unto us a spirit because he wants to make us conscious of himself and the spirit of God comes to dwell within my life and he wants to bring to my life this attitude of a life of intercessory prayer. I remember reading about Dr. Andrew Murray in South Africa in the 1830s when God was moving in the midst of revival. And this man knew this concept of a life, a relationship of intercessory prayer.

And you know, one Sunday morning in his church in Wellington, he stepped into the pulpit and there was a little girl that sat next to her mummy in the congregation and there was a hush upon the meeting as this man somehow walked into the pulpit. And as he walked into the pulpit, she kind of touched her mummy and her mummy kind of bent down and said, what is it? And she whispered to her mummy and her mummy said, what did you say? And she got the little words through. She said, mummy, is that the Lord Jesus Christ? You see my friends, it sounds mystical to us, but my brother and my sister, I want to say to you this morning in the society in which you and I as a believer are living, is it possible for us to live a life in

the fullness of the spirit of God and upon that life is there resting a spirit of intercessory prayer? That means God wants me to spend time.

Three times a day we read about Daniel. And I wonder this morning if you have some count or some sense of an accountability system. I've never in my life been in a continent since I came to this North American continent where I've sensed the tremendous difficulty to have a consistent disciplined prayer life.

Because my friends, we are so busy. We are so busy in ministry. We are so busy doing so many things for God.

And I came to the place where I brought to myself a book of accountability and I hold myself day by day accountable in the presence of God when it comes to my times of prayer. Jesus said, when you pray. Did you pray before you came to this session this morning? Because folks, it's not what we came to receive.

But my brother and sister, it's what we brought into this little session. Secondly, the Savior, you know what he said? He did not only say, when you pray. He said, you're going to spend time, a specificness in time.

But he spoke of the place. He said, when you pray, I want you to go into your closet. That little word closet is a wonderful little word in the New Testament and I've kind of done a bit of researching about that word.

And you know what I discovered? I discovered that the little word closet is speaking to us about two wonderful things. First of all, it is speaking to us about a secret den. Oh my brother, my sister, can I ask you this morning? Have you got a secret den where you are spending time in the presence of God? I did a series of meetings out in Saskatchewan some time ago.

And God wonderfully touched the life of the pastor. Bless his heart, he's a precious fellow. But you know, we came to the end of that time and he said to me, he said, I've made up my mind about a place.

I said, what do you mean? He said, from now on, I'm going to find a place somewhere at the church where I lock myself away and where I spend time in the presence of God. And I turned to him and I said, well, let's be accountable to one another. Every now and again we phone and I turn to him and I said, how is it going with a place where you are seeking the face of God? Oh my brother, my sister, can I ask you this morning? Have you got a place somewhere where you set yourself aside? Where you are involved in the presence of God? One of the reasons why so many of us are afraid of a place like that is because my brother and my sister, a life of intercessory prayer, there is nothing spectacular about it.

No one is going to come to you and say to you, what a wonderful Christian you are. No one is going to come and say, isn't it tremendous to spend so much time with God? It's a secret place, you see. It's a place where God speaks to me.

I spent eight years in the British Isles and those were wonderful years and I stayed with a lady and her brother on the borders of Scotland. When I moved into the house I didn't realize that this lady was retired missionary from the land of Peru, was an absolute disciplinarian and a tremendous perfectionist. This is what happened.

Every morning at five o'clock there was a knock at my door. I would open the door and she would stand there with my early morning cup of coffee and she would say to me, now son, it's time to seek the face of God. Nine o'clock exactly I had to be down at the breakfast table.

Ten thirty another cup of coffee, twelve o'clock was lunch, three thirty an afternoon cup of tea, five o'clock was high tea and nine o'clock was supper and they asked me to pray every time. I prayed about two hundred and fourteen times there, did most of my intercession at the table. Do you know what happened every morning when I came down to the breakfast table? And I was ready for that wonderful breakfast.

That little woman scared the life out of you. Just a short little woman, stand right in front of me. Those two eyes would pierce into the depths of my soul and she would turn to me and she would say to me, Gerard, what did God say to you this morning? Well, I tell you when I wake up this morning, so I got on my knees and I said, Lord Jesus, you better speak to me.

She's waking, but my friend's still challenged. And I wonder this morning, my friends, if you will allow me to ask you, is God speaking to us? Is there some little place where you can say he's ministering to my heart? He's revealing himself to me. You know, I don't know about you today, but I'm positively sick of sitting in meeting after meeting after meeting where I don't sense that God is breaking my heart as his child.

It's a secret place. No one else may know about it. My time is gone.

You read the life story of Robert Murray McChain. You know what you discover? What was the secret of the life of that young man? Died at the age of 27 there in Dundee in Scotland. My friends, there was a place where Robert Murray McChain soaked himself before God.

And they say some days, some days when he would stand up into the pulpit and he began to minister to people, you know what those people said? They said as he looked at them, it seems that his eyes pierced into the very depths of their souls as they sat under his ministry. Because he knew the secret of the prayer. Charles Sutton Spurgeon.

I read some time ago about Spurgeon, that on a Sunday morning when Spurgeon would preach, and I'm sure you knew that Spurgeon was suffering from guilt. Sometimes he would stand with his knee in a chair because he was in tears. He would scream down his chest as he was in tremendous pain.

But you know what Spurgeon said? He said there were times when I sensed the wind of God's Spirit in my wings and God would come upon this man. And my friends, I'm told that 5,000 people would leap to their feet because they were afraid that they missed one word that came from the lips of this man. Why was it? Because those words were unchained from above.

In a place where he sought the face of God. Have you got a secret place before God? A place of transparency. I've got a very simple philosophy of ministry.

You know what it is? My 5% involvement here in public declaration, if this is not the result of 95% accountability and transparency and honesty and brokenness and responsibility before God, if that's not the case, my friends, then what I'm doing here this morning is nothing else than a performance. Out there in British Columbia, we are involved in scores of churches, and I love a church. And I love a pastor.

My heart is broken for these men. If I go into a church on a Sunday morning to preach at a conference, a Sunday to a Wednesday, and I would sit there, and the deepest cry of my heart is, God, let me sense your presence. Because when the presence of God comes, it's going to make me one of the needs of the people.

Some time ago in one of the larger large churches out in the valley, one o'clock this Sunday morning, I woke up and I got on my knees. I knew God wanted me to pray. And I got on my knees in my study and just flack on my face before God.

I said, God, there's a burden here. And I don't know why and I don't know what's happening, but just help me to pray this burden through. And my friends, I tell you, those times are agonizing before God.

Those times that you feel you're coming close to death. At five o'clock that Sunday morning, I knew within my heart I got right through to God. Lying all broken up there on the floor of my study, and about seven o'clock I phoned the pastor.

And I said to him, I said, I want to tell you that God broke into my heart this morning for the services of today. He canceled the communion services that morning. It's a church of two services on a Sunday morning.

My brother and sister, it's not an easy congregation to preach in because the Spirit of God was grieved in 1963 when they asked us to come and do a crusade because they wanted to build a new church. And then some of the men in that church rise up against Ralph and Lou and they cancel their crusade and they brought fundraisers from Texas in to raise money to build this huge new sanctuary. And from that time on, there was a struggle in that church.

That Sunday morning when I came, the pastor said to me, he said, it's been about seven years since we had a real break in this church. And folks, it wasn't me, I can tell you that. I staggered to the pulpit.

I still up till today can't remember what I said the first 20 minutes, but I can tell you something. There was a moment that Sunday morning when God came. One moment we all sat and we listened, we thought it's wonderful.

But the next moment, God came and He broke our heart. I remember a very wealthy, influential businessman up in the gallery came staggering down like a drunk man. There were about two, three hundred people there the afternoon until about three o'clock, sobbing in the presence of God.

Now, I don't know about you this morning, about this conference here. I don't know this school, I must be honest with you. But my friends, if we have only come for good preaching, my brother and sister, we are wasting our time.

If you've just come to listen to Dr. Lutzer, or all these other great speakers, you are here with a wrong motive. You need to say this morning, I've come because of my heart. It's a desire that God will break into my life and send me back to my village, wherever I've come from, with a new sense of passion and a desire to seek the face of God.

It's a secret place in God's presence. Thomas Goodwin, the Puritan, said, those prayers that awaken God must also awaken us. I came across a statement by Thomas Watson about ten days ago.

You know what he said? I was afraid to say it. You know what he said? He said, sue God. I said, read the life stories of these men.

I said to myself, what has happened to this passion of intercessory prayer? Are we spending time in God's presence? Jesus said, when you pray, He said, when you pray, He said, enter into your closet. Wonderful

to pray with lots of people around you, folks. Very difficult on your own to supplicate and to persevere and to weep and to sob and to get through to God and to bear the witness of God's Spirit that we got right through to Him.

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