

Call to Obedience #466
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When You Pray, Enter Into Your Closet

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The Holy Spirit is a Spirit of prayer. When we have Him dwelling within us, we will pray! Therefore it is the will of God that every Christian have a closet of prayer, a place where he is alone, cut off from family, friends, co-workers, and all other things that distract him from his time alone with God. Hundreds of problems that go on and on would be solved that way. If everyone would only frequent their secret prayer closet, the burdens on pastors would be significantly lifted and churches would have people come without unreasonable expectations to worship in the joy of the Lord rather than being depressed or discouraged.

But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly (Matt. 6:6). Do you daily enter into your prayer closet? Oh, how He loves to meet with you—just you and Him alone. He loves it so much that He will reward you openly. The open reward may be a divine healing, sons or daughters being saved, financial blessings, protection on your journeys, blessings on your calling of God, the fulfilling of your dreams, the restoration of a marriage gone dry, strained relationships being restored, prison doors being opened, the enemy being defeated on your left and on your right, etc. Again, He will reward you openly. There is no reward promised for erratic, half-hearted prayer. The greatest power for change, to change anything for any believer, is through prayer closet praying. Indeed this kind of praying is the greatest force in the universe and you have it at your disposal.

There are many churches growing by great leaps and bounds. People are saved by the thousands and millions. But there is something wrong with many of these 'conversions' because they do not produce praying saints! They do not produce men and women who will enter into a secret prayer closet or attend church prayer meetings, if there are any. Indeed, one of the most outstanding characteristics of this church age is prayerless Christians and prayerless churches. Can we really have Christianity without prayer?

But you, when you pray, go into your room... Many have said to me over the years: “I pray all the time;” “I pray while I am working;” “I pray while I am shopping;” or “I pray while I am traveling.” That is good my friend, but it does not replace praying in a secret closet where Jesus and you are meeting together and nothing else is going on. In your secret prayer closet transformation takes place, spiritual growth abounds and the enemy is defeated. In there, you will pick up your songs of praise for the day, divine revelations are offered and received, and your soul will become bright and shiny. You will also pick up your anointing for the day and you may experience angels descending from or ascending to the throne of God. Every godly Bible character had the practice of meeting with God in some place of quietness, in some *closet of prayer*. They practiced closet praying and that became their source of greatness.

Biblical Examples

Abraham had a closet of prayer. Following is one of the most beautiful prayer passages in the Bible: *Then Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba, and there called on the name of the LORD, the Everlasting God* (Gen. 21:33). Abraham planted a tree away from the business of the camp which provided him a quiet and shaded place which was his most sacred and private place for prayer. Before this he had failed several times, but after he had started praying at this sacred place, he stopped failing. From then on, he was on the way to becoming the source of blessings to all nations of the world. Oh, closet praying yields everlasting fruits.

Jacob, when coming to the brook Jabbok, sent his wives and servants away in order to be alone with God. *Then Jacob was left alone; and a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day* (Gen. 32:24). Jacob was accustomed to the secret place of prayer. It is in those places where we can wrestle with God to receive blessings that otherwise would not be ours. **Hannah** had her place of prayer. As a woman in those days, she found it difficult to find a geographical place for prayer. But she was shut up in her soul and prayed silently, only her lips moving. And yet, God heard her just the same and gave her the first prophet of Israel, Samuel. He heard her in secret but rewarded her openly. **David** made many hillsides and valleys his closet of prayer when he served as a shepherd. Later, as a fugitive, he prayed in caves. Oh, what tremendous prayer literature there is in the Psalms of David which have come out of his secret prayer closets.

Of **Daniel**, it is recorded: *Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber*

toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime (Dan. 6:10 KJV). I like this word “aforetime.” Daniel not only prayed in times of crisis, but he also had “aforetime” prayer. If you have “aforetime” prayers, you will be ready when the crises of life come, and you will not buckle from your convictions when it is time to stand, when others bow to worldly gods. If you have “aforetime” prayer, you will calmly face the lions and the fiery furnaces of life. If you have “aforetime” prayer, your counsel will excel the prayerless counselors surrounding you. If you have “aforetime” prayer, you will not be shaken by bad news. You will just calmly get back into your closet, knowing that God has a way out, a way through or a way around any problem in the world! Because Daniel was a closet praying man, King Darius became a believer who then declared Daniel’s God to be the only God in the world.

Jesus knew the power of shutting Himself in. He admonished us to do likewise. It was said of Him: *And when He had sent them away, He departed to the mountain to pray* (Mark 6:46). In this passage, Jesus sent the multitudes away. Why? Because it was time to pray. What are you willing to send away so that you might get to prayer? Something? No, it must be everything! **Cornelius** prayed always. And **Peter** also found a closet of prayer wherever he went. In Joppa, he found it on a rooftop: *The next day, as they went on their journey and drew near the city, Peter went up on the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour* (Acts 10:9).

But **Jonah** apparently did not have his regular times of secret prayer. And so, unknown to himself, he developed an attitude that stirred up the whole eastern Mediterranean Sea. What all are we stirring up by not frequenting the secret place of prayer, by not planting a tamarisk tree where we can meet alone with God? What troubles are we stirring up in our marriage, in our church, or on our job because we are prayerless? Any man who does not have the practice of closet praying is a burden to the world. His life is a negative contribution because he is missing what he has come into to the world for. Is God going to have to put us into the belly of a whale to get us to pray? Is God going to have to make us sick to get us into prayer? Is He going to have to withdraw our financial security to get our attention?

Daniel prayed “aforetime.” Jonah prayed “thereafter:” after he was thrown overboard and was swallowed by a whale, after the damage was done. That is when he prayed—“thereafter!” Had Jonah prayed “aforetime,” he never would have gotten on the wrong ship to start with. How many wrong ships

have we been on because we have skipped and missed in our meeting with God? How many ships had to lose their cargoes because we were asleep when we should have prayed? How much cargo have we lost because of our prayerlessness?

Now, let us consider why people do not pray or why there is very little prayer:

1) Many people do not pray because they have not been soundly converted or are backslidden. If people are soundly converted, they will pray. All of the conversions shortly after Pentecost were sound conversions. All of the converted prayed: *And they continued steadfastly...in prayers* (Acts 2:42). *And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit...* (Acts 4:31). These people prayed to get the Holy Spirit and they kept praying to keep the Holy Spirit. The absence of prayer in the lives of converts in our churches is a sign that they have not been soundly converted, or that they are backsliders. The backslider has no desire to pray.

2) Many people say they are too busy to pray. This is a cop-out. The real reason is that the Holy Spirit has left the lives of these people. When the Holy Spirit is in your life, you want to pray and you will pray. The Holy Spirit gives you the desire to pray. The Holy Spirit helps you to pray and He wants you to be an intercessor: *Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered* (Rom. 8:26). Prayer is not a time waster; it is the great timesaver.

If you are not a praying saint, the Holy Spirit has departed from you. There are things in your life—attachments, loves, sins, attitudes—that have caused the Holy Spirit to withdraw Himself. If you have the Holy Spirit, you will be a praying saint. If you love God, you are not too busy to pray. God is your business. Everything else becomes secondary. Abraham had 318 servants; Moses was governor of a nation; Daniel was prime minister; Jesus dealt with multitudes; all of these men had many responsibilities. And yet, all of them made time for prayer. Friend, Jesus wants you to enter into your closet and pray. If you do, He will reward you openly.

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