

The Privilege of Private Prayer

Scripture Reading: Matthew 6.5-15.

Key Verse Matthew 6.6 *“But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.”*

There are many kinds of prayer. Here the Lord deals with just two, true prayer and false prayer. There are many who are eloquent in public prayer, may be impotent in private prayer. Jesus wanted people in his day to have a genuine, close relationship with God, and this has not changed in the two thousand years since these words were uttered. What really counts in our lives is not the number of meetings we attend, nor the kilometres we travel, not the people with whom we work, nor the number of sermons we preach, not how well we present ourselves before men. It is our own personal relationship with God that really matters.

First, before anything else, this promise is for the Sons and Daughters of God. Notice in verse 6 *“...to thy Father... thy Father...”* Not the Father but *thy* father. Before we can expect to receive anything of our Father we must establish this close personal relationship with God.

There is only one way to become a child of God, and the Bible is very clear on this. We must be born into His family. See John 3.3 and 3.5. See also Ephesians 3.15. How do we become a child of God, born into His family? Read carefully John 1.12, and do what it says. God has an obligation and a delight to meet the needs of *His children*. This is what Jesus is teaching in this passage. But you have no right to call on God as your Father, unless you have been born again.

Amazing as it may seem there are

hundreds of God’s children who are living lives of spiritual poverty because they are estranged to God. Jesus in these simple words sets our thinking straight. Let them speak to our heart

SET aside regular time for prayer. *“...when thou prayest, enter into thy closet...”* See Daniel 6.10. Daniel made time for regular prayer, even in the face of stiff opposition. Prayer must become a habit. See also 1 Thessalonians 5.17. It is not to be a ritual, it must be an appointment that we cannot miss.

SHUT your self in with God.. *“...when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father...”* The point here is that it is a time for personal relationship with God, not a display to the world. *“... thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are...”* said Jesus.

Hypocrite can also be interpreted ‘actor’ or ‘stage player’. One who puts on a show. We should not put on a show either for others, and be sure God is not impressed with our play acting.

SEEK out the presence of God. *“... pray to thy Father which is in secret...”* Look up Psalm 91.1, Isaiah 57.15. The purpose is to seek out God, not go through a routine. Lay before Him the needs and desires of your heart until those needs are met; until He communes with you through his word, or by His Spirit and you receive a word from Him. This is two way fellowship. Allow time for God to speak to you.

SHARE with Him the secrets of your heart. *“... when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father...”* Repeatedly bring your needs to God. Jesus was not speaking against repetition which is an important aspect of praying in faith. See 1 Kings 17.21 & 18.42-45, Matthew 26.44, Jesus spoke against *vain* repetition. The word in verse seven means ‘babble’, repeating over and over meaningless words. Jesus gave us His model prayer which we repeat. We say it many times, but

there is a prayer a progression, covering our relationship with God and others.

Fellowship with the omnipresent God. Psalm 73.25, Psalm 139.5-12. If we cannot flee from His presence, surely we can find Him when we are alone in secret.

Rely on the omniscience of God Note verse 8 *“...your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.”* See Deuteronomy 29.29, Psalm 73.24.

Call on the omnipotence of God. Expect the Reward that Jesus promises. It is not the popularity, prominence or position sought by the religious hypocrites, it is in answered prayer Look up Psalm 25.14, Is anything too hard for God? Look up Jeremiah 32.27

STAY in the afterglow of the experience. Notice the personal pronouns employed in verse 6. In the old version, notice the pronouns Jesus used. *“Thou, thou, thy, thou, thy, thy, thy, thee.”* This is a time for just God and you. Spend time sitting in the sunshine. Be warmed by His presence. Go throughout the day in the afterglow of that experience.

Welcome

Glen Park Gospel Church
 Lower Road, Eltham North
Sundays 10.30 am

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