

When You Pray

by Don McClure

Prayer should be a deeply personal experience, a response to God's love and work in our lives, not just a public display or a way to impress others.

Duration: 51:09

Scripture: Matthew 5:3-30, Matthew 5:43 - 6:18

Topics: "Prayer Life", "Spiritual Transformation"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the transformative power of Jesus in various areas of our lives. He emphasizes that Jesus can bring change, victory, love, and empowerment to those who seek Him. However, the preacher also warns about the capacity of the flesh to parade itself even in holy places and Christian service. He highlights the importance of responding to what Jesus has done for us by giving, praying, and fasting. The sermon references Isaiah's encounter with God in the temple and his realization of his own sinfulness in the presence of God's holiness.

Transcript

Lord, things that could be pitfalls, things that, Lord, we may have a tendency to do or to think about prayer, that, Lord, that you would turn it around, put it as it ought to be, Lord, that prayer would become one of the greatest experiences of our entire life, that the experience with you in prayer would become a destiny in and of itself, would become an end in and of itself, not just a means to another end, but the very end of which it's also the means. And so, Lord, we ask that you would open your word to us and speak to us. For, Father, we ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen. Well, here, once again, and I'm going to try to be as brief as I can on this, of course, the Sermon on the Mount, one sermon, obviously. It's one that I think you need the whole of the Bible to essentially figure it out and to put it all together, but it's perhaps the most complete individual message, I suppose, of all the Bible.

I don't think there's hardly a topic that is discussed in the Christian life anywhere in the Bible that isn't touched on somewhere in the Sermon on the Mount. And so, it's obviously, it's a complete sermon. It's a total sermon, but it's also one that all fits together.

It must work together in the way that that makes it the most powerful of all. So often, we take little bits and pieces out of messages sometimes, and they're still powerful, they're very true, but nonetheless, they don't

have as great of an impact or as great a truth, I suppose, as they do as when we look at it as a whole. Now, what is going on here, of course, is, as Jesus now in this section here in chapter six, he's dealing with some of the issues that can be pitfalls.

Some of the things that the very things that were achieved in chapter five, and we'll look at that in a moment, but some of these things that have happened within our life in chapter five, that they don't get destroyed, or they don't get put away, but they're retained in their depth. And here is the Lord, he's teaching us some things about how to live. As you'll recall, last week, we looked at a number of verses in this chapter that said of the great tendency of how men want to do things before men.

Don't do things to be seen of men. And over and over, a number of times in this chapter alone, Jesus said, but your Father. It's all about us and our relationship with God, not one to where we, it's our relationship with other people here.

This is our relationship with the Lord and keeping it the way that it ought to be, the right sort of priorities. How we are be living before our Father. And it's something there that the love that we're to have, I believe, for the Lord, he wants it to be paraded.

We ought to want it to be paraded. God's mercy that he has had for us, his work that he has had upon us, his grace, his goodness. All of these things, we ought to be ones that we long to shout them from the rooftop, so to speak.

God's goodness to us. But at the same time, personal spirituality. In a sense, the parading of that, that is to be, not to happen, it's to be in quiet.

I suppose that some of the greatest aspects of the Christian life are almost like an iceberg, where they say, 10% is above water, but 90% of it is ought to be beneath it, you know, in a sense. And in the Christian life, the greatest experiences of the Christian life, I suppose, really ought to be beneath it. Because the ultimate reason for we were made is we were made by God, for God, to be with God, to be filled with God, led by God, mastered by God, governed by God, given to him, holy and completely.

And that's the great life that we were made. We were made in his image, to share his life. And that's what we ought to be wanting to do very, very much in the Christian life.

And of course, the tragic thing is, is back when Jesus was around, the Pharisees who had seemed to do everything wrong, in one sense, Jesus constantly, you know, letting the world know they're hypocrites, don't follow the Pharisees. And I was gonna say the heresies of the Pharisees, but whatever it is, but anyway, don't get messed up with them. And one of the great tragedies with them is they just love to pray out loud.

They love to pray in the street. They love to have somebody blow a trumpet for them and let everybody know that they were there doing some sort of a spiritual thing. And so sadly here, even before Jesus gets into what prayer is, he even has to start off by telling us essentially what it isn't.

For as he begins here, he says, you know, and when thou prayest, thou shalt not. Here he has to tell, don't be like the hypocrites are. They love to pray standing in the synagogues, in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen.

And verily I say unto you, they have their reward. They want to be seen of people. Well, they've been seen in Jesus.

If they hope that's what they want, because that's all they got. God didn't hear it. God wasn't interested in it at all.

You see, one of the interesting things, I think that we don't realize, again, we're made in God's image. And God is very, very much like us in a lot of ways. Or we are like him in the sense that so often when somebody cares for us and when we care for them, we want that to be a deeply personal thing.

We want the most wonderful and intimate parts of that relationship. Those are not for public discussion. They aren't for public display in sort of a thing.

It ought to be that the greatest, you know, activities of love and of intimacy are shared between the two that are enjoying it. And when people have to go and make some sort of a public display about it, it not only is kind of a sad thing to look at, in a sense, but it's also something you wonder about the depth of how real their love really is, what it is really all about. And I believe there the Lord is very much the same way.

He wants to love for who he is. He wants our relationship. You know, we love him just for himself.

He wants to be given to by our hearts and our lives just because of who he is himself, to be worshipped just by himself. There's a lot of things that so often there's a human tendency to do just when we are around other people. I certainly hope that the only time that you worship the Lord isn't just when you come in here and sit down in church and other people are doing it to where, well, let's sing along.

Hopefully there's something within our hearts where we find ourselves constantly wanting to worship the Lord through the day and driving down the street or, you know, whenever I'm the type, I love to sing. And I have a tremendous voice in my own mind. It just doesn't work in my own vocal cords.

But I love, you know, to sing. And in fact, I've got all these, of all people to love. I mean, the three tenors and I listen to all these, you know, opera and these, you know, people.

Since I was a kid, I've liked this type of, you know, stuff. I remember many years ago, Greg Laurie used to get in my car and the music would be on. And the first thing he'd say is, going up, you know, and something.

No, I just didn't like elevator music. But anyway, the, but I love to sing. And we ought to be ones that we just love, though we love to sing together and to worship together.

We ought to be ones that with our heart, that there's a song that we have for the Lord constantly within our heart. Paul tells us, be not drunk on wine or as an excess, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking yourselves in psalms and in hymns, spiritual songs, singing and making a melody in your heart unto the Lord, giving thanks unto God the Father in the name of the Lord Jesus for all things. There at Christian, we ought to be ones that are constantly pouring out our love and our affection and our worship and our praise to the Lord.

And a small portion of it ought to be when we're together. A certain amount of it ought to be here, but the greatest part of it ought to just be in our own love, our own worship, our own affection for him. Because the Lord, he loves to be talked to as much as anybody, but he doesn't love to be talked to for the sake of other people.

He loves to be talked to because he loves to be talked to. Because the person that's doing the talking wants to talk to him, wants to communicate with him, wants to pour out their heart with him, wants to share with him. And when somebody merely is being talked to for some other reason, the talking doesn't make any difference to them.

In fact, it's almost frustrating and embarrassing to be talked to. My wife, Jean, when she was in high school, she went to very small missionary high school in Florida. A lot of preachers, kids, and her roommates were some daughters of probably about the most well-known family, I suppose, maybe in the Christian world.

And through high school, and but every time that a speaker would come, they would always go and take one of this man's daughters out for lunch, and want to talk, and how's your dad, and all this other sorts of stuff, and carry on. And one time, Jean, when she came into the room, one of these, one of his daughters, she was sitting there, and she was crying, and tears in her eyes, and she's, what's wrong? And she had just been with somebody very, you know, a lot of people would love to go have lunch with that person, but she said, I wish somebody just wanted to take me to lunch for who I was. My whole life, everybody, they want to be around me, but not because of who I am, because of who my father is.

And I think one of the saddest things is that God, He sees what, why, why are we talking to Him? What is it that is going on? Are we wanting because I want to talk to you? You have come to mean so much to me, who you are, and what you do, and what you mean to me. That in itself, regardless of who hears now and then, I don't, not that we, that we don't say anything around other people, we certainly, we do, and we'll pray, and we ought to sing around one another, but at the same time, the greatest, and the most wonderful of times, ought to just be because of the fact that we love Him, and what He means to us. And that's what God ought to be about, and that's what I think here, that when somebody is, is in the Sermon on the Mount, what ought to happen, I suppose, and there, in chapter five, we saw essentially an exchange of lives happen in that chapter.

I've recounted it so many times, I'm sure many of us, you can almost recite it. But here, when Jesus, there when He goes, somebody is poor in spirit, and they mourn over their sin, and there's a meekness before God, and God breaks them. They're sorry for their own heart, their own life.

I don't want to run my own life any longer. That's what chapter five was all about. Jesus, will you come and take it over? And will you fill me? Will you give me your heart and your life? And there is He, blessed are those that are merciful, and those that are pure in heart, and those that are peacemakers.

And here He puts His heart and His life within us. He saves us there in those beatitudes from the worst enemy in the world, the worst tyrant we've ever known, our own self, our own arrogance, our own pride, our own self-sufficiency. No one has ever, no matter what any human being has ever stolen from you, and what it has ever done to you, or any abuse that anybody has ever done to you, no one has ever done any more abuse to you than you yourself.

In a sense, that's what the Bible teaches. There's no one that is stolen anymore from you than you yourself. All that God wants for us every day of His power and of His love, of His fullness within our life, we're stealing it.

We're the one that, you know, we pour all this time down the drain we could have had with Him. All of this fullness, all of this blessing, all the time. But here in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says, here's how you

can have it.

And you can have my life, and you can have my love. And then He goes on after He is enthroned there in the rest of chapter 5, essentially there He tells us there how to have victory over some of the greatest internal battles within our life. You know, the battle over hatred, the battle over anger, the battle over where we look at people and we're so judgmental.

And there, as you'll recall, we looked at that and He says, here is how you win over hatred and over lust, over coveting, over I have to have it, I want. All of these things that are so detrimental to our life that control us. And Jesus says, here's how you have victory in it.

Here's how. And He gives us a new heart and He gives us the ability to have new relationships, to strengthen relationships, to build a marriage, to keep our oath, to deal with our pride. That's what was happening in the rest of chapter 5. And we're in one area after another.

Jesus goes in and He says, would you like to be changed here? I'll show you how. Would you like to have victory here? I'll show you how. Would you like to learn how to love? I'll show you how.

Would you like to know how to keep me in power in your life day after day? I'll show you how. This is it. I'll give you my life.

I'll fill you and I'll empower you and I'll bless you. And here is, this is happening. Essentially, what has occurred in chapter 5 is, is that you, Paul would probably call it reckoning the old man to be dead.

Paul would probably look at this there and as he would refer to it, the Beatitudes, or we're finally the flesh, our carnal nature, the I, me, my, myself, you know, our own ego is finally being dealt with, it's being set aside. And Jesus, by the power of His Holy Spirit, is beginning to reign. And then, you know, now that the flesh is dead though, the tragic thing, once we reckon the flesh, the old man to be dead and the flesh is, you know, reckoned to be dead, you don't have to be Christian very long to realize that it isn't only Jesus that has the power of the resurrection.

The flesh does too. How many times have you reckoned your own flesh to be dead? How many times have you buried it? How many times have you said, God, I'm through with myself, I'm sick of myself, I ate this, free me, fill me. And He does.

And then, you know, two hours later, flesh is right back there. Miss me? You know, or something, and right back and find some way to get back in power. Well, in chapter 5, though, He was dealing with the ways that it does come back, whether through lust, or through anger, or through broken commitments, not keeping our oath and learning.

He says, here's how the flesh gets back in, in many ways. Well, now in chapter 6, the flesh kind of goes underground. The flesh has this amazing way that if you almost, if you can't beat them, join them.

And this is what it's kind of dealing with here in chapter 6. And Jesus said, here, now when you give, don't do it to be seen of men. When you serve, when you minister, don't do it for any public display. Because the amazing thing about the flesh, all right, if you won't let me back in anger, and you won't let me be back in lust, and you won't be back in lying, or cheating, or stealing, or this and that, how about it, will you let me back if I give? Will you let me back if I pray? The amazing thing about the flesh is that the flesh will do virtually anything, anything to live.

It'll learn scripture, it'll pray, it'll go to church, you know, or it'll go on the mission field. It'll even preach. I don't want to tell you how I know that, but I, you can probably figure that out.

You've listened to me more than three times. But anyway, the, but the flesh has this amazing capacity, whatever, wherever you'll give it a door, whatever way it has to get in, if it can parade itself. And I suppose one of the most tragic things, the flesh, it loves to parade itself in anger, or in lust, or in lying, or just some of the rudiments of its natural corruption, but the flesh is not above going right into the holy, the holiest places of all and parading itself.

It'll go right into Christian service, and say, here, I'll do it. Watch me. It'll go right into any form of ministry.

It'll sing a song. It'll preach. It'll pray.

It'll do virtually anything. Just let me live. Just let me carry on.

And here, Jesus, he's looking there and, and, and saying that, if you want to stay on track with me, if you want to stay in communion, then, then what you, what I'm doing within you, let's keep it here in a certain arena where the flesh isn't going to be able to come along and do its thing. Because I suppose one of the most tragic things is, is once again, is here, Jesus makes it quite clear. The flesh will definitely pray.

Don't do it like the hypocrites. Don't be like the Pharisees. They love to pray.

It's quite a nice exercise for them. People actually look at them and they found in this little arena of the religious world. Now, if they couldn't be the greatest they could be in the, the worldly world or the carnal world or man's world, well, then let's see who we can be in God's world.

Let's see who we can be in the kingdom. We'll move right into that. And it's almost like the flesh.

If you can't beat him, join him. All right. Jesus got in you and he's there and you seem to be just fixed on walking with him and following him.

Well, then let's go together. You know, sort of a thing. And then the flesh wants to find a way right into it.

But here the thing is, is the wonderful thing in one sense is that in chapters five, I think the thing that we ought to all be amazed about is the unbelievable love that God has for us. God, knowing all these things about us, when he came, when he came to us and he called us to himself, when he chose us, when he redeemed us, he knew all the battles that we would be fighting. He knew all the struggles that we were to have over the years, over the decades in our life.

And wonderfully here in the sermon, the mighty seems to touch on most of them. And there's something here in chapter five, though, what has happened is that he has just come and loved us personally. He's come and he says, I can help you.

I can forgive your sin. I can replace the sinner. I can feel you with myself.

I can help touch virtually any and every area of your life that you'll surrender. I can fill it. I can transform it.

I can empower it. I can absolutely make you a whole new creature, give you a tremendously, wonderfully new life. And it ought to be something there that, that when a person now in chapter six, that when a person gives or when a person prays, or as we'll see later in it, when a person fasts or things, other things

we'll be looking at, it ought to be things that we do in a direct response to chapter five.

In other words, I am giving because look what he gave me in chapter five. Look what he did for me. Look what he is doing in my heart and in my life.

Look at what he has done in my walk. Look what he has done with my joy or my peace. Look what he has been doing constantly for me.

So wonderfully for me. Look at how he's transforming me. Look what he's done in my home or in my marriage.

Look at the blessings in my family or my children or people around me. And look at all these things that he's doing. And it ought to be the Christian service or giving or prayer is just a response to that.

It's the soul responding and saying, God, you've done so many wonderful things for me. You love me so much. As Paul was just so taken in by the concept of God's love, you know, Romans eight, well, but you're in Romans eight 31, Paul writes.

And he says, God before us, who could be against us? If he spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall we not? Pardon me. How shall he not with him freely give us all things for who shall separate us from the love of Christ? So tribulation or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword, nay, in all these things, we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither life nor death, nor angels or principalities, nor powers, nor things present or things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God that's in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

Here, Paul, he realized Jesus Christ is so loved me and he's so committed himself to me. He is so gay, you know, there is nothing that's going to separate me from that love. He's absolutely taken in by me.

He loves me with all of his heart. And here, essentially in Matthew five, Jesus has loved and he has given himself and he has cared in the most amazing and practical of ways. And as he has come in, he's dealt with anger and he's dealt with lust and he's dealt with lying.

He's dealt with our pride and our ego and our lack of care for others. All of these things within our heart. And it ought to be that the heart now, more than ever, wants to pray.

That now the soul has something, if it has ever wanted to say anything to anybody, if there is ever any other being outside of itself that it would want to turn to and respond to, say something to, communicate with, fellowship with, share its heart and its life with. If ever there is a place where the soul ought to long to respond, it's to God. And essentially what prayer really is, it is not something to be seen of men.

It is not something that is just outward. It's not vain repetition. So many people, many people, they just pray for the exercise of either they do it when they're around people or they do it in vain repetition.

Can you imagine if somebody talked to you in vain repetition, came up to you and said, hello, Bob. Hello, Bob. Hello, Bob.

Hello, Bob. Hello, Bob. How are you doing? These vain repetitions, probably want a cracker, probably want to just say anything, who cares? If it's just not something from the heart between two people.

And here Jesus said, don't do it on, you know, outside, don't do it externally, do it because it's in your heart to do it. And here within the Beatitudes and in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus there is, he's now looking at this point and saying, if these have happened to you, you're going to want to pray. If anybody has ever in the world is going to want to pray, it's going to be somebody that has experienced Matthew chapter five, the love of God for them personally.

And the wonderful thing is, is that when that happens, the heart has to respond. When God has done something like that for somebody, they have to respond. In Psalm 40, David said, I waited patiently on the Lord.

He inclined his ear to me. He heard my cry. He lifted me up also out of a horrible pit into miry clay.

He set my feet upon a rock and he established my goings. He had put a new song in my mouth, even praise the Lord God. And many shall see it and shall fear and shall trust in the Lord.

Here, David, look, he says, I cried out to God and he heard me. And then he did and he did and he did and he did out of a horrible miry clay feet upon a rock established by going song in my mouth, praise unto my God. And here is, he looked at all that God had done.

A couple of verses later, he says, you know, sacrifice and burn offerings and offerings for sin. Now it's no desire, but a body now has prepared me. Then said, I load is written to me in the volume of the book to do thy will.

I delight to do thy will. Oh my God, yea, thy laws within my heart. When God has done something for somebody, they now have to turn around when they realize, look at what he's done.

Now they've got to turn around and say, you know something, you prepared a life for me. You've redeemed me. I've got to respond.

Sacrifice and burn offering isn't what you want. A body that was prepared me. I offered up to you.

Take it, take it all, you know, fill it, use it, do whatever it is. And we ought to be ones that we find ourselves just wanting to present our whole heart and our whole life as always in every possible way that we can to the Lord, just because of his goodness to us, because of his love for us. And Psalm 63, David, again, he says, you know, oh God, thou art my God.

Early will I seek thee. My soul thirsteth and my heart panteth after thee in a dry and thirsty land. So I look toward thee and I sanctuate to see thy power and thy glory.

And because thy loving kindness is better than life. That's while I live, I'll praise thee. I'll lift up my hands to thy name.

David looked around and he found himself there. He says, God, you have done so much. You're my God.

And there, because of who you are, he says, my heart and my life. It's it's got to praise you. It's got to respond.

It's got to sing to you. I've got to just lift up my hands in full surrender to you while I live. I'll praise thee.

I'll lift up my hands. David was somebody as he just looked at God, he just saw that God had done and how wonderful he was and how unbelievably, you know, loving he was to him. And that is what causes prayer in the heart to begin.

It's got to respond. And Psalm 80, you know, he says, oh Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth who has set thy glory above the heavens. And there he said, God, you are so awesome.

You are so glorious. You are so wonderful. But then he says out of the mouth of sucklings and babes is thou ordained strength because of thine enemies that thou mightest destroy the enemy and the avenger.

And then he looks, he says, but when I consider the heavens and the works of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, what thou hast ordained, he says, what is man that thou art mindful of him or the son of man that thou visitest him. David looked there and he says, God, you are the God of all of eternity. He spoke it all into existence in what you just do with your with your with your hands, with your fingers there, the moon and the stars which you have ordained all this creation, this unbelievable world.

And yet he looks there and he says, but God, now my question for you is what is it about us? What is it about man that you are obsessed with man or the son of man that thou visitest him? And when he says mindful, it means obsessed. David literally looked there and he says, God, you have this most magnificent obsession in the world. You love us.

You can't get us out of your mind. What is man that thou art obsessed or are mindful of or the son of man that you visit us? And God, you not only are obsessed with this, you won't stop hanging around us. You love to be with us.

You're taking in here. You've got all of the creation there. You know, that ought to be a pretty awesome thing.

But to you, you look at everything else you've created and the apple of your eye, the joy of your heart is us. What is man that thou art mindful of the son of man that thou visitest him? He looked there and David realizing there, God had this unbelievable obsession. I mean, God who measures out the heavens in a span.

And yet at the same time, you look there, I mean, something, something between your little finger and your thumb, some between your finger and your elbow. But either way, when God measures out all creation in a span, a little distance, and in that span, there's this little speck called the earth, a little hunk, a little flake of dust, you couldn't find it, you know, it didn't be so small. And then there's all these little specks, you and me, crawling around this thing.

And what is God obsessed with, of all that he created? You, me. And David has to ask him a question. When he looked there, I could look at the heavens, the moon and the stars, which thou has ordained.

God, you need to get a life. You know, what is it about us that you are so obsessed? What do you see? Then he says, but thou has made him a little lower than the angels. He's given him dominion.

And as he looks at him and he says, God, he, you know, he's crowns him with glory and with honor. God looks there and he says, David, you don't see what I see and how I'm going to crown you and the fullness and the power. He says, I gave you dominion over, you know, the beasts of the field and the cattle, the fowls of the air and the fish of the sea and all that pass through the paths of the sea.

One day you'll see what I see, David. You don't see it now. But the amazing thing is when we stop and realize God, you are obsessed.

Matthew chapter five ought to tell every Christian God is obsessed with me. That he looks at my life in every area of weakness, every area of struggle, every burden, every trial. God says, I want to be with you and I want to help you through everything within you.

Anything that would divert you away from my glory and your full identity and the potential of your life. I'm with you all the way, every day in every way. I'll love you.

I'll forgive you. I'll cleanse you. I'll ever live to make intercession for you.

Just to think, what is Jesus Christ right? This very moment doing interceding for every one of us presenting this faultless. He, Isaiah tells us that he will not grow weary nor tired until he has finished his work. He loves doing what he's doing.

He is so obsessed with you and me, forgiving our sins, interceding, presenting this faultless while we're still blowing it. You know, while we're walking in here and we're angry with somebody, he said, that's all right, father, we're getting to that. You know, or, you know, and we're walking in here and maybe we're coveting something else over there.

And don't worry about it, father, forgiven. Died for it. We'll take care of him.

I'll smack him around a little. I'll get to him or whatever, but I will take care of him. Whom the Lord loves, he disciplines and he chastens and he deals with us, but it is all about his love.

And all the way through, he looks at all these little areas of our life, these puny little specks that we are. And yet every one of us, he knows everything about us. He's absolutely, he just can't get us out of his mind.

In Psalm 139, David, he says, oh Lord, how, Lord, how excellent. That isn't it. That's Psalm 8. How is it? Oh Lord, thou has searched me.

That's it. Thou has searched me and has known me. Here, David, he looks and he says, God, what is going on with you? You have searched me.

In that word, it's as if he went out on an expedition. God, you have searched me and you have known me. David realized, God, your search, you look at David as he looks at every one of us.

He says, you look at me and you have searched me and you know everything about me. He said, you know, my downsittings and my uprisings. I mean, he looked there and he realized, God, you know, absolutely everything that there is.

You understand my thought of far off. You know when I'm down. You know when I'm up.

You see a thought coming way off in the distance that I haven't even seen it yet, but it's just working its way towards me. You see my thought to far off. Oh, here it comes.

Get ready. Here comes a thought. In God, he watches us.

He sits there and he observes us. He visits, visits us. And as David is looking at this, he just take it.

And he says, I'll compass my path and my lying down. You're acquainted with all my ways. He says, whether I'm sitting, walking, standing, you're everywhere around me.

You're acquainted with every single thing that goes on. For there's not a word in my tongue, but lo, O Lord, thou knowest it all together. I even start to say something.

He said, I know. I know it all. He knows our thoughts before we think them.

He knows the number of hairs on our head. That's, you would think, now you really do have to get a life. You know, so you almost think, God, what is this? Why would God possibly tell you and I? He knows the number of hairs upon our head.

If it isn't for the fact that the detail that nobody in the world could care less about. If he says, I even know what nobody else could care less about. Therefore, I can assure you, I know of anything you would care about.

Anything that is not seemingly relevant. Every time, you know, you comb your hair, recount, you know, every time, you know, you know, it's constant. But it is to realize this unbelievable obsession.

He says, thou hast beset me behind and before, and thou hast laid thine hand upon me. Since knowledge is too wonderful for me, it is high, I can't attain it. He says, God, what is this that you are so obsessed with man? And he says, whither shall I flee from thy presence? Whither shall I go from thy spirit? If he says, if I ascend to heaven, thou art there.

Behold, if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning and go into the uttermost parts of the sea, even then shall I hand lead me, yea, thy right hand shall hold me. He says, God, even when I'm running from you, even when I say I got to get out of here, I don't, I can't take this.

God's all over me. You follow me. And then when I'm running from me and ruining my life, you're holding on to me.

Even in my rebellion, you were there sustaining, taking care of me. If I shall say, you know, the darkness shall cover me, even the night shall be light about me. He looks around and he said, absolutely.

He says, God, no matter what it is, I can't figure it out. He says, I shall praise you for I am fearfully and wonderfully made in that my soul knows right well. He says, my substance was not hid from me when I was made in secret.

I mean, he looks there and he says, God, he's thinking about it. He realized, God, my substance was not hid from me when I was made in secret. He looks there and he says, you know, when my mom and dad, well, when, when they were making me in secret, they didn't even know that they'd made me.

You knew it. You knew that very moment. I was conceived.

You were there. You knew all about this, you know, the, the, the, the, this whole thing. He said, he said, that eyes did see my substance yet being imperfect here.

I mean, David, as he looks, he says, God, you literally saw me in my mother's womb. He says, that eyes did see, or my substance was not hid from the apartment, but my nice, uh, thine eyes didn't see my substance yet being imperfect. And in, in thy book, all my members are written when as yet, there was

none of them.

David's sitting there. He said, God, before even anybody could guess what color hair or eyes or what my features would be like in your book, all of my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned when, as yet there was none of them. While it is all happening, you already had recorded everything about me.

And there David is, he's wondering about this. That's the obsession of God that he has for you. And the point of all this, you may wonder, what does this have to do with prayer? Well, I don't know either, but I just like those songs.

But anyway, the, the point of it is, is that what prayer is, is prayer is the response of the heart when it realizes who God is, what he has done, how he cares when there, he does get up with us. And as we head off in our rebellion, or we go off in our love, or we go off walking with him, we go off wherever it is. He still says, I'm here.

I'm sorry. I love you. I'm obsessed with you.

I'm mindful of you. I'm mindful of you. No wonder Paul says the love of Christ constrains us.

He sat there and he realized, you know, through life, most people are able to, you know, exhaust human love. Many people through our lives, we can frustrate human love. We can finally get it to where even, you know, everybody will give us up.

But there it is something where God, he'll never give up. I love you. And in this, when a person realizes this, and they begin to respond to it, and they find themselves either wanting to do something, then the response is prayer.

Then is when the response begins to happen where the heart begins to, to have this wonderful relationship where God who's looked there and says, I know you in secret. I've known you everywhere, anytime, every, every issue. I love you.

And I care for you. And here, Jesus says, what I want now is I want a deep abiding personal relationship. So he says, when you pray and he says, what I want to see you do, he says in verse six, when thou, but thou, when thou prayest enter into thy closet, and when thou has shut thy door, pray to thy father, which is in secret here.

Now he turns there and he says, if you will, just now it is Jesus. If you realize what we've done for you and how we love you and how we care and how deep of a relationship we want to have with you. He said, then here's what I want you to do.

I want you to go into your closet. And that word closet, it's an interesting word in the Greek, the word means the word closet, and it means to collect in one place. And I guess that's what we think of as a closet kind of a lot of our homes.

You go home and you open the closet and everything's collected there, you know, and everything piles out. But in one sense here, he says, you go in to a place that you have within your life, where you collect everything, where it is collected. This is where you take your burdens.

This is where you take your joys. This is where you take your sorrows. This is where you take your needs.

This is where you take every area, every issue of your life. As we were dealing with things in chapter five, or your struggles, your hostilities, or your covetous heart, or your pride, or whatever else. Collect everything constantly within your life.

Bring it and put it in one place in prayer. This prayer closet. As you talk, bring it to me.

You don't need to, you can go do it before other people, but they can't help you. And if you do it to be seen of men, you've got your reward. And I hope the men hear you and can help you.

Or else you can realize, I want to say what I got to say. Here, before the only one that can help me. Before the one who has loved me and redeemed me.

And here the wonderful thing is that when we realize that's what the Lord wants us to learn to do in our life, is learn to pray where we collect all of the issues in our life. Constantly. Day by day.

Bring them before him. And he says, then the wonderful thing is, he says, and thy father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly. Here, Jesus said, when you come, and what you really want is you just want to talk to me.

You just want to talk to my father. And that's really what's happening in your life. More than anything else.

You realize what he's done, how wonderfully he's done it. And now you come, and now you respond, now do it. And then interestingly enough, here he says, and thy father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

Now, this is the interesting part, I suppose. Does this mean that if I go and I pray in secret, I pray the way he wants, I don't do it before him, I go into my little collection place, I gather all the issues in my life, I pray in there, now he's going to reward me openly. And I'm going to get what it is that I'm praying for.

Is that what you're saying? And I'm going to step out on a limb here and then try to crawl back off it in a minute, but essentially, that's exactly what I'm saying. I do believe that when you pray, I believe the ultimate final analysis, maybe not the initial, but a final analysis of prayer, is that you will get, and you will be rewarded with what you want. Now, the hook.

I'm saying this for essentially three reasons. I'm not saying it because, you know, I believe maybe there's some of us, oh great, I'll go into my prayer closet, I'll go in alone and say, Lord, here I am, I love you, I got some needs, give me the numbers for the lottery, and we'll be partners. We'll split it right down the 90-10 line, you know, or something.

I get 90, you get the tithe, you know, or whatever on the thing, but only where this means, is that what it is? No, what I do believe, though, is that if I am truly making the Lord the delight of my life, that's what David said, delight thyself in the Lord, he'll give you the desires of your heart. Maybe when you're walking into prayer, you may go in there saying, Lord, I need to win the lottery. Or you may go in there, Lord, I want to meet Mr. Right.

I want him to meet me, and I want him to love me, and I want to meet him, and he hasn't noticed me, and there he is over there, Mr. Right, and he's, you point him out to me, or me to him, and zap him, you know, in the name of Jesus, you know, or whatever, you know, sort of a thing, get him. Or I want to meet Mrs. Right, and uh, Miss Right, don't mean Mrs. Right, she's already married, but the, uh, but I, you know, but I

believe that if we go into prayer, and we begin to really pray aright, we're responding to Matthew 5, I'm responding to, wait a minute, your competence, your love, your power, you've taken out my flesh. I believe many of my prayers, I find I'm praying, they're just the flesh praying, the flesh has just come up with, hey, get in a word for the lottery, you know, or whatever, get in a word for this.

But if somebody really understands prayer, and sits there, one of the most wonderful things that happens in prayer, if I'm making the Lord the light of my life, he'll give me the desires of my heart. And that isn't the thing that I may have initially desired when I went in, he'll change my desires. He'll change my heart, change who I am, and I'll get a yes, but it may not be to the specific, I'll end up with even a greater yes than I realized could have possibly been there.

And I do believe also that God loves to bless and reward those that do love him. He loved Abraham, he loved blessing. He loved blessing the children of Israel, he loved to look at them and say, you trust me.

He says, I'll give you cities you didn't build, houses you didn't build, vineyards you didn't plant, wells you didn't dig, utensils and silverware you didn't put in the house. I'll fill it for you. I'll take care of all your needs.

And he loves doing that. When they're his children and his family, there it comes in, we love him and we love to worship him and we love to seek him. He also loves, I believe, to bless us there with something that is even greater than all of that.

And I think that the greatest ultimate reward of heaven and of prayer really is, is that one day I begin to realize after you pray for a while and then it turns into months and turns into years and it turns into decades. And then after the years go by, how many prayers does he answer? How many times he got you out of trouble? How many trials has he solved? How many times where it was over in history are you still here and you've outlived him? And the wonderful thing that happens with time is initially oftentimes we go in, we've got needs and we've got wants and we've got desires and it's God help me. But one of the most wonderful things that I think ultimately prayer really does is one day you realize that's going to be taken care of.

That's a slam dunk. He's going to take care of those things. And you begin to realize, you know something, Lord, what I have come to the place is that what I want more than anything is just you.

I want your presence. I want your life. I just want to talk.

I wonder how often it is that somebody comes into the Lord with no list, no list, no wants, no needs. They just come, hello, fill me, lead me, I love you. Oh, there's probably some needs, I can't think of them right now next to you.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if that would be something that we would find the great desire of our life? I think that's one of the greatest things that there really is. When you look at the and you realize there's somebody like David who on one hand did have everything. David was one of these guys ultimately had the nation, he had the kingdom, hey anything a king could ultimately have, David had it kind of.

But yet at the same time David was also through the whole processes of life, he was so spoiled. He said in Psalm 16, he says, and thy presence is the fullness of joy. God, you tricked us.

You give us all this other stuff, but there's no real joy ultimately in it. It's in your presence. David said, I will be satisfied when I awaken thy likeness.

That's what I want. Moses was somebody, God just, you know, he finds him coming in and praying and you know, God, the children of Israel, they're murmuring against you, they're murmuring against me and God answers him and he works and he does wonderful things and he opens rivers, water out of rocks, man out of heaven, quail out of the sky, lift the rod, an army is destroyed, the earth shakes, the enemies fall in, whatever it is. I mean, God just answers prayer after prayer after prayer.

Gave him the law, gave him, gave him, gave him. And yet all it really did, the more he got, the more it did another thing to him. And finally, I believe Moses could look there and say, you know, I don't care about any of this.

Show me thy glory. God, I got to know you. What makes you tick? Psalm 103 around verse 7, it says that he made his way, his acts were made known unto the children of Israel, but the ways of God, he made them known unto Moses.

The children of Israel, they could go through and they could all tell you the acts of God. They could all say, you know, oh, I was, you should have seen the plagues, you should have seen the river open, you should have seen the water come out of that, you should have seen the manna fall out of the sky. Was it something? Wow.

And then they could all, the acts of God, they could all tell you what they were. They all knew it. But if then you turn, you said, now, why do you suppose he did it? The average one probably said, huh, you got me there.

But it says Moses knew the ways of God. He knew the heart of God. He knew what made God tick.

And the result of that is that Moses, he found himself looking at God and he says, show me thy glory. That's what I want. Everything else you've given me, all it's done is wet my appetite to say, I've got to know you.

How are you going to know what you're all about? And the more that somebody, you know, Isaiah, you know, I love it. Here, Isaiah, you look at him and you, the first part of the book of Isaiah, Isaiah seems to be a pretty angry guy. You pick up Isaiah chapter five.

In six times, woe unto they that join house unto house. Woe unto they that rise up early in the morning so they can go drink and party. Woe unto those that are wise in their own eyes.

Woe unto those who go and drink. And he goes on six times over and over. Woe unto you, Israel.

Woe unto you, good Baptist preacher, I suppose, you know, whenever you don't know what else to say, beat him, you know, or something. And he took them down. He took some really good shots at them.

And, you know, you can always find something wrong with society, wrong with people, something to say, woe unto you, you idiots. And we all say, yeah, you're right, you know, and it always is right, I suppose. But then in chapter six, he says, in the year the king Uzziah died, I saw the Lord high and lifted up.

His train filled the temple. And he says, and above it, you know, there's seraphim and with six wings and with twain they covered their face. When twain they covered their feet and with twain they did fly.

And they said, holy, holy, holy Lord God almighty and the glory of God that fills the earth. Then Isaiah looks around and he says, woe unto me. He says, I'm a man of unclean lips.

I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips. Then the Lord comes and he takes a call and he touches his lips and he does works within his life and within his heart. And so transformed him that Isaiah ended up seeing things of God that few other prophets ever dreamed of seeing.

There are a few chapters later unto us. A child is born. His son has given the government should be upon his shoulder and he should be called wonderful counselor, the mighty God, everlasting father, prince of peace of his kingdom.

He saw it. He saw Isaiah 53 as he wrote it. You know, all we like sheep have gone astray, but the Lord has laid upon him the iniquity of us all in God.

He wants to spoil us with himself. He wants to take our heart and just say, I love you. And I spoiled you.

If I died for you, I spoiled you. If he spared not his own son, he spoiled us and how we ought to be ones that we find there within our own heart. Lord, I want that with you.

Next week, we'll get into other aspects of prayer. There's a lot of things to pray about. And there's a lot of issues and needs in our life.

Yes. And we'll look at those. And they're all there.

And Jesus wants to get to him. But the first and the most, I think one of the most important things of prayer is do I just love my father? Do I love him in secret? Do I love to be in secret with him? Do I love to thank him for what he's done for me? Do I love, do I thank him for the price he paid for me? Do I thank him for the intercession he's done today? Do I thank him for the provision and the protection he's put upon my life and my family today? And to be able to just go aside and just say, Lord, thank you for all you mean. I don't know what it is that would make you be so obsessed with me, but you clearly are.

And what prayer really is, is it's the opportunity for the soul of man to be obsessed with God too. The soul of a human being to turn back and say, Lord, I love you too. I'm so grateful for what you've done.

Father, we thank you for your word. And we ask, Lord, that you would take it. And Lord, that we would find ourselves.

Lord, that prayer would never be a duty. It wouldn't be a responsibility. It wouldn't be something that I have to do this, or I'll be in trouble.

But rather, Lord, because the one that gets me out of trouble, because the one that loves me and forgives me and cares for me, the one who saves me from myself every day, I want to go and ask him to do it again today and be with me. And I want to talk to him and I want to thank him. And Father, I pray that you would teach us what it is to respond in prayer.

Lord, maybe even as we're just going on tonight, whether it's just being able to sing to you a psalm of gratitude, a psalm of thanksgiving, telling you, Lord, personally what you mean to us, wanting to build an intimate, deep, wonderful love relationship with you. That Lord, after all the trials and the issues and the struggles and the needs of life have long since come and gone, we will have realized all those things were just opportunities for us to come into your presence and realize who we'd be the rest of eternity with. Jesus, may we become obsessed with you and with loving you.

And Lord, may our hearts respond and may we find ourselves, Lord, continuing to grow. We ask it, Jesus, in your wonderful name. Amen.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/8/SID8715.mp3>
Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/don-mcclure/when-you-pray/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net