

# The Secret of Prayer

by Sam Caldwell

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**Scripture:** Matthew 6:6, Luke 18:7, Ephesians 3:14, Psalms 119:164, Acts 10:9, James 5:16, 1 Thessalonians 5:17, Colossians 4:2, Philippians 4:6, 1 Timothy 2:8

**Topics:** "Secret Prayer", "Personal Communion with God"

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## Description

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## Transcript

Chapter 6. I'll just admit to you all that I've been just crying all day since I woke up and I don't know what it's all about but I hope I can still preach. Let's read Matthew chapter 6 verses 5 through 8. This is the greatest teaching on prayer in the whole world. Verse 5 and when thou prayest thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets that they may be seen of men.

Verily I say unto you they have their reward. 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. But when ye pray use not vain repetitions as the heathen do for they think that they shall be heard for they're much speaking.

Be not ye therefore like unto them for your father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him. Amen. We'll pray once more.

Lord Jesus this is a two-week lesson and we ask you to speak to us both weeks and to teach us the secret of prayer Lord. Please make my words simple and clear and please help your dear bride today to be built

up into lively stones. Lord we know that you are here and we know that your word is better than life.

So please preach to us Jesus. We sit at the bottom of this mountain and we hear you Lord and we thank you for your words. Thank you for your friendship Lord Jesus.

Amen. The secret of prayer part one. This has to be a two-week message because I want to talk about verse six and there's there's so much in this verse and in a way it's true to say that our entire Christian life you saved by grace and your entire Christian life thereafter depends on this verse.

Not in a way of works but in a way of we have to live this out. I'm going to try to follow my notes. The context here is the Sermon on the Mount.

We have to remember this. Jesus is speaking to his disciples. He's telling us things we can do and things we are expected to do.

Hear me this is so important. He's not giving us laws that show us how much we need Christ. No.

He's giving us descriptions of the true Christian. I really want to emphasize this as we start okay brothers. Christ is not in the Sermon on the Mount giving us the law that's like a schoolmaster to drive us to Christ.

That's what it says in Galatians but that would be a misreading of the Sermon on the Mount. It's not the law driving us to Christ. It's Christ seated and seating us down before him as his disciples and saying you are following me now.

You have been saved by grace. You can do this. Do you see the difference? We can do the Sermon on the Mount.

The Sermon on the Mount doesn't drive us to get grace from Christ. It's rather he's given us grace and we can do this now. When he tells us stop doing sexual immorality in chapter 5 we can do it.

When he tells us be therefore perfect in chapter 5 verse 48 we can do it. When he tells us right here but thou when thou prayest we can do it. We can live this out.

Do you see what I mean? Now there's a very convicting question and it's the most easy way that any preacher could ever convict a crowd of Christians is simply to say how is your prayer life? Right? I don't have to say anything more do I? But this has to be the biggest help to your prayer life ever. If you've ever struggled here's your help right here in verse 6. Leonard Ravenhill said and I'm sure he was quoting somebody. He said the secret of prayer is what? Is secret prayer.

The secret of prayer is secret prayer. So I want to talk today about the secret of prayer and the secret of prayer is praying in secret. Verse 6 but thou when thou prayest enter into thy closet.

You see that's the secret of prayer right there. We're going to open this verse verse 6 up in two different weeks so I'm only going to give us three points today. There are seven phrases in verse 6 and we're going to take those phrases and look at them over the course of two weeks.

I just want to open up the first three phrases but as we get into this let me give you a few considerations and I want to just really meditate on this verse together. So think through this with me. Let's read verse 6 in full because that's what we're going to center around and all the verses we just read around it they all center on verse 6. Christ says right there but thou when thou prayest enter into thy closet and when thou

has shut thy door pray to thy father which is in secret and thy father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

It's so beautiful. It's so beautiful. Here are some considerations before we get to today's three points.

First how do you react to verse 6? There are three potential reactions. One is to say I don't care and it's very possible that there might be many Christians who read this and say well whatever I've heard it many times I don't care or an unconverted person which might say I don't care this doesn't even touch me at all. A second reaction would be been there done that.

I pray that nobody in this room has that reaction but you could look at verse 6 and say okay I know I've heard it Jesus says when you pray go into your closet and speak to your father in secret but I've tried it and it's been hard and it hasn't always worked and I'm not that good at it and we start to give a bunch of excuses right. A third reaction would be I want more of verse 6 and I pray that that's everyone's reaction in this room. The only healthy Christian reaction to verse 6 is to say I want more.

All of us could say I know I don't do it that much I know I don't maybe pray alone enough but the only Christian reaction the only healthy Christian reaction is to say I want more of verse 6. I want more of this reality right here. Also consider this brothers and sisters there is more of God in this verse than most people will ever know. There is more of God in this verse than most people will ever know and even than most Christians will ever encounter.

So if you learn the art of verse 6 what are some of the benefits you're gonna get? I wrote them down here purpose, wisdom, mystery, holiness, set apartness, adoption, childlikeness, speaking to your father, communion and finally what Samuel Rutherford calls the circle of glory. If you step into verse 6 then you live this life that's a circle of glory where God is glorious and he gives glory into your life and you speak back to him and he speaks back into your life and this this circle starts to happen. There's more in this verse of God than most people will ever know.

And finally consider this the most helpful thing in your prayer life ever will be to take this verse into your prayer closet and actually do it. I was trying to count how many books I have on prayer maybe you would know better sweet something like 60 I think and I think I've read maybe 35 or 40 of them but none of them help or even come close to helping as much as simply reading verse 6 right here and going into your closet and pray. There are some amazing books on prayer out there but none of them come close to doing verse 6. I hope I'm starting to make a point.

Thomas Brooks wrote a whole book this long on verse 6 of Matthew 6. It's an incredible incredible book. Pick it up and read it. It's called The Secret Key to Heaven.

Thomas Brooks said this, the power of religion and godliness lives thrives or dies as closet prayer lives thrives or dies. Godliness never rises to a higher pitch than when men keep closest to their closets. Everybody hear that? Finally he says every man is that really which he is secretly.

Consider that every one of us is that in truth which he is in the prayer closet. Or again as Leonard Ravenhill said, no man is greater than his prayer life. It will humble you if you really consider that.

No man is greater than his prayer life. I don't know how far we'll get here but let's read verse 6 and we're going to take three phrases. Verse 6 consists of seven phrases but we're going to look at three today and the other four next week.

But thou when thou prayest enter into thy closet and when thou hast shut thy door. Let's try to get that far with the Lord's help today. Three things I want you to know about true prayer.

True Christian prayer is different, it is expected, and it is deliberate. It is different, it is expected, and it is deliberate. First phrase right there.

Verse 6 but thou. Consider this Christians. Christ looks at us.

He looks at his disciples and he says but you. He's saying that there's something special about us. Isn't that very sweet? Isn't it sweet to think that Jesus Christ himself looks at you and says but you, but you.

He thinks something very special about us and what he's saying right here is that Christian prayer is unlike all other prayer. It's unlike the prayer mentioned in verse 5 and it's unlike the prayer mentioned in verse 7. Look with me at verse 5. We have to make sure our Lord says he looks at us and says but you. In that but he's saying you are different from these other people I'm describing.

So let's look at these other people he's describing. Look at verse 5 with me. And when thou prayest thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets that they may be seen of men.

So what sort of prayer do the hypocrites pray? They pray show-off prayer. Show-off prayer. And he says verily I say unto you they have their reward.

And you remember what I told you all that Christ means when he says they have their reward. I mentioned it last week. What he means is they have their reward in this lifetime and then comes hell.

That's always the stakes of when our Lord says that. It's such a cutting phrase. They have their reward.

Meaning yeah let him take it. Let him enjoy it for right now. Some people will praise them.

Some people will hear them praying in this in this amazing show-off way and they'll get a little bit of reward from man and then they'll go to hell. Christ says but you but you you're different. So the first thing we have to notice is that we don't do show-off prayer.

Right brothers? We don't do show-off prayer. The second thing look at verse 7. But when ye pray use not vain repetitions as the heathen do for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Okay the second thing is we don't do empty prayer.

Right? What is our Lord talking about? Vain repetitions. Much speaking. We do not pray that way.

Our Lord looks at us and says but you don't do it. Don't do it. Don't pray empty.

Don't pray repetitious. Has anyone experienced either of those two types of prayer? I've sat in prayer meetings where I've heard people preach in prayer and that's despicable. Let us not ever do that.

I love every single one of you and I've heard all of you pray beautiful prayers. So I'm not talking about anybody here. But when we pray we got to pray to the Father.

Right? We just pray. We talk to the Father. There are people who get in a prayer meeting and you know they're not talking to the Father.

They're talking to you. They're trying to preach to you. They're trying to give a mini sermon with their eyes closed.

And that's hypocrisy. And we cannot do that. And that's why our Lord looks at us and he says but you you're different.

I love when he says that to us. What about laundry list prayer? Has anybody ever heard a laundry list prayer? Where someone's just going through the motions and I know I got to pray for them and I know I got to say this and I know I got to do this and I know I got to do that. That's what he's talking about in verse seven, vain repetitions.

And he says, Jesus says, but you, you're not like that. Don't do it. And I'm trying to check myself even today as we're praying.

We got to check ourselves. Am I just praying what I think I should say and in Jesus name and just say the next thing. He says, No, you're not like that.

You're not like that. What else? I've heard people pray too long in public because they're praying too short in private. Has anyone ever heard that? You can hear it on someone when all of a sudden they're in public and they're praying nice and long and they're praying through all the things they need to pray through and you want to stop them and say it sort of sounds like you haven't prayed through any of that in private.

Those who pray much in private will pray short and effective targeted prayers when they're with other people because they know they know I'm in a different zone now. I've been praying. I prayed this morning.

I prayed around my lunchtime at work. I prayed already today. Now I'm with my brothers and sisters.

Now I pray something that's pungent and targeted and that helps other people and that edifies. Amen. So let's just ask this one more time.

Is our prayer life show-offy? Is your prayer life empty and repetitious? Jesus says in verse 6, But thou, just stop it. Don't be like that. Don't pray like that.

What's our first point then brothers and sisters? Christian prayer is different. Isn't that beautiful? Christian prayer is different. Did you know that the Muslims pray? Did you know that the Catholics pray? Did you know that liberal Christians who aren't Christians, they supposedly pray? But Christ says but you, you're different.

You're different. Why am I emphasizing this? Because this should drive you to pray. It's like what? I am one of the only people in this world who truly gets to pray? We ought then to take advantage of that, shouldn't we? It's like I've talked to Muslims and they say we pray the prayers.

You talk to Catholics and they say we pray the prayers. We don't say we pray the prayers. We pray.

We actually speak to our Father. So we ought to take advantage of that, right? We ought to say Lord looks at me and says but you Sam, you pray. Sorry I'm getting worked up here but I mean we pray.

So let's pray. We're different. I mean that word right there, verse 6, that sets us apart, doesn't it? That just pushes us over here into this but you, you're saved by the blood.

You speak to God in the closet. You have a private relationship to God. You're different from other people. Not because you're special but because He elected you and He saved you and He fills you and He guides you and He tells you go into your closet. I love it. I love it.

Secondly, Christian prayer is expected. Verse 6, but thou, when thou prayest. Oh that's so convicting.

He doesn't say but thou if you pray or but thou when you start praying again. No, right here He says but you when you pray. Our Lord Jesus Christ expects every single one of us, every one of us Christians, that we're praying.

Again, He doesn't say when you start praying again. He says when you pray. He expects it and He repeats this phrase three times.

Look at verse 5. And when thou prayest. Look at verse 6. But thou when thou prayest. Look at verse 7. But when ye pray.

So would you conclude that Jesus expects us to be praying? I think so. He expects us to be praying and this is really one of the best tests of salvation ever. Is your life marked by secret prayer? In Luke chapter 18 verse 7 Christians are called this.

Listen. We are called his elect who cry to him day and night. That's a title of Christians.

You know the word Christian is only used two times in the New Testament. But we're described as believers. We're described right here as his elect who cry to him day and night.

Could that be said of you? Have you cried to him this morning? Will you cry to him tonight? Do you cry to God day and night? Does it define you? I'm elect. I'm chosen and I have a prayer life. That's Luke 18 verse 7. This man Thomas Brooks says, listen, that man is lost.

That man is cursed who can find time for anything but none to meet with God in his closet. Thomas Brooks is laying it down. He's saying if you can find time for everything else in the day, but you can't make five minutes to go to God in private, you're lost.

You're not saved. You're cursed. We should take that very seriously because that's how our Lord speaks in verse six.

Look at it one more time. But thou, when thou prayest. He expects all Christians to be praying Christians.

There's no class of Christians who's prayerless Christians. All Christians are praying Christians. And now let's emphasize one more word.

But thou, when. Get that word, when. Do you have a time when you pray? When is your when? Let me say that again because it's a funny phrase.

When is your when? When is your when? When's the time when you pray? Someone tell me, when did Daniel pray? What? A little louder? Amen. It's a good bluegrass song that reminds you of that. He prayed to the Lord every morning, noon, and night.

Daniel prayed three times a day and you could find him. He was going to be there on his knees three times a day. How many times did David pray per day? In Psalm 119, he says seven times.

I prayed to the Lord seven times. We can set a little reminder on our phone to beat seven times in the day. Amy Carmichael would pray morning and evening and often she had such bad various physical problems that she had to get the young women that she was working with, she had to get them to read John 14 for her and she would call that her prayer.

She couldn't even speak by the end of the day. She was so exhausted. But she would pray every morning and she would pray every evening.

Keith McLeod, an incredible Canadian evangelist, he would pray at 10 p.m. That was his when. When his whole family and his wife had gone to sleep. That's hard because you might have been up since 5 in the morning.

You might have been up since 5.30, since 6. But here he is, Keith McLeod up in Saskatchewan, Canada, and he's praying at 10 p.m. And he would say he'd even let that fly. If the Lord could keep him up, he'd let it go. One night he let it go all the way till 5 a.m. But his when his time was 10 p.m. E.M. Bounds.

Anyone know what his time was? It was 4 a.m. Right. E.M. Bounds toward the end of his life said, you know, I've wasted so much time. And he started giving the Lord from 4 a.m. I believe it was five hours after that.

William Seymour decided to give five hours per day. He didn't have a specific time, but he knew it was always going to be five hours. That was his when.

Always five hours. And what did that produce? The Lord used that to produce the Azusa Street Revival. Thousands and thousands being saved.

Smith Wigglesworth said that he hardly ever prayed for 30 minutes, but he hardly ever went 30 minutes without praying. You all catch that? He hardly ever prayed for 30 minutes straight, but he hardly ever went 30 minutes without praying. Right.

So his when was I'm just going to catch it every 30 minutes throughout the day. I'm going to catch it whenever the Lord puts it on my heart. I'm going to catch it.

I'm going to pray. That was his when. Let me ask you again.

Prayer is expected. If you're a Christian, you do pray. If you don't pray, you're not a Christian.

But when is your when? And if you don't have one resolved this week, make one. If it's 10 minutes before you're out the door, but you're in silence and you've got a cup of coffee, that's your when. Do it.

And the Lord tells you, but you when you pray. And let's end with one more point. We've said Christian prayer is different.

Isn't that glorious how different it is? We've said, secondly, Christian prayer is expected when you pray. And finally, Christian prayer is deliberate. Look again at first six.

But now when thou prayest enter into thy closet and when thou has shut thy door. Christian prayer finally is deliberate. We'll go through the rest of this verse next week.

Christian prayer is deliberate. It's deliberate. It's deliberate.

What does he say here? You have to get these phrases. He says, when you pray, enter into your closet. And when you have shut your door, he's giving us a very clear and a very easy recipe.

But it's so deliberate, you have to actually do it. What is a closet? It's the inner room in one's house. And you can figure out whatever that is.

It's the inner room. And it's a it's a room that has a door, isn't it? Right. Go into your closet.

And when you have shut the door, so somehow you've got to be able to shut the door. This is the most courageous thing that any Christian can do. And you all can challenge me on that.

You can say, no, it's more courageous to do this good work or to go to the abortion clinic or to do this good work or to stand up for these rights or to stand up for these rights. No, this is the most courageous thing that any Christian could do. You find a private room and you close the door and you get alone just with your father.

That's the most courageous thing. That's the highest calling in the Christian life. I truly believe that.

And I hope you come to believe that. And moreover, this right here, this part of it is the most neglected commandment in the whole Bible, I would say, to hear Jesus say, but you, when you pray, go into a room and shut the door. That is the most neglected command in the whole Bible.

Here's a question for us. Is this a literal command or is this a principle? Think with me, brothers, right here, enter into your closet. And when you have shut the door, is it a literal command or is it a principle? I would say it's both.

If you can get as literal about this as possible, then do it. In our little apartment, we all have seen it, right? We have a little closet in our room. I actually enter into that closet and I actually shut the door and there's a ton of clothes.

So you've got to get under the clothes and you've got to pray right there. Right. If you can do it, if you have a place in your house or a place at your workplace or in the bathroom or out in your car, there's a place you can go and you can shut the door.

Then do it as literally as possible. Amen. But secondly, we know that this is a principle.

We know from comparing scripture with scripture that there's a principle and not just a literal command here. How do we know that? When Christ was alone in the wilderness, Matthew chapter four, did he go into the inner room and shut the door? Anybody? No, right. No, there wasn't a door out in the wilderness.

When Peter was on the housetop in the book of Acts, praying and catching visions from the Lord, did he go into the inner room and shut the door? No. When Paul is bowing his knee in Ephesians three or when he meets with other believers and acts on the sand there and they bow down. Did he go into the inner room and close the door? No, they're just trying to make the point, right? If we can follow it, literally do it.

But if you can't, then catch the principle from this verse. And that would be this prayer is deliberate. Prayer is deliberate.

You have to make it special. You have to set yourself apart. You have to get alone with God.

And again, that could be in more of a principle of a prayer closet than just a literal prayer closet. Let me ask you this as we close. Where is your where? I've asked you when is your when right now, where is your where? Where is your closet? Where is your inner room? I bet everybody in this room could tell me a place or two where you've prayed.

But would you go home from this sermon and make it your closet? Isaac in the Old Testament, where did he pray? He went out into the field. Susanna Wesley, does anyone know where she would pray as she had children filling up the whole room? I don't know how many children she had. Tons of children.

Where was her prayer closet? Anyone tell me? Amen. It was underneath her apron. She would go and sit in her chair and she pulled the apron over her head and she tell the children they're going to get spanked if they didn't treat that as her prayer closet.

Wigglesworth, Smith Wigglesworth, where was his prayer closet? He walked straight through the city and he'd speak in tongues. He would just walk in through the city and he was able to shut it all out. Not all of us can do that, but he could.

William Seymour, where was his prayer closet? In Azusa Street. It was a big wooden crate that he put near the pulpit and he would hide under it right here and he would pray. Jonathan Edwards, where was his prayer closet? The beautiful woods of Western Massachusetts.

He would go out there. There were these beech trees and these birch trees out there. So beautiful in these woods.

I grew up near there. My grandparents had a place in Cummington, Mass. Edwards would go out there and pray and that's where he felt his heart strangely warmed.

That's where he would have his heart melted by the love of God. I'll give you some of my prayer closets. When I swim, the minute I get under the water, it's like I'm in a prayer closet and I can talk to God.

When I drive in the car, that's been one of the places where I've just yelled out and screamed out my biggest prayers. When I walk in the woods, I'm sure many of you pray in the woods. The shower, wonderful prayer closet.

OK, so I've told you Christian prayer is different. Christian prayer is expected. And finally, Christian prayer is deliberate.

And I want to ask you again, where do you go? Where do you go to pray? I'm going to end in this way. You all might think I'm very silly. It's just a few of us here.

I want to beg you all to take this message seriously. And I'm dead serious. I want to beg you all to do secret prayer.

I know that this is a thing that we can all fail in so much, but get back to it. OK. I wrote down some things here.

There are some things that are not going to happen unless we engage in secret prayer, holiness, salvation among our loved ones that we've been praying for. It's not going to happen apart from secret prayer. We need to bend our knee and we need to get alone and pray for these people.

Advancement of the kingdom and finally, true Christian love and true Christian sweetness, that stuff only develops when you get alone with the Lord. I'm on my knees to simply beg you all, take your prayer life more seriously. If you've scanned your mind today, you can say, I'm not doing it.

Then start doing it. Go home and start doing it. If you scan your mind, you say, maybe I'm doing 10 minutes.

Give the Lord 30 minutes. You can do it. If you say, I never pray at work, do it for five minutes at work in the bathroom.

You can. If I debased myself enough in front of you all, I'm actually begging you to do more in your prayer life. That is where we advance the kingdom.

Amen. Someone want to pray? I'll pray for us. Lord, we love you.

And I love my brothers and my sisters. And we love that your scripture is so clear. And I do ask Lord that my words have not been at all hurtful.

Lord, I ask that our, these words have built people up and Lord, I just know that there are certain things we cannot do unless we get down and pray to you, Lord. And I know that's the engine of this church. And I know that's the engine of future revival in Portland.

And I know Lord, that's the engine of our families being healthy and successful and our children being saved. Lord, I know it's not going to happen unless we get down on our knees and we pray and Lord, I know there are going to be rough days ahead, so we need to pray there. And I know Lord that there are going to be times when you pour out your blessing.

So we need to be praying and we need to be thanking our father in secret. So help us please, Lord. We consecrate ourselves to thee, oh Lord.

We ask you to take our prayer lives and make them gold. Amen.

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