

Closet prayer

When Martin Luther's puppy happened to be at the table, he looked for a morsel from his master, and watched with open mouth and motionless eyes; he (Martin Luther) said, 'Oh, if I could only pray the way this dog watches the meat! All his thoughts are concentrated on the piece of meat. Otherwise he has no thought, wish or hope.'

Matthew 6: 5 – 8 And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

1) Closet prayer is sincere

- The word that Jesus used for hypocrite means an actor on a stage. Someone who merely pretends to be someone or something else.
- Hypocrites are never authentic or sincere. They put on an outer show for those around them.
 - They love the praise of men more than the praise of God.
- Jesus gave an example of a hypocrite praying in the temple
 - Luke 18: 9 – 14 To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable: "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.'
"But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'
"I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."
- The root problem with hypocrisy is pride, and pride never sees its need for God.
 - Pride always puts on an outer show of religion for personal gain.
 - Pride always seeks self-glory rather than the glory of God.
 - Pride will do as much publicly as possible
 - Pride compares itself with others
- The humble person seeks God in the closet where no one but God can see them.
- Closet prayer is for the sincere seeker after God.
 - The person has no pretences and acknowledges their own state of fallenness before a holy God.
 - There is nothing to be proud about in our natural state. We're completely at the mercy of God.
 - We often don't know what to pray for or how to pray. Even in our prayers we are dependant on God to lead and help us.

2) Closet prayer is seen by God

- God sees what man doesn't see.
- God hears what man doesn't hear
 - God heard the sobbing of Hagar and Ishmael in the wilderness
 - God heard the unspoken prayers of Hannah for a son, although she was judged by Eli the priest as drunk.
 - God heard the cry of Elijah's heart under the broom bush after he had fled from Jezebel and didn't give him what he prayed for – death.
- Life is full of distractions.
 - Distractions vary from person to person
 - Distractions can be people, things to do, phone, TV, books, work.
 - What are your main distractions that keep you from intimate time with God?
- Closet prayer is free from distractions
 - Set your time with God in the closet apart without distractions
 - Sit somewhere where the things that distract you won't be able to affect you during your prayer time.
 - If it's your phone then switch your phone off or on silent and put it somewhere out of reach.
 - Write down tasks that you need to do before your prayer time so that you don't have to worry about forgetting them during your prayer time.
- It's possible to sit for an hour but being so distracted that you haven't connected with God at all
- God wants our hearts to be fully devoted to him. He wants us to be completely focused on him.
 - He sees, but he is a jealous God and doesn't want to share our affections with anything else.

3) Closet prayer rests in the presence of God

- We are so often full of words when we pray that we let our words run out of our mouths like a column of ants seeking food.
- We have our lists and run through them, often to let people know that we're praying for them. However, such prayers are so shallow that they're often meaningless.
- God doesn't need our meaningless ramblings when we come before him. He already knows everything we need, and the needs of those we're praying for, before we even ask him.
- What God wants us to do is come before him, focus on him, and find our rest in him.
 - Come to him with a submissive and teachable heart to align ourselves to his will so that when we do request anything it will be according to his will and not ours.
 - Jesus went to a quiet place in Gethsemane and prayed "not my will but yours be done".
- It is so easy to pray selfish prayers that seek after the meeting of our own needs, getting us out of difficulties, etc. that we don't yield to what God wants of and for us in those situations.
- Being in the presence of God may take us to places in our lives that go completely contrary to our fleshly desires, but they yield the greatest peace because they are right before God.
- Are you resting in the presence of God in your prayer life?