



DAY 2

PRAYING IN SECRET

" Whenever you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites, because they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by people. I assure you: They've got their reward! But when you pray, go into your private room, shut your door, and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. "

Matthew 6:5-6

Today we are going to spend some time in guided prayer. I am convinced we learn more about praying and become better at it through practice.

Because of our human condition and because of the enemy's work, you may be thinking, *Not today. I don't have time to stop for this.* Maybe something in your spirit just doesn't feel like praying. Every time that happens to me, sirens go off in my head and red warning flags begin waving in my heart. If I don't feel like praying, I have learned that means I really need to pray, and soon. If you have those sirens going off in your head, make a concerted effort to push through your apathy or distraction and lean into this time of prayer.

Find a place you can be alone with God in quiet and secret. Take your Bible and a pen. Begin by reading Matthew 6:5-6.

When I finally get into my closet to pray, it seems like my mind is always racing. Sometimes I'm even out of breath from the pace it took to get here. I always want to begin my prayer time with my heart focused on the glory of God, but sometimes I can't get there immediately. I have to ask for cleansing. I ask Him to settle my heart so I can speak and hear and reflect on Him.

Spend the first part of your prayer time in surrender. I usually lay on my face down here with the shoeboxes. In these surrender prayers I even hold out my hands to show God that I want to put down all the distractions I hauled into the closet. When I am here in secret, only God sees. I don't feel weird or hokey. This is my prayer offering to God and I want even my physical posture to reflect my heart. Do whatever it takes to place yourself in secret before the Lord. This is your special, secret time with God.

Turn in your Bible to Psalm 29 and read it out loud. Now read Psalm 33. There in your closet, pray back to God your praise and your worship for all the attributes you just read. Look back at the words if you need to and specifically thank God as He leads you.

Go back to Psalm 33:20-22.

- Commit anew that you will wait for God in all your requests.
- Affirm that your hope is in Him.
- Ask for His unfailing love to rest upon you.

Turn to Psalm 51:1-12 and read that passage to God.

- Spend time praying through each individual transgression that the Holy Spirit brings to mind.
- Ask for cleansing and purity.
- Ask for strength in future temptation.
- Confess anything that hinders you in your relationship with God.
- Receive God's pardon as a gift. Thank Him.

You may already keep a prayer journal of ongoing requests to God. This is a great way to record God's faithfulness. If not, write your requests below.

Spend a few minutes praying for each request individually. Cover each of these needs with your desire for God's will to be done.

Do not lose heart in your prayers. Remember we just made a commitment to wait on God. In our waiting, we pray until the answer has been given. Ask God for all that you need. You know part of what you need and God knows the rest.

Next pray through the Lord's Prayer:

*“ Our Father in heaven,
Your name be honored as holy.
Your kingdom come.
Your will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And do not bring us into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one’ ” (Matthew 6:9-13).*

We have access to God because of the work of Jesus Christ. I try to teach my children to pray in the name of Jesus. Our power comes from no one else. It gives honor to our Savior when we acknowledge His sacrifice and pray in His name.

Just a little note to moms—Do the best you can. God knows your heart. Just stopping to lie on the floor in your bedroom to pray while the kids watch a video or play beside you is a beautiful act of obedience. Right this minute I am lying on the floor in my walk-in closet. The door is closed and my laptop is in here with me. All the kids are home for the summer. It's raining today, so they're inside. The boys have three friends over, and they're playing down the hall. I hear the phone ringing. Someone just knocked on the front door. The point is—we just have to pray anyway.

At least four people came in the closet while I was praying. "Sorry, Mom, but can we go to Caleb's house?" "What time is my appointment at the eye doctor?" "Why is your computer in here while you're praying?" I imagine God smiles. We're praying. He's listening and teaching little hearts at the same time. What a beautiful offering.

Tomorrow we're talking about fasting in secret. Don't skip it, okay? I am planning on fasting solid food in secret tomorrow (except you're reading about it later). I'd like for you to fast too. From what can you fast? One or two meals? Television? The telephone? What can you leave off tomorrow as we prepare to seek the heart of God through His call to fast?

Our fasting is supposed to have purpose. We'll fast together tomorrow, but start praying now about your individual purpose in fasting.


DAY 3

FASTING IN SECRET

At the end of yesterday's study I asked you to think about what you could fast from today. If you forgot about it, now it's time to decide. If you're doing this study in a group, they will know you are fasting, but other than those women, keep it a secret.

I remember having fasting days in seminary. Nobody called to ask me if I'd like to fast that particular day. But we were learning the discipline by practicing. The campus fast wasn't required, but it was strongly suggested. We all fasted together and whined a little, but, even so, God met with us powerfully. Sometimes we only grow in the disciplines of obedience because someone pushed us. As students we came to realize the value of the discipline and then began choosing it on our own.

From what have you chosen to fast today? _____



"When you fast, put oil on your head, and wash your face, so that you do not show your fasting to people but to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you."

Matthew 6:17-18