

“SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING YOUR DAILY QUIET TIME”

“Lessons to Carry to the Prayer Closet”

Let me begin this vignette with a clear lesson that has glared at me from my Quiet Time sessions in the book of Job recently, then follow the opening lesson with a series of lessons that were suggested by the first one.

First, when going to your “prayer closet” (Matthew 6:6), *remember who you aren’t!* Somewhere I saw this quote, “There is only one God per universe, and in *this* universe, *I am not He!*” The very nature of sin is to put myself in God’s place and try to occupy His throne and play His role. “You shall be like God,” was Satan’s first temptation, and he still utilizes it to his own advantage today. What a relief it is to settle the issue of Who is God! None of us is as important as all of us tend to think we are. Someone wisely said, “If you think of yourself ‘more highly than you ought to think,’ perform this simple exercise. Get a large bowl, fill it with water, thrust your finger into the water, remove it, and see how big a hole is left in the water.” When this issue is settled for me in favor of truth, incalculable burdens are lifted from my shoulders. I no longer have to assume sole responsibility to govern myself, fret alone over my responsibilities and my schedule, and protest over barriers which seem insurmountable and burdens which seem unbearable. He is God, and He is *omni-competent!* I am delivered from the stupidity and sin of replacing Him with my own pygmy effort.

Second, when going to your “prayer closet,” *remember who you are!* Reinforce the first lesson by remembering that you are a limited, dependent man, and that the Lord Almighty is the sole and only God. Then take a giant step in the admission of who you are *before God, in Christ*. If you are a twice-born child of God, gigantic derivative realities define and describe you.

One is that you are a child of God both by birth (which has given you a new nature) and by adoption (which has given you a new standing and new privileges).

Another is that you are indwelt by a “Stay-within Friend,” the Holy Spirit of God. Remember that your body is the “Holy of Holies” (the exact meaning of the word translated “temple” in I Corinthians 6:19) in which God literally dwells. Remember that you are a perpetual carrier of the Presence of God in the mediating Presence of the Holy Spirit. You may feature yourself going into your prayer closet to *meet* God, but the truth is that you are *carrying Him into the prayer closet* and you are going there to be reminded of the possibility of intimate relationship with Him *all of the time*. Without the regular encounters with Him there, you tend to forget that He is in you and with you wherever you go.

A third reality that derives from your new birth is that you have been sealed in Christ by the Holy Spirit, and thus may have full assurance that you are secure in Christ and will be delivered fully safe to Heaven when your journey on earth is complete. Also,

simultaneous with that sealing, you were also given the “down-payment of the Spirit” to show you what is coming in “future installments” and to guarantee that you *will receive* all future increments of the inheritance that became yours when you were saved.

These truths provide only a beginning of “taking our inventory” as Christians.

Third, when going to your prayer closet, *remember what you have—both negatively and positively*. On the liability side of the ledger, the negative side, you still have *the flesh, with its horrible capability of acting like itself*. The flesh or “self-curl” that remains in you after you are saved is like a Jack-in-the-box just waiting to be released in your experience. The flesh has been described as “the beast in the basement,” waiting for someone to open the cellar door and invite the beast to rise up and show off in the rest of the house—and in the neighborhood nearby. The “works of the flesh” are devastating in the believer’s life, but they are always possible.

The presence of the flesh, which is “Satan’s handle” in your life, allows the continuing capacity to commit flagrant sin at any time. When you hold that handle out toward Satan, he will be happy to take hold of it and drag you around at his will. Many a Christian has sadly lamented after some horrible sin, “I can’t believe I did that,” but his lament only reveals that he has not understood the flesh or has not been wise enough to keep the cellar door closed on God’s terms.

On the “assets” side of the ledger, the positive understanding of what you have in Christ, the inventory list is great and glorious. I will mention just one item: you have the imminent companionship of Jesus. “I will never leave you nor forsake you,” Jesus said in Hebrews 13:5. Grammatically, this sentence in Greek has *five negatives* in it! What pains Jesus has taken us to assure and reassure us of His unbroken Presence with us!

An atheistic college student posted on his door a sign which arrogantly said, “God is nowhere!” But some simple Christian rearranged the letters in the announcement so that it read, “God is *now here!*” God is at the prayer closet door, ready to host your coming as you enter to meet with Him. Magnify His Presence, and then enjoy it as you linger with Him throughout your Quiet Time.

Furthermore, the Holy Spirit has told you in His Book that “all things are yours” (I Corinthians 3:21, 22). In that text, Paul then proceeds to give an itemized list of your possessions in Christ. The list is by no means *exhaustive*. In fact, it is certainly not the list of possessions any Christian would have devised, and this shows us how different God’s evaluation is from ours. The eight items in the I Corinthians 3:21, 22 list are the most important things in the range of human experience, but no sinner will easily admit this. A Christian’s wealth only shows up *as wealth* in the light of eternity—or in the light of Heaven’s wisdom prevailing in a Christian’s heart. Every Christian is absolutely and boundlessly rich with unfading and imperishable wealth, but he must “read his inventory” on a regular basis to be reminded of his riches.

Finally, when going to your “prayer closet,” *remember where you are.* Let me quickly remind you of your spiritual location, wherever you may be geographically.

First, you are *in Christ.* Your residence is in Christ, your primary relationships are in Christ, your resources are in Christ, etc., etc. You are *sphered* in Christ, *surrounded* by Christ, *secured* in Christ, *safe* in Christ, *supplied* in Christ, etc., etc.

Second, you are *in the Body of Christ.* You are a “member in particular” of His very Body, the Church. You are so attached to Christ that you cannot be dismembered from Him. Furthermore, you are enlisted in the design He has for His Body. Just as you, an invisibility personality living in a visible body, perform and reveal yourself through your body, so does Jesus perform and reveal Himself through His Body. And *you are a crucial part of His performance and His self-revelation.* Celebrate this when you approach the door of your prayer closet, and praise Him for such an arrangement!

Third, and far more soberly, you are *still in the wicked world that crucified Christ.* Remember that this world “is no friend of grace,” and that this world is both one of your leading obstacles in being a Christian, but also one of your leading opportunities for sharing Him with desperately lost people. The world is both your leading challenge in practicing your faith in Christ, your leading opportunity to make Him known, and your best workshop to magnify Him.

Finally, you are *in a circle of brothers, sisters and friends,* with whom you are to share mutual support as a Christian. Pray for those you remember as you bow at God’s throne, and ask Him to make you a great support to each of them, and to allow each of them to be a great support to you.

Let me conclude by paraphrasing a paragraph from a book I am presently reading. Psalm 62:8 says, “Pour out your hearts to Him, for God is our refuge.” Human hearts tend to be full of many things, things such as joy, anger, peace, weariness, anxiety, strength, bitterness, trust,.... To pour out the heart means to pour out not just some of these elements before the Lord, but all of them, the ‘bad’ as well as the ‘good.’ When we pray, everything in our hearts must be poured out to the Lord like a drink offering, so that the heart is kept empty for Him. You see, God comes Himself and brings His blessings to fill us, but He often finds our hearts already filled with many, many things and He cannot fulfill His purpose. “Pour out your heart to Him” so it will be empty to receive Him and all He brings.