

The **BATTLE PLAN for PRAYER**

FROM BASIC TRAINING TO TARGETED STRATEGIES

PART III: CONDITIONING

LESSON 8

YOUR HEART: Secret vs. Show

The secret things belong to the LORD our God. (Deut. 29:29)

Scripture reveals that the primary way Jesus prayed was in secret. Though we have a few accounts of short prayers He prayed publicly, as well as one longer, high-priestly prayer (John 17), His routine was to either rise early to be alone in prayer (Mark 1:35), send every one away in the afternoon and escape to a solitary place (Mark 6:46), or stay up late and pray after the others had gone to sleep (Luke 6:12).

In contrast, the religious leaders of the day were the exact opposite. Their pretentious prayer times were performances. They wanted to impress the crowds and convince everyone they were holy, spiritual giants. Jesus just called them hypocrites; in other words, actors on a stage. Consider what Jesus said in Matthew 6:5 (HCSB): "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!"

Now let's acknowledge, everyone enjoys being loved and respected. It feels good to think those in our world think the world of us. But while being valued as a person. does have some healthy benefits, our faith and service toward God should always be a matter of humility and sincerity. And it should always be aimed at our awesome God, our Audience of One--and not for the fickle and fleeting praise of mere men.

This is not to say that praying in public is wrong. Leading others in prayer is sometimes the most loving and Christlike thing you can do. Moses, Joshua, David, Solomon, even Jesus Himself prayed before large groups of people when necessary. But they were leading others to focus on God, not to impress or fish for praise. Nor were they *afraid* to pray in public--demonstrating another form of pride--out of a fear of man. Those in the first century who "loved the praise of men more

than the praise of God" (John 12:43 NKJV) were afraid to publicly identify with Christ in case it brought frowns from the Pharisees.

Regardless of what we do, we should be dead to self and let pleasing God be the goal. As the apostle Paul said: "Am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ" (Gal. 1:10). We must remember that God alone created us and owns us. God alone is holy, reigning supreme, and He knows us better than we know ourselves. He alone answers prayer and will judge us one day. His opinion is the only One that matters. Seeking and pleasing Him above all should be our highest priority.

This mind-set should always affect how we pray. The reverence, humility, and sincerity with which we approach God should be reflected in how we speak to Him regardless if anyone else is listening. We must check our motives and crucify any pride whenever we are praying.

Hypocrisy must go. Fear of man must go. Leading others in prayer is a serious responsibility, never meant to spotlight the person praying but to place the focus on God alone.

So while public praying with the right motives can be important and powerful in the life of believers, Jesus' statement "when you pray" implies that your default, daily prayer life should be to "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" (Matt. 6:6 HCSB).

Whereas united, corporate prayer can be extremely powerful in the church, Jesus implies here that getting alone and praying to God in secret is fundamental and foundational. Anyone praying for show already has the only reward they will get. Whatever feeble notoriety the audience gives is the full benefit of their "performance," not the blessings or provision from God.

In fact, God hates pride. "Everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord; Assuredly, he will not be unpunished" (Prov. 16:5). He despises the hypocrisy of those who seek their own glory while pretending to give it to Him (Proverbs 8:13; Matthew 15:8).

Secret prayer puts you in a situation where you can

remove distractions, focusing all your attention on adoring God, confessing sin to Him, thanking Him for His blessings and guidance, presenting your needs and requests to Him. It helps you stay humble, be real, and seek no other reward for your time with Him other than knowing, loving, and glorifying Him more. Secret prayer helps remove selfish motives. It's just you and God. "Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you" (I Pet. 5:6-7).

But there's also another benefit. Jesus said in Matthew 6:6 that your Father *is in* the secret place, *sees* what is done for Him in secret, and *rewards* what is done in secret. Since God says He is present in the secret place, why would we not want to meet with Him there? And who doesn't want God to reward them? To respond to their requests? If the Son of God primarily sought His Father in secret and then commanded us to do it, why wouldn't we?

Our answers to these questions expose our hearts. Because if we find ourselves praying in front of others more than in secret, we're likely chasing the approval of men. Even if we do pray in secret but go out and brag about it, our pride again is exposed. But when no eyes are on us but the Lord's, and no ears are there to hear us but His, our motives are more pure.

Your true heart is best revealed in secret. In other words, *the secret you is the real you*. It's what you think when no one knows or hears. It's what you do when no one sees. The Proverbs, speaking wisely about a person's human nature, says, "As he thinks in his heart, so is he" (Prov. 23:7 NKJV). That's why seeking God in secret is so powerful. It tests us and tells on us.

Getting alone with God is one way of saying, "I choose You above others. I want to seek and know You and hear from You more than anyone else." When we give Him our full attention—to love Him, to worship Him, to read His Word, to listen and obey Him—He is pleased and honored. Then He chooses to bless or reward us in the way He knows is best. And He does it better than we can do it, rewarding us at "the proper time." Consider these verses...

"He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty" (Ps. 91:1 NKJV). "For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion; in

the secret place of His tabernacle He shall hide me; He shall set me high upon a rock" (Ps. 27:5 NKJV). "The secret of the Lord is with those who fear Him, and He will show them His covenant" (Ps. 25:14 NKJV).

The secret to your success will come from your secret place. And the secret to your failure will come from your failure in the secret place.

So go there. Abide there. Escape there. Worship there. Pray there.

And keep it a secret.

PRAY: O' Lord, show me why I pass up so many opportunities to get alone with You. Help me realize my time with You in quiet is priceless. It's where I can hear from You best, be the most honest before You, and enjoy the most blessings of Your presence and rewards. Thank You, Lord, for choosing to be so near to me, and for inviting me to spend time alone with You, just the two of us. Help me to die to my pride and then delight in spending time alone with You.

HOMEWORK:

1. The primary [top one] way in the Scripture shows that Jesus was prayed in where? _____
2. The accounts of prayers:
 - ☞ Jesus prayed _____, as well as one _____ high-priestly prayer in John 17.
 - ☞ Jesus's routine was to either rise _____ to be alone in prayer in Mark 1:35.
 - ☞ Jesus send every one away in the afternoon and escape to where? _____ (Mark 6:46)
 - ☞ Or Jesus _____ and pray after others had gone to sleep. (Luke 6:12)
3. Name one group who were the exact opposite of Jesus' humility.
4. The religious leaders' pretentious [fake] prayer times were _____.
5. The religious leaders wanted to _____ the crowds and convince everyone the religious leaders were _____.
6. What did Jesus called the holy, spiritual giants/religious leaders?

7. The religious leaders are _____ on a stage. They've got their _____!
8. Your aim is for: which one?
 - a) feel good to think those deaf people in our community think the church of us and receive their fickle [not constant or loyal in affections] and fleeting [passing swiftly; vanishing quickly] praise of the deaf people
 - b) our awesome God, our Audience of One
 - c) both
 - d) ?
9. Moses, Joshua, David, Solomon, and Jesus prayed before large groups of people when necessary and they were leading others to _____ on God, not to _____ or _____ for praise. They were not _____ to pray in public—demonstrating another form of pride—out of a _____ of man.
10. T F: The religious leaders loved the praise of God more than the praise of men.
11. Regardless of what you do, you should be ALIVE or DEAD to your 'self—I' and your goal is _____ God.
12. Are you now seeking the FAVOR OF: men? or God? or both?
13. T F: If you were not trying to please men/women, you are a bond-servant of Jesus Christ?
14. Remember who created you and owns you? _____
15. Y N NS: Is God alone holy?
16. Y N NS: Is God reigning least?
17. Y N NS: Is God knows you better than you know yourself?
18. Y N NS: God alone answers your prayers?
19. Y N NS: One day, you will face God who judges you?
20. Y N NS: Will you trust men's opinions more than God's opinion?
21. In two things above all your highest priority should be what?
22. Name three mind-set should always affect how you pray?
23. Each time you approach God should be reflected in how you speak to Him and you must _____ your motives and _____ any pride whatever you are praying in the presence of others who are

listening.

24. Y N NS: Hypocrisy MUST GO?

25. Y N NS: FEAR of man MUST GO?

26. T F: Leading others in prayer isn't a serious responsibility.

Smith Wigglesworth shared the story: Six people went into the house of a sick man to pray for him. He was a leader in the Episcopal Church, and he lay in his bed utterly helpless. He had read a little tract about healing and had heard about people praying for the sick. So he sent for these friends, who, he thought, could pray "the prayer of faith". He was anointed according to James 5:14, but because he had no immediate manifestation of healing, he wept bitterly. The six people walked out of the room, somewhat crestfallen to see the man lying there in an unchanged condition.

When they were outside, one of the six said, "There is one thing we could have done. I wish you would all go back with me and try it." They all went back and got together in a group. This brother said, "Let us whisper the name of Jesus". At first, when they whispered this worthy name, nothing seemed to happen. But as they continued to whisper, "Jesus! Jesus! Jesus!" the power began to fall. As they saw that God was beginning to work, their faith and joy increased, and they spoke the name louder and louder. As they did so, the man rose from his bed and dressed himself. The secret was just this: Those six people had gotten their eyes off the sick man and were taken up with the Lord Jesus Himself. Their faith grasped the power in His Name. Oh, if people would only appreciate the power in His Name, there is no telling what would happen.

27. Which one: Spotlight on the person praying? or on God alone?

28. While your public praying with WRONG or RIGHT motives can be important powerful in your life.

29. Jesus said, "When you pray" implies [to involve as a necessary circumstance] that your _____ [failure to act or meet], daily prayer life should be to "go into your private room, shut your door, and pray to your Father who is in secret."

30. It describes how two groups are different:

☞ Whereas [since it is true that] _____, corporate prayer can be LEASTLY POWERFUL or EXTREMELY POWERFUL in your church.

☞ Jesus implies [to involve as a necessary circumstance] here that getting alone and praying to God in secret is _____ [a central importance] and _____ [a basis or principle upon which something

stands or is supported].

- ☞ Anyone praying for 'show' _____ has the only reward they will get.
- ☞ The religious leaders like Pharisees, Sadducees, ISIS, Buddhist monks, Muslim leaders, Mormon elders or false religious leaders are feeble notoriety [well known or famous name for bad] the audience gives is the full of benefits of their '_____'; not the blessings or provision from God.

31. T F: God loves pride and hypocrisy.

32. Secret prayer puts you in a situation where...

- ☞ you can remove _____,
- ☞ you _____ all your attention on adoring God,
- ☞ you _____ sin to Him,
- ☞ you _____ Him for His blessings and guidance,
- ☞ you _____ your needs and requests to Him.
 - It [_____] helps you
 - stay _____,
 - be _____,
 - and seek _____ other reward for your time with Him other than knowing, loving, and glorifying Him more.
 - Secret prayer helps remove your _____
_____. It's just between you and God.

33. Matthew 6:6 recorded:

- ✗ that your heavenly Father is in the PUBLIC or SECRET place.
- ✗ that your heavenly Father SEES what is done for Him in the PUBLIC or SECRET place.
- ✗ that your heavenly Father REWARDS what is done in the PUBLIC or SECRET place.
- ☞ Stop a minute. SINCE God says He is present [now] in the secret place.
- ☞ Do you know where is the secret place?
- ☞ Why would you not want to meet with your heavenly Father there in the secret place?
- ☞ Do you want God rewards you in the secret place?
- ☞ If Jesus, the Son of God primarily sought His Father in the secret

place and then commanded you to do it, why wouldn't you?

- ❖ Our answers to these questions _____ our hearts. Because if we find ourselves praying in front of others more than in secret, we're likely chasing the approval of GOD or MEN.
- ❖ Even if we do pray in secret but go out and brag about it, our _____ again is EXPOSED.
- ❖ But when no eyes are on us but the Lord's, and no ears are there to hear us but His, our motives are more _____.

34. Where is the secret? _____

35. That's why seeking God in secret [that's you] is so WEAKNESS or POWERFUL. It _____ you and _____ on you.

36. You need to getting alone with your God is one way of saying:

- 👉 "I choose You above others. I want to see and know You and hear from You more than anyone else in Jesus' Name. Amen."

37. When you give Him your $\frac{1}{4}$, $\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{3}{4}$, or FULL attention:

- ✓ to _____ Him,
- ✓ to _____ Him,
- ✓ to _____ His Word,
- ✓ to _____ and _____ Him—
 - God is _____ and _____.
 - _____ God chooses to bless or reward you in way He knows is WORST or BEST. And He does it better than you can do it, rewarding you at 'the proper time'.

38. The secret to your success will come from your PUBLIC or SECRET place.

- 👉 So you _____ there.
- 👉 You _____ it a secret.

39. Describe this "And the secret to your failure will come from your failure in the secret place" means to you?