



THE PRAYER CLOSET

Transforming Lives Through Intercessory
Prayer And Fasting

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THE HUMDRUM PRAYER LIFE

Has prayer become an empty routine for you? You see the importance of prayer. You pray daily. You are committed to prayer. Yet, you seem to be in a rut. Your praying seems lifeless, maybe even monotonous and boring. You just don't seem to have any joy or power in prayer. You continue to pray because you know that is what you are supposed to do. Yet, you feel as if your soul is parched and empty.

This is what I call the "humdrum prayer life." It seems that your prayer life is dry as dust. You continue to pray. You continue to seek God. But, your prayer life has become uneventful and routine.

One of the significant dangers that you will face in your prayer life is forgetting that prayer is an encounter with the true and living God. Prayer becomes a routine when you neglect the truth that you are entering the presence of the Almighty God of time and eternity. When you realize that you are entering the presence of God, it transforms your praying. It brings new life, joy, and power to your praying.

I am sure that you know and believe that prayer is entering the presence of God. Yet, the problem is that we have the tendency to neglect this truth. Often we simply do not take seriously the fact that we are encountering the living God. We overlook the fact that we are entering into a conversation with the eternal God who reigns forever and ever.

The main theme of *The Prayer Closet* this month is renewing your prayer life. It will focus on

dealing with the humdrum prayer life. First, we will be looking at how to renew your passion for prayer. The most crucial step to this is gaining a fresh understanding of prayer. It is an encounter with the living God. It is entering His presence and having the opportunity to speak to Him and listen to Him. When you lose sight of this, prayer turns into a humdrum routine, an empty ritual that lacks life, power, and joy. Following this, we will examine some practical steps that you can take to experience a personal prayer revival.

In order to help gain a fresh understanding of encountering God through prayer, we will examine Moses' encounter with God at the burning bush. In **Exodus 3**, Moses experiences a life-changing encounter with God. In this text, there are three basic truths about encountering God. It is my hope and prayer that the Holy Spirit will use these truths to fan the flames of your prayer life. These truths can bring genuine renewal to a prayer life that is lifeless and characterized by empty routine.

Encountering God means understanding God's purpose for prayer

(Exodus 3:1-4)

Moses' encounter with God was not His plan. Moses did not expect this life-changing encounter with God. Yet, God purposed to meet with Him. He not only purposed to meet with Him but also to change his life.

Dr. Kevin Meador, 595 Stratton Road, Decatur, MS 39327 (601) 635-2180

Email: prayercloset_1998@yahoo.com

OUR WEB PAGES: www.prayerclosetministries.org - www.kingdompraying.com

After 40 years of training in the courts of Pharaoh, Moses now neared the end of another 40 years of his life as a shepherd (**Exodus 3:1**). In this text, Moses approached Mount Horeb (another name for Mount Sinai), searching for grassland for the flock. Suddenly the Angel of the LORD appeared in a flame of fire in the midst of a burning bush (**Exodus 3:2**). When Moses saw the burning bush, he was curious why the bush burned but was not consumed by the fire. He then went to investigate (**Exodus 3:3**).

When Moses went to investigate, God spoke to him, "So when the LORD saw that he turned aside to look, God called him from the midst of the bush and said, 'Moses, Moses!'" (**Exodus 3:4**). Aware that it was God calling him, he responded with the only correct response, "Here I am!"

God purposed to meet with Moses in order to fulfill His will for him. God had chosen Moses to lead the people out of Israel. At the burning bush, God determined to encounter Him and change him so that he could do His will. This encounter was God's plan not Moses. God's love and grace led to this meeting between God and Moses.

Prayer is an encounter with God. It is entering His presence in order to communicate with Him and be changed by Him. It is an encounter that God has determined to have with you. Prayer is not a good idea that we devised. It is God's plan. It is a loving invitation from your Father who sacrificed His Son and gave you the Holy Spirit in order to allow you to have this privilege.

The Word of God declares in **Psalm 4:3**, "But know that the LORD has set apart for Himself him who is godly; the LORD will hear when I can to Him." God has saved you so that you can have daily encounters with Him. He has called you to Himself through Jesus so that you can have the privilege of communicating with Him. When you enter His presence, He listens to you. When you enter His presence, He longs to speak to you. Every time you come before Him, He desires to touch you and change you. Just as Moses' encounter with God, God wants to communicate with you and change your life.

How should this truth affect your prayer life? It should cause you to realize that entering God's presence is an event. It is not ordinary or humdrum. It is going before the God who has given

you the privilege of prayer. Every time you pray, you are encountering the living God who longs to communicate with you and change you. A believer gets into a "prayer rut" when he or she loses sight of this awesome encounter. Prayer becomes ordinary and humdrum when you neglect the fact that you are entering the presence of God.

Too many times the familiarity of prayer dulls the believer's senses. We take for granted that we are entering God's presence. We go so quickly into His presence that we fail to remember that we are encountering the living and almighty God. We forget that God has given us the majestic and supernatural privilege of spending time with Him—talking to Him, listening to Him, and being changed by Him.

In order to deal with the humdrum prayer life, you must have a fresh realization that you are encountering God. You are entering the presence of the God who has called you into relationship with Himself. You, yes you, have the privilege of entering the presence of the living God of time and eternity! He desires to hear from you, speak to you, and change your life. Your Father lovingly invites you into His presence to meet with Him. He has determined to meet with you through prayer. He is determined to change you. This is His purpose for your life! This is His plan for you!

Encountering God means honoring His holiness (Exodus 3:5)

After Moses answered the Lord, He speaks to him again, "Do not draw near this place. Take your sandals off of your feet; for the place where you stand is holy ground" (**Exodus 3:5**). The ground was not holy because of where it was but because of God's presence. Moses was to honor God's holiness by removing his sandals. He showed great reverence for God during this encounter, "And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God" (**Exodus 3:6**).

Moses' encounter with God reveals that God is holy. It shows that he must be revered as the holy God. This was a valuable object lesson for Moses. He was to honor God as holy in private and

in public. God wanted him to understand that He is holy and that holiness must be honored.

The same is true in our encounters with God. When we pray, we are entering the presence of the holy God. He is utterly opposed to sin. He cannot tempt anyone to sin nor can He be tempted to sin. Our response must be to reverence Him. We must enter His presence with a trembling awe.

Your prayer life will become humdrum if you do not honor God's holiness. When you pray, you are entering into the Holy of Holies, the very presence of God. You are going before the God who is called the consuming fire, the jealous God (**Deuteronomy 4:24**). You are entering the presence of the One of whom the angels cry out continually, "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory" (**Isaiah 6:3**).

Honor His Holiness Through Reverence

How do you honor God's holiness in prayer? When you pray, enter His presence with a humble heart. Come before Him with a spirit of reverence and awe. Let the truth of His holiness cause you to come before Him with a sober sincerity. One of the burdens of my heart is how this generation has lessened the holiness of God. In many prayer meetings, it sounds as if God is our "little cosmic Buddy". People treat God as if He is their pal in the way that they enter His presence and speak to Him while in His presence.

Now I would never want to demean or lessen that truth that God is personal. He is a God who loves and cares about His people. He longs to have an intense and abiding relationship with His people. We are to strive for this intimate friendship with Him. Yet, at the same time, we must maintain a balance. We must realize that He is the holy God. He is the Holy One whom the angels worship day and night. He is absolute purity. We must rid ourselves of a flippant, irreverent spirit before God.

Honor His Holiness Through Repentance

Honoring God's holiness also means coming before Him with a heart ready to confess and repent of sin. We must enter His presence with reverence

and repentance. God is holy. He hates sin. It is an insult to Him. To enter God's presence with a heart that is complacent about sin is dishonoring to Him. To enter His presence without a willingness to confess and repent of sin is offensive to God.

Why are you able to enter the presence of God? It is only because of the blood of Jesus Christ, "Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by *the blood of Jesus*, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is His flesh . . . let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith" (**Hebrews 10:19-22**). You have access into the presence of God because of the blood of Jesus. Because of His death, you have received the forgiveness of sins. Through His blood, you have the privilege to enter His presence.

Entering His presence should cause you to seek the cleansing power of Christ's blood, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all righteousness (**1 John 1:9**). You were given access to God's presence through His blood. The only way to continue coming into His presence is through cleansing from your sin through His blood. It is an insult to God to be given the privilege to enter His presence through the blood of Jesus and then ignore or neglect dealing with sin. To enter God's presence with a hardened heart toward one's sin is a slap in the face of the merciful and gracious God.

This attitude will also lead to a humdrum prayer life. Our problems with prayer often lie in our complacency to deal with our personal sin. The Bible is clear—a complacent attitude toward sin will drain life and power from our praying. Failing to deal with your personal sin hinders your communication with God. It will turn prayer from a dynamic encounter with God to an empty ritual with no meaning. Listen to the Word of God: "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the LORD will not hear me" (**Psalms 66:18**).

"Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear" (**Isaiah 59:1-2**).

“When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood. Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes. Cease to do evil; learn to do good” (**Isaiah 1:15-16**).

When you enter God’s presence, you must enter with a repentant heart ready to confess and deal with sin. You must continue to enter in the way that you were granted access—through the blood of Jesus! Entering His presence without dealing with sin is a disgrace to Him. He is the High and Holy One. He must be revered. Sin is an abomination before Him. When you enter His presence, confess sin and be washed, be cleansed, and be restored to the place of deep intimacy with Him. Commit yourself of confessing and repenting of the sin in your life.

Encountering God’s holiness means honoring His holiness. It requires entering His presence with both reverence and repentance. The humdrum prayer life is often characterized by a lack of these qualities. As you renew your reverence and repentance before Him, it can bring new life and power to your prayer life.

Encountering God means recognizing His faithfulness

(Exodus 3:6)

When God revealed Himself to Abraham, He declared, “I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (**Exodus 3:6**). This declaration highlights the faithfulness of God. God was about to deliver the people from Egypt and bring them into the Promised Land. He was going to do this because of His promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (**Genesis 15:12-19**). God is showing Moses that He is a faithful God. He will not allow His promises to fail. He will perform what He has promised. He wanted Moses to understand and be assured of His faithfulness. This would enable Moses to lead the people and stand before God in their behalf.

The same is true for you. If you are going to stand before Him in prayer and walk with Him, you

must recognize and be assured of His faithfulness. When you enter God’s presence, you must recognize that He is a faithful God. He is faithful to His promises. He will perform what He has purposed. You can always depend on God to do what is best and right in every situation. This will enable you to stand before Him in faith and expectation.

Why is this so crucial to your prayer life? God’s faithfulness provides a foundation on which to build your trust in Him. His faithfulness should strengthen your faith in Him. It should provide you with the assurance that He is listening to you and that He is answering you. God’s faithfulness should fuel our praying before Him. It should create within us expectant hearts and submissive wills.

When you do not recognize God’s faithfulness, it will lead to a humdrum prayer life. Your prayer life will degenerate into going over a list of names and needs. It will be reciting a prayer list with no trust in Him or expectation of His intervention. You will be calling out names without the hope of divine intervention or genuine change.

Yet, when you focus on His faithfulness, your encounters with Him will be filled with hope and expectation. You will pray His Word and plead His promises with all your being. You will expect Him to answer. You will trust Him for His answers. You will move from calling out names and needs to pleading with Him and expecting Him to work.

How should the faithfulness of God affect your prayer life? It should have two basic effects:

Recognizing God’s faithfulness creates the expectation of intervention.

When you pray for yourself or others, you should expect God to work. Prayer is not a vain or useless activity. God is faithful. He will answer in His time and in His way. When you recognize and trust in His faithfulness, it should provide the expectation and hope that He will answer. It can open the floodgates of grace in your life that will help you cling to Him until He intervenes. God does not always answer immediately. Recognizing and trusting His faithfulness can help you continue pleading and believing in Him over the long haul.

Recognizing God's faithfulness empowers you to pray the Word, particularly His promises.

Since God is faithful, this should motivate us to pray His Word. God is going to be faithful to His Word. He will do what He has promised. When you enter His presence, your heart and lips should be filled with His Word. You should go into His presence ready to declare and plead His Word before Him.

Encountering God means recognizing His faithfulness. It requires the expectation that He will answer, intervening in His time and way according to His wisdom and power. Due to His faithfulness, it also involves pleading His Word and promises before Him.

Encountering God means hearing and obeying Him (Exodus 3:7-10)

God encountered Moses at this burning bush in order to reveal His will to him. God desired to use Moses to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt. He had heard the cries of the Israelites and was ready to deliver them (Exodus 3:7-9). God had purposed to use Moses as the one to deliver them from their bondage. God revealed to Moses that he was going to use him to set His people free (Exodus 3:10).

Moses gives us a perfect example of what NOT to do when you encounter God in prayer. Moses began to make excuses why he could not do what God was calling him to do. He protested that he was not able to lead the people out of Egypt. The rest of Exodus 3 and the majority of Exodus 4 show Moses' unbelief and excuse making.

When you encounter God in prayer, you must be ready to hear and willing to obey Him. When you enter His presence, God wants to speak to you. He longs to teach you. He desires to guide you. He wants to use you. Yet, you must have a readiness to hear Him and a willingness to obey whatever He says.

Prayer becomes humdrum when you are not ready to hear and obey what God speaks to you. When prayer is a one-way conversation, it is going

to be boring and empty. The humdrum prayer life exists when prayer focuses only on your agenda, your desires and needs. Prayer is intended to be a dynamic encounter with a living God who hears and speaks. It is designed to be a time of hearing, listening, and obeying. But, when the focus is solely on you, it will rapidly grow mundane and monotonous.

When you enter God's presence, He is ready to speak to you. He is willing to show you His will. Be prepared to listen and obey. Encountering God means hearing and obeying Him.

Practical Applications

You can overcome the humdrum prayer life by realizing that prayer is an encounter with God. What are some practical steps that you can take to stay focused on the truth that you are encountering God through prayer? The following are some suggestions to help you remember this truth and overcome the humdrum prayer life.

- (1) *Meditate on those verses concerning your access; remind yourself of these verses before you pray.* Some of these verses are **Ephesians 2:18, Ephesians 3:12, Hebrews 4:16, Hebrews 7:19, Hebrews 10:19, 22.** Keep these truths in mind before you enter His presence. You might consider memorizing them. You might even have them on a sheet or an index card. Read over them and review them regularly.
- (2) *Pray for a fresh understanding and awareness of His holiness.* Plead with Him to teach you about His holiness. Pray for Him to reveal His holiness to you in fresh and unique ways. Meditate on verses like **Isaiah 6:3, 57:15, and 1 Peter 1:13-16,** asking for insight into His holy character. Ask for Him to destroy any complacency that you have concerning His holiness.
- (3) *Regularly examine yourself.* Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal anything in your life that is not right in God's sight. Plead for Him to convict

you about those stubborn areas of your life that you have not confronted.

- (4) *Be diligent to confess your sin.* Sin will cut off your communication with God. It will drain your prayer life of power and life. Don't neglect this part of your prayer life.
- (5) *Enter His presence with praise and thanksgiving.* **Psalm 100:4** teaches you how to enter God's presence, "Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise." As you enter God's presence in prayer, praise Him with all your strength. Thank Him from a sincere and grateful heart for specific blessings in your life. Fill your prayer life with abundant and overflowing praise and thanksgiving.
- (6) *Pray for a greater understanding and awareness of His faithfulness.* Ask Him to reveal the truth of His faithfulness to you in fresh and unique ways. Meditate on and pray verses like **Psalm 119:65, 89, 90, Lamentations 3:23, John 8:26, 1 Corinthians 1:9, 1 Corinthians 10:13, 2 Corinthians 1:20, 1 Thessalonians 5:24, Titus 1:2.**
- (7) *Strive to pray His Word.* When you enter His presence, be prepared to pray His Word and plead His promises. When you have a prayer concern, see what the Scripture says about your prayer concern. Plead what God reveals concerning the prayer concern.
- (8) *Include times of listening in your prayer life.* Have times in your prayer life when you listen to God. Be silent and still before Him. Ask Him to speak to you. Record those insights that God gives you during your times of listening.
- (9) *Pray for a submissive spirit.* Confess your willingness to do whatever God speaks to you. Declare your resolve to obey Him. If you cannot pray this, ask Him to grant you a submissive spirit. Pray that your will would become pliable and teachable.

The Top Five Ways To A Boring, Humdrum Prayer Life

If you would like to develop a boring prayer life, the following is the best way to do this. You can have a dry and lifeless prayer life by putting these principles into practice. They will guarantee an inconsistent, monotonous prayer life. When you put these principles into practice, you can be assured that you are headed for boring and routine times of prayer.

Number One: Spend your time in prayer asking without worshipping. Make sure that your entire prayer life consists of making requests of God. Focus more on prayer requests than praising God and thanking Him. Let your prayer time be filled with asking of God. Don't worry about adoring God or thanking Him. Just make sure that you spend more time bringing needs and concerns before Him than anything else.

Number Two: Don't develop any variety in your prayer life. Always do the same thing in the same way that you have always done it. Don't concern yourself with being sensitive to the Holy Spirit and His leading when you pray. Don't worry about developing a balance between praising God, confessing your sin to God, thanking Him, and making requests of Him. Neglect taking time to listen to God. Don't prayerwalk. Forget about praying with other believers. Close your Bible when you pray. Just make sure you are not willing to change in any way.

Number Three: Don't concern yourself with confessing your sin. Fill your prayer life with clichés like "Lord, forgive of my many sins" without confessing your sins specifically. Don't get too concerned about your personal sin. Confront and deal with sin only when you really feel guilty.

Number Four: Let your schedule dictate your prayer life. Pray as your schedule lets you. Don't worry about establishing a set time and then disciplining yourself to keep this time. Make sure that your lifestyle determines how much time you will have to spend with God.

Number Five: Stop growing in your understanding of prayer. Don't be interested in learning more about prayer. Accept the fact that you are an expert when it comes to prayer. Believe that you already know enough about prayer. You must develop this attitude, "Learn about prayer? Why should I learn about prayer? It's simple. All you have to do is pray." Neglect studying about prayer. Rely on the understanding and knowledge that you have about prayer right now. Make sure that you are unwilling to receive any new insights or help concerning your prayer life.

Praying For A Passion For God

Prayer is an encounter with God. When we lose our passion for God, our prayer life will suffer. By "passion for God," I mean that felt conviction of our need of God. Passion for God manifests itself when we know that we must have God, that we need Him and that we must know Him. It refers to our hunger and longing for God. It consists of our overwhelming need for Him and our hunger to know Him and His ways. Prayer often becomes ~~humdrum because our hunger and need for God has~~ lessened.

The Lord grieved over the fact that His people had lost their passion for Him, "I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your betrothal, when you went after Me in the wilderness, in a land not sown" (**Jeremiah 2:2**). When God delivered His people from Egypt, they loved Him. They were willing to leave Egypt to go into the wilderness to follow Him. Yet, that passion had faded, "For my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn themselves cisterns—broken cisterns that cannot hold water" (**Jeremiah 2:13**). They now chased after other gods. They did not sense an overwhelming need for God or a consuming hunger for Him. They loved everything above Him and pursued all other things above Him.

Has this happened to you? Do you have the overwhelming sense that you need God for every step of your life? Do you hunger and long for Him more than anything in this world? When you lose your passion for God, it will affect your prayer life.

You will not seek Him with all your heart. Prayer will become an ordinary, routine experience.

Renewing your passion for God will impact your prayer life. It can lead to new life, power, and vigor in prayer. The following is a plan for seeking fresh passion for God. This plan consists of three basic parts.

Examine Yourself (Psalm 139:23-24)

Ask God the following questions:

- What is hindering me from loving you with all my being?
- What is hindering my passion for You?
- What am I pursuing above You?
- Have I placed anything or anybody above You?

Confess Your Sin And Need (1 John 1:9)

As the Holy Spirit reveals those things that are hindering your love and passion for Him, confess these to God and seek His cleansing and restoration. Then begin confessing your need of God. You might consider saying some of the following to God on a daily basis:

- "I need You."
- "I love You."
- "I can't make it without You, God"
- "You're my only Hope, God"
- "You are my Strength."
- "You are the greatest blessing of my life."

When you confess your need of Him daily, it honors God and reminds you of your need for Him.

Plead with Him (Matthew 7:7)

The following Scripture prayers can help you seek God for the renewal of your passion for Him. Plead these prayers with all your strength and might.

Father, I plead that You would enable me to love You with all my being. Increase my love for You, O God. I want to love You with all my being. I long for You to be my greatest and highest love. Deliver me from loving anything above You (**Matthew 22:37**).

O God, You are my God. I will seek You. I ask that my soul would thirst for You and that my flesh

would long for You like a dry and thirsty land where there is no water. O God, quench my thirst for You. Reveal Yourself to me in fresh and new ways. Fill my life with Your presence and power (**Psalm 63:1**).

As the deer pants for the water brooks, I pray that my soul would pant for You. I plead that my soul would thirst for You more than anything or anybody (**Psalm 42:1-2**).

Father, I plead that my flesh would cry out for You, the living God. I pray that You would be my greatest desire, my most precious blessing (**Psalm 84:2**).

Father, I pray that I would recognize that I have no one to depend on but You. I plead that I would desire no one or no thing on the earth above You (**Psalm 73:25**).

Show me Your ways, O Lord; teach me Your paths. I long to know You as never before in my walk with You (**Psalm 25:4**).

Father, I pray that You would empower me to fear You, the Lord my God, to walk in all Your ways, to love You, and to serve You with all my heart and soul all the days of my life (**Deuteronomy 10:12**).



THE PRAYER CLOSET MINISTRIES, INC.
Dr. Kevin Meador
595 Stratton Road
Decatur, MS 39327

Nonprofit Org.
U. S. Postage Paid
Hickory, MS
Permit #2

Steve & Ann Mayes
P. O. Box 525
Pelahatchie MS 39145