



THE PRAYER CLOSET

Encouraging & Equipping Believers in Prayer

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ISSUE 2

DEVELOPING A QUIET HEART

"A quiet heart? What do you mean by a 'quiet heart'?" I'm not surprised by a response like this to the title of the newsletter. Silence and stillness are rare and precious in this day and time. Our lives are filled with noise. Our days are characterized by a hectic pace from the time we get up until we go to bed at night. There's always somewhere to go, always something to do.

As a child of God, it's crucial to have times of stillness before God. It's essential to develop a quiet heart. What is a quiet heart? A quiet heart is one that can be still before God and commune with Him in the stillness. A quiet heart is one that focuses on God – reflecting on Him and receiving from Him. You'll probably never have a quiet life – free of hectic pace, noise, and distraction. But you can have a quiet heart.

At a prayer conference, a young woman came to me and confessed her struggle with prayer. I won't ever forget her earnest words, "I don't know how to just be with God. I don't know how to be still and enjoy Him and listen to Him. How can I do this?" Her words sum up the quiet heart – a heart that is still, silent, and receptive before God. In fact, this is what God is calling us to, "Be still and know that I am God" (**Psalm 46:10**).

In the commotion of our lives, God pleads with You, "I love You. I want to be with

You. I want to have fellowship with You." Developing a quiet heart is making personal your love relationship to God. It is having fellowship with Him – letting His presence envelop you and receiving from Him. Your God and Father longs to have this with you. In the hectic pace of life, your Father desires to comfort and change you. In the noise of life, your Father wants you to hear His still, small voice. With all the distractions of life, your Father wants to reveal His truth to you.

Developing a quiet heart is also called contemplative prayer. Don't let those words scare you off. Contemplative prayer is a way of quieting yourself before God and having fellowship with Him in stillness. It can anchor your prayer life. It can also breathe new life into a prayer life that is sagging and characterized by the routine and ordinary. It can help you get alone with God and just be with Him. This issue of *The Prayer Closet* will focus on contemplative prayer – developing a quiet heart.



What Is Contemplative Prayer?

Contemplative prayer is getting quiet before God and fellowshiping with Him in the stillness.

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It is communing with God through quiet moments of meditation, listening, and reflecting on Him. Instead of rushing into His presence with an agenda or a grocery list of requests, we quiet ourselves and wait before Him in stillness. We quiet our souls until God speaks and we are able to hear His gentle voice.

Contemplative prayer involves every part of you:

- (1) The mind – meditating on Scripture.
- (2) The heart – listening to God's voice.
- (3) The will – responding to His voice.

It is your whole being responding to God. It's not about rushing into God's presence and going through a list or trying to convince God of our agenda. It is bowing before God and acknowledging Him, waiting on Him and being ready to receive from Him.

THE MIND

Contemplative prayer begins with meditating on the Scripture. The Scripture is to be the basis of all our praying.



God has spoken through His Word and this is where we must turn to speak to Him and to listen to Him. When you find a verse or verses, meditate on them. Think about how this speaks to You about God, His will, or His ways. Let the truth of God's Word fill Your mind.

Is there a wrong way to meditate? Eastern religions have popularized the concept of meditation. However, there are numerous differences between meditation in Eastern religions and that taught in the Word of God. These are the major differences between Eastern meditation (EM) and Christian meditation (CM):

EM: Focuses on emptying the mind.

CM: Focuses on filling the mind with the awareness of God's presence and God's Word.

EM: Dependent upon one's human ability to achieve a certain state.

CM: Dependent upon God's indwelling Holy Spirit to accomplish God's work and will in us.

EM: Results in a loss of personal identity

CM: Results in gaining our true identity in Christ.

EM: No goal outside of the experience itself:

CM: Has as its goals – greater love for God, more powerful intercession, and service to others.

EM: Highest level is "nirvana" – a complete merging of one's self into the consciousness of the universe.

CM: Highest level is an encounter with the living and personal God.

EM: Recognizes no objective reference for establishing truth.

CM: Recognizes the Bible as the only standard by which truth is established.

Developing a quiet heart means meditating on God, His Word, and His ways. We meditate on these things that we might have a personal encounter with Him.

THE HEART

Contemplative prayer also involves the heart. When you meditate, you are filling your mind with God's truth. You are making yourself aware of God's presence. This prepares you to hear from God. It gets you ready to receive from Him

As you meditate on the truth, it is then that you listen for God. It is then that you yield yourself to the Holy Spirit that He might apply the Word of God to you. It is about quiet waiting on Him, surrendering to Him that He might do His work in you. You are not telling Him what you want; it is God telling you what He desires by His Spirit and His Word.

This is the power and uniqueness of contemplative prayer – it is a personal encounter with the living God. It is a personal



meeting between God and you in which He reveals truth to you and applies it to your heart and life. It's about fellowship with God in which you yield yourself to Him.

THE WILL

When you sense God has spoken to you, it is time to respond.



Contemplative prayer also involves the will – it is responding to God when you have received from Him. You must act on what God has revealed; you must respond when He dealt with you.

It may be that God will call on you to confess a particular sin. He might reveal a commitment that He desires that you make. He might show you something that needs to change in your life. He might give you insight on how to pray for someone. He might want to comfort and encourage your heart – receive that comfort and encouragement. The key issue is obedience. Whatever God shows you respond to Him with obedience.



Why Should I Practice Contemplative Prayer?

Why should a believer seek to develop a quiet heart before God? The Bible offers a variety of reasons for developing times of stillness before God.

First, God invites you to be still and quiet before Him. This invitation is issued in **Psalm 46:10**. There are other passages that show that God desires that believers practice stillness before Him:

Psalm 130:5-6

"I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in His word I do hope. My soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning—yes, more than those who watch for the morning."

Psalm 62:5

"My soul, wait silently for God alone, for my expectation is from Him."

Psalm 25:5

"Lead me in Your truth and teach me, for You are the God of my salvation; on You I wait all the day."

These, along with other passages, reveal God's heart – that He wants His people to meet Him in stillness and quietness.

Another reason for developing a quiet heart is the example of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Word of God reveals that Jesus pulled aside and spent time alone with His Father, "Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed" (**Mark 1:35**). Jesus went to a quiet place and there spent time alone with His Father. He had times of silence before the Father in which He heard from Him, "Then Jesus answered and said to them, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner'" (**John 5:18**). The Lord Jesus sets a compelling example for you of silent waiting on the Father.

Developing a quiet heart in prayer empowers you to be more sensitive to God's voice. Too many times we rush into God's presence with our own plans and agendas. We focus more on what we have to say than on what He desires to speak to us. By developing a quiet heart in prayer, it puts you in the place where you can hear from Him. It prepares you to hear the gentle whisper of God's voice (**1 Kings 19:11-13**)!

Developing a quiet heart also opens your life for God's divine surgery. God is the heavenly Surgeon who wants to work on your heart, "He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds" (**Psalm 147:3**). As you are still and receptive to God, He "operates" on you. He cleans out "wounds" and pours His love and grace into them. He points out those things that are not right in your life. He convicts you of sins. He highlights wrong attitudes. He grants you power and grace for repentance and change. He gives you strength and provides you with promises. He shows you the way that He desires you to live and walk.

Developing a quiet heart can strengthen and invigorate your prayer life. As you wait on the Lord in silence, He can give you the insights that you need for adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and intercession. These insights can bring about new life and resolve in your praying. And they can lead you to seeing more answers to prayer (**1 John 5:14-15**).

Developing a quiet heart in prayer enables you to develop your relationship to God. Contemplative prayer is about relationship – getting alone and being with God. This is the goal of our salvation, “And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent” (**John 17:3**). Salvation is “knowing” God. This means more than just knowing facts about God. It means more than memorizing Scripture and keeping up with sermon outlines. It is about a vital relationship with God. It is about spending time with – being with – God. That’s the purpose of contemplative prayer, developing a quiet heart that meets with and fellowships with God. It is about coming to know God in a personal way – being still before Him, hearing His voice, receiving from Him, and obeying Him.



How Can I Put This Into Practice?

You may see the need for a quiet heart. You may long for this. But, the question is, “How do I put this into practice? How do I make this an essential part of my prayer life?” The following are some suggestions on how to practice contemplative prayer.

THE MIND

In order to spend time and fellowship with God, you have to know Him. This is why the Word of God is crucial for prayer. God has revealed Himself in His Word. We are therefore to use His Word in getting to know Him and fellowshiping with Him.

You might consider the following to help you begin meditating:

- *A verse of Scripture* – You can use a verse of Scripture that stands out to you. It may be one that you have memorized or one that you came across in your Bible reading or Bible study.
- *Verses of Scripture* – You can collate verses around a particular theme. I recently meditated on verses concerning God’s faithfulness. I wrote down a variety of verses concerning God’s faithfulness in my journal and focused on these in my times of prayer. You can use a concordance or a topical Bible to help you locate verses a particular them.
- *The characteristics of God* – God has made His character known in the Word. You can meditate on the variety of characteristics that God has revealed.
- *The metaphors and titles of God* – God has also made Himself known through a variety of titles and metaphors. These are given to help us understand who God is and how He relates to us. These are excellent tools for meditation.

Once you determine what you will meditate on, begin reading the verse or the verses over and over again. Read slowly and carefully. Let the words sink into and fill your mind. Begin thinking about what this says about God and His ways. Reflect on how this applies to you and your life before Him.

THE HEART

As you meditate, be still before the Lord. Wait in silence before Him. Yield yourself to Him and His Word. How can you still yourself before Him? These suggestions are offered to help you move toward this:

- *Anticipate God’s presence and voice.* Remind yourself that God is with you. He is powerfully present. You have His undivided attention. Anticipate that He will meet with you. If you seek Him, He will meet with you.
- *Acknowledge His presence.* Verbally affirm that God is meeting with you. You might consider saying something like this, “Father, I thank You for Your presence. I’ve come to meet with You. I long to be with

You and to spend time with You. I've come to be with You." You might not feel God's presence but He is always with you. Verbally affirming this can heighten your awareness of His presence.

- *As you meditate on the truth, reflect on the question, "Lord, what are you saying to me?"* The purpose of this is to apply God's Word to your life. It is a time to wait on God and have Him speak to your particular situation through His eternal, unchanging truth. You might also consider meditating on two other questions, "Lord, what do you want me to know personally about You?" and "Lord, how have I sinned?"
- *Find a quiet place where you can get alone with the Lord.* This is crucial to being still before Him. You must find a place where you can be still and quiet.
- *Ask the Holy Spirit to lead you in the truth.* Call on the Holy Spirit to guide you in the truth. Plead that He will enable you to apply the Word of God to your life. Ask Him to speak through His Word to you about the specific issues of your life.
- *Breathe in and out, slowing your mind.* Many times before I begin praying, I will take time to simply sit in silence. I will take in long, deep breathes. I would then slowly and methodically breathe out.
- *Declare faith statements openly.* Before I begin times of prayer, I will often announce statements of my faith. I will breathe in and out and then declare these faith statements. Examples of this are:

I accept Your presence.
I know You are with me.

I release my guilt.
I receive Your mercy.

I release my fears.
I receive Your power.

- *Purify your heart.* Confess your sins to God. Ask Him to create in you a clean heart. Pray for the removal of worldly clutter from your heart. This is crucial to hearing and knowing the Father's voice,

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (**Matthew 5:8**).

THE WILL

When you feel that God has spoken to you, it is time to act. Meeting with God should result in putting His Word into practice. It should be an encounter that helps you apply the truth to your specific situation. The following suggestions are offered to help you in this area:

- *Keep your journal near that you can record how God speaks to you.* This is a crucial step. As you meditate and listen to God, record those insights that He grants. When He speaks, write down whatever He impresses on your heart. The failure to write these things down will often mean failure to respond to God.
- *Write out "obedience statements."* Obedience statements are sentences that make known what you will do with His Word. It is how you're going to respond when God speaks to you. The obedience statement is, "God, because of this truth, I can . . ." Other ways that you can write these statements is, "I will, I no longer fear, I am, I give, I face this day." This is a simple way to apply what God speaks to you.
- *Use these insights to help you pray.* This time of silent prayer can prepare you for intercession and petition. God may grant you insight for your praying for others or even for yourself. Times of silence can be powerful preparation for Spirit-guided intercession.
- *Call on God to help you put into practice what He has spoken to you.* God wants you to do more than listen to Him. He wants you to hear and practice what He says. Obedience is the desire of our Father's heart.
- *Put yourself in the verse or verses of Scripture.* After you have listened to God and heard from him from this verse, put yourself in the verse. As an example, let's say that I have meditated on Joshua 1:8. After my time of prayer and listening with