

Find Your Way to the Secret Place

I love that the gospel is so simple and real. God loves us so much! It's as though He has purposed to leave us love notes everywhere. Wherever we open our hearts to see and hear Him, He is there.

If we learn to listen, we will hear His voice calling each one of us. But how do we find our way to the secret place where God abides?

Today, many great ministries have taught us how to be prayer warriors—how to pray for the lost, our schools, our cities and our nation. Yet, many of us lack a sense of the closeness and intimacy with God we crave.

Many of us don't know how to find God in our prayer time. With all our understanding about God's awesome power, it's as if we've lost sight of God Himself and His longing to be intimate with us.

If we want to find God in our everyday experiences and sense His real presence throughout all life's struggles and joys, we must learn about a kind of prayer few of us understand. I am speaking about the prayer of inner quiet.

In the psalms, we discover long lists of God's amazing attributes and His great and mighty acts. We read: "You are the God who performs miracles; You display Your power among the peoples. With Your mighty arm You redeemed Your people, the descendants of Jacob and Joseph" (Ps. 77:14-15, NIV).

We get into the pace of those words and imagine a God who is always on the move. Unfortunately, we often miss an all-important instruction—"selah"—which means pause a minute and calmly think about what you've just read.

Although we often complain about our demanding, stressed-out lives, most of us have become accustomed to the frantic pace. We're afraid that if we stop suddenly, the whirlwind of promises we've made and responsibilities we've picked up will overtake us from behind.

In truth, we have created these high-pressured lives. But at the same time we have a desire to retreat to the quiet sanctuary where God abides.

No matter how busy or stressed you've been, you can learn how to enter the secret place with God and know His real presence every day. However, changing your lifestyle is going to take time. And you will need to know how to wait on God.

Although God is always present with us, coming into His secret place is one thing you cannot hurry. Be patient. You'll find your way to the secret place with God if you learn to take the time.

GOD CAN MAKE A WAY

Some years ago, my husband, Jim, came home fired up after being at a fantastic Christian conference. He could hardly sit down. "God was so great!" he kept saying. "This amazing thing happened, and that miracle took place."

All the while I was thinking, Please! Don't tell me another word. At the time, we were between houses, living with our four kids in someone else's basement.

Every ounce of energy and focus was going to the kids. I was hungry to be with God but didn't have time to go off on a weekend retreat.

When Jim left the room I leaned my head against the wall and cried. I felt desperate because it seemed that I could do nothing to find a spare minute to be alone with God.

Just then the Lord came to me, and in that still, small voice

inside He said: "Michal Ann, I'm God of the impossible. What's impossible for you is not impossible for Me. I'm going to start coming and visiting you in the night season."

I wasn't sure I understood what He meant. But night after night I began to dream, and in this way, God came wooing.

We went on long walks down country lanes, and God told me about the preciousness of my life and revealed how cherished I am. I was given a gift of seeing myself through His loving eyes.

Yes, I believe these dreams were unusual. God had a specific way of revealing His love to me at that time, and He has a very special way to reveal Himself to you, too.

Even though you may feel as if your schedule is too full and you can't squeeze out an additional moment, God Himself can make a way. He's looking for the tiniest opening in your day or your night, when He can make His wonderful presence known in a unique way in your life.

AN INVITATION TO INTIMACY

The dreams assured me of God's love and presence. Suddenly I knew that intimacy with Him was absolutely possible, no matter what kind of stress I was experiencing.

I wish staying in that wonderful secret place with Him happened automatically, but it did not. Since then I've learned several practical steps to take to meet with God, who obviously longs to meet with us.

- First, most of us have to disregard the idea that we have to be specially called to times of prayer. God calls every one of us to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17, NKJV).

However, before God calls us to prayer, He calls us to Himself. He is calling every one of us; He is calling you.

- Second, we need to find a place to be entirely alone. Susanna Wesley had no place to go inside her home to get away from her many children and be alone with the Lord. So she periodically pulled her apron up over her head, and her children knew it was time to leave her alone.
- Third, we must learn what it takes to quiet our own spirits. We must begin disconnecting from media and gab sessions with friends. Then we can take time to search our hearts, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to find out what's really going on inside of us.

If we want to find the secret place with God, we must enter with our true selves. Keeping up false fronts and masks will hinder us from experiencing God's presence.

- Fourth, we need help to prevent our minds from wandering. For this reason, I recommend that you meditate on God's Word. I can think of no better way to corral and direct your straying thoughts. Also, God's Word builds up our faith by revealing who He is to us.
- The fifth thing we can do to prepare ourselves to meet with God in the secret place is to open ourselves to receive His love. We have inside us a huge vacuum that only God can fill.

Therefore, our hearts must be wide open to Him. And prayer is simply turning our hearts fully toward God, opening up all of ourselves to Him and receiving His love in return.

Allowing God to fill us is difficult because we carry around mental lists of the many things we must do to become worthy. In actuality, all we are required to do is relax and breathe in the breath, the very Spirit of God, who is always present with us—and in us (see John 14:17).

COME AS YOU ARE

It's in the secret place of prayer that we find inspiration for the dull and dry times and comfort for the lonely and

hurting times. Prayer is as simple as breathing out, asking God to clear out the clutter and the noise within, and breathing in His presence, asking Him to create that inner room where you can always go to meet with Him in secret.

The kind of prayer I am referring to is not about getting it right or achieving a goal. Intimate praying can come about only as we learn to strip away pretense and come, just as we are, into the inner chamber with our Lord and King.

Some of us look at other Christian women and think, If only I knew how to pray the way she prays. We engage in a kind of worldly thinking, as if we're going into another woman's home to see her decorating scheme.

Prayer that brings us into intimate experiences with God does not involve imitating another or reproducing that person's prayers. God wants you to have a relationship with Him that no one else can enjoy.

One of the greatest spiritual problems many of us have is wishing we were someone else. We want to enjoy God's presence, but we think, God, You really don't want to meet with me, do You?

Sister in Christ, you can't undo mistakes from your past or remake yourself into somebody you're not. God wants you to say: "God, I'm here! Just as I am, I come."

Being able to enter into the deep love and peace of God in prayer is not about getting rid of flaws and faults. It's being in the presence of the wonderful God who has said, "I am with you always" (Matt. 28:20).

Entering your secret place requires nothing more than coming. For He says, "'Everything and everyone that the Father has given me will come to me, and I won't turn any of them away'" (John 6:37, CEV).

The only requirement for finding our way to the secret place with God is to begin. We start by abandoning ourselves to God, which means seeking Him and learning to rest in His divine presence no matter what our circumstances.

If we abandon ourselves to God, we trust that He is in control of our lives, not only when everything goes well but also when everything goes wrong. We trust that He has not abandoned us and that He knows what's best for us. We make a deliberate choice to believe that He is working something bigger into us than what we can accomplish ourselves.

I am not saying this is easy; it's not. But by abandoning ourselves to God and totally laying down our lives, we leave all our cares and concerns in His loving hands.

ABANDONMENT UNLOCKS THE DOOR

If we want the peace that only God can give, we must abandon ourselves completely to Him. Abandonment is the key that unlocks our entry to the secret place where our King and heavenly Bridegroom dwells.

Abandonment is the means God uses to reveal His mysteries to us. One of the greatest mysteries is the way God transforms us from who we are now into women who bear the marks of Jesus Christ.

Finding your way to this place in God requires giving Him the keys to everything: children, husbands, families, homes, possessions, friends, jobs and dreams. We must place everything in His hands and leave it there for Him to do with as He sees fit.

It takes great faith to produce this kind of abandonment in us. It does not come easily. But the more we know God and the better we know Him, the easier it will be to abandon ourselves freely without holding back.

God is our center, and His kingdom is within us (see Luke 17:21). When we abandon ourselves and become completely united with Him in spirit, soul and body, the barriers of doubt, fear and pride will melt in the warmth of His love. We can come into a place where peace, love and eternal strength are ours because we are one with Him, peacefully resting in the wonder of that love.

Read a companion devotional.

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