

Seeking the Lord

#3 – Transformed in the Secret Place

God never intended for us to bear our burdens without his help.

“Cast all of your cares (burdens, anxieties) upon Him for He cares for you.” - 1 Peter 5:7

Scriptures: Luke 10:38-42 | Psalms 42 & 73 | Matt. 26:36-44 | Phil. 4:6-7 | John 15:18-21 & 16:33

O, the Burdens of the World!

Who of us doesn't feel the pressures, the disappointments, the opposition, and troubles of the world around us? Whether you are Christian or not, this life is filled with burdens. Think about the ways the world tries to deal with these pressures... Denial... Drugs... Anger and Rage... Depression / Victimhood... Busyness... Retail Therapy... Relationship Hopping... Entertainment / Distractions...

How about you? Have you felt defeated, overwhelmed, discouraged, confused or afraid? Are you able to bear these burdens day by day and keep your sanity and joy?

Jesus says in John 16 that *“In this world you will have trouble/tribulation.”* This is not some big surprise. You are not an exception to the rule or forsaken by God. *Everyone* must deal with the pain and pressures of a fallen world. This is why we who hope in Jesus Christ long for a better place! Even the non-believers talk about peace in an idealistic sense. Isn't this longing in all mankind? (Read the John passages now)

Are you ready for some good news?

We were never meant to bear these burdens on our own!

God has ordained for us to come into the secret place and find transformation, power, and joy. The problem is that many people never learn how to make the exchange.

What is the Secret Place?

Jesus talks in Matthew chapter 6 about the secret place. It is our relationship with God that the world does not see. Prayer happens there; good works happen there; it is the place of abiding with God. The psalmist writes in the 91st psalm, *“He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High will abide under the shadow of the Almighty.”*

In the gospels, Jesus often withdrew himself to pray. He also spent forty days in the wilderness where it was just him and God. The apostle Peter experienced the secret place in the book of Acts when he had a vision on a rooftop. The woman Hannah experienced the secret place in 1 Samuel when she cried out for a son with all her might in the temple. James and John saw Jesus transformed on a mountainside. The apostle John experienced the secret place in exile on the isle of Patmos.

The secret place is not a place. It is the zone where it's just you and God.

This can happen in a locked room, a beach, a coffee shop, a mountainside, or at a church altar. It can happen in a prison cell. It is the place figuratively where everything and everyone else fades away, and it's just you and God. You are not there to be seen by man. As a matter of fact, you prefer not to be. You are there to meet with God. This is the secret place. This is the place of transformation.

Let's take a look at what happens there.

Psalm 42 | Deep Calls Unto Deep

(Read Psalm 42) There is no pretense here. Aren't you ready to get totally real with God? To hide all the false externals and pour out your soul? To ask the hard questions, cry out, let your pain and disappointments out? This is what is meant by deep calling to deep. The deep places in you call out for the deep places of God!

I love how the psalmist communicates his longing and utter need for God, his agony and despair, and is honest about his oppression. It's time to be honest with God. This is the first thing that happens in the secret place. The truth is you can't hide anything anyways.

I feel like often times we hide it from ourselves.

We have a hard time admitting how much we are really struggling. This world makes you feel a false sense of shame to ever have to admit that you need help, you can't make it on your own, or you are struggling.

The last thing to understand from this psalm is that he speaks to his soul. He tells his soul to, "Hope in God!" You see the secret place is where we go from despair to hope again! Let deep call to deep in the secret place until you can begin to command your soul with confidence to hope in God!

Mary and Martha | From Exhaustion to Rest

(Read Luke section) In this story we see two sisters. Whether this is your first or hundredth time hearing this story, we learn about transformation here. How can you tell if someone has been in the secret place or not? Well just look at the two sisters. One was burdened, encumbered, short tempered, stressed out, and anxious. The other was at rest, peaceful, sitting, absorbing the words of the master. Tell me, which one would you rather be?

The trouble lies in a misunderstanding. We are too busy doing things for God (things he hasn't asked us to do) instead of simply sitting at his feet! Oh, hallelujah! This revelation will set you free from striving and a works mentality. The man or woman who understands the secret place finds total peace and rest there. All anxieties and exhaustion are massaged away by the words and presence of the master. We feel his love as we look into his face.

Then, if he gives us something to do ... we do it. But from the place of resting in the Lord.

You were not meant to be a stressed out basket case! Go into the secret place now and trade your exhaustion for the rest of the Savior.

Jesus in Gethsemane | From Weakness to Strength

(Read Matthew section) The Savior is hours away from the cross. He knows his time has come. He takes his apostles with him into the garden to pray. Pay attention to the way Jesus prayed. He poured out his soul

to the Father. Does this sound familiar? He makes known his agony, he rests and waits, and then he submits his request to the Father... "Let this cup pass from me."

But there is a key here. How does he always end his prayers?

Yet not my will but thy will be done.

How often do we pray selfish prayers that are outside the will of God without realizing it? Thus, it is important to take this lesson from the master. Even Jesus himself submitted to the will of the Father... *in all things!*

The point I want you to take from this story is that Jesus went and prayed in the secret place to make an exchange. What did he pray for? Did he pray for a change of God's plan? Did he pray to escape the hour of persecution and trial? On the surface this is what it appears to be. But no... there is something much deeper going on.

He went into the secret place until his will was conformed to the will of the Father!

He knew that he had to go through the cross. The problem is he didn't have the strength to do it. So he prayed. And he prayed again. And he prayed a third time... *using the same words.*

What happened? Why did he do this?

He did this because he understood that the secret place is where we trade our fleshly weakness for the strength of Almighty God. He arose after the third prayer session ready to face the cross.

Psalm 73 | From Confusion to Total Clarity

(Read Psalm 73) Here the psalmist is confused, oppressed. Have you ever looked at others and been envious of their seeming ease when you are struggling and afflicted? Have you felt just as this man has? The key is that he was looking with his human understanding. The keys are found in verses 16 and 17. He says that when I tried to understand all of this (the injustice of it all, the unfairness of it all), it was oppressive to me.

Until I went into the sanctuary of God, then I understood.

He goes from confusion and oppression to receiving total clarity from God himself. How often have we dealt with oppression and confusion because we were looking at our lives from a human perspective? You see God wants to give you a revelation that will utterly change your paradigm. This man was no longer envious of these people. He saw how temporary their seeming comfort truly is. What a vapor the wicked are! He ends it with repentance at his own ignorance due to the bitterness of his heart. When you feel oppressed and confused by life or the wicked, go into the secret place and trade your confusion for God's clarity. You will come out of the prayer closet rejoicing once again!

The Great I AM

When God reveals himself to Moses in the desert through the burning bush, he gives Moses a name. He says, tell them I AM has sent you. The secret place is where you meet with God. How does he reveal himself to his people?

I AM.

... Do you get it?

Questions and putting it into practice

1. What is your biggest take away from this study?

2. The revivalist Evan Roberts prayed a famous prayer that eventually led to the Welsh Revival:

"Bend me O God! Bend me!"

Explain how this relates to Jesus' prayers in the garden of Gethsemane. What was taking place in Evan when he prayed this?

3. In Exodus, God calls himself I AM. I want you to fill in the blank in your own life. When you are going through _____, God says I AM _____. Write them all down now.

4. Name some areas in your life where you feel confused. Be honest. Write them down now. Will you go into the secret place this week into the sanctuary of God to find the answers? Write down what He speaks.

5. Read over the Philippians section this week and think about it as you go into the secret place. Write down any thoughts or revelations that you received through meditation on this Scripture.