

Matthew 6:6

Matthew 6:6 “But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret – and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.

Here Jesus emphasizes how important it is that we have a “secret” relationship with His Father. How wonderful to know that Jesus came to enable us to know *His* Father as *our* Father! By simply putting our faith in Jesus as our Savior, God adopts into His family (John 1:12), and gives us His Spirit to enable us to relate to Him as our loving heavenly Father (Galatians 4:6).

Once we receive Jesus, we can build a deeply personal relationship with our Father by talking with Him in private (“go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret”). Jesus calls this praying to God “in secret.” He is teaching us that there should be much in our relationship with the Father which no one else knows.

Any healthy close relationship has a significant “secret” aspect to it. This is a key reason for the joy we feel in connection with that relationship – it is something special, just between us and the other person. When this “secret” life withers, we know that closeness is diminishing, and we move to restore it by spending time with that person – especially time alone.

It is the same way with our relationship with our heavenly Father. Just as an iceberg has most of its mass under water, our “secret” relationship with Him can and should be greater than our public spiritual lives. If we neglect this “secret” time, our Christian lives will become like a sink-hole that gradually erodes underground until it eventually



collapses in moral failure. But if we have much going on in secret with God, we will avoid these collapses. The healthy abundance of a secret life with God makes us much less vulnerable to the empty promises of sin.

Jesus speaks specifically of the “reward” the Father will surely give us when we spend regular time communing with Him in private. He clearly views this reward as highly desirable and speaks of it as an inducement to praying to our Father in private. But what specifically is this reward? The immediate context of Matthew 6:6 indicates three different kinds of reward, and there may be many more.

- *We gain protection from the soul-destroying bondage of living for people’s approval.* In Matthew 6:1, Jesus says: “Beware of practicing your righteousness before people to be noticed by them.” This is our instinctive fleshly orientation – to seek people’s approval and admiration and recognition. This lust is a deep compulsion, emerging unconsciously from our corrupted souls, and it corrupts even our public spiritual activities. Nothing counteracts this lust more effectively than regularly enjoying times of “secret” fellowship with our Father. We emerge from such times more secure in His love, and this strengthens us to relate to people in ways that please Him and genuinely serve them, rather than seeking their recognition or avoiding their disapproval.
- *We gain greater confidence that He cares deeply about us and wants to meet all of our needs.* In Matthew 6:8,11-13, Jesus reminds us that since our Father already knows our needs, we should regularly ask Him to meet our physical, relational and spiritual needs. “Secret” time with God thus includes pouring our hearts out to Him about our current needs. Every day we have new needs, and unless we take them to Him in this way, they accumulate in our souls and ignite anxiety, frustration, and self-sufficient strategies to meet our own needs. But when we take our current needs to Him in private prayer, we experience fresh assurance that He cares for us as our loving heavenly Father. We also experience His wise answers to our secret requests, and this



helps us to live securely as His well-loved children, rather than like orphans who must look after ourselves.

- *We experience answers to our kingdom-expansion prayers.* In Matthew 6:9,10, Jesus urges us to pray for the advancement of God's kingdom – that more people will come to know Him, and that more of His children will follow Him more closely. As we spend regular secret time with our Father, His Spirit teaches us how to pray for the advancement of His kingdom. And as we pray these Spirit-led prayers in secret, we increasingly see God answer them in our daily lives. These answers become a precious part of our secret relationship with Him. Sometimes, He asks us to keep these answers secret from other people, so that we don't misuse them as a way to boast. At other times, He urges us to share these answers as an encouragement to our brothers and sisters in Christ. Over time, we become convinced that our greatest ministry is this kind of intercessory prayer. We also learn that in the context of secret intercessory prayer, God often guides us into the other ways He wants us to serve Him.

Father, thank You that through Jesus you have made me Your child, and that I can now have a rich personal relationship with You. Teach me how to commune with You in secret. Make my secret times with You the richest parts of my day. Thank You for promising to reward my secret times with You – what amazing generosity!