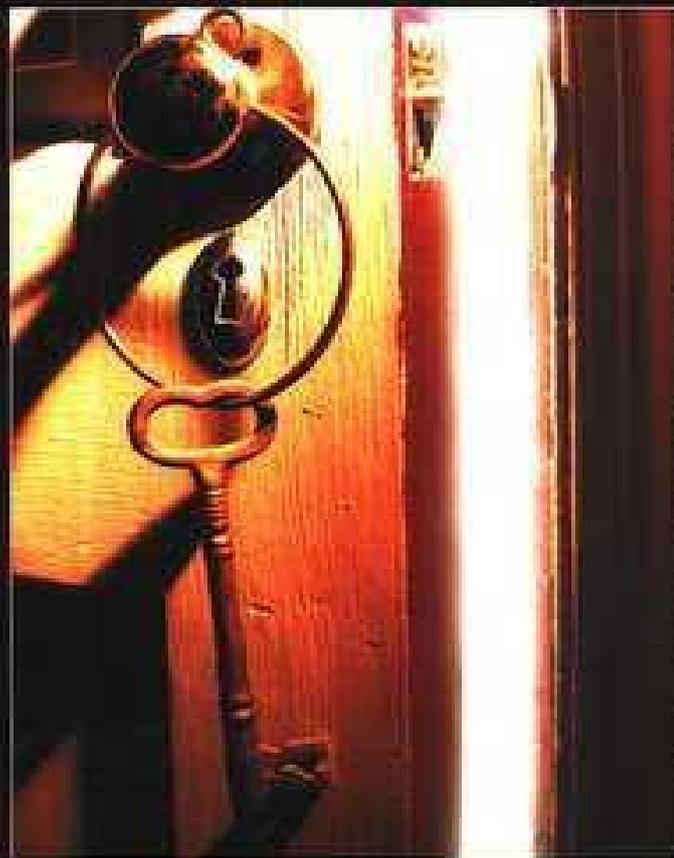


# SECRETS *of the* SECRET PLACE



Study Guide  
Available

Keys to Igniting Your  
Personal Time with God

# Bob Sorge

Bob Sorge's life proclaims the message of how one pursues and enjoys intimacy with God. His deep experience of God through His word along with his patient endurance of hardship have resulted in "living understanding" of the subject of this book. We do not need more books on intimacy with God but better books on it. Books that flow out of reality — forged out of revelation and encounter. With this book as a road map, gain fresh vision and inspiration for going forward on a journey wherein the very issues of life are in the balance.

— Mike Bickle

There has never been a generation that needs the secret place more than this one. Bob Sorge gently admonishes us to establish a place, time and incentive to meet regularly with God. This book is an enticement, not a guilt projector. The principles he expounds are timeless, tried and true. I loved the book. It stirred my spirit to want renewed fellowship with my Lord.

— Judson Cornwall

My dear friend Bob Sorge's passion for God and His word reverberates through every line of this wonderful book. If you already have similar passion, this book will stoke the fires and fan the flames. If you have little or no passion, this book will ignite one. So, do yourself a favor and saturate your needy spirit in these combustible truths. You will join the ranks of those who are desperate for an intimate relationship with God, the Lover of our souls, who alone can satisfy and fulfill us.

— Joy Dawson

As I read through selected chapters of this excellent book, I could not help thinking: these are the truths the church must hear. Focused, penetrating, passionate and practical, Bob Sorge goes past informing of God's secret place, he takes us there. This is a book to return to again and again.

— Francis Frangipane

You will be encouraged, lifted, motivated and compelled to spend greater quality time with the Lord. This is a book that reveals the secrets that can carry you higher on the mountain of truth and worship. Bob Sorge, through the years, continues to be one of the leaders who pioneers the advanced training of those who have given their lives to worship and intercession.

— Kent Henry

Everything of God flows out of the secret place. Everything good and lasting — everything that survives the ultimate test is born in the secret place. We can "make it" to heaven with empty hands, but why do that? Why not go instead with crowns to lay at His fee? If we give Him crowns, it will be because we met Jesus daily in the secret place. I recommend *Secrets of the Secret Place* to every hungry, desperate follower of Jesus. You won't be disappointed.

— Floyd McClung

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## *Part I*

# **Accepting The Great Invitation**

## *Secrets of the Secret Place*

*Isn't it incredible that the awesome God of the universe has invited us to a breathing, growing relationship with Him! This first section of meditations directs our hearts to some of the foundational truths that will help us establish a meaningful secret place connection with the Lord. You may choose to read one chapter a week, or you may take it at your own pace. Either way, say "yes" to His incredible invitation!*

# 1

## The Secret of Saying “Yes”

*Chris and DeeAnn Abke were feeling overwhelmed by a looming financial challenge. In desperation, they took some time late one evening—after settling their kids into bed—to pray and seek the Lord’s help. As they sat together on their living room couch, making their petitions known to God, suddenly an audible voice began to speak, “If you need help, call 9-1-1. If you need help, call 9-1-1.”*

*They heard the voice say this about four or five times, and then it stopped. Mystified, Chris and DeeAnn just looked at each other.*

*The voice seemed to be coming from the garage, so they cautiously opened the door and flipped on the garage lights, not sure what they would find. Everything was in its place except for a small toy ambulance, belonging to their son, that lay by itself in the center of the garage floor.*

*Chris picked up the ambulance, pushed a button next to its emergency lights, and the voice began to speak, “If you need help, call 9-1-1.” As they wondered aloud how the toy had activated of its own accord, suddenly the Holy Spirit seemed to nudge Chris with these words, “If you need help, call 9-1-1—Psalm 91:1.” Going back to the Scriptures, the verse had an entirely new meaning to them as they read it together: “He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty*

*Chris and DeeAnn understood this incident to be God’s*

*way of directing their hearts to a renewed commitment to that secret place relationship with Him. The inference was that God would direct their steps related to their financial needs as they gave themselves to the intimacy of abiding in the presence of the Almighty.*

I share my friends' story with you because I am absolutely convinced the power of heaven is unlocked on earth when we devote ourselves to the secret place of the Most High. Therefore, I have written this book with the singular purpose of stoking the embers of your personal prayer life. I pray that you will say "Yes!" to a daily, fervent pursuit of Jesus in the secret place. *My earnest prayer is that with each devotional you will gain renewed momentum and a holy fascination to pursue the greatest pearl of human existence—a personal, intimate, passionate, living relationship with the glorious Creator of the universe.*

One of the best kept secrets of our faith is the blessedness and joy of cultivating a secret life with God. Imagine the sheer delight of it even now. You're tucked away in a quiet nook; the door is shut; you're curled up in a comfortable position; the living word of God is laid open before you; Jesus Himself stands at your side; the Holy Spirit is gently washing your heart; your love is awakened as you meditate upon the gracious words of His mouth; your spirit is ignited and your mind is renewed; you talk to Him, and He talks to you in the language of intimate friendship.

Ahhh, it doesn't get any better than this!

Hell will do everything in its power to misrepresent and distort the exuberant delight of this dynamic reality; this present world system is strategically designed to squeeze out your time and energy for the secret place; the church usually focuses its best energies on getting saints busy; and there seem to be relatively few believers whose secret life with God is so vibrantly life-giving that it kindles a contagious desire in others to follow their example.

I connect viceraly with the pain of countless believers who carry the conviction that the secret place is central to an overcoming life but who struggle on a regular basis to maintain the secret place as a daily lifestyle. I know what it's like to live below what the Christian walk could be and yet feel almost powerless to change anything. I've watched myself return persistently to the sources which are no source. For example, when wanting to get revitalized from a draining day, we will look to television, as though its distractions will renew us—only to be left empty for the umpteenth time. Or, we will attend a church service in the hope that the preacher's walk with God will infuse us with fresh energy for the journey. But deep down we know that sermons and teachings, although edifying, can never replace the carrying power we find when we sit at His feet and hear His word for ourselves.

We don't need to add another condemning word to the berating voices we all know so well. What we need, rather, is for our eyes to be lifted to the glorious hope we

already carry within. My desire is that I might share some secrets—lessons I’ve learned mostly by doing it wrong first—to empower you toward the goal of the upward call of God in Christ.

When we learn to dwell in the secret place of the Most High, we are positioning ourselves to discover the key to true kingdom fruitfulness. Reproductive power is unlocked in the shadow of the Almighty! One of the best Bible examples of this truth is found in the life of Cornelius, the first Gentile believer. Cornelius was a devout Gentile who committed himself to the secret place of prayer. His piety is described in the Book of Acts as fourfold: he gave regularly to the poor; he lived a holy lifestyle; he practiced fasting; and he adhered to the secret place of prayer. It was because of those four pursuits that God filled Cornelius and his household with the Holy Spirit and made them the firstfruits of all Gentile believers. It’s as though God said, “Cornelius, because of your passionate conviction for the secret place, your life is the kind of example that I can reproduce in the nations. So I’m designating you to be the first Gentile to receive the Holy Spirit, because I’m going to take your devotion to the secret place and export it to every nation on earth!” By making Cornelius the catalyst for the redemption of the nations, God was giving a powerful endorsement to Cornelius’s priority of cultivating a hidden life with God. The eruption of fruitfulness from his life must have caught even him off guard!

Many of you reading this book have a call to neighborhoods, to cities, and also to nations. As you devote yourself to the secret place with God, He will birth something within you that will spread, in His time, to the four corners of your sphere. It’s an awesome secret: *The call of God burning in your breast will be uncontainable and unstoppable as you devote yourself to the fiery passion of intimate communion with the Lover of your soul.*

Won’t you join me in pressing forward into new dimensions of kingdom power and glory? The face of Christianity is changed, generation after generation, by those who discover the power of the secret place. I pray that with the reading of every page you will join me in saying “Yes!” to the secret of the centuries.

“What is this secret?” someone might ask.

The secret place *IS* the secret!

## 2

# The Secret of the Shut Door

“But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly” (Matthew 6:6).

Jesus Himself spoke these blessed words. All Scripture is God-breathed, but followers of Jesus always find special delight in giving particular attention the words Jesus Himself gave us. When Jesus taught on prayer, He gave primary emphasis to the secret place. In fact, the first thing He taught concerning prayer was the primacy of the secret place. In the verses following, He would teach us *how* to pray, but first He teaches *where* to pray.

Matthew 6:6 contains a powerful secret regarding the *where* of prayer, but before I share it let me ask a question. Do you struggle frequently with feeling disconnected from God? Do you strain to feel God’s presence when you pray? Does He seem distant to you? Do you long to know that He is with you, right now, drawing near to you?

If your answer to any of those questions is, “Yes,” then I have some wonderful news for you. There is a guaranteed way to get into God’s presence. There is a sure-fire 100% guaranteed way to have instant intimacy with the Father, and Jesus Himself gave us the key. Jesus gave us this secret in the above verse when He said, “Your Father who is in the secret place.” Jesus is saying, “Your Father is already in the secret place. He has gone ahead of you; He is waiting for you. The moment you get to the secret place, you are in the immediate presence of your Father.”

Jesus affirmed this truth twice in the same chapter. He says it the second time in Matthew 6:18, ““So that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but *to your Father who is in the secret place*; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.”” Jesus says it twice for emphasis, so we know this word is absolutely certain. *Our Father is in the secret place!*

Furthermore, Jesus gives us the key to finding this secret place. If you’re wondering what you must do to place yourself in the secret place, Jesus made it clear. To get there, all you have to do is *shut your door!*

When you enter your room, and *shut your door*, you are in the presence of your Father. Instantaneously! It matters not how you feel. Regardless of your soul’s climate at that moment, you know with absolute confidence you have stepped into the

chamber of your Father in heaven. *The secret place is your portal to the throne, the place where you taste of heaven itself.* Receive this word and you have gained one of the greatest secrets to intimacy with God. Because when you know you are in the immediate presence of your Father, your spirit and soul will often respond to that knowledge with heartfelt connectedness. The knowledge of this truth will set your spirit free to soar.

When you build your life on the blessed intimacy of a secret place relationship with God, you are building on the rock. You're getting your foundations in order. That's not simply my opinion, that's the explicit teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ. The principles Jesus gave in Chapters 5-7 of Matthew's Gospel were all given at one time, in one great sermon. Jesus said that in this sermon He was laying forth the foundation stones of a disciple's life. Here's how He expressed it:

“Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them,

I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall” (Matthew 7:24-27).

Jesus' message is unmistakable. He is saying, “If you will hear and do what I have taught you in this Sermon on the Mount, you will build foundations into your life that will survive the harshest storms of life.” And believe me, friend, storms will most certainly come! There are some storms that have yet to hit your life. The question is, will you have the foundation in place to survive the storms?

One of the most essential elements of that foundation is to have an intact secret life with God. Those who hear this word and do it will not only enjoy intimacy with the Father on a daily basis, but they will also be equipped to sustain the greatest storms—whether they originate from hell's fury or the world's distractions or the floodgates of heaven's blessings.

Don't forget the secret: *shut your door.*

### 3

## The Secret of Listening

When God brought the people of Israel from Egypt, through the Red Sea, to Mount Sinai, He appeared to the nation as a visible fire on the mountain and spoke to them with a thundering audible voice. The experience was so awesome it totally overpowered the Israelites, who asked that Moses go instead and speak to God by himself on their behalf.

The psalmist described this scene with a most unusual phrase: “I answered you in the secret place of thunder” (Psalm 81:7). God viewed the convocation with His people on Mt. Sinai as a “secret place” encounter with His people. He called them aside to a deserted mountain in order to speak with them and give them His commandments.

God has always designed that the secret place be a place where He answers us and speaks to us. Sometimes, He even apprehends us by thundering to us with His awesome voice. There is nothing more glorious in all of life than hearing His voice! God has always longed to have the kind of intimate relationship with His people wherein they hear His voice and respond accordingly. *We close the door to our secret place so that we might shut out all distracting voices and tune our hearts to the one voice which we long to hear.* “The secret place of thunder”—what an awesome description of

the place where we come aside to be with our Lord!

Something profound happened inside me the day the Lord showed me the single most important word in the entire Bible. I was on an intense study of Jesus’ teachings, and was suddenly struck by how often Jesus talked about the necessity of hearing. For example, He cried out, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear!” (Matthew 13:9). His words hit me like a freight train. I realized that everything in the kingdom depends upon whether or not we hear the word of God. The Holy Spirit began to extrapolate that truth for me to the breadth of the entire Bible, and suddenly I saw it: The word “hear” is the most important word in the Bible! The most important treasures in the kingdom are predicated upon the necessity of hearing God. When the Lord gave me this truth, I wanted to underline every occurrence of the word “hear” in my Bible. My paradigm of kingdom living was radically realigned because I was awakened to the fact that everything changes when I hear from God and act upon that word. This is the wellspring of eternal life; this is the fountainhead of kingdom power and authority; this is the source of wisdom, understanding, and life direction! Nothing can replace the confidence and authority that comes from hearing God. *Hearing God’s voice*

*has become the singular quest of my heart, the sole pursuit that alone satisfies the great longings of my heart.*

For this reason, I strongly advocate for a prayer life that is comprised mostly of silence. It's a great delight to talk to God, but it's even more thrilling when He talks to us. I've discovered that He has more important things to say than I do. *Things don't change when I talk to God; things change when God talks to me.* When I talk, nothing happens; when God talks, the universe comes into existence. So the power of prayer is found, not in convincing God of my agenda, but in waiting upon Him to hear His agenda.

I do not mean to give the impression that hearing God's voice is my daily experience in the secret place. Far from it! Most days I come away with unfulfilled longings, unrequited initiatives, unanswered prayers, unrealized aspirations, deferred hopes, and incomplete understandings. But then along comes one of those days—you know what I mean—when heaven leans over and God speaks a word directly to the heart. He breathes upon a portion of Scripture and personalizes its meaning precisely to my felt needs. Oh what glory! That moment is worth all of the knocking and seeking of the preceding days. I will endure months of silence if He will but speak one creative word from His mouth to my spirit.

My role in the secret place is to listen for anything God might want to speak. If He doesn't speak to me, my time spent in silent listening is not futile or in vain. I haven't missed something or failed to connect. I've done my part. It is so important to me that I put myself in a posture of listening. I'm convinced there have been times I have not clearly heard God's word to my heart because I have not been listening at the time He was speaking. I realize I can't tell God what to speak, or when to speak it. But I can position myself in the secret place so that, when He chooses to speak, I am found listening.

Scripture says, "Today, if you will hear His voice" (Psalm 95:7). So hearing the voice of God is largely a matter of the will. We must choose to hear Him. We make the choice by setting aside time to listen quietly. This hearing is a "today" thing that we do. It says "if" because hearing His voice is conditional—built upon the condition of quieting our hearts to listen.

All of us want God to hear our prayers. But the Lord said, "Therefore it happened, that just as He proclaimed and they would not hear, so they called out and I would not listen" (Zechariah 7:13). In other words, God is saying, "When I spoke, you didn't listen to Me; therefore, when you speak, I won't listen to you." The inference is that when we hear God's voice, He in turn listens to our voice.

Oh, how can I speak of this wondrous secret more articulately? How can I make it more plain? *Hearing God is the most cherished secret of the secret place.*

Do not believe your adversary's lies. He would tell you that you are unable to hear the voice of God. Nothing could be further from the truth. Jesus said of you, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me" (John 10:27). You

*can* hear the voice of God. Stop everything, come aside, listen, and wait

on Him. Wait until. He longs to commune with you.

When listening, it is a common experience to be bombarded with thoughts about all that must be done in our daily duties. A practical suggestion: Take a notepad to the secret place, and write down “things to do” as they interrupt your listening. Then, you can put those thoughts out of mind and maintain your focus where you want it, knowing that you’ll not forget about those details later.

Be encouraged by the fact that you’re not the only one who finds listening a very challenging discipline to master. The best attainments in God always come the hardest. Be prepared to make the discipline of attentive listening a lifetime pursuit that will become easier in the doing of it. Let’s grow together!

## 4

# The Secret of Radical Obedience

Hearing God in the secret place is one of the greatest keys to the overcoming Christian life. However, it must be linked with its corollary: radical obedience. We hear, and then we do. “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves” (James 1:22).

By “radical obedience,” I mean immediate obedience that fulfills the commandment to its fullest measure. *Radical obedience does not seek to comply to the minimal standards but pursues extravagant, lavish fulfillment.* If Jesus says, “Sell all,” then we sell all! Immediately.

The New Testament word for obedience, *hupakoe*, is a compound word of two Greek words, *hupo*, “under,” and *akouo*, “to hear.” So to obey is “to hear under.” Obedience involves listening attentively with a heart of compliant submission and, then, obeying His word.

Implicit obedience starts, for every one of us, not in doing good works but in sitting at His feet and hearing His word. *Devotion to the secret place is the saint’s first great act of obedience.* Jesus revealed this:

But He answered them, saying, “Who is My mother, or My brothers?” And He looked around in a circle at those who sat about Him, and said, “Here are My mother and My brothers!

For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother” (Mark 3:33-35).

The will of God in that moment was for the people to sit at Jesus’ feet and hear His word. Until you attend to this responsibility first, you will be constantly frustrated in your inability to uncover the joys of radical obedience. Works of service gain their spiritual energy from the furnace of a fiery love relationship at Jesus’ feet. *The true*

*fulfillment of serving Jesus is discovered when we get first things first: First we sit and listen, and then we go and do.*

My friend, Steve Peglow, once told me he thought some people were “common law Christians.” By that he meant they want the benefits of living with Jesus without making the commitment. But even as the full joy of living together is found only within the context of the commitment of marriage, so too the joy of following Jesus is found only in abandoning oneself to every word that proceeds from His mouth.

Some people put their best energies into creative thinking. However, God has a way of negating the plans of men: “The Lord brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; He makes the plans of the peoples of no effect. The counsel of the Lord stands forever” (Psalm 33:10-11). Instead of focusing on being creative, focus on being obedient. Give your best energies to waiting on God in His presence, listening for His voice, and then moving out in action only when He has spoken. There’s no sense in coming up with your own ideas when it’s only God’s counsel that will stand! I’m saying it several different ways: The key is in hearing and obeying.

Oh what joy to hear His word and do it! The benefits are profound (I will mention only a few among many):

### **Obedience unlocks eternally abundant life.**

Jesus said, “And I know that His command is everlasting life” (John 12:50). Coming from the Master of understatement, these simple words contain far more impact than a cursory reading would reveal. Take that statement to your place of meditation and let Him awaken you to the lifegiving power of extravagant adherence to His command. *The life that resides in Him flows into you when you obey.*

### **Obedience incurs the gaze of God.**

God looks with special interest and affection upon the one who is devoted to obedience. He said it this way, “But on this one will I look: on him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and *who trembles at My word*” (Isaiah 66:2). It’s fantastic to just imagine it: You’re in the secret place with His word before you, and you’re trembling at the prospect of His speaking to you; He sees your willing spirit and conceives of ways to honor your devotion. Wow! To tremble at His word means firstly that we long for Him to speak, and secondly that we tremble with ready diligence to act upon the word that comes. *When we tremble for His word with this kind of keen anticipation, He fastens His gaze upon us in order to do good on our behalf.*

### **Obedience produces greater intimacy.**

In my opinion, one of the most powerful statements Jesus made on earth is right here: “He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself

to him” (John 14:21). *Jesus said obedience is the proof of love, and love brings us into incredible intimacy with the Father.*

Furthermore, obedience unlocks the affections of Christ and His self-disclosure to the human heart. There’s nothing more I long for than for Jesus to manifest Himself to me! For the hope of beholding Him I will embrace any and every command of His mouth. I choose to obey Him, not because I am energized by watching my obedience change people’s lives, but because His presence is so sweet when I obey. My heart is enflamed with zeal for His closeness, and obedience only fuels that fire.

## **Obedience builds unshakable foundations.**

“Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them,

I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall” (Matthew 7:24-27).

You will notice that the storm comes both to those who do Jesus’ sayings and those who don’t do them. No one is exempt. Storms are most certainly headed your way. The only question is, will you survive? Will your foundations be strong enough to sustain the winds and floods? Those who walk in radical obedience have made themselves ready for the storm, and they will overcome. ““Oh, that you had heeded My commandments! Then your peace would have been like a river, and *your righteousness like the waves of the sea*”” (Isaiah 48:18). The greater the winds that assault the obedient, the more his righteousness rises up like mighty breakers, crashing on the shore in majestic thunderings of fragrance to God.

Of course, there are many other benefits of obedience beyond these four just cited. But I’m trying to keep our chapters in this book short! Consider just two other brief thoughts yet, regarding obedience. The first comes to us through Mary, the mother of Jesus.

Mary gave us one of the greatest summations of obedience: ““Whatever He says to you, do it”” (John 2:5). True servants are found sitting at Jesus’ feet (““Where I am, there My servant will be also,”” John 12:26). Then, when He speaks, they just do it.

Servants don’t try to give the Master a better idea; servants don’t complain that they think the task is stupid; servants don’t try to decide if they’re in the mood to do it right now; servants don’t decide if the task is within their dignity to perform it. They just do it. ““So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, “We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do””” (Luke 17:10).

The closer you get to God, the more obedient you must be. Some choose the level of obedience whereby they endeavor to avoid sin and choose righteousness. That was the level where the children of Israel, who knew God’s acts, lived. Moses, however, knew God’s ways. So Moses’ level of obedience was of necessity much higher. The issue for Moses was no longer simply, “Is this action right or wrong?” The

issue was, “What is God’s command?” For example, when Moses was on the fiery mountain the command was, “Stay behind the cleft of the rock. Because if you come out from behind the protective rock and see My face, you’ll die. You’re so close to Me right now, Moses, that if you make a wrong move you’ll see My face and have a cardiac arrest on the spot.” Now, is there anything wrong or sinful about stepping out from behind a wall of rock? No. But when you’re that close to God, it’s imperative you follow His instructions to the letter and stay where He’s putting you. It bears repeating: *The closer you get to God, the more obedient you must be.*

## 5

# The Secret of Rapid Repentance

Eight times the Scriptures enjoin us, “Take heed to your selves” (Exodus 19:12; Deuteronomy 4:23; 11:16; Jeremiah 17:21; Luke 17:3; 21:34; Acts 5:35; 20:28). Two of those times the words are spoken by Jesus Himself. This taking heed to oneself is a primary function of the secret place. *Prayer is the constant calibration of the soul.* It is a lifestyle of stopping and taking candid spiritual inventory. This is not spiritual paranoia, but rather the exercise of one who has a healthy fear of God and a sublime desire for glorious heights of intimacy with God. The devout is constantly testing himself for spiritual fervor, alertness, faithfulness, purity, love, obedience, growth in grace, etc.

It is in the secret place that I find “my spirit makes diligent search” (Psalm 77:6). I so very much long to please Him and to know His will, so my spirit diligently searches the recesses of my heart to see if there might be anything in me for which I need to repent. I want nothing of my self-life to hinder my relationship with Him or His purposes for us together. I feel like I’m panning for gold—the finds are few and not as weighty as I would desire.

Here’s some excellent counsel: *Become a good repentor.* The only way to move forward in God is through repentance. If your pride hinders you from repenting, get over it. You’re a wretch. You need mercy so badly it’s scary. Wise up and master the art of repentance. Call your sin in its worst possible terms. Grovel. Eat dust.

I remember the day I awakened to the reality that I live far below God’s glory. I saw it in the story of Jesus’ multiplying the loaves and fish for the five thousand: “Then Jesus lifted up His eyes, and seeing a great multitude coming toward Him, He said to Philip, ‘Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?’ But this He said to test him, for He Himself knew what He would do” (John 6:5-6). Jesus was testing Philip, to see if Philip was living in the glory zone. Philip would have to live in another dimension to know the answer to the test, which was simply, “Lord, just break open these loaves and fish and multiply them for the multitude.” Philip failed the test because his thoughts were a universe below those of Jesus (Isaiah 55:9). Then I saw it so clearly: I am failing the Philip test virtually every day! I am so earthbound in my perspectives that I am almost oblivious to the dimension of glory in which Jesus lives. It’s safe to assume that apart from God’s grace I am constantly falling short of the excellence of God’s glory. Do I need to repent continually? You bet!

Beloved, I pray you might gain the secret of radical, rapid repentance. Ready repentance opens the channels for intimate communion with God. When you’re in the

secret place, be quick to confess your unbelief and hardness of heart. Don't make Him talk you into it. Agree quickly with Him in the way.

When I speak of repentance in this chapter, I am not thinking of repenting from sins like lying, fornication, stealing, cursing, pornography, hatred, drunkenness, or not tithing. Those sins are so obvious that you don't even need the conviction of the Holy Spirit to know you're in disobedience. God's word regarding those sins is blatantly clear. Sincerity and a clear conscience doesn't even begin until we deal with these kinds of outward sins.

No, I am not talking about obvious sins; in this chapter, I am talking about repenting from our *iniquities*. Iniquities are the hidden faults that we don't see, the wicked residue of our fallen nature that discolors the fabric of our thoughts, motives, feelings, responses, and desires. Iniquities are wrapped up in much more *subtle* areas of sinfulness, such as pride, rebellion, unbelief, envy, selfishness, ambition, and covetousness.

We all have hidden pockets of iniquity, and we need God's help to see them. You can't repent of something you don't see, so God will help you to see them. God has many ways of bringing our iniquities to the surface where we can see them, and those ways are summarized under the scriptural metaphor of *fire*. How God uses fire to surface our iniquities is the subject of this passage:

"Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: 'The Lord knows those who are His,' and, 'Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.' But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work" (2 Timothy 2:19-21).

Paul is saying the Christian life is founded on two powerful realities: We are known by Christ, and we depart from iniquity when we see it.

*As you are in the secret place and meditating in the word, God will use the fire of circumstances mixed with the fire of His word to reveal your hidden faults to you.* As you gaze upon His perfection and beauty, you will suddenly see yourself in a whole new light. You will sense His unconditional acceptance despite your weaknesses, but also His firm commitment to conform you into the image of Christ. At that moment you are standing at the threshold of a wonderful opportunity: This is a time to embrace rapid repentance.

For the devout, this is actually an exciting moment. Repentance becomes the opportunity to turn from things that have been hindering love, and as such, repentance becomes the catalyst for a greater and more profound intimacy than we've known to this point with God. When we repent quickly of those things God's word is revealing, we experience the pleasure of the Father in a palpable way. The light of His countenance touching our hearts causes us to actually *feel* His delight in our responsiveness.

As we repent of the iniquities that the fire surfaces, we are actually buying gold in the fire (Revelation 3:18). A consistent pattern of rapid repentance will cause us to become a vessel of gold or silver, useful to the Master for noble purposes. Those who resist repentance do not necessarily lose their salvation, it's just that they do not progress beyond being vessels of wood or clay. They are useful to the Master only for dishonorable purposes (in a great house there is a need even for toilet plungers and dust pans).

The assurance of the above passage is clear: Rapid repentance from iniquity will cause us to progress forward to more noble purposes in God's great house and will deepen our knowing relationship with Him.

## 6

# The Secret of Sowing

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart (Galatians 6:7-9).

Perhaps the most common struggle of Christians, when it comes to the secret place, is to feel like they're "spinning their wheels," that their time in prayer and meditation is accomplishing nothing. It's very tempting, in those times of seeming powerlessness, to just move on to something else with a shrug that says, "Well, maybe it will be better tomorrow."

Some of us have become so discouraged with feelings of ineffectiveness that we have fallen into a slump of neglect. I hope the secret of this chapter will help to get you back on track!

Here's the awesome secret of Galatians 6: *When you sow to the Spirit by giving dedicated time to the secret place, you will eventually reap life in the Spirit. Eventually.* We have usually applied this text to the grace of giving financially, but it applies equally to the grace of seeking God in listening meditation. It is impossible to sow to the Spirit without reaping a corresponding harvest.

When I speak of sowing, I am talking about giving of your *time* to the secret place. I am talking about establishing patterns and habits that enable you to spend significant time with God in the secret place on a daily basis. This kind of sowing *will* produce a harvest in your walk with Him. It will change you and, in turn, begin to affect everything around you.

This secret has carried me at times when I was very tempted to give up the intensity of my pursuit of God. When I've been on fasting retreats, for example, I've often been tempted with feeling like my fast is accomplishing nothing in the Spirit. Just when I'm tempted to quit, I remind myself that if I will continue to sow, one day I will reap. I take my focus off my current frustrations and assert my confidence in God's word that a harvest will come my way, in time, if I persevere. I've often experienced the secret of this chapter. Many times I've thought my time in the secret place was rather dull and uneventful, but later perspective showed that it had been, in fact, a powerful time with God. The actual impact of the secret place, I've discovered, is usually not evident until a later time.

We live in a culture that evaluates its priorities based upon immediate results.