SECRETS OF THE SECRET PLACE

as of 3.10.2012

READ PSALM 91 (NKJV).

He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.
2 I will say of the LORD, “He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him I will trust.”

3 Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler[a] And from the perilous pestilence.
4 He shall cover you with His feathers, And under His wings you shall take refuge; His truth shall be your shield and buckler.
5 You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, Nor of the arrow that flies by day,
6 Nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness, Nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday.

7 A thousand may fall at your side, And ten thousand at your right hand; But it shall not come near you.
8 Only with your eyes shall you look, And see the reward of the wicked.

9 Because you have made the LORD, who is my refuge, Even the Most High, your dwelling place,
10 No evil shall befall you, Nor shall any plague come near your dwelling;
11 For He shall give His angels charge over you, To keep you in all your ways.
12 In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.
13 You shall tread upon the lion and the cobra, The young lion and the serpent you shall trample underfoot.

14 “Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore I will deliver him; I will set him on high, because he has known My name.
15 He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him.
16 With long life I will satisfy him, And show him My salvation.”
**THE GOSPEL**
The gospel is a relationship with a person. It's not saying a prayer “once upon a time” so that you have eternal fire insurance. It's not agreeing to the right theological statements about God. The gospel is having a real relationship with a real God.

Eternal life is produced in our lives not by knowing enough Bible verses or “Christianese” to convince other people that we are saved but rather eternal life is produced by knowing Jesus intimately.

God says it this way in **JOHN 17.1-3**.

17 After saying all these things, Jesus looked up to heaven and said, “Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son so he can give glory back to you. 2 For you have given him authority over everyone. He gives eternal life to each one you have given him. 3 And this is the way to have eternal life—to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, the one you sent to earth.

The way to have eternal life is to know God. And I want to clarify it’s not about head knowledge but about intimate heart knowledge which comes from spending time with Him. Jesus rebuked the religious leaders of His day because they knew the Scriptures but didn’t recognize God when He was standing right in front of them.

We grow in knowledge about anyone by spending time with them. If I only know (insert name) because they come to men on fire but we have never spent any quality face time together our level of intimacy is going to be limited.

The more time I spend with (insert name) the more intimately I will know (insert name). If we start to meet 1on1 every week then after a year we are going to know each other fairly well (assuming we are being transparent and real with each other).

It’s the same with God. If we want to experience eternal life we need to spend quality face time with the Lord and really get to know His heart.

**PSALM 91** refers to that time and location we meet with the Lord as the Secret Place. About a month ago I started this teaching called **Secrets of the Secret Place** which was designed to give you some practical ways to really connect with the heart of God as you seek to spend time with Him. We are going to do a quick review and then hopefully finish that teaching tonight. I believe that this is one of the most important aspects of following Jesus because it is in the Secret Place that we learn to connect with God’s heart and hear His voice which in turn provides the correction, instruction and encouragement necessary to experience salvation and fulfill our destiny.
SECRET #1. SCHEDULE TIME WITH GOD.
we are busy. if we don’t prioritize spending time with God (MATTHEW 6.33) we will end up being the believers Jesus warned about in MATTHEW 13.22 (soil choked out by thorns).

SECRET #2. SET APART A MEETING PLACE.
set aside a specific area of your apartment or house to meet with God (think of it as God’s office). make sure it’s a place you can close the door and be set apart from other people and activities going on so that you are free from distractions. let others know this is your time with God and not to disturb you. turn off email, skype, your phone and anything else that could distract you during your time with God (believe me the world will start calling you when you get deliberate about spending time with God).

as you consistently use the same space to connect with God it will become saturated with His presence. [share about prayer room at TW and home] we are preparing a place that consistently draws the abiding presence of the Lord.

with all this said, we don’t want to be religious about this. anywhere can be the secret place (i have had some of my most powerful encounters with God just parking my vehicle spontaneously and meeting with Him).
SECRET #3. QUIETING YOUR SOUL AND LISTENING

God is always speaking to us. we often have too much noise going on in our mind and emotions to really hear Him which is what brings us to SECRET #3 which is the importance of learning how to quiet our soul so that we can listen to the “still small voice” of the Lord (1 KINGS 19.11-13 story of Elijah on the mountain).

that is one of the reasons the world is trying to make so much noise. if the enemy can keep people’s minds engaged constantly through smart phones, computers and televisions then there is no time to stop and hear the heart of God. we are engaged in a battle for our thought life and the only way to win is to be intentional about cutting off the noise and learning how to listen to God.

i don’t know about you guys but when i come into the secret place it takes me between 15-30 minutes to wind down from the last 20 things i was doing before i can even engage the heart of God in a real way (and there are levels to this). we are going to talk about this more in SECRET #4 JOURNALING and SECRET #12 RETREATS.

the other thing we need to learn how to do is to just wait on the Lord and listen. we come from an ADD generation that wants instant gratification. some of us listen for :30 seconds and if God doesn’t do something we move on to the next thing. if fact we start feeling uncomfortable if something doesn’t happen in under :60 seconds. we need to learn the grace of waiting on the Lord.

ISAIAH 40.31 (NKJV) says it this way:

But those who wait on the LORD
Shall renew their strength;
They shall mount up with wings like eagles,
They shall run and not be weary,
They shall walk and not faint.

i want to encourage you to stretch your “waiting muscles” by just spending time in the presence of the Lord waiting and listening. write down what you hear.

SECRET #4. JOURNALING

journaling is SECRET #4. this is one that really helps me enter the presence of God. i don’t have a formal journal (although many do and i would encourage this) but i always have a pad of paper and something to write with. this helps me in a couple ways.

first, it helps me capture the 5-10 items that are still flying through my mind that have nothing to do with my time with God. as i write them down (for dealing with later) i can release them and it frees my heart and mind to focus on the Lord.

second, it helps me capture what God is saying to me. i often get many things in the secret place that are unrelated but all important. if i wasn’t writing them down i would forget them.

i know many people who will keep prophetic messages that are fulfilled many months later and that brings great confidence and encouragement that we are really hearing the Lord in the secret place.
SECRET #5. REDUCE OR ELIMINATE MEDIA.
we don’t have time to get into a full teaching (we have one called KILL YOUR TV that i strongly encourage you to pick up and listen to) but much of the noise in our culture is from media. the world is blasting us with noise 24/7 through our phones, computers and televisions. you can’t go anywhere that secular content isn’t being pumped into your soul. televisions at gas pumps and restaurants. advertisements in the bathroom. we are being inundated with messages and the vast majority of them don’t originate in heart of God.

this bombardment of images and sounds has an impact on your ability to hear the heart of God.

[share personal testimony of grieving the Holy Spirit and noticing that His presence would leave while i was watching secular media]

there are many things that we can do beloved that are permissible but they are not profitable (1 CORINTHIANS 10.23). watching secular media is one of those areas.

when people come up and tell me that they are having problems hearing God it is usually one of two problems. either they have not received the baptism of the Holy Spirit (which is usually a surrender problem) or they have a media problem (which is why we normally recommend a 40 day media fast).

SECRET #6. EARS TO HEAR AND RAPID REPENTANCE.
the phrase “ears to hear” is a phrase used in the Old Testament (DEUTERONOMY 29.4, PROVERBS 20.12, ISAIAH 32.3, JEREMIAH 6.10, EZEKIEL 12.2) and one that Jesus uses throughout the gospels (MATTHEW 11.15, MATTHEW 13.9, MATTHEW 13.15, MATTHEW 13.43, MARK 4.9, MARK 4.23, LUKE 8.8, and LUKE 14.35).

i remember coming out of a fast several years ago and i just fell into despair as God brought me revelation about the meaning of this phrase. He said that people don’t really want to know the truth. they would rather push it away than face it and because they don’t face it they perish.

“ears to hear” means “anyone who really wants to know the truth” and its often used in a context where the teaching or instruction is difficult for the flesh to embrace.

this phrase is trying to highlight our natural tendencies towards self deception. there are parts of our own hearts that do not want to hear what God is saying (like sell everything and become a missionary to Africa). When your heart posture is such that you are not willing to hear everything God is saying or you want to hear what suits you and your comfort level the Scriptures refer to that as “itching ears.”

A.W. Tozier said it this way, “most Christians don’t hear the voice of the Lord because they have already decided in their hearts that they are not going to obey Him.”

the consequence of not wanting the truth is that you don’t get it.

this is dangerous because there is a path before each person that seems right but it leads to destruction (PROVERBS 14.12).
so how do we get ears to hear?
they are a gift from God (PROVERBS 20.12 “ears to hear and eyes to see – both are gifts from the Lord”). we ask God to give us a heart that wants the truth no matter what the cost to the flesh (ROMANS 13.14 (NKJV) “make no provision for the flesh”).

[corporate prayer. though its costly. give me ears to hear.]

David wanted the truth. God said David was “a man after His own heart.” it wasn’t that David was perfect before God but David wanted to know any way that He had offended God and when He realized His sin He was quick to repent.

PSALM 139.23-24 is a picture of the heart posture that draws light and grace from God to see our self deception.

23 Search me, O God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.
24 Point out anything in me that offends you,
and lead me along the path of everlasting life.

as God reveals our sins and brokenness by giving us ears to hear and eyes to see then we need to respond with repentance (agreeing with God that He is right and we are not). when we know something is wrong and we delay taking action to correct it we are in disobedience.

those that ask God for “ears to hear” and respond with rapid repentance when God reveals issues will grow quickly in intimacy with God and hear His voice consistently.

SECRET #7. INQUIRING OF THE LORD
one way you can draw the heart of God is to honor Him by making a practice of bringing decisions before Him. i will often build a list of questions or issues that i need to know the answers to before Him and regularly He will answer them one after the other. its amazing!

not just big decisions but whatever you need to know. many times the small decisions of our heart are a big deal to the Lord. when we are continually bringing things to Him we are rewarded by His faithfulness to keep us in His will.

As MATTHEW 4.4 says, “people do not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”

when we make hearing God’s heart on everyday matters a priority He delights in us. can you imagine your child coming to you every morning to ask “what’s on your heart today dad? how can i serve you?” wouldn’t you be delighted?!

not only are we blessed when we ask God what His heart is on a matter but when we don’t inquire of the Lord we can operate in presumption and experience significant consequences.
not inquiring of the Lord is what caused the Lord to kill Saul (1 CHRONICLES 10.13-14). David learned this lesson because of the incident involving Uzzah (1 CHRONICLES 13.9-10). We learn why Uzzah died moving the Ark of the Covenant later in 1 CHRONICLES 15.12-13:

12 He said to them, “You are the leaders of the Levite families. You must purify yourselves and all your fellow Levites, so you can bring the Ark of the LORD, the God of Israel, to the place I have prepared for it. 13 Because you Levites did not carry the Ark the first time, the anger of the LORD our God burst out against us. We failed to ask God how to move it properly.”

inquiring of the Lord leads to life and is a practice that draws His presence. He honors those who honor Him.

SECRET #8. IMMEDIATE OBEDIENCE.

we talked about God’s love language being obedience (Jesus said, “those who love me obey me” in JOHN 14.15 and 21).

the Word tells us why David was a man after His own heart in ACTS 13.22.

22 But God removed Saul and replaced him with David, a man about whom God said, ‘I have found David son of Jesse, a man after my own heart. He will do everything I want him to do.’[a]

nothing draws the heart and presence of the Lord like a lifestyle of consistent listening and obedience.

Peter is talking with religious leaders when He says this in ACTS 5.32, “we are witnesses of these things and so is the Holy Spirit, who is given by God to those who obey Him.”

God pours out His Spirit on those who obey Him and the more you obey God the more you will experience Him. Jesus said it this way in MATTHEW 25.29:

29 To those who use well what they are given, even more will be given, and they will have an abundance. But from those who do nothing, even what little they have will be taken away.
SECRET #9. DECLARE WAR ON SEXUAL IMMORALITY.

Many of the things we have talked about so far are things that attract the presence of the Lord but now we are going to talk about something that defiles the temple of the Lord (that’s you) and is hostile to His presence.

there is a reason that our culture is saturated with sexually explicit images and language. the enemy knows that nothing destroys intimacy with God faster than sexual immorality. we will look at a few passages of Scripture to understand this truth more clearly.

15 Don’t you realize that your bodies are actually parts of Christ? Should a man take his body, which is part of Christ, and join it to a prostitute? Never! 16 And don’t you realize that if a man joins himself to a prostitute, he becomes one body with her? For the Scriptures say, “The two are united into one.”

17 But the person who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with him.

18 Run from sexual sin! No other sin so clearly affects the body as this one does. For sexual immorality is a sin against your own body. 19 Don’t you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, 20 for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body. 

1 CORINTHIANS 6:15-20 (NLT)

3 Let there be no sexual immorality, impurity, or greed among you. Such sins have no place among God’s people. 4 Obscene stories, foolish talk, and coarse jokes—these are not for you. Instead, let there be thankfulness to God. 5 You can be sure that no immoral, impure, or greedy person will inherit the Kingdom of Christ and of God. For a greedy person is an idolater, worshiping the things of this world.

6 Don’t be fooled by those who try to excuse these sins, for the anger of God will fall on all who disobey him. 7 Don’t participate in the things these people do. 8 For once you were full of darkness, but now you have light from the Lord. So live as people of light! 9 For this light within you produces only what is good and right and true. 

EPHESIANS 5:3-9 (NLT)

this is one of those issues that I would rather have shock you now rather than later. if you have a sexual immorality issue then it needs to be dealt with beloved. it will definitely impact your ability to experience intimacy with God and your eternal destiny. i want to strongly encourage you to listen to the teaching on SEXUAL PURITY that we have at the media table.

when you grow in victory in sexual purity you will experience greater intimacy with the Lord. SECRET #9 is DECLARING WAR ON SEXUAL IMMORALITY.
SECRET #10. ENGAGE IN THE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES AND GRACES

consecration, the Word, worship, waiting, prayer, fasting

disciplines (meaning you have to set your will to do them against the resistance of your flesh) and they are graces (because they are empowered by God’s Holy Spirit)

we are not going to spend much time on these secrets of the secret place because we are going to do teaching on each one of them next week, but these divine disciplines and graces are designed to bring us into alignment with the heart of God.

when you are spending time in the secret place these are all things the Holy Spirit might lead you to do. your secret place time is not a formula or a checklist but having each of these available is a great way to partner with the Holy Spirit.

[review and share examples from each]

CONSECRATION.  spending time listening and repenting for anything in your life that is offensive to God. writing down restoration assignments and completing them. make sure you are right with God before spending time with Him.

THE WORD.  spending time reading and meditating on the Word. i like to read through entire books at a time to learn the Word in context. generally speaking i read through the New Testament at least three times then go back and read through the Old Testament. as soon as i finish reading through this next time i am going to read through the NKJV. its good to read other translations to get a fuller picture of God’s heart in the Scriptures.

WORSHIP.  i love to have worship going on in the background while i am reading the Word and then i also enter into times where my heart focus is on God. i ask and regularly receive visions during times of worship. my goal in everything is to engage God’s heart and abide in His presence. if my mind wanders (it did in the early days but not as much any more) i ask for help focusing on the Lord.

WAITING.  times of not doing anything but just basking in the Lord’s presence and waiting for Him (if He wants to speak something to me). story of Mary and Martha (LUKE 10.38-42) is particularly helpful to understand how we fall into busyness even in the secret place.

PRAYER.  talking to God (like He is in the room – which He is). sharing what is on my heart and listening for what is on His heart for intercession.

FASTING.  an important part of life in the secret place. entering into voluntary weakness so that God’s strength can be made known in us. i have found this helps consecration in a significant way.
SECRET #11. HIS PRESENCE.
the goal of all Secret Place activity is to enter the manifest presence of the Lord. all the
great men of God lived in the presence of the Lord.

See GENESIS 5.21-23 (Enoch walked in close fellowship with God for 365 years and
then was taken by God). GENESIS 24.40 (Abraham lived in God’s presence). 1 SAMUEL
2.21 (Samuel grew up in the presence of the LORD), 1 KINGS 18.15 (Elijah lived in
God’s presence); PSALM 56.13 (David walked in the presence of the LORD), PSALM
140.13 (the godly live in the presence of the Lord) and Jesus had the Holy Spirit without
measure.

[testimony about young adults at the prayer room at IHOP]
every minute we spend in the presence of the Lord our DNA is changed. the more
time you can spend in God’s presence the more you are going to look like Him.

consecration has really help me consistently enter the presence of the Lord in the secret
place. God put it to me this way, “repentance always works.”

SECRET #12. RETREATS
spending time with God everyday very important but we also need to take extended
periods of time away with the Lord. when we go away from our normal life routines to
spend time with the Lord it is always fruitful.

for us as a ministry we have felt God establishing a regular rhythm of Sabbath times of
seeking the Lord. we take one week off every three months and then we have a longer
Sabbath (2-3 weeks) at the end of each year.

during that time each staff person is asked to inquire of the Lord as to whether they are
supposed to be at TW and if they are in the right position within the ministry.

i have found that often it takes me 2-3 days just to wind down from normal activity level
and to reach as level of peace where i can really start to hear what is on God’s heart.
our culture is so ramped up on caffeine and busyness it takes a while to enter into rest.

deliberate and spontaneous retreats are an important part of a vibrant life with God in
the secret place. there are certain things that require more time to unpack. we have
gone through major surgery during many of these Sabbath retreats and that could not
have happened well in the midst of our ordinary routines.