

Good morning. My name is John and I'm happy to share God's Word with you this morning. Please be in prayer for our pastor who is away right now that God will bless him and his family. Also be praying for Pastor Josef and Pastor Nichols who is planning on arriving here in Quito later this month.

It's good to be here this morning. I'm grateful to see all of you this morning. How many of you ran the race "La Ruta de las Iglesias" last night? I'm always intrigued by that race. The historical part and sequential points within the race have given us some ideas that we'll share with you as a church later this summer. But, if you ran last night in that race, congratulations!

If you'll please open your Bibles to Matthew 6:5-8 and we'll look at this portion of God's Word. Last week we started a sermon series called **"Prayer – a relational conversation with God."** Next week we'll start with the actual words of the Lord's Prayer as the model that Jesus gave us in prayer. But last week, we talked about not worrying? How did you do this past week?

For me, God had to teach me a few things. If you remember me saying, I worry a lot. You could say that I have a PHD in worrying, so when the Bible tells us, "Don't worry, but pray about everything," that applies to me too. There was a situation that happened this past week that found me worrying a lot. The hard part was that I remembered the whole sermon about not worrying but to pray about everything. So, every day I had to put into practice that sermon. Pray about everything and give thanks for what God has already done. Amazingly, God answered and gave me peace, just like God promised in His Word.

We're in Matthew 6. The context is the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus is giving his sermon that touches on many subjects, but one subject that He knew was important for us to learn is the need to pray. We, as God's people, need to learn to depend on and trust in God in every aspect of

our lives. Prayer is that medium that we use to express that dependence on Him. Let's read God's Word this morning.

***Matthew 6:5-8***

***<sup>5</sup> “And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. <sup>6</sup> But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.***

***<sup>7</sup> “And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. <sup>8</sup> Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.***

In verse 5, Jesus continues his instructions to not do things for the praise of others. In the context before verse 5, He tells his listeners to not give their offerings so that others will see and applaud them for their generosity. However, they are to give their offerings privately. The same instructions are given when it comes to our prayer lives. We too are not to pray to impress people, but we are to meet with the God of the universe in private and share our hearts with Him.

***Matthew 5:6 says, “But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret.”*** Last week we talked about what should we pray about – which is everything. Today I would like to talk about where we should pray. We know that we can pray to Almighty God anywhere, but there are times in our lives that we need to get alone with God in a specific place and meet with Him. Jesus himself did that. The Bible often says that he arose up early in the morning and went somewhere specific to pray, to meet with God the Father.

So, let me ask you. Do you have a place where you can go and pray, so pour out to God the details of the trials and difficulties of your life?

As long as I can remember, I have always had a place to pray. When I was a boy of about 10 years old, I used to pray in my bed. As a child, our bedroom had bunkbeds. My younger brother slept on the top bunk, and I slept on the bottom. It was there, in the darkness of night, that I started to pray for others. Later, when I became a teen, I would wait until everyone would go to bed, and then I would read my Bible and pray at our dining table. Many nights I would listen to the BBN Christian radio station as they would play instrumental music throughout the night hours. There I would meet with God. It was during those nights that God spoke to me and gave me assurance about whatever situation I was going through by these bible verses:

***Psalm 91:1-2, “He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High, will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress; my God; in him will I trust.”***

***Another verse was Psalm 121:1-2, a verse that I still use today. It says, “I lift my eyes to the hills, from where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth.”***

When I went to college, I would go hiking up to a mountain on the weekends and pray. The place was similar as if you would go up to the Teleferico and sit on a bench on Guagua Pichincha. I would go up there and heard the most amazing sound – silence. It was there I that spent time with God asking God for direction in my life, the person whom I should marry, and many other aspects of my life. In the quietness of the mountain, there was the place where I met with God.

After my wife and I were married and went to Paraguay to live, we lived in an apartment that overlooked the Paraguayan Chaco. From our apartment in Asuncion, we could see for kilometers the beautiful scenery of God’s creation. Each day I would take my mate or terere and sit on a

bench and pray. Later, when we moved to another city, my office at church was the place where I would have my quiet time with God. There were many days that in that place I would complain to God, express my anger and frustration with Him, pray for lost souls, etc. It was there too, that God spoke to me from His Word for whatever circumstance that we were going through.

Here in Ecuador, each morning I get up around 4:30 or 5:00 a.m., stagger to the coffee maker, get a cup of coffee and then sit on a padded chair in the living room of wherever we are living, and begin to pray for you, circumstances that are we are facing, or some other need that has arisen. It is in that place, and those places that I have mentioned, that I have fought many battles in my life.

Jesus thought it was extremely important, that he told us to have a private place where we can go and pray. “But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret...” It is a room where you and I will fight the battles of life. We know that the we have an enemy, who is Satan himself. The bible tells us that Satan is a liar, a deceiver, a destroyer and looks to destroy us. The way to overcome the devil and fight our battles is found in Ephesians 6

***<sup>10</sup> Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.<sup>11</sup> Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. <sup>12</sup> For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. <sup>13</sup> Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. <sup>14</sup> Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, <sup>15</sup> and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. <sup>16</sup> In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; <sup>17</sup> and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of***

***God, <sup>18</sup> praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, <sup>19</sup> and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, <sup>20</sup> for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.***

In the battles that you and I face each day, we need a place to fight them. Jesus tells us to ***go into our rooms and close the door***. It is in that place that we fight our battles. Daily battles usually come in 3 different areas of our lives. 1) family issues; 2) financial difficulties; 3) physical needs. There are many other battles that we face, but these three seem to be prominent in many of our lives.

Jesus said that when we pray, we should go into our room. Do you have a room? Do you have a specific place where you go each day and pray? Secondly, it is a private place. The bible tells us, ***“when you pray, go into your room and shut the door.”*** It may be a literal room, but what I see here is that we are to shut out all distractions that would disturb us. If you have ever had a meeting with someone, like a doctor, a boss, a counselor or some other professional person, probably, the first thing that that person did was to shut the door. The purpose of that was to shut out all distractions and disturbance that would possibly happen during the meeting.

That is the same thing that Jesus is saying. When we pray, we are to shut out all the distractions and disturbances of the world and meet privately with Him. That could mean no cell phones, smart watches, or smart gadgets. No TikTok, no Instagram, no Facebook, no email, no tv, no radio, nothing that could distract you from your time with God. Go to a place where it’s just you and God. ***“When you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret.”***

First, we see a place. Secondly, we see a private place. Thirdly, we see a holy place. This is a place where you meet with the eternal God of the

universe. It is where you share the most intimate of your life with God. It is where that most difficult battles of your life are fought. When the circumstances of your life are out of our control and there is nothing that you can do to change them, then on your knees in the presence of Almighty God is the place where He gives us the victory.

As I mentioned last week, it is important when you go into that place that you have your bible, a notebook and maybe a box of tissues. It is in that place that you and I will cry out to the creator of heaven and earth to give us peace and direction in our lives. One man said that he learned early in life that if he was to accomplish anything of value in life, he would only be able to accomplish them on his knees. It would be on his knees that he would see God work and do the impossible.

The bible tells us in *Proverbs 3:5-6*, ***“Trust in the Lord with all of your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all of your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make straight your paths.”***

Jesus himself thought that it was important to have a place to pray. He knew that we needed to learn that if we are to flee temptation, if we are to overcome our battles, if we are to have victory over our difficulties, then we need a place, a private place, a holy place to meet God and pray.

In that place of prayer, God wants you to Himself. He wants to meet with you and converse with you. That is why it is important that it be a quiet place. There, God not only wants to hear from you, but he always to speak with you. Some people may say, “I’ve never heard from God.” And my response would be, “you probably weren’t listening because God in His word is ready to speak to us each day.”

I’m a father of two adult children. They live far from me and live their own lives now. But I love to hear from them. I enjoy hearing about their lives, the activities that they do, their friends that they have, and all the aspects of their lives. I love them immensely and enjoy it when I have time to spend with them and interact with them.

God, the creator of the universe, loves us immensely much more than I do as an earthly father to my children. He wants to hear from us and for us to tell Him about all the aspects of our lives. He also wants to interact with us. He wants to speak to us through His Word and give us instructions how we can live a full life, how we can make wise decisions.

***.<sup>6</sup> But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.***

Let me encourage you this week, to find a place in your house, and start meeting with God. Find a place where you will make it a place where you will fight the battles of your life. Find a place, a private place, a holy place. Find a place where you can meet each day with the God of the universe who will listen to you and instruct you and give you peace as you go through each day of your life.

Let's pray.