

WEEK 2

Living the Kingdom Life by Living a Hidden Life

Scripture Reading: Isa. 45:15; 37:31; Matt. 6:2-4, 5-15, 16-18; 14:22-23; Psa. 42:7; S.S. 4:12

OUTLINE

« DAY 1 »

- I. We need to learn from the pattern of the Lord living a hidden life in His going up to the mountain privately to pray (Matt. 14:23; cf. Luke 6:12):
 - A. The Lord did not remain in the issue of the miracle with the crowds (the miracle of feeding five thousand men, apart from women and children), but He went away from them privately to be with the Father on the mountain in prayer (Matt. 14:14-23):
 1. The Lord compelled the disciples to leave Him in order that He might have more time to pray privately to the Father (vv. 22-23).
 2. He needed to pray privately to His Father who was in the heavens so that He might be one with the Father and have the Father with Him in whatever He did on earth for the establishing of the kingdom of the heavens; He did this not in the deserted place but on the mountain, leaving all the people, even His disciples, so that He might be alone to contact the Father.
 - B. We should treasure three phrases—to be with the Father, on the mountain, and in prayer:
 1. To pray with others is good, but often we need to pray by ourselves; when we pray with others, we cannot enjoy the Lord as deeply as when we pray to the Lord privately.
 2. Even the Lord Jesus told us that when we pray, we should shut our door privately and pray to the Father who sees in secret (6:6); then we have the sensation of how intimate He is to us and how close we are to Him.
 3. We have to learn to leave the crowds, our family, our friends, and the saints in the church to go to a higher level on a “high mountain”; we have to go higher, far away from the earthly things on a lower level; we need to get to a higher level, separated from the crowd, to be with the Father privately and secretly to have intimate fellowship with Him.

« DAY 2 »

- II. The principle of the kingdom people is that they live a hidden life, not performing their righteous deeds before men—deeds such as giving (vv. 2-4), praying (vv. 5-15), and fasting (vv. 16-18):
- A. Regarding each of these three illustrations, the Lord used the word secret (vv. 4, 6, 18); our Father is in secret, and He sees in secret; the kingdom people, as children of the heavenly Father, must live in and care for the Father's secret and hidden presence.
 - B. The kingdom people, who live in an emptied and humbled spirit and walk in a pure and single heart under the heavenly ruling of the kingdom, are not allowed to do anything in the flesh for the praise of men but must do all things in the spirit for the pleasing of their heavenly Father.
 - C. The effect of doing our righteous deeds in secret is that the flesh and the self are killed; if people in society and even in degraded Christendom are not allowed to make a show of their good deeds, they will not do them; the self loves to be glorified, and the flesh loves to be gazed upon.

« DAY 3 »

- D. The saints who grow openly do not grow in a healthy way; we all need some secret growth in life, some secret experiences of Christ; we need to pray to the Lord, worship the Lord, contact the Lord, and fellowship with the Lord in a secret way.
- E. We should pray much yet not let others know how much we pray; if we pray every day without telling others or letting them know about it, it means that we are healthy and that we are growing.
- F. The kingdom people must have some experience of prayer in their private room, contacting their heavenly Father in secret, experiencing some secret enjoyment of the Father, and receiving some secret answer from Him (v. 6).
- G. Any time we exhibit ourselves in our righteous deeds, we are not healthy; such an exhibition greatly frustrates our growth in life.
- H. Our human life loves to make a display, a public show, but God's life is always hidden; a hypocrite is one who has an outward manifestation without having anything within.
- I. We can never practice living a hidden life in secret in our natural life; it is possible only in the divine life, the life that does not enjoy making a show; if we are serious about being the kingdom people, we must learn to live by the hidden life of our Father.
- J. The universe indicates that God is hidden, that God is secret; if we love others by the love of God, this love will always remain hidden.

« DAY 4 »

III. “Surely You are a God who hides Himself, / O God of Israel, the Savior” (Isa. 45:15):

- A. Believers may know God as the almighty One, as the righteous One, as the One full of grace and compassion, but as the One who hides Himself, He is unknown to them.
- B. God does countless things in the midst of His people and countless things in their personal lives, yet He conceals Himself:
 - 1. God likes concealment, but we like display; God does not crave outward manifestations, but we cannot be content without them.
 - 2. God was obviously with Elijah on Mount Carmel, but when God withheld His manifest presence, Elijah could not bear it (1 Kings 19:9-18):
 - a. God knew that Elijah wanted Him to be a God who would manifest Himself; he had not realized that God is a God who hides Himself.
 - b. God was not in the great and strong wind, He was not in the earthquake, and He was not in the fire; instead, God spoke to Elijah in a “gentle, quiet voice” (v. 12).
 - c. The fact that God spoke to Elijah in a gentle, quiet voice indicates that God was ushering Elijah into the New Testament age, in which God speaks to His people not by thundering but gently and quietly (cf. 1 John 2:27).
 - d. Elijah said to God that he was the only faithful one left, but God very gently answered Elijah by saying that He had reserved for Himself seven thousand men who had not bowed the knee to Baal (1 Kings 19:18; cf. Rom. 11:2-5).
 - e. Elijah had reckoned the situation only with what he could see, but God is a God who hides Himself; He had secretly reserved for Himself seven thousand overcomers who had not bowed the knee to Baal; God’s activity was so hidden that not even the prophet Elijah knew anything about it.

« DAY 5 »

- C. We need to realize the hidden nature of God’s working; we should not think that only mighty influences, great visions, and tremendous revelations are of God; God’s surest work is done in the secret of our beings:
 - 1. The more we serve the Lord, and the more we abide in Him, the more we realize that God is a very quiet God, so quiet that His presence is often undetected.
 - 2. His most intimate way of guiding us is so natural that we scarcely perceive He is guiding us at all, yet somehow we have been led; it is often by this quiet inward activity of God that we receive our greatest guidances.
- D. When the only begotten Son came for the purpose of declaring God, He hid Him in a human life—a human life whose appearance was “marred,” a human

life that had “no attracting form nor majesty” (Isa. 52:14; 53:2):

1. He came from Galilee, an insignificant province, and from the town of Nazareth, a small town of which it was said by the Jews that no prophet or person of repute ever came from there (John 1:46; 7:52).
2. Thus, when He appeared, people found it hard to believe that God was present in Him—they found it hard even to believe that He was a prophet of God, yet God was hidden within Jesus of Nazareth (cf. Col. 2:9).
3. Also, Jesus of Nazareth belonged to a poor home and grew up to be a carpenter—a very ordinary carpenter, working in a very small way, until He was thirty; who would have ever thought that He was indwelt by the infinite God?

E. If you study the Scriptures carefully, you will see that God has the kind of temperament that dislikes ostentation; He likes to work secretly rather than openly (Matt. 17:1-9; John 20:14-17; Luke 24:13-37; John 20:24-29; Isa. 39:2-8):

1. “Whom having not seen, you love; into whom though not seeing Him at present, yet believing, you exult with joy that is unspeakable and full of glory”; it is a wonder and a mystery that the believers love One whom they have not seen (1 Pet. 1:8).
2. Since the resurrection of the Lord, the chief discipline for His followers has come along the line of knowing Him as a God who hides Himself.
3. Everything of God’s economy with Christ as its centrality and universality is not in the seen realm but in the unseen atmosphere and realm of faith (2 Cor. 4:13, 16-18; 5:7; Heb. 11:1; Eph. 3:17a; 1 Tim. 1:4b).

F. When we are most conscious of impotence, God is most powerfully present (2 Cor. 12:9-10):

1. The God who hides Himself is at work within our lives, and He is working mightily.
2. Our responsibility is to cooperate with Him by responding to His voice within—that “gentle, quiet voice,” that voice that seems so much a part of our own feelings that we scarcely recognize it as a voice at all.
3. To that voice, registered in the deepest depths of our being, we must say Amen, for there, secretly and ceaselessly, the God who hides Himself is working.

« DAY 6 »

IV. Psalm 42:7 says, “Deep calls unto deep”:

- A. Others can respond deep within to only what issues from deep within us; anything that is not from the depths will never reach the depths of others.
- B. The kingdom life is a life in the depths, a life that can “take root downward and bear fruit upward” (Isa. 37:31; cf. Acts 6:7; 12:24; 19:20).
- C. On the one hand, we need to allow Christ as the seed of life to take root deep in the soil of our heart as the good earth (Matt. 13:23); on the other hand, we,

as living plants in Christ, need to take root deep in the soil of the all-inclusive Christ as the reality of the good land (Col. 2:6-7):

1. The good earth signifies the good heart that is not hardened by worldly traffic, that is without hidden sins, and that is without the anxiety of the age and the deceitfulness of riches; we need to daily allow the Lord to deal with these things in our heart so that we can grow with the growth of God (v. 19).
2. Because we have been planted in Christ as the reality of the good land, we need to take time to absorb Him (especially in our times with Him in the morning).

D. While the sower sowed, some seeds fell beside the way, some on the rocky places, some into the thorns, and some into the good earth; this shows us four different ways for man to receive the word (Matt. 13:4-8, 18-23):

1. The Lord Jesus tells us that among these different conditions, one is the rocky places; there is a little earth on the surface, but underneath there are rocks; when the seed falls into this kind of ground, it springs up quickly, but as soon as the sun comes out, it withers because of the lack of root (vv. 5-6).
2. What is a root? It is growth that occurs beneath the soil. What are the leaves? This is growth that occurs above the soil.
3. In other words, roots are the hidden life, whereas leaves are the manifest life; the trouble with many Christians is that, while there is much apparent life, there is very little secret life; in other words, there is the lack of a hidden life.
4. If all your experiences are manifested, then all your growth is upward; there is no downward growth; if this is the case, you are a person who has only leaves without root, and you are on shallow ground.
5. The Christian who parades all his virtues before men and who does not have anything in the depth of his being has no root; he will not be able to stand in the day of trial and temptation; may God work in us so that we can take root downward.

E. We need deep experiences of Christ like that of the apostle Paul (2 Cor. 12:1-4):

1. Paul was caught away to the third heaven and caught away into Paradise, but he did not divulge this experience until fourteen years later; Paul's roots were deep beneath the soil.
2. If we want to have Paul's work, then we need to have Paul's "root"; if we want to have Paul's outward conduct, then we need to have Paul's inner life; if we want to have Paul's manifest power, then we need to have Paul's secret experience.
3. This does not mean that we should not testify, but we must realize that many experiences need to be hidden (cf. 4:5).
4. To be without root is to be without any hidden treasure; it is to be without any hidden life or hidden experiences; it is essential that some of our experiences remain covered; to uncover everything is to lose everything (cf. Isa. 39:2-8).

F. Whatever secrets we have with the Lord must be preserved; only if He moves within us to reveal something, dare we reveal it; if He wants us to share some

experience with a brother, we dare not withhold it, for that would be violating a law of the members of the Body of Christ, which is the law of fellowship:

1. We need to learn what the Body of Christ is and what the flow of life among the members is; but we also need to learn the need for safeguarding the hidden part we have before the Lord, the experiences of Christ that are not known to others.
2. If our life has no depth, our superficial work will only affect other lives superficially; only “deep calls unto deep.”

G. A pure and beautiful spiritual life is derived from inward, hidden, and uninterrupted fellowship with God; hence, “he will bud like the lily / And will send forth his roots like the trees of Lebanon” (Hosea 14:5); this kind of life is capable of bearing much fruit (vv. 5-7).

H. In order to live a life in the depths, it is necessary to have direct and intimate fellowship with the Lord; Song of Songs 4:12 says, “A garden enclosed is my sister, my bride, / A spring shut up, a fountain sealed”:

1. At this point in her spiritual progress, the Lord’s loving seeker has become a garden for Christ’s private satisfaction.
2. She is not an open garden but an enclosed garden; all that she has is for her Beloved’s delight and for no one else.
3. If today’s believers would close up a little more and seal up tighter, their work would become more prevailing.
4. May the Lord grant us grace and do a deeper work in us through the cross so that we may strike deep roots and live a hidden life in the depths to fulfill God’s requirements and satisfy His heart.

« WEEK 2 — DAY 1 »

Morning Nourishment

Matt. 6:6 But you, when you pray, enter into your private room, and shut your door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will repay you.

14:22-23 ...He compelled the disciples...to go before Him to the other side....And after He sent the crowds away, He went up to the mountain privately to pray. And when night fell, He was there alone.

After performing the miracle [of feeding five thousand men, apart from women and children], the Lord went up to the mountain privately to pray (Matt. 14:23; cf. Luke 6:12).

The Lord did not remain in the issue of the miracle with the crowds but went away from them to be with the Father privately on the mountain in prayer. If we go to a certain place and have a great success, would we leave right away, or would we remain in this big success to enjoy it? We need to see and follow the pattern of the Lord Jesus. He did not remain in the issue of the great miracle that He performed. Instead, He went up to the mountain privately to pray. The word privately is very meaningful. This means He did not let the people know that He was going to pray. Otherwise, they would have followed Him. He went away from them to be with the Father privately in prayer. I like these three phrases: to be with the Father, on the mountain, and in prayer. We should learn from the Lord's pattern here by exercising to be with Him on the mountain in prayer. His looking up to heaven [Matt. 14:19] means that He had no trust in Himself. His going up to the mountain means that He wanted to be with the Father in prayer. (CWWL, 1994-1997, vol. 3, "The God-man Living," pp. 564-565)

Today's Reading

Standing in the position of man (Matt. 4:4), the heavenly King, as the beloved Son of the Father (3:17), needed to pray privately to His Father who was in the heavens, that He might be one with the Father and have the Father with Him in whatever He did on earth for the establishing of the kingdom of the heavens. He did this not in the deserted place but on the mountain, leaving all the people, even His disciples, that He might be alone to contact the Father. (Matt. 14:23, footnote 1)

The kingdom people must have some experience of praying in their private room, through which they contact their heavenly Father in secret, experience some secret enjoyment of the Father, and receive some secret answer from Him. (Matt. 6:6, footnote 1)

To pray with others is good, but often we need to pray by ourselves. When we pray with others, we cannot enjoy the Lord as deeply as when we pray to the Lord privately. Even the Lord Jesus told us that when we pray we should enter into our private room and shut our door and pray to the Father who sees in secret (Matt. 6:6). Then we have the sensation of how intimate He is to us and how close we are to Him. We have to learn to leave the crowds, our family, our friends, and the saints in the church to go to a higher level on a "high mountain." We have to go higher, far away from the earthly things on a lower level. We need to get to a higher level, separated from the crowd, to be with the Father privately and secretly to have intimate fellowship with Him. This is the significance of being on the mountain in prayer.

His going up to the mountain privately to pray indicated His asking the Father to bless all those who had participated in the enjoyment of the issue of the miracle that they would not be satisfied with the food that perishes but that they should seek for the food that abides unto eternal life and recognize that He was not only the Son of Man but also the Son of God who was sent and sealed by the Father and who could give them eternal life [John 6].

His going up to the mountain privately to pray also indicated that He wanted to receive of the Father some instruction concerning how to take care of the five thousand people fed by His miracle. (CWWL, 1994-1997, vol. 3, "The God-man Living," pp. 565-566)

Further Reading: CWWL, 1994-1997, vol. 3, "The God-man Living," msg. 14

« WEEK 2 — DAY 2 »

Morning Nourishment

Matt. 6:3-4 But you, when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will repay you.

Matthew 6:1 says, “But take care not to do your righteousness before men in order to be gazed at by them; otherwise, you have no reward with your Father who is in the heavens.” Righteousness here denotes righteous deeds, such as giving alms, mentioned in verses 2 through 4; praying, in verses 5 through 15; and fasting, in verses 16 through 18. No doubt these verses speak about the righteous deeds of the kingdom people. Actually, however, they expose the self and the flesh. We have something within us that is worse than anger and lust...In these eighteen verses the Lord uses three illustrations—the giving of alms, praying, and fasting—to reveal how we are filled with the self and the flesh.

Man’s flesh, seeking to glorify itself, always wants to do good deeds before men to be praised by them. But the kingdom people, who live in an emptied and humbled spirit and walk in a pure and single heart under the heavenly ruling of the kingdom, are not allowed to do anything in the flesh for the praise of men, but must do all things in the spirit for the pleasing of their heavenly Father. (Life-study of Matthew, pp. 257-258)

Today’s Reading

Regarding each of the three illustrations [in Matthew 6], the Lord uses the word secret (vv. 4, 6, 18). We must do our righteous deeds in secret, for our Father is in secret. In verse 4 the Lord says that our Father sees in secret. The kingdom people as children of the heavenly Father must live in the presence of the Father and care for the Father’s presence. Whatever they do in secret for the Father’s kingdom, the Father sees in secret. The heavenly Father’s seeing in secret must be an incentive to doing their righteous deeds in secret. In this verse the Lord also said that the Father will repay us. This may transpire in this age (2 Cor. 9:10-11) or in the coming age as a reward (Luke 14:14).

The effect of doing our righteous deeds in secret is that the self and the flesh are killed. If people in society today are not allowed to make a show of their good deeds, they will not do them...This is the deplorable practice of today’s degraded Christianity, especially in the matter of fundraising...The greater the public show, the more money people are willing to give. Certainly such making of a show is of the flesh...As kingdom people, a basic principle concerning righteous deeds is never to make a show of ourselves. As much as possible, hide yourself, keep yourself covered, and do things in secret. We should be so hidden that, as the Lord Jesus says, our left hand does not know what our right hand is doing (Matt. 6:3). This means that we should not let others know what we are doing. For example, if you fast for three days, do not disfigure your face or show a sad countenance. Rather, give the impression to others that you are not fasting so that your fasting may be in secret. Do not fast in the presence of men, but in the secret presence of your heavenly Father. To do this is to slay the self and the flesh.

We encourage the saints to function in the church meetings. However, there is the danger of functioning in order to make a show of ourselves. There is the danger of doing things in the presence of man...By the Lord’s mercy and grace, we must do as much as possible in a hidden way. Always try to do those things that are pleasing to God and righteous with man in a secret way. Try not to let others know of them. Simply do your righteous deeds in the presence of God.

Our Father sees in secret. As you are praying alone in your room, no one else can see you, but your heavenly Father sees. Do not pray on the street corner or in the synagogues to be seen by men. Pray in secret to be seen by your Father who sees in secret. Then you will also receive an answer from Him in secret...If possible, do everything in secret, not giving any opportunity to your self or yielding any ground to your flesh. (Life-study of Matthew, pp. 258-260)

Further Reading: Life-study of Matthew, msg. 21

« WEEK 2 – DAY 3 »

Morning Nourishment

Matt. 6:5-6 And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites, because they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners, so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, They have their reward in full. But you, when you pray, enter into your private room, and shut your door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will repay you.

Although the Lord speaks about the matter of reward (Matt. 6:1, 5), the important thing here is not the reward, but the growth in life. [Those] who grow openly do not grow in a healthy way. We all need some secret growth in life, some secret experiences of Christ. We need to pray to the Lord, worship the Lord, contact the Lord, and fellowship with the Lord in a secret way. Perhaps not even the one closest to us will know or understand what we are doing. We need these secret experiences of the Lord because such experiences kill our self and our flesh. Although anger and lust are ugly, the thing that most frustrates us from growing in life is the self....The self loves to be glorified, and the flesh loves to be gazed upon. (Life-study of Matthew, p. 260)

Today's Reading

We should pray much, yet not let others know how much we pray...If you pray every day without telling others or letting them know about it, it means that you are healthy and that you are growing....[If] you always tell others how much you pray...you will not only lose your reward, but you will not grow in life or be healthy....If your righteous deeds are in secret, you may be assured that you are growing in life and are healthy. But any time you exhibit yourself in your righteous deeds, you are not healthy. Such an exhibition greatly frustrates your growth in life.

The universe indicates that God is hidden, that God is secret. Although He has done a great many things, people are not aware that He has done them. We may have seen the things done by God, but none of us has ever seen Him, for He is always hidden, always secret. God's life is of such a secret and hidden nature. If we love others by our own life, this life will seek to make a display of itself before men. But if we love others by the love of God, this love will always remain hidden. Our human life loves to make a display, a public show, but God's life is always hidden. A hypocrite is one who has an outward manifestation without having anything within. Everything he has is merely an outward show; there is no reality inwardly. This is absolutely contrary to God's nature and to His hidden life. Although God has so much within Him, only a little is manifested. If we live by this divine life, we may pray much, but others will not know how much we have prayed.

When we Christians give a hundred dollars, it is better that we only let others know that we have given a dime. We do more than what is visible to others. We can never practice this kind of giving in our natural life. It is possible only in the divine life, the life that does not enjoy making a show. This is the crucial point in this portion of the Word.

If we are serious about being the kingdom people, we must learn to live by the hidden life of our Father. We must not live by our natural life, which is always making a display of itself. If we live by our Father's hidden life, we shall do many things without making any public show of them. Rather, all that we do will be in secret, hidden from the eyes of others.

In praying, as in giving alms, the kingdom people are not to make a public show [Matt. 6:5]....Prayer to seek man's praise may gain a reward from men, but it does not receive an answer from the Father. Thus, it is vain prayer.

Our prayer should be in secret [v. 6]....The kingdom people must have some experience of prayer in their private room, contacting their heavenly Father in secret, experiencing some secret enjoyment of the Father, and receiving some secret answer from Him. (Life-study of Matthew, pp. 261-262, 264)

Further Reading: Life-study of Matthew, msg. 21

« WEEK 2 — DAY 4 »

Morning Nourishment

Isa. 45:15 Surely You are a God who hides Himself, O God of Israel, the Savior.

1 Kings 19:12 And after the earthquake, a fire—Jehovah was not in the fire. And after the fire, a gentle, quiet voice.

Have you ever noticed this statement in the Bible—“a God who hides Himself”? I have tested numbers of brothers and sisters with this question and have made the discovery that scarcely any of God’s children have realized that His Word contains such an expression, nor do they really know God as a God who hides Himself. They know Him as the almighty One, as the righteous One, as One full of grace and compassion, but as the One who hides Himself, He is unknown to them.

Note how Isaiah expresses this thought: “Surely You are a God who hides Himself, / O God of Israel” (Isa. 45:15). This statement of his is most emphatic. He is not talking empty words, the fruit of his own imagination; his utterance is based on an accumulation of facts. He has looked at those facts, he has studied those facts, and then he has come to his conclusion: “You are a God who hides Himself, / O God.” What he has seen of God’s doings, what he has observed happen to Israel under the hand of God, what he has beheld of the experiences of God’s people—all these observations have forced the prophet to acknowledge that God is a God who hides Himself. Why did Isaiah come to this conclusion? If you read his book through, you will discover why. It was because God did countless things in the midst of the children of Israel and countless things in their personal lives, yet He concealed Himself. He was ceaselessly working, yet He was always hidden. Very much was being done by Him, yet the Israelites were utterly ignorant as to who the doer was. Then one day Isaiah exclaimed, “Surely You are a God who hides Himself, / O God.” (CWWL, 1956, vol. 2, “A God Who Hides Himself,” p. 3)

Today’s Reading

Our personalities are diametrically opposed to God’s personality. He likes concealment; we like display. He does not crave outward manifestations; we cannot be content without them. This divine disposition constitutes a great trial and test to us.

“Elijah was a man of like feeling with us” (James 5:17), and he did not stand this test. On Mount Carmel God was obviously with him, but when God withheld His manifest presence, Elijah could not bear it. He became depressed and crept into a cave. When God asked him, “What are you doing here?” he answered, “I have been very jealous for Jehovah the God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, thrown down Your altars, and slain Your prophets with the sword; and I alone am left, and they seek to take my life” (1 Kings 19:9-10). God knew Elijah’s difficulty; He knew Elijah wanted Him to be a God who would manifest Himself; he had not realized that God is a God who hides Himself. So God gave him a demonstration. There arose “a great, strong wind” (v. 11). Elijah thought, The Lord is in this. But “Jehovah was not in the wind” (v. 11). The wind was followed by an earthquake. Elijah thought, Surely the Lord is in this. But “Jehovah was not in the earthquake” (v. 11). Then came a fire, and Elijah thought, The Lord is a consuming fire; He will be in this. But “Jehovah was not in the fire” (v. 12). After the fire came a gentle, quiet voice—and the Lord was in that (v. 12). Elijah said to Him, “I alone am left” (v. 14), but the Lord very gently answered, “There are seven thousand persons who have not bowed down to Baal. Elijah, I hide Myself; you did not know that I had preserved those seven thousand souls” (cf. v. 18). Elijah had reckoned only with what he could see, but God is a God who hides Himself. He was not in the wind or in the earthquake or in the fire; He was in the gentle, quiet voice. He had preserved for Himself seven thousand persons who had not bowed the knee to Baal, but so hidden was His activity that not even the prophet Elijah knew anything about it. (CWWL, 1956, vol. 2, “A God Who Hides Himself,” pp. 3-4)

Further Reading: CWWL, 1956, vol. 2, “A God Who Hides Himself,” pp. 3-11

« WEEK 2 — DAY 5 »

Morning Nourishment

1 Pet. 1:8 Whom having not seen, you love; into whom though not seeing Him at present, yet believing, you exult with joy that is unspeakable and full of glory.

Col. 3:3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

[May] God's children...realize the hidden nature of His working. Do not think that only mighty influences, great visions, and tremendous revelations are of Him. God's surest work is done in the secret of our beings. Often it is just a slight whisper or a slight influence—so slight we can scarcely distinguish it from our own impressions. This is God's mightiest mode of activity. Sometimes from our innermost being comes a faint suggestion (or shall I call it a feeling, a voice, or words?) saying something like this: "That is your natural life; that belongs to the cross"—saying it in words that are scarcely words. But do please take note: these almost indefinable words are indications of God's most positive activity. You may reason: This is not God; it is just me. But let me assure you, this is His most definite speaking and working. It is such divine activity that has preserved the church throughout her history of nearly two thousand years. The more we serve the Lord and the more we abide in Him, the more we realize that God is a very quiet God, so quiet that His presence is often undetected. His most intimate way of guiding us is so natural that we scarcely perceive He is guiding us at all, yet somehow we have been led; something has happened. It is often by this quiet, inward activity of God that we receive our greatest guidances. (CWWL, 1956, vol. 2, "A God Who Hides Himself," pp. 4-5)

Today's Reading

[When the] only begotten Son came for the very purpose of showing forth the Father, He hid Him in a human life—a human life whose "visage was marred," a human life that had "no attracting form nor majesty" (Isa. 52:14; 53:2). And He came from Galilee, an insignificant province, and from the town of Nazareth, a small town of which it was said by the Jews that no prophet or person of repute ever came from there (John 1:46; 7:52). So when He appeared, people not only found it hard to believe that God was present in Him—they found it hard even to believe that He was a prophet of God. Yet God was hidden within Jesus of Nazareth.

This man belonged to a poor home and grew up to be a carpenter—a very ordinary carpenter, working in a very small way, until He was thirty. Whoever would have thought that He was indwelt by God, the infinite God?

If you study the Scriptures carefully, you will see that God has the kind of temperament that dislikes ostentation. He likes to work secretly rather than openly. He created the universe and then hid Himself in it, until we do not know where to find Him.

[May we] all realize that, since the resurrection of our Lord, the chief discipline for His followers has come along the line of knowing Him as a God who hides Himself. He is in the midst of men yet does not show Himself to men; He dwells within yet withholds the consciousness of His indwelling.

By the time [Peter] wrote his first Epistle...he could say, "Whom having not seen, you love" (1:8). That is a marvelous thing. Where would you find a man who could love a fellow man he had never seen?...Faith and love are in an unseen One.

When we are most conscious of impotence, God is often most powerfully present....Do not set your expectation on some great vision or on some great experience. And do not expect anything outward, for the God who hides Himself is at work within your life, and He is working mightily. Your responsibility is to cooperate with Him by responding to His voice within—that "gentle, quiet voice," that voice that seems so much a part of your own feelings that you scarcely recognize it as a voice at all. To that voice, registered in the deepest depths of your being, you must say Amen, for there, secretly and ceaselessly, the God who hides Himself is working. (CWWL, 1956, vol. 2, "A God Who Hides Himself," pp. 5-6, 9-11)

Further Reading: CWWL, 1956, vol. 2, "A God Who Hides Himself"

« WEEK 2 — DAY 6 »

Morning Nourishment

Psa. 42:7 Deep calls unto deep at the sound of Your water spouts; all Your waves and Your billows pass over me.

Matt. 13:5 And others fell on the rocky places, where they did not have much earth, and immediately they sprang up because they had no depth of earth.

Only a call from the depths can provoke a response from the depths. Nothing shallow can ever touch the depths, nor can anything superficial touch the inward parts....Others can respond deep within to only what issues from deep within us....Anything that is not from the depths will never reach the depths of others. If we have never received help or benefit in our depths, we will never have anything issuing from our depths. (CWWN, vol. 37, "Deep Calls unto Deep," p. 37)

Today's Reading

In the Lord's parable of the sower...some seeds fell...on the rocky places [Matt. 13:5]....When the seed falls into this kind of ground, it springs up quickly, but as soon as the sun comes out, it withers because of the lack of root. What is a root? It is growth that occurs beneath the soil. What are the leaves? They are growth that occurs above the soil. In other words, roots are the hidden life, whereas leaves are the manifest life. The trouble with many Christians is that, while there is much apparent life, there is very little secret life. In other words, there is the lack of a hidden life....If all your experiences are manifested, then all your growth is upward; there is no downward growth. If this is the case, you are a person who has only leaves without root, and you are on shallow ground.

The Christian who parades all his virtues before men and who does not have anything in the depth of his being has no root; he will not be able to stand in the day of trial and temptation.

How much [of our experience] would be left if what is known by man was taken away? May God work in us so that we can take root downward.

Did Paul disclose all his revelations? Far from it. He wrote, "I know a man [who is himself] in Christ, fourteen years ago (whether in the body I do not know, or outside the body I do not know; God knows) such a one was caught away to the third heaven" (2 Cor. 12:2). He did not divulge this experience until fourteen years later....God's church knew nothing of it;...not one of the apostles had heard of it. Paul's roots were deep beneath the soil.

If you want to have Paul's work, then you need to have Paul's "root"; if you want to have Paul's outward conduct, then you need to have Paul's inner life; if you want to have Paul's manifest power, then you need to have Paul's secret experience. The trouble with Christians today is that they cannot keep any spiritual thing or any special experience undisclosed. As soon as they have a little experience, they have to tell it abroad.

This does not mean that we should not testify. But we must realize that many...spiritual experiences need to be hidden away and should not be exposed....To be without root is to be without any treasure; it is to be without any hidden life or hidden experiences. It is essential that some of our experiences remain covered; to uncover everything is to lose everything.

Whatever secrets we have with the Lord must be preserved....Only if He moves within us to reveal something, dare we reveal it. If He wants us to share some experience with a brother, we dare not withhold it, for that would be violating a law of the members of the Body of Christ. One law of the members of the Body of Christ is fellowship. Once we suppress this law, the flow stops. We must be positive, not negative, and minister life to others....I trust we shall learn what the Body of Christ is and what the flow of life among the members is; but I trust we shall also learn the need for safeguarding the hidden part we have before the Lord, the experiences which are not known to others.

If our life has no depth, our superficial work will only affect other lives superficially. We repeat yet again—only "deep calls unto deep." (CWWN, vol. 37, "Deep Calls unto Deep," pp. 37-40, 42-44)

Further Reading: CWWN, vol. 37, ch. 7, "Deep Calls unto Deep"; CWWN, vol. 38, ch. 66; Life-study of Colossians, msg. 44, 51-53

<< WEEK 2 — HYMN >>

Hymns, #1132

1 Lord, teach us how to pray,
Not as the nations do in vain,
But turn us from our way,
And cause us, Lord, to call on You each day—
Lord Jesus, grow in us.

2 Lord, You're the seed of life;
You've sown Yourself into our heart,
And now You have a start;
So day by day more life to us impart—
Lord Jesus, grow in us.

3 Lord Jesus, soften us;
You know the source from which we came.
By calling on Your name,
Lord, let no earth unturned nor rocks remain—
Lord Jesus, grow in us.

4 Lord, how Your light makes clear
That we could not but e'er fail You;
Yet there's a message true:
The seed of life within us will break through—
Lord Jesus, grow in us.

5 Make us in spirit poor;
Lord, take whate'er we think we know.
We'll open to life's flow,
And thus take in the life that makes us grow—
Lord Jesus, grow in us.

6 Lord, make us pure in heart;
For we'll be not content until
You all our being fill;
O Lord, renew our mind, emotion, will—
Lord Jesus, grow in us.

7 Yes, Lord, impress our heart
That we must take You in each day;
The seed will have its way;
Your growing brings the kingdom here to stay—
Lord Jesus, grow in us.

8 Amen!—The growth in life!
There's nothing that Your life can't do;
Our every part renew.
We'll make it, we will make it just by You.
Lord Jesus, grow in us.
Lord Jesus, grow in us.