

## **“First Watch” Touch Points for Evangel’s Prayer Vigil team**

**For the week of February 8, 2015**

### **Developing a Praying Life – part 6**

#### **INSIGHTS from A Praying Life by Paul E. Miller**

*from Part 1: Learning to Pray Like a Child / Chapters 7 & 8*

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##### **CRYING “ABBA” CONTINUOUSLY (Ch. 7)**

*In this chapter Miller talks about the short “bullet” prayers that can fill his thoughts throughout the day.*

**Poverty of Spirit, Not Discipline...**Even now I don’t realize that I am praying, but the Spirit....More specifically, it is the Spirit of *his Son* praying. The Spirit is bringing the childlike heart of Jesus into my heart and crying, *Abba, Father*. Jesus’ longing for his Father becomes my longing. My spirit meshes with the Spirit, and I, too, begin to cry, *Father*.

...I discovered myself praying simple two- and three-word prayers, such as *Teach me* or *Help me, Jesus*. The psalms are filled with this type of short bullet prayer.

This is the exact opposite of Eastern mysticism, which is a psycho-spiritual technique that disengages from relationship and escapes pain by dulling self....But as Christians we realize we can’t cure ourselves, so we cry out to our Father, our primary relationship.

A praying spirit transforms how we look at people. As we walk through the mall, our hearts can tempt us to judge, despise, or lust. [But a praying spirit can lead us to lift short prayers for the people we see.]

**Paul’s Example and Teaching...**[here Miller cites a number of references to Paul’s call for “unceasing prayer”—Rom. 1:9-10; 12:12. 1 Cor. 1:4, Eph. 1:16; 6:18, Col. 1:9; 4:2, 4:12, 1 Thess. 1:2; 2:13; 3:10; 5:17, 2 Thess. 1-11, 2 Tim. 1:3.]

A praying life isn’t simply a morning prayer time; it is about slipping into prayer at odd hours of the day, not because we are disciplined but because we are in touch with our own poverty of spirit, realizing that we can’t even walk through a mall or our neighborhood without the help of the Spirit of Jesus.

##### **BENDING YOUR HEART TO YOUR FATHER (Ch. 8)**

*Miller begins by relating a story about a conversation with a drug rep who told him that two-thirds of suburban American women are on antidepressants.*

Instead of fighting anxiety, we can use it as a springboard to bending our hearts to God....When we do that, we’ll discover that we’ve slipped into continuous praying.

**A Brief History of Anxiety and Prayer...**goes back to Eden... When [Adam and Eve] sought independence from God, they stopped walking with God...and their prayer link was broken.

What does an unused prayer link look like? Anxiety. Instead of connecting with God, our spirits fly around like severed power lines, destroying everything they touch. Anxiety wants to be God but lacks God’s wisdom, power, or knowledge... Because anxiety is self on its own, it tries to get control. It is unable to relax in the face of chaos. Once one problem is solved, the next in line steps up. The new one looms so large, we forget the last deliverance.

Oddly enough, it took God to show us how not to be godlike. Jesus was the first person who didn’t seek independence. He wanted to be in continuous contact with his heavenly Father....No longer do we have to be little gods, controlling everything. Instead, we cling to our Father in the face of chaos by continuously praying. Because we know we don’t have control, we cry out for grace. Instead of flailing around, our praying spirits can bless everything we touch.

**Invitations for Prayer...**When you stop trying to control your life and instead allow your anxieties and problems to bring you to God in prayer, you shift from worry to watching. You watch God weave his patterns in the story of your life. Instead of trying to be out front, designing your life, you realize you are inside God’s drama. As you wait, you begin to see him work, and your life begins to sparkle with wonder. You are learning to trust again.

From [A Praying Life](#), Paul E. Miller, [NavPress](#) (2009), pages 63-75 (chapters 7 & 8)

#### **PRAYER PROMPTS**

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- If are facing anxiety, or helping someone who is, try some of the prayer ideas suggested by Miller or the Scriptures cited.
- Reflect on this week’s worship service, the music, Scriptures, and Pastor Dave’s sermon\* from Exodus 14, “Let My People Go—For My Glory (Part 1).” Pray that the Lord will lead you to ways to apply the lessons learned in your own walk with Christ and as you connect with different people this week.
- Continue to pray for opportunities to invite people to our services or become engaged in spiritual discovery with the people of Evangel in other ways as well. Ask the Lord to open doors of conversation, connection or compassion with others to enable that engagement this week.

\* A podcast of the sermon and other materials are normally posted on the website by Monday.

*Touch Points* is e-mailed every Friday, posted on the website ([www.evbapt.org](http://www.evbapt.org)), with printed copies available in the lobby.