

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

For the week of March 1, 2015

Developing a Praying Life – part 9

INSIGHTS from A Praying Life by Paul E. Miller from Part 2: Learning to Trust Again / Chapter 11

DEVELOPING AN EYE FOR JESUS

In the second part of the book, Miller addresses cynicism, the spirit of our age. Last week, we presented the first five of six “cures:” 1) Be warm but wary 2) Listen to hope again 3) Cultivating our childlike spirit 4) Cultivating a thankful spirit and 5) Cultivating repentance. This week, the final cure: Developing an eye for Jesus.

Miller starts with a story about an experience with a seasonal tax business he and wife operated. A computer problem was driving him crazy and ended up delaying his service to a client, who patiently waited more than three hours. Overwhelmed by her patience, he awkwardly blurted out, “Does Jesus make a difference in your life?”

...She replied, “Jesus is everything to me. I talk to him all the time.”

I was floored, partly by the freshness and simplicity of her faith but mainly by the unusual patience that displayed her faith....I was overwhelmed by the irony of my unbelief. Jesus had been sitting in our waiting room, right in front of me, as obvious as the daylight. I had walked by him all day. I had wondered if Jesus was around, and he had been silently waiting all day, saying nothing. It was a stunning display of patience.

Cynicism looks in the wrong direction. It looks for the cracks in Christianity instead of looking for the presence of Jesus. It is an orientation of the heart....

A principal source of cynicism comes from looking up at Christian leaders who have gotten Jesus’ kingdom mixed up with their own....In order to see Jesus, I would have to look lower....I hunted for the difference between what others would normally be like and what they had become through the presence of Jesus....[which] would reveal itself in the restoration of authenticity in people. I’d see Christians whose inner and outer lives matched.

SPOTTING JESUS IN CLEVELAND

When we look for Jesus we can find him, even in seemingly mundane encounters, as I did one morning in Cleveland, just a month later. *[It started with a friend apologizing for a minor oversight and then seeing the godly perspective of a group of men at a prayer breakfast.]*

...When I returned the rental car, the attendant greeted me cheerfully. When he saw my name on the receipt, he said, “You have a name from the Bible.” He was partly witnessing, partly fishing for a fellow Christian, and partly just in love with the Bible. His cheerfulness and exuberant faith didn’t reflect the seeming lowliness of his job. Once again, I saw the presence of Jesus.

[Miller then relates a phone call from his wife Jill about a situation with their autistic daughter Kim that caused Jill to laugh in a tough situation]....It was the laughter of faith, rejoicing in tribulation because the tribulation was so funny. Again, the presence of Jesus.

Then my mom called while I was walking through the airport. She briefly described a situation where she’d been falsely accused and had realized she needed to unilaterally forgive without the possibility of reconciliation. No mention of the gory details, just a quiet reflection on her own heart.

Jesus was everywhere, transforming the mundane morning—caring and apologizing (Jim), studying and obeying (the men), witnessing and befriending (the attendant), suffering and laughing (Jill), forgiving and not gossiping (Mom). Each of these people was living out his or her faith without a mask. With a little conscious reflection, it is easy to see the beauty of Jesus.

Instead of focusing on other people’s lack of integrity, on their split personalities, we need to focus on how Jesus is reshaping the church to be more like himself. We need to view the body of Christ with grace.

Next week...we move into Part 3 of the book, “Learning to Ask Your Father.”

From A Praying Life, Paul E. Miller, NavPress (2009), pages 95-99 (ch. 11)

PRAYER PROMPTS

- If you or someone you know has been struggling with cynicism, pray for an honest recognition of the situation and for the development of “an eye for Jesus.”
- Reflect on this week’s worship service, the music, Scriptures, and Dennis Nordine’s sermon,* “Be a Superhero...Change the World.” 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, particularly in the weeks leading up to Easter, or to 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 will be posted on the website by Monday

Touch Points is e-mailed every Friday, posted on the website (www.evbapt.org), with printed copies available in the lobby. To be included in the weekly e-mail, use the Contact Us form on the website and request “add me to the Prayer Vigil list.”