

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

For the week of March 8, 2015

### Developing a Praying Life – part 10

#### INSIGHTS from A Praying Life by Paul E. Miller from Part 3: Learning to Ask Your Father / Chapter 12

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##### WHY ASKING IS SO HARD (Ch. 12)

Miller starts with a story about helping his youngest daughter, Emily, with a science project. Because of the family’s misadventures with such projects, they pray first. Logging her results, she asks her father what they did first. When he says they prayed, she says “I can’t write that.” When Paul asks why not, Emily responds “That isn’t how it works, Dad. They don’t want us to say that.”

Western culture [and the western-inspired public cultures of communist countries] is the most publicly atheistic culture that has ever existed. Among the thousands of cultures in the history of humanity, our culture is the only one not to have regular public acknowledgement of a spiritual world. In view of the sweep of human history, our culture is odd.

....How did this happen? If you go back far enough, “they” is the eighteenth century Enlightenment. During this period in history, the leading thinkers decided they didn’t need God anymore. ...[T]hinkers such as Kant divided the world into *feelings*, things that are true only for me, and *facts*, things that are true for everyone.

...This way of viewing the world is called secularism. When you lump God together with feelings and subjective opinion, then God is marginalized....Prayer is private and personal, not public and real.

C. S. Lewis was referring to the Enlightenment worldview when he said, “Nearly all that I loved I believed to be imaginary; nearly all that I believed to be real I thought grim and meaningless.” When his good friend J. R. R. Tolkien told him that Christianity was a “true myth,” it merged Lewis’ two great quests for beauty and truth.

**The Power of the Enlightenment....**Before the Enlightenment, early scientists in the West wrote in their notes that they prayed. Johannes Kepler, the Danish astronomer who discovered the laws of interplanetary

motion, wrote that he was “thinking God’s thoughts after him.” Newton and others regularly gave glory to God in their writings.

Ironically, modern science is possible because Christianity taught that God created a world separate from himself. If the world is separate, we can investigate it.

....Secularism is a religious belief that grew out of the pride of human achievement, particularly scientific achievement. It masquerades as science or reality, opposed to religion, which it calls opinion. Secularism claims to have given us the gift of science when, in fact, Christianity gave us the gift of science.

The Enlightenment mind-set marginalizes prayer because it doesn’t permit God to connect with this world. You are allowed a personal, local deity as long as you keep him out of your science notes and don’t take him seriously.

**The Modern Roots of Cynicism....**The Enlightenment doesn’t say that religion is not real. It *defines* it as not real. Once you’ve defined it as not real, then it isn’t even an item for discussion.

When our children encounter the pull of the world in their teenage years, it is easy for them to say that God-talk is phony because it has been relegated to the non-real world....

**A Child Prays in a Secular World....**Miller relates the story of Dana Tierney, a *New York Times Magazine* writer who had rejected her childhood faith, but found her young son praying with ease and confidence for his father, a reporter headed to Iraq. In her article she also reflected on the way people of faith view the physical world...“They see a realm of hope beyond this world.”

...that Dana even wrote this article is indicative of the postmodern winds blowing through our culture. Science is beginning to lose its godlike status.

Because it is my Father’s world, then as Emily and I kneel by a stream to do a science experiment, we should pray and ask for his help. It is a complete unity of thinking and feeling, physical and spiritual, public and personal. It is my Father’s world.

From [A Praying Life](#), Paul E. Miller, [NavPress](#) (2009), pages 103-111 (ch. 12)

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#### PRAYER PROMPTS

- Pray that God will give you fresh insight into the life of prayer in our increasingly secular world and how that impacts your relationship with others, especially nonbelievers.
- Reflect on this week’s worship service, the music, Scriptures, and Pastor Dave’s sermon,\* “Let My People Go: This Stirs the Heart” (Exodus 15:1-18. 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 and other materials will be posted on the website by Monday.

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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. 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.”