

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

**For the week of March 15, 2015**

### **Developing a Praying Life – part 11**

#### **INSIGHTS from A Praying Life by Paul E. Miller from Part 3: Learning to Ask Your Father / Chapter 13**

---

##### WHY WE CAN ASK (Ch. 13)

*This chapter follows last week’s look at why asking is so hard, where Miller talks about the influence of Enlightenment thinking (secularism) on our concept of our relationship with God. He begins this chapter with the story of a former Hindu, Asha, who approached him after a seminar in London with a very specific, personal prayer request. As you read the following, think not so much of your own experience, but of the person who views the world through the lens of secularism.*

It would never occur to an American Christian to approach a guest speaker whom you had just met and ask him or her to pray for your granddaughter, right there on the spot. It would feel intrusive, selfish, inappropriate. Our definition of prayer as private and personal makes us hesitant to buttonhole a speaker.

An Infinite Personal God...Asha believes that an infinite God is personally involved in the details of her life. An infinite-personal God is such an astounding idea that we struggle to grasp it. Our modern world is okay with an infinite God, as long as he doesn’t get too personal, as long as he stays out of science notes [a reference to last week]. Non-Western cultures have no trouble thinking that God is personal, but they doubt he is infinite. Thus ancient battles between nations were often seen as power struggles between different gods. [See 1 Kings 20:23 for an example, when the Syrians met Israel in battle].

David captures the infinite-personal God with the first sentence of Psalm 23, “The Lord [infinite] is my shepherd [personal].” In the ancient Near East nothing else came close to this picture of intimacy. Occasionally an ancient king would be described as a shepherd of his people, but the gods were never interested in “little old me.” The words me or my, which sound like “ee” in Hebrew, ring

thirteen times through the psalm. The infinite God is interested in me.

Likewise, we feel Solomon’s wonder in his prayer of dedication for the temple as he contemplates the infinite God dwelling personally with us (2 Chronicles 6:18). Because God is both infinite and personal, he will listen “to the cry and to the prayer that your servant prays.” (6:19).

Isaiah is also in awe that God dwells “in the high and holy place [infinite], and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit [personal]” (57:15).

Majesty and humility are such an odd fit. This is one reason we struggle with prayer. We just don’t think God could be concerned with the puny details of our lives. We either believe he’s too big or that we’re not that important. No wonder Jesus told us be like little children! Little children are not daunted by the size of their parents. They come, regardless.

Einstein struggled with the oddness of a universe that reflects an infinite-personal God. On the one hand, he consistently articulated an Enlightenment view of God as depersonalized and distant. A sixth grade girl from a Sunday school in New York asked him, “Do scientists pray?” Einstein replied, “A scientist will hardly be inclined to believe that events could be influenced by prayer.” Yet he frequently referred to God personally. When debating Niels Bohr on quantum theory, Einstein said, “God doesn’t play with dice.” In his biography of Einstein, Walter Isaacson said that Einstein’s frequent references to a personal God were genuine....In fact, Einstein said his science was driven by a belief in a “God who reveals himself in the harmony of all that exists.”

A praying life opens itself to an infinite, searching God. As we shall see, we can’t do that without releasing control, without constantly surrendering our will to God. “Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10) is actually scary.

From *A Praying Life*, Paul E. Miller, NavPress (2009), pages 113-117 (chapter 13)

---

#### **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: To Keep My Word” (Exodus 15:22-27. 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.

---

*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.”*