

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

For the week of April 12, 2015

Developing a Praying Life – part 15

INSIGHTS from A Praying Life by Paul E. Miller from Part 3: Learning to Ask Your Father / Chapter 16

WHAT WE DON’T ASK FOR: “OUR DAILY BREAD” (chapter 16)

In the church, most prayer requests are limited to sickness, joblessness, kids in crisis, and maybe an occasional missionary. Yet Jesus’ prayer for daily bread was an invitation to bring all our needs to him. In the Greek, “Give us this day our daily bread” (Matt. 6:11) is an obscure expression that literally means “give us tomorrow’s bread today.” It hints at the abundance God wants to bring into our lives....

Material Things—Too Selfish, Too Vulnerable...We’ve already seen how we don’t like to ask for mundane things such as pajamas, particularly material things, where it doesn’t occur to us to ask God. For example, we balk at praying, *God, I want a vacation home. Would you get me one?* We don’t mind *acting* selfishly, but *talking* selfishly is embarrassing. After all, we aren’t little children anymore. A vacation home is so beyond the purview of daily bread that it feels presumptuous to ask God for one.

So what do we do instead of asking God for a vacation home? We look at our finances, talk to a realtor, and go buy one—all without seriously praying about the decision. Don’t get me wrong. I’m not saying buying a vacation house is inherently sinful. God delights in giving his children good gifts, including vacation homes. But he wants to be part of all the decisions we make. He wants our material needs to draw us into our soul needs. This is what it means to abide—to include him in every aspect of our lives.

Abiding is a perfect way to describe a praying life. For example, many Christians who are thinking of buying a vacation home might even pray, asking God practical questions, such as “Can we afford it?”....But we seldom ask God heart questions such as “Will a second home elevate us above other people?” “Will it isolate us?” In the first set of questions, God is your financial advisor. In the second set of

questions he has become your Lord. You are abiding. You are feeding your soul with food that lasts.

We can do the same thing with a promotion. It feels selfish to pray for one, so instead well work for it....we create two selves—a spiritual self and a material self.

We also shy away from prayers like these because they invite God to rule our lives. They make us vulnerable. ...Left to ourselves, we want God to be a genie not a person. Scholars have pointed out that Jesus’ references to the kingdom are a subtle way of introducing himself as king. When we pray the first petition of the Lord’s Prayer, “Your kingdom come,” we are saying, “King Jesus, rule my life.” The heart is one of God’s biggest mission fields.

Oddly enough, we can also use prayer to keep God distant. We do that by only talking to God and not to mature believers. I can demonstrate that easily. Which is easier, confessing impure thoughts to a mature friend or to God?.... We need to ask the body of Christ, Jesus’ physical presence on earth, the same questions we ask God.

If you isolate praying from the rule of Jesus by not involving other Christians, you’ll end up doing your own will.

Wisdom—Too Unexpected....When we need advice, we find a wise person, ask him or her a question, and listen to the answer. It seldom occurs to us to do this with God....Without realizing it, we are operating in an Enlightenment mind-set that denies the possibility of an infinite God speaking personally into our lives. That’s why I prefer the biblical term *wisdom* to our more common term *guidance*. Guidance means I’m driving the car and asking God which way to go. Wisdom is richer, more personal. I don’t just need help with my plans; I need help with my questions and even my own heart.

Next week: What we don’t ask for: “Your Kingdom Come”

From *A Praying Life*, Paul E. Miller, NavPress (2009), pages 141-47 (chapters 16)

PRAYER PROMPTS

- Pray that God will touch the mission field of your heart as you bring to him your needs for daily bread. Pray that He will use others at Evangel to be partners—“Jesus’ physical presence on earth”—as you seek wisdom.
- Reflect on this week’s worship service, the music, Scriptures, and Pastor Dave’s sermon,* “The Presence of Easter: Lazarus Raised” (John 11:32-44). Pray that the Lord will lead you to ways to apply the lessons learned in your own walk with Christ, as you connect with different people this week, and as you reflect on what the Lord may have used during this year’s Lenten season and Holy Week to affect your daily walk with Christ.
- Continue to pray for opportunities to invite people to our services, particularly Maundy Thursday and Easter Sunday, and 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), 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.”