

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

For the week of April 19, 2015

Developing a Praying Life – part 16

I INSIGHTS from A Praying Life by Paul E. Miller from Part 3: Learning to Ask Your Father / Chapter 17

WHAT WE DON’T ASK FOR: “YOUR KINGDOM COME” (ch 17)

Christians have done some confusing things with “your kingdom come” that keeps the rule of Jesus at a distance. We’ve spiritualized the kingdom, thinking it only has to do with religious things. Or, we’ve identified the kingdom with Christian institutions. The kingdom is there, but that is only one expression of the kingdom.

Change in others—too controlling, too hopeless...Seldom do we pray seriously and thoughtfully for those we love as they deal with their besetting sins. I’m going to pick on husbands for a minute because most men don’t pray thoughtfully for their wives; they just whine or withdraw....[Miller then uses the example of a husband praying for a wife who is critical of him. A few excerpts from a much longer section:]

...By raising the issue, he just gets more criticism, so his heart quietly shuts down....Without realizing it, he has become cynical about the possibility of real change in his wife...To engage God in prayer about his wife’s attitude feels like opening up an old wound....Mixed in with his frustration is guilt. Some of what she says is true. He isn’t sure where her sin ends and his begins.

The husband also hesitates to pray because he’s been told that he shouldn’t try to control his wife. But the point of prayer is shifting control from you to God....Where should the husband begin? Like a little child, he should ask God for what he wants. It might help to write down in a prayer notebook or on a card what he wants changed in his wife and to find a scripture that describes Christ in her. Then he could start praying that scripture for her every day and also invite God to work in his own heart.

This prayer will become a twenty-year adventure. The adventure begins with asking God, *Do I have a critical spirit too? Do I respond to my wife’s critical spirit with own critical spirit?* Usually, what bugs us the most about other people is

true of us as well. By first taking the beam out of his own eye (see Matthew 7:1-5), the husband releases in his wife’s life the unseen energy of the Spirit. The kingdom is beginning to come....

Character change in me—too scary...Almost every Christian is confident God will answer a prayer for change in us, and it scares us to death....what happens if you pray for patience? God permits suffering in your life. What happens if you pray for humility? God humbles you. We’re scared of such prayers because we want to remain in control of our lives. We don’t trust God....We also don’t pray for change in ourselves because we don’t want to admit that we need to change.

The fatalism inherent in so much modern psychology immobilizes us as well. Emotional states are sacred. If I’m grumpy, I have a right to feel that way and to express my feelings....Oddly enough, idolizing our emotions doesn’t free us to be ourselves but instead results in us being ruled by the every-changing wind of feelings. We become a thousand selves, or to use Jesus’ words, “a reed shaken by the wind” (Matthew 11:7)....But if we take Jesus’ word seriously—“Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do” (John 14:13)—it opens the door to the possibility of real change and hope. No longer are you captured by the mind of the culture. You’ve been invited into coregency with the Ruler of the universe. The King has come.

Change in things I don’t like in our culture—too impossible....Most of the time we just whine about things in our culture that we don’t like. In never occurs to us to pray that culture itself will change.

... Prayer is deeply personal and deeply mysterious. Adults try to figure out causation. Little children don’t. They just ask.

If you slow down and reflect, you’ll begin to see whole areas of your life where you’ve been prayerless.

Next week: Surrender Completely: “Your Will Be Done”

From *A Praying Life*, Paul E. Miller, NavPress (2009), pages 149-154 (chapters 17)

PRAYER PROMPTS

- Pray that God will reveal to you new areas that you can commit to him—for change in others, character change in yourself, and change in our culture.
- Reflect on this week’s worship service, the music, Scriptures, and Pastor Dave’s sermon,* “Awaiting the Son – Introducing Thessalonians.” 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.”