

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

For the week of April 26, 2015

Developing a Praying Life – part 17

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

SURRENDER COMPLETELY: “YOUR WILL BE DONE” (ch 18)

Miller begins this chapter with a story involving his son Andrew—one of those relatively small matters that blows up into a contest of wills.

Until we see how strong our own will is, we can’t understand the second petition of the Lord’s Prayer—“your will be done” (Matthew 6:10). Not only was I prayerless in this incident, I was also prayerless about this area of Andrew’s life.

Sin is complicated. We are never a passive observer, dispensing wisdom and justice. We are part of the mess. My solution to the problem made it more complex. That’s why we can’t afford to do anything on our own.

Because I acted on my own, independent of my heavenly Father, my words by themselves had to do all the work. Because I had not asked God to work inside Andrew’s heart, I felt it was up to me to deal with him about his irresponsibility, and this increased my intensity.

...If I’d been in touch with my self-will, then it would have opened up the door to prayer, to abiding. The great struggle of my life is not trying to discern God’s will; it is trying to discern and then disown my own. Once I see that, then prayer flows. I have to be praying because I’m no longer in charge. Either I see all of life as a gift, or I demand that life have a certain look to it.

Getting in touch with our self-will...Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5, 6, and 7 is a blueprint for getting in touch with your self-will and letting God take control...To understand the sermon, think of your life as a room filled with open doors called money, sex, power, and fame.

Jesus begins the sermon by telling you he is going to go through your life and close all the doors to human power and glory. In the Beatitudes, he says: “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth” (Matthew 5:5. In other words, he is saying, “Give up power in relationships, and I will give you an entirely different way of to do life. Don’t

be afraid of being codependent, of disappearing, I will take care of you.”

In the rest of chapter 5 Jesus closes one door after another...empower your enemies...revenge...oaths and promises...secret sexual pleasure. If you do what Jesus says in chapter 5, you start to feel spiritual.

In chapter 6, Jesus deals with wanting to look spiritual. He tells you to keep your prayer life hidden...don’t use spiritual means for getting power and glory. Jesus closes the door to getting your identity from your own righteousness.

Then Jesus closes the door to getting your security from money....you begin to panic and say, “Who’s going to take care of me?” ...So, not only do you have to give up money, but you have to give up worrying about money. Two more doors close to human power and glory.

As you begin chapter 7, you have a new view of the world. You’ve learned how to put God at the center. Everywhere you look, people are caught up with stuff. Now Jesus taps you on the shoulder and says, “Stop judging. When you see someone else’s sin, instead of using that information to correct them, use that information to humble yourself by first finding the beam in your own eye.” Instead of using your insights into other people’s issues as a spiritual hammer, Jesus wants you to take these insights and deepen your own repentance (7:1-5). Argh! How do I do life?

Having closed all your doors, Jesus opens the door to prayer and tells you how he gets things done (7:7). He asks for help from his Father. He talks to his Father and tells him what he wants. Prayer is the positive side of the surrendered will. As you stop doing your own will and wait for God, you enter into his mind. You begin to remain in him...to abide. This is the praying life.

Next week we’ll move into Part 4, “Living the Father’s Story”

From A Praying Life, Paul E. Miller, NavPress (2009), pages 155-161 (chapter 18)

PRAYER PROMPTS

- Pray for repentance, that God will remove the desire to use of “spiritual hammer” on other people, learning to pray for them as you examine your own life at the same time.
- Reflect on this week’s worship service, the music, Scriptures, and guest speaker Craig Parro’s sermon,* “When God Throws a Curve Ball.” 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.”