

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

For the week of May 31, 2015

Developing a Praying Life – part 22

INSIGHTS from “A Praying Life” by Paul E. Miller from Part 4: Living in Your Father’s Story / Chapter 23

PRAYING WITHOUT A STORY (Ch. 23) - Part 1

What happens when you don’t have a sense of your life as a story being told by your Father? *AT THIS POINT, MILLER INSERTS A LONG EXCERPT FROM A STORY TOLD BY PHILIP YANCEY FROM “PRAYER: DOES IT MAKE A DIFFERENCE?”*

My heart breaks for Joanne. She’s had a lot coming at her. Leukemia while in college, struggles with her three children, and deep disappointment with God. Many of the psalms give voice to Joanne’s heart cry: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Psalm 22:1). On the cross Jesus himself echoes Joanne’s agony.

The most difficult part to raise with Joanne is her bitterness....I wonder if she was set up for bitterness by bad teaching on prayer that disconnected it from life. Did Joanne’s bitterness contribute to her children’s struggles? She talked about her children’s distance from God and then acknowledges her own.

If we don’t get passionate with God in the face of disappointment, like the Canaanite woman, then cynicism slips in, and our hearts begin to harden. We begin a living death. This chart summarizes two approaches to a praying life.

NO STORY	STORY
Bitter	Waiting
Angry	Watching
Aimless	Wondering
Cynical	Praying
Controlling	Submitting
Hopeless	Hoping
Thankless	Thankful
Blaming	Repenting

From [A Praying Life](#), Paul E. Miller, [NavPress](#) (2009), pages 195-200 (chapter 23)

PRAYER PROMPTS

- If you are struggling in a situation or with your relationship with your heavenly Father, pray that God will help you to live inside the story he is writing for you and evidence the traits on the right side of the chart above.
- Reflect on this week’s worship service, the music, Scriptures, and Pastor Dave’s message “A Greeting of Grace” (1 Thessalonians 1:1). 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.
- 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.”

Another story of God’s weaving....I’d love to tell Joanne the story of God’s twenty-five-year answer to our prayers that Kim speak. I’d describe for her the dance between our prayers and Kim slowly developing one form of communication after the other. It was work, prayer, mistakes, frustration, more work, more prayer, breakthrough, work, prayer, and so on. Again and again, often at the last moment, we saw God provide. And he never did it without humbling us.

MILLER FELT KIM WAS MAKING PROGRESS WITH SIGN LANGUAGE AND FELT THE DESIRE TO WRITE A BOOK ABOUT THE PERSON OF JESUS AND HOW HE LOVES. As I was praying about this, the thought came to me, *Paul, how can you speak about me when Kim doesn’t speak?* This simple challenge to my integrity had the ring of God about it. God was determined that my hidden life with my family match my open life in ministry. He didn’t want a robust public ministry focused on love (the book) and an unfinished private ministry (Kim’s not speaking). He didn’t want the outer life to look bigger than the inner....So I set aside plans to write the book and began to think about ways to get Kim speaking on her speech computer....

Slowly by slowly, Kim’s sentences became clearer and clearer. She began to “speak” with an electronic voice—which was fun to manipulate because we could switch her voice to other personas, such as Huge Harry or Rough Rita.

One seeming coincidence followed another [*BOTH WITH KIM’S “SPEECH” AND IN THE PROCESS OF PUBLISHING THE BOOK WHEN GOD OPENED THAT DOOR*]...the Father deliberately delayed a book about the beauty of his Son for the sake of Kim being able to speak more clearly. He put Kim ahead of his Son’s own honor. I do not understand that kind of love. I guess that is what the cross is all about.

Do you see the difference between making an isolated prayer request and praying in the context of the story that God is weaving?

Next week: part 2, reflections on these examples.