

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

For the week of June 7, 2015

Developing a Praying Life – part 23

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 2

LAST WEEK WE COVERED TWO EXAMPLES: THE BITTERNESS OF JOANNE’S LIFE OF SEEMINGLY UNENDING UNANSWERED PRAYERS AND MILLER’S OWN EXAMPLE OF YEARS OF DELAY IN ANSWERING PRAYER BECAUSE HE WAS STILL IN THE MIDDLE OF THE STORY THAT GOD WAS WEAVING.

Living in Our Father’s Story....Living in our Father’s story means living in tension....After all, tension and overwhelming obstacles make for a good story! How boring life would be if prayer worked like magic. There’d be no relationship with God, no victory over little pockets of evil.

To live in our Father’s story, remember these three things:

1. **Don’t demand that the story go your way.** (In other words, surrender completely.)
2. **Look for the Storyteller.** Look for his hand, and then pray in light of what you are seeing. (In other words, develop an eye for Jesus.)
3. **Stay in the story.** Don’t shut down when it goes the wrong way.

This last one, staying in the story, can be particularly difficult. When the story isn’t going your way, ask yourself, *What is God doing?* Be on the lookout for strange gifts. God loves to surprise us with babies in swaddling clothes lying in mangers.

Sometimes when we say “God is silent,” what’s really going on is that he hasn’t told the story the way we wanted it told. He will be silent when we want him to fill in the blanks of the story we are creating. But with his own stories, the ones we live in, he is seldom silent.

To see the Storyteller we need to slow down our interior life and watch. We need to be embedded in the Word to experience the Storyteller’s mind and pick up the cadence of

his voice. We need to be alert for the story, for the Storyteller’s voice speaking into the details of our lives. The story God weaves is neither weird nor floaty. It always involves bowing before his majesty with the pieces of our lives.

Watching for the Divine Artist....Let me show you what I mean by taking a moment to reflect on the story God was weaving in Joseph’s life (see Genesis 37, 39-40)

...You can tell that Joseph realizes God is weaving a story with coats and silver because when his brothers arrive, Joseph gives each of them a coat and silver. He wraps up the story of his life by blessing his brothers with the very items they have stolen from him (see Genesis 41-45). Joseph has not given in to bitterness or cynicism; instead he discovers the gracious heart of his God, grace he extends to those who have harmed him. Forgiveness flowed.

...We’ve lost a sense of divine artistry in our lives because the Enlightenment put art, poetry, and literature in the same category as religion. It defined these things as “not real.” So poetry isn’t allowed in history or biology books. This, of course, is a false separation. Open any biology book, and you are immediately confronted by the work of a spectacular artist and designer.

When confronted with suffering that won’t go away or with even a minor problem, we instinctively focus on what is missing, such as the lost coats and the betrayal in Joseph’s story, not on the Master’s hand. Often when you think everything has gone wrong, it’s just that you’re in the middle of a story. If you watch the stories God is weaving in your life, you, like Joseph, will begin to see patterns. You’ll become a poet, sensitive to your Father’s voice.

Next week: “Hope: The End of the Story”

From *A Praying Life*, Paul E. Miller, NavPress (2009), pages 201-203 (chapter 23)

PRAYER PROMPTS

- What is the story God is currently writing in your life? Have you ever tried to escape from the story when God didn’t seem to be answering your prayers or making the story come out the way you wanted? If you stayed with the story, what discoveries did you make about God and your relationship with him?
- Reflect on this week’s worship service, the music, Scriptures, and Pastor Joel’s message “The Lord’s Prayer.” 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.”