

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

For the week of June 28, 2015

Developing a Praying Life – part 26

INSIGHTS from A Praying Life by Paul E. Miller from Part 5: Praying in Real Life, Chapters 26 and 27

WITH THIS ISSUE WE BEGIN WINDING DOWN OUR EXTENDED SERIES BASED ON PAUL MILLER’S BOOK. THE FINAL PART OF THE BOOK DEALS WITH A NUMBER OF PRACTICAL GUIDES TO PRAYER.

USING PRAYER TOOLS

When I ask [at prayer seminars] why 95 percent write their schedules down but only 5 percent write their prayer requests, someone usually answers, “If you forget an appointment, you pay for it.” ...the bottom line is we don’t write down our prayer requests because we don’t take prayer seriously. We don’t think it works.

I am not naturally a people person, but when I regularly pray for people using some kind of written system, my heart tunes in to them. I am bolder about asking them how things are going because they are already on my heart

Disabled by the Fall...Remember that we are not normal children learning how to pray. Like [my autistic daughter] Kim, we are disabled by the Fall. We have a disorder that mars our ability to talk with God. As Kim needs a speech computer in order to communicate, so we need written aides in order to communicate with God.

Deep within the American psyche is the 1960s’ Romantic idea, originally from Emerson and Rousseau, that if something doesn’t feel natural, it isn’t real. We think spiritual things—if done right—should just flow. But if you have a disability, nothing flows, especially in the beginning.

Be Careful of Systems...[Systems can become rote, desensitizing us to God as a person. We can become wooden or mindless as we pray...When you are autistic, you have trouble picking up social clues from the other person. You are so lost in your own world that you miss people. None of us wants to be treated like robots... including God. He is, after all, a person.

Many people are so aware of this caution that they are suspicious of all systems. They feel like it kills the Spirit. Systems seem to fly in the face of what we learned about childlike praying. But all of us create systems with things that are important to us. Remember, life is both holding hands and scrubbing floors. It is both being and doing. Prayer journals or prayer cards are on the “scrubbing floors” side of life. Praying like a child is on the “holding hands” side of life. We need both.

PRAYER PROMPTS

- Pray for those who seek a deeper and more effective prayer life, that God will draw them closer and guide them in applying some of the ideas introduced to us by Paul Miller (or other sources you may be familiar with).
- Reflect on this week’s worship service, the music, Scriptures, and Dr. Pio Tica’s message “God Wants to Use You.” * 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.”

KEEPING TRACK OF THE STORY: USING PRAYER CARDS

The idea of using prayer cards instead of a prayer list came to me one day when I was sitting on our living room sofa, trying to pray....While sitting like this, spiritually numb, a thought suddenly came to me: Put the Word to work. I got some three-by-five cards, and on each one wrote the name of a family member, along with a Scripture that I could use to shape my prayers for that person. [This eventually became a stack of cards covering a range of people]. Here are some overall guidelines I use when creating a prayer card:

1. The card functions like a prayer snapshot of a person’s life, so I use short phrases to describe what I want.
2. When praying, I usually don’t linger over a card for more than a few seconds. I just pick out one or two key areas and pray for them.
3. I put the Word to work by writing a Scripture verse on the card that expresses my desire for that particular person or situation.
4. The card doesn’t change much. Maybe once a year I will add another line. These are just the ongoing areas in a person’s life that I am praying for.
5. I usually don’t write down answers. They are obvious to me since I see the card almost every day.
6. I will sometimes date a prayer request.

A prayer card has several advantages over a list. A list is often a series of scattered prayer requests, while a prayer card focuses on one person or area of your life. It allows you to look at the person or situation from multiple perspectives. Over time, it helps you reflect on what God does in response to your prayers. You begin to see patterns, and slowly a story unfolds that you find yourself drawn into....Because items on a list are so disconnected, it is hard to maintain the discipline to pray. When I pray, I only have one card in front of me at a time, which helps me concentrate on that person or need.

[Miller describes his “stack of cards,” some featuring one person per card, others representing a group of people (friends, work, missionaries, etc), particular ministries, a repentance card (3-5 things you need to repent of) and a hopes and dreams card. You can organize your own stack].

Prayer is asking God to incarnate, to get dirty in your life. Yes, the eternal God scrubs floors. For sure we know he washes feet. So take Jesus at his word. Ask him. Tell him what you want. Get dirty. Write out your prayer requests: don’t mindlessly drift through life on the American narcotic of busyness. If you try to seize the day, the day will eventually break you. Seize the corner of his garment and don’t let go until he blesses you. He will reshape the day.

From *A Praying Life*, Paul E. Miller, NavPress (2009), pages 221-233 (chapters 26 and 27)