

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

**For the week of July 12, 2015**

### **Developing a Praying Life – part 28**

#### **INSIGHTS from A Praying Life by Paul E. Miller from Part 5: Praying in Real Life, Chapter 29**

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##### **LISTENING TO GOD**

*MILLER CONTINUES HIS DISCUSSION OF A NUMBER OF PRACTICAL APPROACHES TO PRAYER*

A number of years ago I took a retreat day in December to pray through my goals for the coming year. During longer times of prayer such as this, I meditate and pray through passages of Scripture. Sometimes I am simply still before God, slowing down so I can become more aware of the direction of my life and my heart. I’ll ask, *How is God speaking into my life? What is God doing?*

As I thought about the coming year, I wrote in my prayer journal, *What do you want me to focus on? How do you want me to focus?* The thought came to me as clear as the words on this page: *I don’t want you to have any goals this year. I’m going to work on your character.* Surprised, I asked, *What character issues?* Again, a clear thought came to me. *You know.* And I did. Almost immediately, seven items came to mind, and I wrote each of them down in my prayer journal [THE TOPIC FOR NEXT WEEK].

**Was God Speaking?....**So, was God speaking? Did the Spirit prompt me, or was it just my intuition? I believe God was hands-on, working on me, speaking to me during that day of prayer. Here’s why.

First, my question and the subsequent answer were immersed in reflection on God’s Word. It was just one stage in an unfolding, biblically informed story of repentance. [See Psalm 25:14].

Second, the answer surprised me. I’m almost obsessive about goals, yet I’d never had a thought like that one before. In the Bible, we see the same surprising quality to God’s intervention. Who would have guessed the incarnation, the cross, and the resurrection? The thought that I was too proud sounded like God. It was distinctively *his* voice. It matched Scripture. He writes his Word on our hearts.

Finally, it came true. God did nothing but work on my character that year. There was no point in having goals.

The kingdom came. God’s will was done. Scripture tells us that we can discern a false prophet if his prophecy does not come true (Deut. 18:21-22).

**Where Christians Go Wrong....**[two common faults]:

*“Word Only”—Going Wrong by Not Listening.* If we focus exclusively on God’s written Word when looking for God’s activity in our lives but don’t watch and pray, we’ll miss the unfolding story of his work.

Seeing the finger of God in our circumstances, creation, other Christians, and the Word keeps us from elevating our thoughts to a unique status....Seeing God’s activity in the details of our lives enhances the application of God’s Word....What is at stake here is developing an eye for the Shepherd. I need to tune in on my Father’s voice above the noise of my own heart and the surrounding world—what C. S. Lewis called “the kingdom of Noise.”

*“Spirit Only”—Going Wrong By Elevating Human Intuition.* The problem is that the Holy Spirit comes in on the same channel as the world, the flesh, and the Devil....If we frequently interpret random thoughts and desires as “God speaking” we get weird.

Paul links communication from God with the danger of creating a false, elevated spirituality [see Colossians 2:18-19]. Paul wants us to keep our eye on the Head, the Good Shepherd, not on the means of communication [visions, intuition, and premonitions].

Keeping the Word and Spirit Together....We need the sharp-edged, absolute character of the Word and the intuitive, personal leading of the Spirit. The Word provides the structure, the vocabulary. The Spirit personalizes it to our life. Keeping the Word and the Spirit together guards us from the danger of God-talk becoming a cover for our own desires and the danger of lives isolated from God.

*WE’LL WRAP UP MILLER’S BOOK IN TWO WEEKS, THEN MOVE INTO A FIVE-BLESSINGS APPROACH TO PRAYING FOR OUR MINISTRY TO THOSE AROUND US AS WE APPROACH THE RESTART OF VARIOUS PROGRAMS IN SEPTEMBER.*

From *A Praying Life*, Paul E. Miller, NavPress (2009), pages 239-248 (chapter 29)

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##### **PRAYER PROMPTS**

- Pray for yourself and others at Evangel, that we will experience the proper blend of Word and Spirit in order to truly listen to God. Ask that God will increase this awareness as you relate to and pray for those on your Impact List.
- Reflect on this week’s worship service, the music, Scriptures, and Pastor Dave’s message “Coming Attractions” \* (1 Thessalonians 1:8-10). 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, 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.

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*Touch Points is e-mailed every Friday, posted on the website ([www.evbapt.org](http://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.”*