



REDEMPTION
CHURCH

A PRAYING LIFE

CONNECTING WITH GOD IN A DISTRACTING WORLD

BY PAUL E. MILLER

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GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDELINES

Thanks for committing to be a part of this group and working through *A Praying Life: Connecting with God in a Distracting World* by Paul E. Miller. We are grateful for our friends at Vintage Church of Raleigh, North Carolina (vintagenc.com) for their initial work in preparing a study guide and giving us permission to modify their study guide for use our church.

Our mission is to make authentic disciples of Jesus who live for the glory of God and the good of our world. **Prayerfulness is a mission-critical part of our church life and a significant part of our learning to be disciples of Jesus.**

Our goal for this study is application. We want to become people of prayer. The questions in this guide aren't focused on content as much as they're focused on our personal application. So, let's be real with one another. Let's share our struggles and our doubts. Let's confess our weakness and our sin. Let's encourage one another. **Let's make sure our groups are a safe and grace-filled place.**

As you participate in group discussions, remember that the goal isn't to re-teach what is presented in the book. **We want to learn what we can from the material with a goal of becoming more like Jesus.** So, we don't want to invest much time or energy reviewing his writing or talking about what we did or didn't like, or defending it from criticism. If you or others in your group disagree with something he's written, make sure you understand his full point before launching into a disagreement. Then, as quickly as possible, let's turn our discussion to the Scriptures, coming under their authority. Finally, let's use wisdom in discerning how much of our time should be spent discussing that specific topic before getting back on point.

In order to maximize your benefit of this study, you will want to read the chapters prior to participating in your group discussion. Hopefully, **as you read, you can try to apply the things to your own life.**

In your group discussion, let's spend much of our time discussing what these things specifically look like in our own lives. **Since you can read on your own, we want to maximize group time for applying these things at a personal level—how are our hearts and our actions changing because of what we are learning?**

Finally, there are too many questions here to be covered with sufficient depth. With that understood, your leader will try to pick the ones they believe are best for your group to think through and discuss with a goal of engaging your hearts and applying these truths to life.

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CHAPTER ONE | WHAT GOOD DOES IT DO?

In this chapter:

- What surprised you?
 - What encouraged you?
 - What convicted you?
1. On page 14 Miller talks about a “quiet cynicism or spiritual weariness that develops in us when heartfelt prayer goes unanswered.” Have you ever felt either of those things in the face of unanswered prayer? When?
 2. On page 16 Miller writes, “Most Christians feel frustrated when it comes to prayer!” Based on your own experience, do you agree or disagree with him?
 3. What do you think are the primary reasons why we don’t pray? What are the reasons you don’t pray?
 4. Evaluate the validity of this statement from “the prayer therapist” in your own life (p. 17): “Your relationship with your heavenly Father is dysfunctional. You talk as if you have an intimate relationship, but you don’t. Theoretically, it is close. Practically, it is distant. You need help.” If you were honest and vulnerable, to yourself and to God, where is your relationship with God right now?

CHAPTER TWO | WHERE WE ARE HEADED

In this chapter:

- What surprised you?
- What encouraged you?
- What convicted you?

2. Miller describes the book like this (p. 20): “Prayer is not the center of this book. Getting to know a person, God, is the center.” Why would he describe a book on prayer that way? What does the state of your prayer life say about your relationship with God?

3. Miller uses the following headings throughout the rest of the chapter. “The Praying Life...”:

- “Is Interconnected with All of Life”
- “Becomes Aware of the Story”
- “Gives Birth to Hope”
- “Becomes Integrated”
- “Reveals the Heart”

Which of these sections most encouraged you to pray? Why did they encourage you?

5. Miller writes (p. 23): “Learning to pray doesn’t offer us a less busy life; it offers us a less busy heart. In the midst of outer busyness we can develop an inner quiet. Because we are less hectic on the inside, we have a greater capacity to love.” How does Miller support that statement? Does it make you feel trapped / defeated or does it make you feel free / hopeful?

6. Prayer reveals your heart. Miller says that praying will unmask you and show you areas of sin in your life (p.24). We will likely feel uncomfortable and impatient with this process of trusting God with our brokenness. Why is it important to allow God to work in these areas rather than pulling back from God?

7. What does Miller mean when he says that we “have an allergic reaction to dependency”? If the heartbeat of prayer is dependency, (p. 24) what would it look like for you to come to God truly dependently and not just pretend to be dependent?



CHAPTER THREE | BECOMING LIKE A LITTLE CHILD

In this chapter:

- What surprised you?
 - What encouraged you?
 - What convicted you?
1. On page 31 Miller writes, “We know we don’t need to clean up our act in order to become a Christian, but when it comes to praying, we forget that.” Have you found that to be true in your life? How might trying to “clean yourself up” actually be a hindrance in your prayer life?
 2. How would coming to God “like a child” change when you pray and the way you pray? What are some of the benefits you see in coming to God like a child when you pray?
 3. “The opening words of the Lord’s Prayer are ‘Our Father.’ You are the center of your heavenly Father’s affection. That is where you find rest for your soul” (Miller, p. 34). What do you think of those sentences? Do you approach prayer with that in mind? Why or why not?
 4. How does believing the gospel help you approach God in prayer like a little child?

CHAPTER FOUR | LEARN TO TALK WITH YOUR FATHER

In this chapter, Miller encourages us to ask like a child, believe like a child, and play like a child.

Which one of those areas:

- Surprised you?
- Encouraged you?
- Convicted you?

1. On page 39 Miller writes:

“But as we get older, we get less naive and more cynical. Disappointment and broken promises are the norm instead of hoping and dreaming. Our childlike faith dies a thousand little deaths.” How have you found this to be true in your own life experience?

2. On page 41 Miller writes, “When it comes to prayer, we... just need to get the words out... Don’t be embarrassed by how needy your heart is or how much it needs to cry out for grace.” What specific ways can you apply this statement to your own prayer life?

CHAPTER FIVE | SPENDING TIME WITH YOUR FATHER

In this chapter:

- What surprised you?
 - What encouraged you?
 - What convicted you?
1. Have you ever really thought about how Jesus prayed? How does Jesus' prayer life encourage your own?
 2. Do you see any personal benefits to praying out loud? If so, what are they?
 3. Use this statement on page 49 to assess your own life and beliefs: "If you are not praying, then you are quietly confident that time, money, and talent are all you need in life. You'll always be a little too busy, a little too tired. But if, like Jesus, you realize you can't do life on your own, then no matter how busy, no matter how tired you are, you will find time to pray." For you personally, what is the most convicting in this statement?
 4. Miller says, again, that prayer is not about performing a duty; prayer is really about deepening a relationship. He adds (p. 47), "You don't create intimacy; you make room for it." What are one or two baby steps that you can take to make more space and time in your relationship with God?

CHAPTER SIX | LEARNING TO BE HELPLESS

In this chapter:

- What surprised you?
 - What encouraged you?
 - What convicted you?
1. What is one area of your life where self-confidence is masking your helplessness? (If you can't think of one, think about something you say is important in your life that you don't often take to God in prayer.) Why is it important that you begin to take this to God in prayer?
 2. On page 55 Miller writes, "Prayer mirrors the gospel." Explain some of the reasons this is true.
 3. Miller says he did his best parenting by prayer. Think of an important relationship you have in your life now. How can you serve that person or persons by prayer rather than by what would feel like more pragmatic efforts? What specifically would you pray?
 4. How would becoming more helpless in your prayers help you fight anxiety?

CHAPTER SEVEN | CRYING “ABBA” CONTINUOUSLY

In this chapter:

- What surprised you?
 - What encouraged you?
 - What convicted you?
1. How does Miller describe “continuing prayer”? What does he say is the key to learning to pray continuously? Why is that the case?
 2. What are some specific ways you plan to pray without ceasing?

CHAPTER EIGHT | BENDING YOUR HEART TO YOUR FATHER

In this chapter:

- What surprised you?
 - What encouraged you?
 - What convicted you?
1. How have you seen prayer help you fight anxiety? How can your personal anxiety serve as an invitation to prayer?
 2. What is one specific area of anxiety in your life? How does that reveal a fight with God for control?
 3. How can continuous prayer help you give up that fight and instead rest in God's care and provision?
 4. Using the Jesus Prayer model from the last chapter (p. 68), write out a prayer you can pray continuously in response to that specific area of anxiety. Share your prayer with your group, your family, or your friends.

CHAPTER NINE | UNDERSTANDING CYNICISM

In this chapter:

- What surprised you?
 - What encouraged you?
 - What convicted you?
1. On page 79 Miller writes, "Cynicism begins with the wry assurance that everyone has an angle. Behind every silver lining is a cloud. The cynic is always observing, critiquing, but never engaged, loving and hoping." How can you tell the difference between cynical critiquing and engaged loving?
 2. A cynic is necessarily critical of others. Do you find yourself being overly critical of others in your life? If so, where? What attitudes/beliefs might be driving this critical nature?
 3. Miller paints a picture of the fall from naive optimism to dark cynicism (80-82). Do you resonate with his account? Is it your story? What events/thoughts in your life have caused you to become distant from God and others?
 4. The cynic is simultaneously a victim and a critic. How does the gospel address/counter these two attitudes? What might this look like in your life specifically?

CHAPTER TEN | FOLLOWING JESUS OUT OF CYNICISM

In this chapter:

- What surprised you?
- What encouraged you?
- What convicted you?

In this chapter Miller gives five cures for cynicism:

Be Warm but Wary

1. Jesus keeps in tension wariness about evil with a robust confidence in the goodness of his Father. Is there a relationship in your life that you might need to be more wary of? Is there a relationship in your life that you might need to be more hopeful in?
2. Miller writes (83-84): "You don't have to distance yourself with an ironic, critical stance. You don't have to shut down your heart in the face of evil. You can engage it." How does the gospel allow us to engage evil with hope and love?
3. Miller says (84-85) that Jesus "isn't just offering practical wisdom. His wisdom works because in his death he himself acted boldly, trusting his Father to help him...Even as his Father turns his back on him, Jesus trusts." How can Jesus' trust and obedience be a source of hope/strength for you?

Learn to Hope Again

4. "Hope begins with the heart of God. As you grasp what the Father's heart is like, how he loves to give, then prayer will begin to feel completely natural to you" (85). Do you believe that God is generous? What would your life (especially your prayer life) look like if you believed God "loves to give"?
5. Some of God's last words in the Bible are, "Behold, I make all things new" (Rev. 21:5). When you pray, you are touching the hopeful heart of God. When you know that, prayer becomes an adventure (86). Do these words from Revelation give you hope? If so, why--what do they say about the character of Jesus?



Cultivate a Childlike Spirit

6. Miller says that one cure for cynicism is to become like a little child again. Children are rarely cynical. What specifically can you do to see God as "Father" and cultivate this childlike spirit?

Cultivate a Thankful Spirit

7. Miller writes, "Nothing undercuts cynicism more than a spirit of thankfulness. You begin to realize that your whole life is a gift." (89) What are some things that you can regularly thank God for in your life? How might doing this become an antidote to cynicism?

Cultivate Repentance

8. Miller writes, "My heart gets out of tune with God, but life goes on. So I continue to perform and say Christian things, but they are just words...My words sound phony, so other's words sound phony too. In short, my empty religious performance leads me to think that everyone is phony. The very thing I am doing I accuse others of doing" (91-92). He is saying that our own lack of integrity makes us believe that others are dishonest. Is this true of you? If so, how could personal honesty and belief in the gospel help you? How might it help you not be so critical of others?
9. Which of Miller's five cures for cynicism (above) spoke to you most strongly as a way for you to become more prayerful?

CHAPTER ELEVEN | DEVELOPING AN EYE FOR JESUS

In this chapter:

- What surprised you?
 - What encouraged you?
 - What convicted you?
1. "When we look for Jesus we can find him, even in seemingly mundane encounters..."(97)
Do you regularly see Jesus in the everyday? If so, where? What kinds of things do you practice that help you to remember Jesus as you're going through your regular day?
 2. In this chapter, Miller says that we need to focus more on Jesus' work in people's lives than on their faults. He says, "we need to view the body of Christ with grace." (99) Is there someone in your life you need to view with more grace? What are a few specific things you can do this week to encourage another believer (not in theory, but an actual person you are committing to encourage)?

CHAPTER TWELVE | WHY ASKING IS SO HARD

In this chapter:

- What surprised you?
 - What encouraged you?
 - What convicted you?
1. Look at the chart on pg. 105--do you agree with the chart's "true for me, true for all" distinction? Why or why not?
 2. Does religion belong in the "true for me" category? Why or why not? How might your belief on this matter affect the way you view prayer?
 3. Miller points out that the modern mindset, "marginalizes prayer because it doesn't permit God to connect with this world. You are allowed a personal, local deity as long as you keep him out of your science notes and don't take him seriously." (107) Does this mindset resonate with you? What are some ways the scriptures counter this mindset?

CHAPTER THIRTEEN | WHY WE CAN ASK

In this chapter:

- What surprised you?
 - What encouraged you?
 - What convicted you?
1. When you need something seemingly trivial, like a parking space in a crowded lot, do you pray for one? Why, or why not? What does your answer reveal about your beliefs about God? Your beliefs about yourself?
 2. To have faith in prayer, we need to believe that God is both transcendent (infinite, powerful), and immanent (personal, involved). Which of these two ideas do you struggle most to believe? Why?
 3. What are some specific challenges in your life you would bring to prayer if you believed God was both powerful and personal?

CHAPTER FOURTEEN | HOW PERSONAL IS GOD?

In this chapter:

- What surprised you?
 - What encouraged you?
 - What convicted you?
1. Have you ever seen a very specific answer to prayer? If so, write some examples out. How might remembering these answers regularly help build your faith? What can you do to regularly remember God's faithfulness?
 2. Miller writes, "When we stop being ourselves with God, we are no longer in real conversation with God." (122) What are some ways that you aren't "real" with God? How might that be a hindrance to your prayer life?
 3. "Desire and surrender are the perfect balance to praying." (123) Do you struggle more with expressing your wants or with surrendering your will to God? How do you know when to ask and when to rest?
 4. Miller says that sometimes we don't pray because, "we don't want to risk our prayer not being answered. We prefer the safety of isolation to engaging the living God." (125) Does this statement resonate with you? Can you think of any specific, risky prayers you can begin to pray this week?

CHAPTER FIFTEEN | WHAT DO WE DO WITH JESUS' EXTRAVAGANT PROMISES ABOUT PRAYER?

In this chapter:

- What surprised you?
 - What encouraged you?
 - What convicted you?
1. What is your honest reaction to Jesus' words in Jn. 14:13-14: "Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it."? Why?
 2. Miller cites James 4:2-3 saying that we pray wrongly by not asking at all or by asking selfishly. Which "cliff" are you most likely to fall off (not asking or asking selfishly)? Can you think of specific examples?
 3. Miller says (134), "All of Jesus' teaching on prayer in the Gospels can be summarized with one word: ask. His greatest concern is that our failure or reluctance to ask keeps us distant from God." When you are reluctant to ask God for something, what does this reveal about your view of God? What does this reveal about your view of yourself?
 4. What does Luke 18:1-8 and Luke 11:5-8 teach us about the nature of prayer and the character of God?
 5. Miller says, "'Asking in Jesus' name' isn't another thing I have to get right so my prayers are perfect. It is one more gift of God because my prayers are so imperfect." How does praying in Jesus' name transform your prayers? How can this give you great confidence in prayer?
 6. Miller describes using "prayer cards" to record answered prayer. What can you do to record God's answers to your prayers? How can this encourage your faith?

CHAPTER SIXTEEN | WHAT WE DON'T ASK FOR: "OUR DAILY BREAD"

In this chapter:

- What surprised you?
 - What encouraged you?
 - What convicted you?
1. Often, we don't pray for our (material) wants because it seems selfish. Miller writes, "We don't mind *acting* selfishly, but *talking* selfishly is embarrassing" (142). Do you find it hard to pray for material things? How could inviting God into these mundane or selfish requests increase our intimacy with him?
 2. Miller says that we can "keep God distant" (143) by not seeking guidance from other believers. Is there a situation in your life for which you should be getting godly advice? Would you be brave enough to express that need to your group or a church leader today?
 3. Encouraging us to ask God for wisdom, Miller says (145), "I don't just need help with my plans; I need help with my questions and even my own heart." What are some specific plans, situations, or motivations that you can begin to ask wisdom for? If you struggle to identify something, think about the areas that you worry about, want to be right about, hope that you don't mess up. These are likely areas where you could benefit from wise counsel and the prayers of others.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN | WHAT WE DON'T ASK FOR: "YOUR KINGDOM COME"

In this chapter:

- What surprised you?
- What encouraged you?
- What convicted you?

In this chapter Miller lists three areas where we can pray for Jesus' kingdom to come: in others, in ourselves, and in our culture.

Others

1. What keeps you from praying for Jesus to change others? Do you agree with Miller (150) that it can sometimes feel like "the spiritual version of banging your head against the wall"?
2. What friend or family member can begin praying for? Read Miller's advice on the top of pg. 151, and then begin praying regularly for this person accordingly.
3. One reason we don't pray for others is that it exposes sin in our own life. "We can't do battle with evil without letting God destroy the evil in us as well" (151). Have you found this to be true in your own life? As you pray for others, take note: how is God convicting you as well?

Ourselves

4. Does this statement resonate with you: "We're scared of [praying for personal change] because we want to remain in control of our lives"? Why or why not?
5. What is an area of growth in your life you can take to God in prayer?



Culture

6. Miller writes: "It never occurs to us to pray that culture itself will change." Does the bible give us any reason to think that God's kingdom can advance in our culture?

7. What are some problems in our culture you can begin to pray about regularly? Might we be better off if Christians prayed as much as they complained?

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN | SURRENDER COMPLETELY: “YOUR WILL BE DONE”

In this chapter:

- What surprised you?
 - What encouraged you?
 - What convicted you?
1. Miller says (158) that in the Beatitudes Jesus "closes all the doors to human power and glory." Which of these "doors" to power and glory (money, sex, power, fame) are you most prone to trust instead of Jesus? What would repentance in this area of your life look like?
 2. Miller describes self-will as the belief that, "[We] are in charge of [our] life, determined to make [our] kingdom pain free." Does this statement resonate with you? What areas of your life could you begin to take to prayer instead of trying to control?
 3. "Self-will and prayer are both ways of getting things done. At the center of self-will is me, carving a world in my image, but at the center of prayer is God, carving me in his Son's image" (160). How does the gospel fundamentally reshape the way we view reality? How does this statement show that prayer has to be based in the gospel?
 4. "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" (159). How can seeing other people's issues be an opportunity to deepen your own repentance?

CHAPTER NINETEEN | WATCHING A STORY UNFOLD

In this chapter:

- What surprised you?
 - What encouraged you?
 - What convicted you?
1. In this chapter, Miller describes praying a similar theme for his daughter over the course of many years. Doing this allowed his prayers to shape their relationship (166), to bring repentance in his life (168), to influence financial decisions (167), to shape parenting decisions (168). What benefits might taking a "long view" of prayer have in your life?
 2. "Our prayers didn't sit in isolation from the larger story God was weaving in her life and in ours" (167). Do you view your prayers as isolated requests or as attached to the larger story of your life? Why or why not?
 3. What specifically might help you to grow in seeing your prayers in the larger story of God?

CHAPTER TWENTY | A FATHER'S LOVE

In this chapter:

- What surprised you?
 - What encouraged you?
 - What convicted you?
1. In scripture, God reveals himself as Father. What kind of response do you have to the idea of God as Father? Why? Where can you look in scripture to get an idea of what your Heavenly Father is like?
 2. Emily recounts a story where she finally realized how much her Heavenly Father loved her (176). Do you have a similar story? Write down or share the story to help you remember it, and thank God for his love for you. If you can't describe a similar story of trusting God's fatherly love, can you imagine how your misconceptions might influence your relationship with God?
 3. Miller asked God to give his daughter faith, and the response was that, "The next nine months were the hardest in Emily's life...God used her isolation and the challenge of befriending moody teenagers to repeatedly break her and draw her to himself." How can this story give you hope and faith in God's goodness, even in the midsts of difficulty?

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE | UNDERSTANDING THE PATTERNS OF STORY

In this chapter:

- What surprised you?
 - What encouraged you?
 - What convicted you?
1. Miller gives three ways we usually react to a “desert” situation: Denial (No, really, everything is fine), Determination (I can fix this), or Despair (Why bother?). Which one of these do you find yourself doing most often?
 2. Miller writes: “A desert can be almost anything. It can be a child who has gone astray, a difficult boss, or even your own sin or foolishness. Maybe you married your desert” (p. 184). What situation in your life right now might be a “desert?” If you can’t think of a current one, what is the most recent or most difficult desert you have faced?
 3. What are some specific ways a “desert” situation might actually be beneficial for us in the long run?
 4. Jesus endured the ultimate “desert” situation on the cross. How does His death and resurrection give you hope in your “desert?”

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO | HOW GOD PLACES HIMSELF IN THE STORY

In this chapter:

- What surprised you?
 - What encouraged you?
 - What convicted you?
1. What would you need to believe about God in order to persist in a situation where He is making you wait or when your prayers seem unanswered?
 2. Miller writes, “Everyone talks now about how prayer is a relationship, but often what people mean is having warm fuzzies with God. Nothing wrong with warm fuzzies, but relationships are far richer and more complex” (p. 191). Do you think that you can be completely “real” with God? Is there a situation in your life where you are not being honest with Him?
 3. Miller writes (p. 192), “When God seems silent and our prayers go unanswered, the overwhelming temptation is to leave the story---to walk out of the desert and attempt to create a normal life. But when we persist in a spiritual vacuum, when we hang in there during ambiguity, we get to know God. In fact, that’s how intimacy grows in all close relationships.”

Is there a situation in your life where you feel as though God is not answering your prayers? What would change about your prayers if you viewed this simply as “part of the conversation”?

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE | PRAYING WITHOUT A STORY

In this chapter:

- What surprised you?
 - What encouraged you?
 - What convicted you?
1. Miller writes, “Most of our prayers are answered in the context of the larger story that God is weaving” (p. 201). Have you ever considered your prayers as part of a story that God is weaving? How can viewing your story and prayers within the larger context of God’s story give you hope?
 2. Miller writes about viewing Jesus as a person rather than a “prayer machine.” Which view of Jesus do you have when you pray? Why do you think that is?
 3. Miller writes, “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...* With His own stories, the ones we live in, He is seldom silent (p. 201). Where, specifically, have you felt that the story you’re living in wasn’t going “the way it’s supposed to?”
 4. In light of your disappointments, how can you begin to pray with honesty and faith in God’s control?

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR | HOPE: THE END OF THE STORY

In this chapter:

- What surprised you?
 - What encouraged you?
 - What convicted you?
1. Describing a struggle in his family's life, Miller says, "Our prayers didn't float above life...Praying was inseparable from working, planning, and good old-fashioned begging" (p. 209). Do you recognize God working in a particular story in your life right now? Would you pray each day this week that God would show you what He is doing, and how the events of everyday life connect to His story?
 2. "Some writers suggest that God focuses simply on us knowing Him. That is just another version of the despair chart. He is also concerned about our situation" (p. 205). What parts of your everyday life do you not take to God in prayer? What are one or two areas that you will pray about every day this week?
 3. To see the marvel of the stories that our Father is telling, we need to become like little children (p. 210). Why do you think Miller says that we must be like children to see God at work in the everyday? What are some things you can do to cultivate this childlike attitude?

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE | LIVING IN GOSPEL STORIES

In this chapter:

- What surprised you?
 - What encouraged you?
 - What convicted you?
1. Miller writes, “Living in a Gospel story exposes our idols, our false sources of love” (p. 214). Do you have a difficult situation in your life currently? What false sources of trust or love might it be revealing?
 2. Read Philippians 2:1-11. What about this passage seems counterintuitive or opposite to the way the world “normally” works? Where might God be trying to do something similar in your life? What can you do to cultivate the “mind... which is yours in Christ Jesus?”
 3. Miller writes, “If we stop fighting and embrace the Gospel story God is weaving in our lives, we discover joy. Paul bubbles over with joy as he writes the book of Philippians, chained between two Roman soldiers” (p. 215). How is it that Paul can have joy in a Roman jail? How can praying in light of the Gospel give you joy in your difficulties?

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX | USING PRAYER TOOLS

In this chapter:

- What surprised you?
 - What encouraged you?
 - What convicted you?
1. Miller writes, “We all create systems with things that are important to us.” Do you write down your prayer requests or have a “system” to help you pray? If you do, what do you use, and why do you like that system? If not, do you think a system could help you?
 2. Does having a “system” to organize your prayer life seem inauthentic to you? Why? Why might we need some kind of organization to our praying?

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN | KEEPING TRACK OF THE STORY: USING PRAYER CARDS

In this chapter:

- What surprised you?
- What encouraged you?
- What convicted you?

Miller writes about his use of Prayer Cards (225-226):

- The card functions like a prayer snapshot of the person's life, so I use short phrases to describe what I want.
- 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.
- I put the Word to work by writing a Scripture verse on the card that expresses my desire for that particular person or situation.
- 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.
- I usually don't write down answers. They are obvious to me since I see the card almost everyday.
- I will sometimes date a prayer request by putting the month/year.

1. What part(s) of Miller's prayer cards (the bulleted list above) might be helpful to you? Why?
2. This week, what specific prayer cards you could create and use to pray for others? Can you think of 3-5 cards to create and try using in your prayers?
3. "Write out your prayer request; don't mindlessly drift through life on the American narcotic of busyness" (233). Ask the Spirit to reveal to you where you are too "busy." Where might you be missing out on seeing Jesus in your life or the life of others?
4. Miller writes that he "puts the Word to work" by praying Scripture. What are some specific ways you can incorporate Scripture into your prayer life?

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT | PRAYER WORK

In this chapter:

- What surprised you?
 - What encouraged you?
 - What convicted you?
1. Miller says there is a three-step pattern in the growth of the Kingdom and in prayer: planting, waiting, and working again at the harvest. What do you think he means by this?
 2. Writing about a prayer for a coworker, he says, "God involved me in my own prayers, often in a physical and humbling way" (236). Why might God want to involve us in the answers of our own prayers? Can you think of any place where God might want to use you, specifically, to help answer your own prayer request?
 3. "If we do pray, we don't watch and wait. We want the answer now. We grumble right at the point when God is about to do his biggest work" (237). Why is it important to "stick it out" with a prayer request? Are there big things you've prayed for recently and just forgotten about? Write those down so you can continue to watch the story unfold.
 4. "We reverse the kingdom pattern...We tell Bob what a pain in the neck he is. Then we watch the relationship disintegrate. Finally, when nothing is working, we might pray...we decide that prayer doesn't work" (237). Where in your life do you reverse the Kingdom pattern (work, wait, and pray rather than pray, wait, and work)?

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE | LISTENING TO GOD

In this chapter:

- What surprised you?
 - What encouraged you?
 - What convicted you?
1. "Seeing the finger of God in our circumstances, in creation, in other Christians, and in 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 can you do to cultivate "seeing" God in the everyday?
 2. Miller writes, "Unless Scripture guards and directs our intuitions, we can easily run amok and baptize our selfish desires with religious language" (244). How do the scriptures control what God is telling us "in the moment?"

CHAPTER THIRTY | PRAYER JOURNALING: BECOME AWARE OF THE INTERIOR JOURNEY

In this chapter:

- What surprised you?
 - What encouraged you?
 - What convicted you?
1. "Writing in a prayer journal helps us take stock of our location on the journey...When we understand the story, it quiets our souls. It's okay to have a busy life. It's crazy to have a busy soul" (251). How does seeing the "big picture" keep you from having a busy soul? What can you use to keep track of God's work in your life over time?
 2. "Because Augustine had encountered the living God, he was able to see the irrational bent in his heart toward evil" (251). How does seeing God *as he really is* actually help us see ourselves *as we really are*?
 3. "You can't walk with the Shepherd and not begin to change" (252). Where has God been leading you to repentance lately? How is this a function of a deepening relationship with Him?
 4. "If I hadn't written down my reflections, I wouldn't have known what God was teaching me. By the time I was finished, I knew my part in God's play" (256). How might a journal help you make sense of events in your life? Would you commit to using a prayer journal for 60 days?