

A Praying Life: Connecting with God in a Distracted World

Week 5: April 17 – April 23

Chapters 20 - 21



In the desert..... I've been to the desert, literally and figuratively. Paul Miller talks about desert experiences in chapter 21 of this week's reading. What about you? Have you had a desert experience? If you haven't, you will. When you read chapter 21 of *A Praying Life* you will understand what Paul Miller is referring to when he writes about "the desert." But for now, let me tell you about one of my desert stories. As I read this chapter, I was reminded of my 2020 desert experience. My husband and I (Equip America Coordinators at the time) were in the desert of Tucson, Arizona when, 2 days before the Tucson Equip America was to be held (two and a half months of preparation, all the work had been done, the key people were either in place or about to be) the country began its little whisper of a shut down because of COVID. There had been a few confirmed cases in Tucson and the team decided to err on the part of safety and postpone the event. We were completely devastated and began to question, what next? My husband and I found ourselves in a desert, literally. We found ourselves on hold in a hard place. There are so many parts to this story, it would take a chapter in a book to write about it all. Today I'll give you the short story. We quarantined in the desert of Tucson and we saw God do amazing things while we waited. After a couple of months, the country began to open things up again, and we had gone from winter in the desert to spring. I'd never been to the desert before. But daily as I walked my 3 - 4 miles around the RV park where we lived those few months, I began to notice beautiful blossoms emerging from the prickly pears, the chollas and then by the saguaros. The cactus show brought brilliant hues of yellow, red, pinks and white to the deserts around us. Not to mention the brilliant display of God's color palette during sunset. We had been so busy preparing for the Equip America event prior to the shutdown that we hadn't gone on walks in the evening and had therefore, missed the beautiful scenery.

Needless to say, the desert taught us so many valuable lessons in the spring of 2020. As you read chapters 20-21 of our book this week, you will read Paul Miller's desert experiences. Everyone's desert experiences are different. That's because God has a different plan and purpose for each and every person. The desert is where we grow, where we are stretched, where we seek answers, paths, direction. Here are some lessons we learned from our desert experience. Literally, the desert is rich, it's diverse, it beautiful, but its dangerous. There are

things in the desert that can bite you, prick you, or stick you. You'd better be on guard at all times. Things in the desert are competing for water – to conserve it and to capture it. If you go deep into the desert without water you can become parched or even dehydrated. It's hot and you can absolutely burn up. But it can be so cold that you can absolutely freeze. You must be aware and prepared for the extreme temperature changes because its paramount for survival. In the depth of the desert it is hard to see your way out but if you keep walking you can find your way. There is great visibility for general directions to know where to go if you pay attention. There's a keen sense of surrounding because you can see far and wide and there are landmarks along the way. But stay on the path, the trail marked before you, because if you veer off there are other dangers to be sure. My dear husband preaches a sermon about the desert. In the desert don't look down, the terrain is rocky, rugged, cumbersome. In the desert don't look out to the mountains, they don't seem within reach, too distant, too much climb. In the desert look UP at the Sun for direction. The Sun will direct you out. Spiritually, look to the SON—our Savior Jesus Christ! The SON directs our path. The SON leads us beside the still waters, restoring our soul, bringing us to green pastures. The SON gets us out of the desert. Psalm 25:10 says, "All the paths of the Lord are steadfast love and faithfulness." ALL THE PATHS – even the ones that take us through the desert are steadfast love and faithfulness. Steadfast love brought you to the desert. Steadfast love will never leave you nor forsake you in the desert. Steadfast love will guide you out of the desert.

For us personally, it was place of preparation and growth. God opened up a reservoir of His living water and showed us how powerful that water supply is to the soul that is thirsty. In our busyness, distractions cloud our visibility and we get blurred. Times of rest in the desert helps renew the landmarks, refresh the dry, parched areas of our soul and cause us to tap into His source of nourishment. God's nourishment is satisfying. Spending time in His word – the Bible, connecting with newness, taking time to fill up and be alerted to the dangers ahead are preparatory for growth. God did much in that desert experience and at the close of our desert experience God showed off His brilliant display of creation and reminded us of His sovereignty. He's in control all the time. Why should I be discouraged? Why should the shadows come? Why should my heart be lonely? Jesus, He is our portion, our constant friend . His eye is on us day and night, always watching over us. ALWAYS! Lyrics from His Eye is On the Sparrow by Civilla D. Martin, 1905.

Let's take a look at Psalm 121:8. "The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore." When we are traveling through our desert experiences – literally or figuratively – we can be assured that the same God -yesterday, today, and forever – watches over His own. He neither slumbers nor does He sleep (Ps. 121:4). Sometimes the things that could harm us works together for our good as Romans 8:28 says. Look and keep looking to the SON, Jesus, the same maker of heaven and earth for your help. He is always with you.

-----Daily Reflections-----

- Sunday, April 17: As you begin this week's chapters from *A Praying Life*, Paul Miller writes in chapter 20 about "The Father's Love." Dwell on the lyrics of Stuart Townsend's *How Deep the Father's Love For Us* as you prepare for this week's reading. "How deep the Father's love for us. How vast beyond all measure. That He should give His only Son to make a wretch His treasure. How great the pain of searing loss. The Father turns His face away. As wounds which mar the Chosen One bring many sons to glory. I will boast in Jesus Christ, His death and resurrection. Why should I gain from His reward? I cannot give an answer. But this I know with all my heart, His wounds have paid my ransom.
- Monday – Friday, April 18– April 22: [Chapter 20](#)- What does it look like to pray in faith? What does it not look like (pp. 156, 159)? How can staying on the road of Good Asking help us move toward the person for whom we are praying? What hope can we have if we have known broken images of God in our fathers, bosses, pastors, or other leaders? How is this particularly meaningful to you? [Chapter 21](#) – Has it ever hurt you to hope? What happened that made/makes hope so hard? What is your desert? Where is there a large gap between hope and reality in your life? Paul gives three pictures of where we can go in the desert: denial, determination, and despair. Which one best describes where you go (pp. 162-614)? A. If denial, what reality are you not facing? B. If determination, in what ways are you using your self-will to close the gap? C. If despair, how have you partaken of the bread of bitterness (p. 166)?
- Saturday, April 23. Read Genesis 15:1-6; 16:1-6. Both Abram and Sarai live in the promise of God giving them a child and the reality of Sarai's barren womb. How do they respond to this desert? In what ways are you like them in your desert? What does God do for people in the desert (pp.166 – 167)?

Daily reflections are adapted from Paul E Miller's *A Praying Life Discussion Guide*.



WEEKLY PRAYER REQUESTS FOR April 17 – April 23

ADORATION: praising God for who He is and what He has done.

Lord, God, You loved this world so much that you gave your one and only son so that we might be called your children too. Our hearts adore You with gladness and grace this Easter week. Help us to live in that gladness and grace of Easter Week every day of our lives. Your sacrifice on our behalf! Oh, what amazing love! According to Your great mercy, You allowed us to be born again to a living hope through Your son's resurrection from the dead. Jesus, you arose triumphantly as

a victor from that grave where they laid you. And now, because of Your Son's power over sin and death we, your children, get to walk in fellowship with You. We get to talk to You whenever we want to, personally, corporately, intimately. Whenever. Wherever. Anytime of the day or night! We get to hear you whisper in our ear that we are yours and you are ours. It's a joy that fills our heart with singing and rejoicing. Jesus, You paid it all and now all to You we owe. Our sin left a crimson stain that You washed white, as white as snow. We praise You, Lord.

Pause to express your thoughts of praise and worship.

CONFESSION: stating our sins and asking forgiveness!

Have mercy on me, O God. According to your unfailing love, according to your abundant mercy, blot out my transgressions. Wash away my iniquities, cleanse me from my sin. The more closely I walk with you daily, the more aware I am that, as your image bearer, I still possess qualities that don't exemplify you and your character. Reveal to me every area of sin that lurks in my life and in my heart. Help me to identify and be aware of present sin and sin that is trying to take root and doesn't belong in my life. Empower me to turn from my sin and transgressions. Merciful God, we sin against you in word and deed and in our thoughts, in the things we have done and in the things we have left undone. Humbly we admit our sorrow and sadness before you. Forgive us that we might delight in your will, walk in your ways and glorify you with our lives. Amen.

Ask the Spirit to search your heart and reveal any areas of unconfessed sin. Acknowledge these to the Lord and thank Him for His forgiveness.

THANKSGIVING: thanking God for specific things that He has done.

Lord Jesus, You were oppressed and afflicted, yet You did not open Your mouth; You were led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so You did not open Your mouth. By oppression and judgment You were taken away. And who can speak of Your descendants? For You were cut off from the land of the living; You were stricken for the transgression of God's people. You were assigned a grave with the wicked, yet with a rich man in Your death, though You had done no violence, nor was any deceit of Your mouth. Yet it was the Lord's will to crush You and cause You to suffer. Though the Lord made You a guilt offering, You will see Your offspring and prolong Your days, and the pleasure of the Lord will prosper in your hand. You will see the fruit of the travail of Your soul and be satisfied; You who are God's righteous servant will justify many by Your knowledge. And You will bear their iniquities. Therefore, God will give You a

portion among the great, and You will divide the spoils with the strong, because You poured out Your life unto death, and were numbered with the transgressors. For You bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. (Isaiah 53:7-12). We're forever grateful to You. We're forever grateful for the cross of calvary. We're forever grateful for Your willingness to become the lamb slain from the foundations of the world.

EE Praises:

- SYFW in Streetsboro, OH on 4.9.22 with 18 attendees, 3 of them were pastors, 4 churches represented with 3 of them new to EE.
- Don Snipes completed a EV2 Launch in Rogers, AR with 9 attendees, 3 of them pastors, 6 churches represented, 1 church new to EE, 22 people heard the gospel during OJT and 11 professions of faith.
- Shibu Oommen held a SYFW on April 9 in Media, PA with 15 attendees, 1 pastor, 2 churches, 6 people heard the gospel and 1 profession of faith.
- Sam Yeakle held a SYFW on April 10 at The Assembly in Evansville, IN with 27 attendees, 2 pastors.
- Art Hallet, EE Prison Ministry, praises for a van to use during the long ministry road trips.
- Vince Varriale completed online Quick Share training from the Phillipines to expand his toolbox. Praise the Lord for EE Chinese training in the NE. And for the young men Vince is mentoring.

Pause to offer your own expressions of thanksgiving.

SUPPLICATION: asking God for our needs and our wants.

- Pray for our next Equip America on April 23 in the following locations:
 1. Pueblo, CO
 2. Tallahassee, FL
 3. Las Vegas, NV
 4. North Providence, RI (Spanish Version)
- Pray for Faith Baptist Church in Streetsboro, OH as they begin EV2. Pray for confidence, boldness, and perseverance. Pray for the other churches that attended SYFW in OH to begin implementation in their churches.
- Pray for churches in AR to implement EE and continue equipping others to share the gospel.

- Pray for Lynn, new believer that made a profession of faith during OJT in Media, PA.
- Pray for EE Prison Ministry Director, Art Hallet as he heads west, this week to minister in prisons and churches along the way. Pray for fundraising efforts to purchase a 12-15 passenger van to transport work release inmates to local church services and events.
- Pray for the AME 7th District “God First” Holy Convocation in SC this week where Vince Varriale will be a guest and for connections with pastors. Vince and some of the district pastors are going out unto the byways to share the gospel. Pray for divine appointments.
- Pray for ongoing training that Vince is doing with AME district in SC working to multiply EE connections throughout the entire district.
- Pray for God’s continued protection and healing to the people of Ukraine. Show them that You are with them and that You hear their prayers. Strengthen anyone who is feeling hurt, alone, broken. Replace feelings of anxiety, fear, and uncertainty with Your peace and hope.
- **The 71st National Day of Prayer** will be celebrated on Thursday, May, 5, 2022. The theme this year is a call to praise in prayer. *‘EXALT THE LORD, WHO HAS ESTABLISHED US’ based on Colossians 2:6-7.*
- For plans and preparations for Congress Of Nations in 2023
- Pray for “TOGETHER 22” happening in the Cotton Bowl Stadium in Dallas, TX, June 24-25! EE is partnering with Pulse to help the spread of the gospel and equip others to share. Pray for an outpouring of God’s Spirit as entire generations gather to meet with Jesus and be equipped to share Him with the world. We’re praying that a new Jesus movement will be unleashed.
- Pray for churches throughout America as we celebrate Easter Sunday and the days that follow. Pray that people will see Jesus and receive Him as Lord. Pray for unbelievers that hear the gospel but don’t make decisions to follow him will be drawn to him and will repent and be saved. Pray for all the new believers that come to saving faith in Jesus to get plugged into a Bible believing church and get discipled and become growing followers of Christ. Pray that they will become Great Commission witnesses of the saving faith through Jesus.

(Ministries of EE: Share Your Faith Workshop, Everyday Evangelism, Hope for Kids)

SYFW	4/24	North Macon Presbyterian Church	Macon, GA
SYFW	4/29 – 4/30	Calvary Arlington	Arlington, WA

SYFW	4/30	Broadway Baptist Church	Maryville, TN
SYFW	4/30	Grace Baptist Church	Salem, OR
SYFW	4/30	Calvary Arlington	Arlington, WA
SYFW	4/30	Polk Baptist Association	Columbus, NC
SYFW	4/30	Faith Family Fellowship	Purdy, MO
SYFW	4/30	Philema Road Baptist Church	Leesburg, GA
SYFW	4/30	Taller Manos a la Obra a Rio Life Community Church (Spanish)	Mercedes, TX
SYFW	4/30	Rio Life Community Church (English)	Mercedes, TX
SYFW	5/1	Maumee General Baptist Church	Owensville, IN
SYFW	5/7	Emmanuel Baptist	The Dalles, OR
SYFW	5/7	Faith Presbyterian Church	Wilmington, DE
SYFW	5/14	Taller Manos a la Obra a Iglesia ACyM Casa de Jennings	Bronx, NY
SYFW	5/14	The Redeemed Christian Church	Erie, PA
SYFW	5/15	Mt. Pleasant Church of God	Evansville, IN
SYFW	5/14	Callahan Baptist Church	Callahan, FL
SYFW	5/21	First Baptist Church	Effingham, IL
SYFW	5/22	Oak Hill Christian Center	Evansville, IN
SYFW	6/4	Trinity Bible Fellowship	Blanton, PA
SYFW	6/11	Life Bible Church	Harrisburg, OR
SYFW	6/25	The Church of the Apostles	Atlanta, GA
SYFW	8/27	Martha Road Baptist Church	Altus, OK
EV2 Launch	4/21 – 4/23	Eficaz a Iglesia Un Nuevo Comienzo	El Paso, TX
EV2 Launch	4/21 – 4/23	New Vision Church	El Paso, TX
EV2 Launch	4/21 – 4/23	Lanzamiento Evangelismo Eficaz a New Vision Church	El Paso, TX
EV2 Launch	5/13 – 5/14	Northside Baptist Church	Lawton, OK
EV2 Launch	5/19 – 5/21	Lanzamiento Evangelismo Eficaz a Iglesia ACyM de Virginia	Manassas, VA
EV2 Launch	6/10 – 6/11	New Generation Baptist Church	Norman, OK
EV2 Launch	8/4 – 8/5	First Baptist Rogers	Rogers, AR
EV2 Launch	8/25 – 8/27	Lanzamiento Evangelismo Eficaz a ACyM Casa de Oracion	Brandon, FL
Classic Clinic	10/24-10/28	Chinese Community Church of Indiana	Carmel, IN

Pray out loud for transformational miracles in your life:

Father, through your precious son Jesus, I come to you just as I am. In your name, I pray for forgiveness of sins. I forgive others who have done wrong against me. I give my entire self to you, Lord Jesus, now and forever. Heal me, change me, strengthen me in body, soul, and mind. Take my life and let it be consecrated to you. Take my moments and my days. I want my moments and my days to be filled with endless praise to you. Take my will and make it yours, I don't want my will to reign any longer. Come Lord Jesus, cover me with your precious blood

and fill me with your Holy Spirit. Go before me today and prepare the way before me. I want to follow you every day of my life and be surrendered to you and you alone. In Jesus name, Amen.