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## Pray Always - He's Listening

By: Dr. Marcellino D'Ambrosio



I've often heard people say that they don't want to trouble God with their petty needs and concerns. After all, he has more important things to attend to, like running the universe.

Yet, the New Testament makes God out to be a glutton for punishment. Not only does Jesus often urge us to ask for what we need, ("Ask and you shall receive" Lk 9:11), but he praises the people, like [Bartimaeus](#), who ask in the loudest, most obnoxious of ways (Mk 10:46-52). And to top it off, he tells stories in which he showcases rude, relentless people who wake up their neighbors in the middle of the night (Lk 11:5-8). My all-time favorite is the nagging widow who

won't give the judge a moment's rest till she gets what she wants (Lk 18:1-8).

The unjust judge simply wanted to get the lady off his back. He wanted the widow to *stop* bugging him. But God appears *to want us* to bug Him. And *keep* bugging Him. Why? Maybe because He'd rather us look to Him for assistance than to the idols of this age. Perhaps because he knows that asking Him for help strengthens the virtue of humility in us since it is an admission that we are not in total control of the universe and just might need His help. Perhaps because He is a loving Father and likes being with us, even when we come just to ask Him to open his wallet.



When I was a teen, I thought that prayer was about nothing but asking for stuff. I prayed that God would keep my parents from finding out about certain things I'd done. I prayed that the best-looking girl in the class would like me. After all, Scripture says to ask.

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But Scripture also tells us what to ask for. And there is the rub. We are often wrong about what to ask for, because we misidentify what will really make us happy. God knows us better than we know ourselves, since He created us. And He loves us more than we love ourselves, because He is our Father.

So before talking to Him, which is a dimension of prayer, we need to listen to Him, which is an even more important dimension of prayer. We were given two ears and only one mouth for a reason.



But how do we listen to him? One privileged way is through Scripture. These words are guaranteed to be His, for they are inspired, breathed by the Holy Spirit, divine words in human words (2 Tim 3:16). This does not just mean that the Holy Spirit moved once, guiding the authors when they wrote the words down thousands of years ago. It means that the Holy Spirit dwells in these words as in a Temple and beckons us to enter to meet him regularly, for a life-changing rendezvous. These words are not

simply a wearying catalogue of ideas we need to hold, facts we need to believe, or rules we need to observe. Instead they are meant to be a fresh, personal, energizing communication from God each time we hear or read them. They are food for our souls.

Most of us don't eat once a week. We eat daily. Several times a day in fact. So we should gather up the manna of God's word at least daily, maybe even several times a day.

So you don't have much time for quiet prayer and extensive Bible reading? Join the club. You may not have time for a daily Thanksgiving feast, but I bet you snack a few times a day. There are scriptural, bite-sized snacks called the Psalms that have been the backbone of prayer for God's people for nearly 3,000 years. The psalms are God's inspired word through which He speaks to us, but they happen to be cast as prayers that we can use to speak with Him. That kills two birds with one stone. And they cover everything that we could possibly want to say to God. "Thank-you.' 'Praise you.' 'Why are you doing this to me?' 'Please help me!,' etc." There are even a few asking God to smash our enemies.



PHOTODISC

These would have been perfect for Moses when he was praying during the battle with Amalek, except they hadn't been written yet.

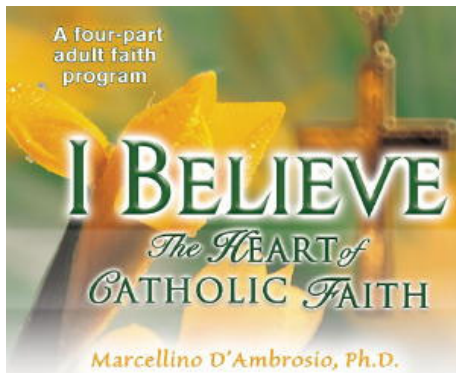
If you have time for three meals or snacks a day, you have time for at least three Psalms a day.

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