



## Top Ten Prayers

... with apologies to David Letterman

I've been re-thinking my prayer life, wondering what value my prayers have for God, or for me.

I pray at breakfast, lunch, dinner, and (occasionally) over the afternoon snack.

I pray when I get up and when I collapse into bed near midnight.

I pray when I leave home fifteen minutes after I should have and am hoping the traffic will be terrible so I'll have a "valid" excuse for being late.

I pray when I start a major presentation and when I say something stupid.

I pray a lot. But, is this really a meaningful conversation?

Thinking about this, I decided to create a list of the "TOP TEN" prayers God might share if He were a guest on the Dave Letterman TV show. So, a drum roll from the band, and here goes ...

**10. Futility Prayers.** "God, please help me to have done good on that test."

Do I really expect God to change the words on my paper after it's on the teacher's desk?

**9. Turbulence Prayers.** "God, please don't let this airplane crash, but if it does, please forgive me for (insert appropriate sins here).

**8. Let's Make a Deal Prayers.** "God, if you will ... I will ..." My requests run from, "Help me find the lost quarter," to "Give me a new Corvette!" My promises are equally bizarre.

**7. Fire Alarm Prayers.** "WAKE UP!" God shouts into my sleep, and then He makes me do something I would have done if I had known it was important to do right now. Like, "Pray for Aunt Marge," who at that very minute (2:33 a.m.) has run out of gas on a railroad crossing with a freight train whistling toward her from off in the distance.

I'd like to understand how these prayers work and why God calls on me to do the praying. So far, I do not understand, but I love the waking up and the praying—and learning what it was all about when Aunt Marge calls in the morning.

**6. Unwilling Prayers.** "God, I wish the professor hadn't asked me to pray to begin class today, but here goes. Make me sound intelligent." Maybe this one should go under "Futility Prayers."

**5. Administrative Memo Prayers.** "Lord, this must be done by 4:00 p.m." How many times I give God my agenda and schedule and assume they are the same as His!

**4. Mantra Prayers.** "Dear God, thank you for this food and help us to ... Amen."

One of my friends says that memorized prayers, the ones I can say perfectly even when half asleep, are just "yadda, yadda, yadda" to God. What if he's right?

**3. Surprise Prayers.** "You really answered? How could you do that! WOW! I had no idea you'd

really come through!!!"

Like when the Jerusalem believers were praying that Peter would be released from prison—and then wouldn't answer the door when Peter knocked! (Acts 12) I am ashamed at how many times God has answered my prayers in ways that surprised me.

**2. Kick-the-can Prayers.** "God, I am so angry at you, I can hardly talk. How could you let Rhonda die? How come the good people suffer and the bad folks get rich!!!"

Some folks feel it's not right to be so candid with God about my feelings. However, I don't think I've ever told Him anything that surprised Him.

**1. Crayola Prayers.** Brennan Manning writes, "A little child cannot do a bad coloring; nor can a child of God do a bad prayer."

God loves hearing the voice of my heart. He loves my honesty, my desperation, my pleas, and my peace. God loves a good talk, loves hearing about my day, and loves hearing me try to say "thank you" for brussel sprouts.

So I pray on, speaking clearly from my heart rather than carefully from my mind.

And God listens, ignoring the packaging and cherishing the heart sounds. It is the most intimate relationship I can share with Him, me praying crazily outside the lines, and God celebrating my artwork as if I were a budding Van Gogh. "It's beautiful," He smiles, tenderly cherishing my split infinitives. "I understand," He says.

Then He answers in ways I never dreamed possible.

*Dick Duerksen*