

WHEN YOU PRAY

During the minister's prayer one Sunday, there was a loud whistle from one of the back pews. Gary's mother was horrified. She pinched him into silence and after church, asked: "Gary, whatever made you do such a thing?" Gary answered soberly: "I asked God to teach me to whistle... And He just then did!"

This reminded me of an incident. Our friend, Paul, was one of the hardest working guys I know, a new believer and zealous in his love for God. His neighbour was a dedicated agnostic. Though it happened nearly three decades ago I still recall Paul's infectious laugh as he told us how he "testified" to the guy next door.

"He was trying to fix his truck and he kept muttering, 'God damn this thing!' I went over and said, Well, God must answer prayer – you get asking Him to damn your truck and He keeps on doing it." The neighbour wasn't impressed.

I'll never know how effective Paul's "ministry" to his neighbour actually was but I've often thought of God's grace in sorting out the ways in which we approach him. As humans we gravitate to extremes in prayer: either demanding that He respond to our list of requests or throwing up our hands in despair and adopting a "whatever will be, will be" attitude. Both extremes are rife with pride. In the first case we forget that God is God and He doesn't owe us anything. In the latter, it's easy to sink into self pity while preparing ourselves to protect God's reputation in case He doesn't come through.

Learning to trust the promises of God while maintaining an attitude of submission to His will can keep us from whistling in the dark – or the church.

"Don't forget your promise to me, your servant. I depend on it. "(Psalm 119:49)