

## A TWO-WAY PRAYER

*Answer me when I call to you, O my righteous God. (Psalm 4:1a, NIV)*

LINKS PLAYERS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MARTY JACOBUS opened a national board call this week with a simple devotional thought. He told how he, like many of us, had grown up in a neighborhood where the kids played freely until Mom rang her bell. “When I heard that bell,” he said, “I had about four minutes to step across the threshold into our house. If I was late, my mom would quote Psalm 4:1 to me: ‘Answer me when I call.’”

The story produced a nice laugh from those of us on the call. We could picture a similar exchange with our own moms. And we were recharged with the sense that sometimes we really need one another. Our entreaties aren’t just casual wishes.

The psalmist David took up a serious theme with God in writing the song we call Psalm 4. He opens with an urgent request of the Lord: “Won’t you attend to me?” He then turns his urgency to his fellow travelers in the faith. Look at his points:

- Reserve for God his glory
- Seek the God who is true, not the gods who are false
- Stay calm and silent, searching your hearts
- Make right sacrifices and trust in God

This is diligent work, requiring an applied faith. David wants the people of God to pursue God as he does. He wants them to cry out for his answers to their calls.

But there is something more to capture in our understanding, for this prayer—“answer me when I call you”—is the same plea God makes to us. We cannot *fulfill* requests for God in the specific way that he does for us, but we can *respond* to his call to come, to find rest in him, to learn from him, to serve him as King. God is not praying *to* us as we might say we pray to him, but he is certainly praying *of* us that we place our trust in him, which very much means entering his presence.

When Jesus spoke of trust, he did so quite practically. “Do not worry about what you will eat and drink and the clothes you will wear,” he said. “For the pagans run after all these things and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Matthew 6:25, 33-34). Do you see it? The answer to our prayers—all of them—is God. Now will we answer his prayer and come to him?

**Opening questions** What associations do you find in these words: *ask, beg, entreat, seek, pray*? In what ways are they similar? How are they different?

**READING** Psalm 4, 1 Samuel 3:1-10, Matthew 6:25-34

### To the God who hears

What was David’s specific request in Psalm 4:1? How do you think God’s answers to such a prayer lead to the conclusions David made in verses 6-8?

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### Eli, Samuel, and God

In 1 Samuel 3, whose voice was Samuel hearing? Why was he unaware of who it was? What did Eli instruct Samuel to do when God called? Do you think God might still call on us personally?

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### Worry and prayer

Why do we worry about matters of this world? What should be our alternative action (see Philippians 4:6 in addition to Matthew 6)?

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