

She meandered through the crowded subway train, chanting at top volume. Still with my eyes closed, I could hear people stepping aside to make room for her. I could imagine none of them were making eye contact or taking any of her tracts. "I wish she'd shut up," someone muttered. I echoed the thought. What a holy, kindly, forgiving soul I am!

Then just as she came to my end of the car, she started reading a psalm from her Bible. "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning," she proclaimed, just the passage I'd been saying to myself. So much for the word of God transforming me. I opened my eyes, looked at her and smiled. I stood up to get off the train. "Thanks," I said. "That's one of my favorite psalms too."

"READ THE BIBLE," she said.

Give yourself a time, pick a place and pray. Do it a little bit every day. Check in. God will find you wherever you are and you will find God. You don't have to say much. "Hi, God," will do.

FREE EXCERPT! From your friends at Guideposts

10 PRAYERS YOU CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT

How to Talk to God About *Anything*

RICK HAMLIN

Executive Editor, *Guideposts Magazine*

“HI, GOD.”

If you listened to my head in prayer, you'd be surprised at the racket going on in there. None of it is going to sound that holy. I'm irritable, I complain, I replay conversations at work and emails I sent. I selfjustify and talk nonsense. I obsess about my health and my appearance.

“Hi, God,” I'll say, “it's me, Rick. Remember all that stuff I told you about yesterday and what I was really worried about? Well, today, something else just hit me . . .” If when we bring all these matters to God and he seems silent, does it really mean he's not listening? The best moments with the people you love can be filled with silence. Think of the down time you spend with a spouse. You're both puttering around the house. One of you is reading a book, the other is washing the dishes or wiping the table after dinner. The kids are watching TV. Neither of you says anything but you feel each other's presence. One of the greatest pleasures of marriage is being with someone and not having to speak. God time is like that. It offers the gift of companionable silence.

Yet there are other times God finds ways to speak to you, and you often don't know it until after it happens. Some days on the subway, when I'm ready to close my eyes and pray, somebody will sit down next to me and I'll know I need to be sociable. “Hi, Rick. How are you?” says a neighbor I haven't seen for a long time. I sigh. *Don't you see my Bible in my lap? Can't you tell I'm busy?* What arrogance on my part. Maybe the thing God had in mind for me that morning was to listen to what my neighbor had to say.

One June morning it was a guy I hadn't seen much since our boys played Little League together. He's a high school teacher and was a terrific coach for our boys. I loved hanging out with him, but I wasn't in a chatty mood just now. “Hi, Rick,” he said. “Hi, Bob,” I said, “how are you?” I reluctantly slid my Bible back into my gym bag.

“I'm doing okay,” he said. We talked about our boys first, where they were, what they were doing. Small talk. But then he said, “I'm heading downtown to hand in my resignation. This is my last year of teaching.”

“Wow,” I said. “What are you going to do next?”

He talked about some of his plans and how he was feeling in the lurch, untethered, uncertain exactly what the future would hold. He seemed glad to share this milestone with someone, his last official day as a public schoolteacher. By the time I got off the subway I knew that conversation was more important than any of the prayer chitchat that would have taken place. “Hi, God,” you say, and God comes in the form of a friend who needs to talk. *Just as you did it to one of the least of these you did it to me.*

Another morning I was meditating on a verse from the Psalms, trying to remember what I'd read (“Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning”). From the other end of the train I heard the strident voice of a West Indian woman who I think of as the A-train evangelist. “READ THE BIBLE,” she said. “Listen to the message of the Bible and be saved. God wants you to read the Bible. Hear God's word.”

I sighed. *She's so loud. I didn't want loud this morning. I want peace and quiet. I wish she'd go back the other direction.*