

Quick and Easy Methods for Remembering Prayer Requests

I jolted awake at 2 a.m. this morning to a shrill, heart-stopping alarm blasting from my cellphone. I nearly fell out of bed onto my head while scrambling to find the phone somewhere on the floor. I grabbed the screaming phone and fumbled for a button—any button—to turn off the dreadful sound before reading an amber alert for two missing children from a nearby community. I scanned the grim details about the alleged abductor, and my heart moaned in lament.

I crawled back into bed willing my heart rate to slow, and stared into the darkness above my head. My racing thoughts turned to prayers. “Lord, please watch over these two children. Wherever they are, whatever they’re experiencing, be their guard. This moment changes their lives forever. Help them know Your presence today and for the rest of their lives. Please guide the police as they search.”

My heart constricted as though the snake of darkness might squeeze the life right out of me. So much hurt. So much pain. “Why, God? Why does it seem we only hurt each other?”

Five hours later, as I groggily began my day, I checked the news for an update. A policeman had found the children 1,100 miles away, and they were being held in safe custody. I sobbed as I read more details of the story and realized what those precious children had experienced during the night. I put a little extra “oomph” into my morning kiss good-bye with my two children.

Midday, I scrolled my Facebook feed to see if I was the only one jarred awake at 2 a.m. Some friends grumbled about the rude awakening. Most, however, described how they too spent that wee hour of the morning praying for the children and

their safe return home.

A community praying for children they didn't even know. What a beautiful picture of the body of Christ.

"See?" God's Spirit whispered. "There is still light in this world. Remember I am the light, and My light still shines in so many. You do more than just hurt each other. You are also capable of great love for each other." If only an audible alarm could jolt us out of our spiritual slumber every day and call us into prayerful action for our community.

How would our communities change if we didn't just say, "I'll pray for you," but we actually did pray—deeply, intensely, and purposefully?

Even when the news doesn't wake me early in the morning with an urgent alarm, great needs press in around me every day.

A year and a half ago, I sat on my bedroom floor Spirit-groaning like Paul describes in Romans 8:26:

"Likewise, the Spirit helps us in our weaknesses, for we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words."

That day, a friend had called to say her father had been diagnosed with cancer. Another friend had sent an email with a discouraging update about his family's already years-long adoption process. A third friend had texted with news that his wife was leaving him for another man.

Each message closed with, "Will you please pray?"

"Of course. Absolutely," I replied to each one.

Yet I felt so inadequate. Prayer has never been one of my strong disciplines. I often prayed for people on the spot for fear I would forget later. I certainly didn't want to lie about praying.

That day, during my Spirit-groanings for these dear friends, I also asked for help with my prayer discipline.

“There has to be a better way. I want to remember. I want to be a participant, not just a bystander.”

As I rose to finish my day, a thought came to me—a thought that would forever change the way I pray.

A is for adoption. I counted several friends who were waiting for adoptions to be complete and others who had recently brought their adopted children home.

B is for bullying. I remembered my teacher friends and the students in my kids’ classes who’ve suffered from bullying behavior.

C is for cancer. I listed at least a dozen people I knew who were battling cancer.

D is for depression. I remembered all the family members and friends I knew who were struggling through depression and anxiety on a daily basis.

What if instead of having one long prayer list, I prayed for people by topic, through the entire alphabet?

I grabbed a sheet of paper and within an hour had topics for nearly the entire alphabet. The next day, I met my friends Cindy and Carrie for coffee and quietly mentioned how I was going to start praying A to Z through the needs of the community. I showed them my list, and their eyes lit up.

“Will you share it with me? That’s something I would use too.”

“Me too, please. I often feel overwhelmed and just don’t know where to start or how to remember to pray for everyone.”

I wasn’t alone in feeling like an inadequate prayer.

That’s when I realized God is raising the alarm. He is calling

His people to prayer. As the world grows darker, His light shines brighter.

As I prayed A to Z, I no longer felt overwhelmed. In fact, I found myself praying for more people and more struggles than ever before. I experienced a peace and a lightness in prayer that I hadn't known in a long time.

As the idea spread among my friends, I began to hear stories. My friend Erin picked up the idea and started praying A to Z with her kids. She told me they prayed for a family who had been waiting years to adopt a child. The morning after praying through "A for Adoption" she woke to an email from her friends saying a child had been placed with them. Erin woke her children with the incredible news. What a joy to pray with her kids and see God's answer so soon!

My mom told me she had never noticed how difficult it was for families in her church with special needs children to enjoy an entire worship service. She started to see how often they were called out of service. She told me, "Now that I'm praying A to Z, God is revealing to me people's needs that I hadn't seen before."

As we pray for our communities' deepest needs, we bring His light into the darkest corners.

No problem is too great for our Father to handle. In fact, as I began to also praise God from A to Z, I realized how every need is fulfilled in who He is.

From A to Z, I hope you'll join me in praying for the specific needs of your community and begin to experience the lightness of joy, peace and hope that comes from the Father. {eoa}

*An excerpt from Pray A to Z by **Amelia Rhodes**. ©2016 Worthy Inspired*