

Try This Simple, Creative Method to Focus Your Prayers

When faced with more prayer requests than she could count, Amelia Rhodes realized how often she was failing to follow through on praying for others long-term. She longed to participate fully in lifting up those around her rather than simply offering quick, fly-by prayers as she learned of needs. Rhodes sought the Lord's guidance and help with being more disciplined in her prayer life, and an idea started to take root in her heart. "I realized how many people I knew were struggling with the same types of things: adoptions, cancer, marriages. The idea of praying by topic seemed natural, and then I decided to see if I could make an A to Z list of all the needs and struggles facing our communities today," Rhodes explains.

Rhodes' new book, *Pray A to Z: A Practical Guide to Pray for Your Community* (Worthy Inspired) helps readers get a better handle on the prayer needs of those around them. Covering matters such as abuse, depression, hunger, persecution and more, Rhodes helps readers categorize requests into manageable groups. Each letter of the alphabet covers five topics, the first three of which are for prayers of petition asking God to work in a certain area of one's life. The last two topics for each letter offer opportunity for praise, acknowledging God's character and His work.

Q: Why is it hard for us to pray with focused intention for the requests of those around us?

Our world has become increasingly chaotic, with an endless stream of chatter and alerts from our tech devices. Every week, the news reports more heartbreaking tragedies. I find with so many things calling for my attention, it can be easy to let prayer get squeezed out of the day. Sometimes I just don't know where to begin, or I can't find the words to express the ache in my soul. My heart and mind often jump from need to need. Writing and then reading these prayers and

verses has become a starting place to bring my focused attention to God in prayer for my community.

Q: Why do you encourage readers to write down their requests, the names of those they are praying for and the dates they started praying?

I know how easily I forget things. I find writing down requests and dates serves as a testimony and a record of what God has done. Reading back through what you've written, you will see things you've forgotten or didn't realize how God specifically worked in a situation. It helps us remember His goodness and prompts us to continue to pray for people who are still in the midst of a struggle.

Q: Is *Pray A to Z* best used individually, or does it work in a group setting as well? Is it appropriate for parents to use with their children?

Pray A to Z works well as a personal prayer guide as part of developing and deepening your private conversations with God. It also works great in a group setting. Whether you use the book to open a small group meeting or take the entire group time to pray through topics together, *Pray A to Z* can serve as a starting point for prayers together. Many times people are uncomfortable praying out loud in front of others, and reading a prayer from the book and inserting names and situations specific to your community can help ease that discomfort. I've had parents say using *Pray A to Z* in their family has opened the door to talk to their children about important topics. It's a blessing for parents and children to pray together and see how God answers throughout time.

Q: Tell us about your process of prayer-walking in your neighborhood.

Whenever I am roaming the streets of my neighborhood, I turn my inner conversations to God and prayers for those who live in the houses I am passing. Whether it's walking to and from the school bus stop, walking to work or running the neighborhood for exercise, I make a point to focus my thoughts toward God, specifically for my neighbors and any situations I

know they are facing. If a house is for sale, I'll pray for the people who will eventually buy it. I prayed over empty lots before houses were built. I also pray for those I don't know and ask God to direct me into building a relationship with them. {eoa}

Learn more about more about Amelia Rhodes and *Pray A to Z* at , on Facebook (ameliarhodeswriter) and via Twitter (@amrhodes).