

An interview with Amelia Rhodes, Author of *Pray A to Z: A Practical Guide to Pray for Your Community*



A text from a friend. An urgent phone call from a family member. An announcement at church. Maybe even a share on social media or story from the news. Many needs surrounding us require prayer. Each request is valuable and worthy of time before the Father, but the sheer number of them can be overwhelming. In *Pray A to Z: A Practical Guide to Pray for Your Community (Worthy Inspired)*, author Amelia Rhodes helps readers topically organize their prayer requests and lay the burdens of their community at the feet of the Heavenly Father.

Q: *Pray A to Z* is not an instruction book on the mechanics of prayer, but rather a guide to praying for one's community, born from your personal experiences. Where did the idea of praying from A to Z come from?

One day within the span of a few hours, I received phone calls and text messages from a number of friends who were all dealing with very heavy struggles. Each one asked me to pray for them. Of course, I said I would, but at that point I recognized how often I fail to follow through on praying long-term for people. As I prayed that day, I also asked God to help me with my prayer life. 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.

Q: You lead readers in praying through the alphabet for their community, but there are more than just 26 topics in this book. Share with us how the book is structured and how you have organized the individual letters.

Each letter features prayers and prompts on five topics. Three topics for each letter focus on prayers of petition, and two focus on praise. So we pray about adoptions, abuse and alcoholism and then praise God for His abundance and that He is almighty. We pray for marriages, missionaries and ministers and those in the military while praising God for His majesty and mercy.

Q: Why did you feel it important to include aspects of praise and adoration, rather than having only need-based topics?

The needs get heavy and overwhelming. I found that incorporating praise brings the focus back to our great God. Praising Him helps us recognize how every need we have is met in who God is.

Q: What are some of the prayer needs you cover in the book?

I covered the needs of families in our communities, such as foster families, special needs families, pregnancy crises, raising children, marriages, divorce, adoption and infertility. I also take a look at many of the justice issues facing our societies today, including prejudice, homelessness, hunger, human trafficking, refugees and violence. The prayers also include topics related to how we interact with our communities, including generosity, kindness, estranged relationships, joy, obedience to God, vanity and our yearnings.

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

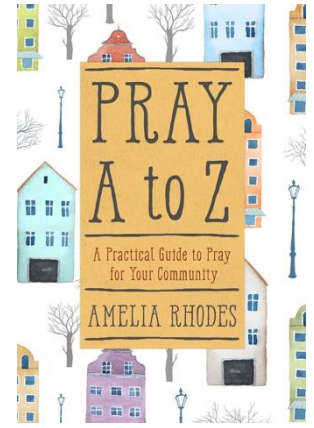
Our world has become increasingly chaotic, with an endless stream of chatter and alerts from our tech devices. Every week the news reports more heartbreaking tragedies. I find with so many things calling for my attention, it can be easy to let prayer get squeezed out of the day. Sometimes I just don't 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.

Q: What do you hope readers take away from this book?

My hope is readers will not just become more engaged and excited about their prayer life and their relationship with God, but as a result they will also become more involved with the people who surround them every day. I've had readers tell me how God has made them more aware of the struggles people are facing and has also revealed how they can be His hands and feet of love to their communities.

Q: Do you have any additional or supplemental resources to help readers pray A to Z?

I developed a set of prayer cards featuring just one topic per letter but covering many of the major issues in our communities. I've also created a guide for groups that is available for download for anyone who desires to begin a prayer group in his or her neighborhood, church or community.

Learn more about more about Amelia Rhodes and *Pray A to Z* at www.ameliarhodes.com, on [Facebook \(ameliarhodeswriter\)](https://www.facebook.com/ameliarhodeswriter) and via [Twitter \(@amrhodes\)](https://twitter.com/amrhodes).