

## Prayer Challenge: Week 1

Congratulations on signing up for the *Before Amen* Prayer Challenge. You've taken the first step toward a jump-start for your prayer life. Sure, we all pray some—but wouldn't we all like to pray more? Better? Deeper? Stronger? With more fire, faith or fervency?

We aren't the first to struggle with prayer. The sign-up sheet for Prayer 101 contains some familiar names: the apostles John, James, Andrew, and Peter. When one of Jesus' disciples requested, "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1 NIV), none of the others objected. No one walked away saying, "Hey, I have prayer figured out." The first followers of Jesus needed prayer guidance. Maybe you do too.

When the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray, he gave them a prayer. Not a lecture on prayer. Not the doctrine of prayer. He gave them a quotable, repeatable, portable prayer (Luke 11:1-4).

Could you use the same? It seems to me that the prayers of the Bible can be distilled into one. The result is a simple, easy-to-remember, pocket-size prayer:

Father,

    you are good.

        I need help. Heal me and forgive me.

            They need help.

                Thank you.

                    In Jesus' name, amen.

Let this prayer serve as your framework over the next four weeks. As you begin your morning, *Father, you are good*. As you commute to work or walk the hallways at school, *I need help*. As you wait in the grocery line, *They need help*. Keep this prayer in your pocket as you pass through the day.

Prayer, for most of us, is not a matter of a month-long retreat or even an hour of meditation. Prayer is conversation with God while driving to work or awaiting an appointment or before interacting with a client. Prayer can be the internal voice that directs the external action.

This much is sure: God will teach you to pray. Don't think for a minute that he is glaring at you from a distance with crossed arms and a scowl, waiting for you to get your prayer life together. Just the opposite. "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in and eat with you, and you will eat with me" (Rev. 3:20 NCV).

Prayer is not a privilege for the pious, not the art of a chosen few. Prayer is simply a heartfelt conversation between God and his child. My friend, he wants to talk with you. Even now, as you read these words, he taps at the door. Open it. Welcome him in. Let the conversation begin.