

Before Amen Prayer Strengths Assessment

As Max Lucado explores in *Before Amen: The Power of a Simple Prayer*, many of the prayers in the Bible can be distilled to a few clear and memorable lines. A powerful, life-changing conversation with God can begin here:

Father,

you are good.

I need help.

They need help.

Thank you.

In Jesus' name, amen.

By looking at the pattern of the prayers in *Before Amen*, we can quickly identify four basic prayer strengths. Prayer strengths are postures—or attitudes—in prayer that we instinctively gravitate toward, postures in which we feel more confident or at least more comfortable. Each of the four strengths corresponds with a core component of the Pocket Prayer.

Worship—You are good.

Trust—I need help.

Compassion—They need help.

Gratitude—Thank you.

To identify your prayer strength and begin to grow in the other core elements of prayer, use this short assessment tool. This is not a scientific assessment and is not

intended as a psychological evaluation or diagnosis. Answer each of the following questions with your initial gut reaction.

1. You're having difficulty falling asleep after a long day because . . .
 - A. you are energized by all that happened that day and see God in it.
 - B. you're thinking of the next day's challenges and giving them to God.
 - C. you're thinking about the difficulties a friend or family member is facing.
 - D. a person did something kind and out of the ordinary for you.

2. If you were part of a group organizing an event, you would be quick to . . .
 - A. affirm the strengths of others on the team.
 - B. ask for assistance from outside sources.
 - C. offer to help others complete their assignments.
 - D. show appreciation to the other volunteers for their service.

3. You're unable to celebrate a holiday with family, so you . . .
 - A. list all the ways you can celebrate on your own.
 - B. talk with a friend about how difficult the situation is.
 - C. invite others without family nearby to celebrate with you.
 - D. change things up and celebrate creatively.

4. Before you put your feet on the floor in the morning, you think about . . .
 - A. how incredible God is.
 - B. the many things you need to deal with that day.
 - C. friends facing trials or crises in their health, finances, or relationships.

- D. the promise of a new day and God's fresh mercies.
5. When your employer has a great year and gives everyone in the company an unexpected bonus, you . . .
- A. congratulate other employees on doing a great job.
 - B. think about how this comes at a perfect time for your plans or situation.
 - C. share your windfall with someone you know is in need.
 - D. immediately send a note of appreciation to the boss.
6. Your preferred part of church life tends to be when . . .
- A. you learn more about what God is like or sing about who he is.
 - B. you cast your cares on God and your spiritual needs are met.
 - C. you get to plan how to put your faith into action by serving.
 - D. you respond to God's presence in an offering, prayer, or sacrament.
7. After you reach a major goal or accomplishment in life, your next move is to . . .
- A. recognize, perhaps even publicly, those who played a role in it.
 - B. plan your next major goal, considering barriers you can now overcome more easily.
 - C. find ways to use the accomplishment to help others.
 - D. write thank-you notes identifying specific ways people helped you.
8. When sensing God's presence at a key moment in life, you . . .
- A. praise God for showing up in that moment and tell others about it.
 - B. plead with God to be with you in an upcoming challenge.

- C. think about how you might help others experience God's presence in the same way.
 - D. thank God for his faithfulness to you in the past.
9. If a schoolteacher is concerned about your child's progress, you would most likely . . .
- A. mention your child's strengths and how they might be used to overcome the area of concern.
 - B. ask for resources or support to help solve the problems.
 - C. look for hands-on opportunities to get involved in solutions.
 - D. thank the teacher and affirm his or her approach to the situation.
10. If your best friend is moving far away for a better job, the first thing you are likely to do is . . .
- A. encourage your friend about the great opportunity so he or she has more confidence.
 - B. consider how you will overcome the loneliness that will probably occur.
 - C. offer to help pack.
 - D. remember that your friendship has withstood other trials and will continue long distance.
11. If you were to tell friends you're moving into a new home, you would mention . . .
- A. all the great help others gave to find the place.
 - B. a few ways your friends could lend a hand.
 - C. how much you're looking forward to inviting neighbors over.

D. details about the home and how glad you are to have it.

Results:

If you selected mostly As, your prayer strength is Worship.

If you selected mostly Bs, your prayer strength is Trust.

If you selected mostly Cs, your prayer strength is Compassion.

If you selected mostly Ds, your prayer strength is Gratitude.

Worship—You Are Good

Your natural bent is to praise God in every situation. Life has its ups and downs, but if you have the Worship Prayer Strength, you focus on God's goodness. You find it reassuring that, no matter what, God is in control. Where others see clouds, you see silver linings. You don't ignore stark realities; you just don't focus on them. You are always on the lookout for how God is moving in the midst of dark times and bright times.

To worship is to point to God. Just as someone who has performed well or won a ball game points to the sky to honor God, you want your whole life to praise God.

If you have the Worship Prayer Strength, you are sure of the goodness of God, and you share that with people who may be discouraged. In prayer you feel content simply to talk about how good God is. You likely enjoy singing praise songs that describe who God is, and you may have an interest in the names of God or the qualities that describe God.

Bible Prayer Partner

Daniel will make a good Bible prayer partner for you, because he is one of the great prayer heroes in Scripture. In Daniel 2 we find him disturbed in the night by a vision (v. 19). The text says that "Daniel praised the God of heaven and said: 'Praise be to the name of God for ever and ever; wisdom and power are his'" (vv. 19–20 NIV).

In the verses that follow, Daniel listed what God had done to empower him. Others would be discouraged by being in exile, separated from family and living among foreigners who didn't worship God. But that didn't keep Daniel from praising God for his goodness. Those with the Worship Prayer Strength don't need a crowd to worship. They praise God without an audience and often during persecution.

Building on the Worship Prayer Strength

Worship often aligns with gratitude. When you naturally recognize God's goodness, the next response may be to thank him for what he has done. Increase your Gratitude Strength by thinking about and thanking God for what he has done directly for you. You can also grow in the Trust Strength by asking God to address your ongoing needs, perhaps focusing on healing a specific physical or spiritual issue. Then practice the Compassion Strength by reflecting on the struggles your friends and loved ones are facing. Ask God to care for them and give them the perspective that he is good even in their situations.

Scriptures for Worship in Prayer

Psalms 34:1, 50:23, 95:1–3, 150:6; Isaiah 43:2; 1 Peter 2:9; and John 4:23–24

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Your prayer strength is Worship. Your natural bent is to praise God in every situation. Life has its ups and downs, but you focus on God's goodness. You don't ignore stark realities; you just don't focus on them. You are always on the lookout for how God is moving in the midst of dark times and bright times. Your Bible prayer partner is Daniel, who praised God in all circumstances.

Trust—I Need Help

Your natural bent is to ask God for help. At first this might seem like a weakness, but if you have the Trust Prayer Strength, you know it's better to lean on the strength of God than to be self-reliant. This is a beautiful place to begin in prayer. If you have the Trust Prayer Strength, you are transparent about your trials, at least with God and perhaps even with others.

To trust is to surrender. We hold things back when we do not trust. But when we pray with the posture of surrender, we pray as children of God, throwing ourselves upon the mercy of the Father. Others might wonder why you let things go that trouble them. The answer is simple: you trust God.

You likely have a unique mix of humility and confidence because of this strength. You can be humble because you know that you don't have to rely on your own strength. But you can approach the throne of God boldly because Scripture says, "This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us" (1 John 5:14 NIV).

Bible Prayer Partner

Nehemiah will make a great Bible prayer partner for you. The book of Nehemiah starts with his prayer journal, and you can build on your strength of trust by following the pattern he set there. He reminded God that he is one "who keeps his covenant" (Nehemiah 1:5 NIV) and that he had made promises to Israel. Nehemiah knew he needed to go before the king and present a huge request, so he prayed, "Give your servant success today by granting him favor in the presence of this man" (v. 11 NIV). Strengthened by his full surrender and requests to God, Nehemiah boldly made his

request of the king: “Send me to the city in Judah where my ancestors are buried so that I can rebuild it” (2:5 NIV).

Building on the Trust Prayer Strength

Trusting God aligns well with compassion. When you surrender your needs to God, it becomes second nature to take to him the needs of others as well. Grow in your Compassion Strength by becoming one who speaks up for those in need, even to God. Your instinct to trust God will rub off on those whose needs are deep, so your best act of compassion may be to spend time with them or even to pray with them. Then you can cultivate the Worship Strength by praising God for listening to your requests. Growing in the Gratitude Strength comes by thanking God for answering your prayers. This might include keeping a journal to record the answers to prayers that you’ve trusted to God.

Scriptures for Trust in Prayer

Matthew 6:7–8, 7:7, 21:22; John 14:3, 15:7; Romans 8:31–34; James 4:7; and 1 John 5:14

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Your prayer strength is Trust. Your natural bent is to ask God for help. At first this might seem like a weakness, but you know it’s better to lean on the strength of God than to be self-reliant. To trust is to surrender and to pray as a child of God. Others might wonder why you let things go that trouble them. The answer is simple: you trust God. Nehemiah made bold requests that God answered, and he is your Bible prayer partner.

Compassion—They Need Help

Your natural bent is to consider others. If you have the Compassion Prayer Strength, you are a natural problem solver, loyal to friends, and sensitive to the needs of those around you, even strangers. You pray for others, but you also match your prayers with action. You think it would be senseless not to help when you can, but you likewise think it would be senseless to act without praying for God to act as well. If you have the Compassion Prayer Strength, your posture is one of looking out for those in need and going to God to present their needs to him.

To have compassion is to intercede and isn't contingent on knowing all the details of a situation. While some hear a request and immediately forget it, you remember it later in prayer. The next time you see that person, you ask how things are going. You sometimes find that you pray for people's concerns longer than they do. You may end up taking care of others more than they take care of themselves.

Your compassion may outrun your time, money, and energy. If you have the Compassion Prayer Strength, you wish you could do much more because you see so much more that could be done. People with this strength commonly rally others to get involved or to pray for those in need. This multiplies the resources.

Bible Prayer Partner

The good Samaritan makes an excellent Bible prayer partner for you. Jesus told the story of the good Samaritan in Luke 10:30–37. When the Samaritan came along and saw the beaten and robbed man, the Samaritan felt “compassion” for him (v. 33). Religious leaders had seen the same man and had ignored him. But the Samaritan soothed and bandaged the man's wounds and then put him on his donkey and took him to an inn.

After taking care of him for one night, the Samaritan gave money to the innkeeper and said, “Take care of this man. If his bill runs higher than this, I’ll pay you the next time I’m here” (NLT). Today that would be like leaving your credit card to cover any costs. Those with the Compassion Prayer Strength go to great lengths to ensure that people in need are truly helped out of their situation.

Building on the Compassion Prayer Strength

Compassion aligns with trust in several ways. As you discover the needs of those around you, you quickly realize you cannot solve all the problems you encounter. As you rely on God to meet the needs of others, also turn your own needs over to him, thereby growing in the Trust Strength. In addition, you can increase in the Worship Strength by reflecting on God’s compassion. Consider that he knew the cares and concerns of people before you did and is at work as a good God. Then you can build your Gratitude Strength by thanking him for giving you sensitivity to the needs around you and for providing for those needs, even through you.

Scriptures for Compassion in Prayer

Proverbs 19:17; Romans 12:15; 1 Corinthians 12:25–26; 2 Corinthians 1:11; Ephesians 6:18; and 1 Timothy 2:1

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Your prayer strength is Compassion. You are a natural problem solver, loyal to friends, and sensitive to the needs of those around you, even strangers. You think it would be senseless not to help when you can, but you likewise think it would be

senseless to act without praying for God to act as well. Your Bible prayer partner is the good Samaritan, who showed compassion on an injured man, even when others ignored him.

Gratitude—Thank You

Your natural bent is to thank God. If you have the Gratitude Prayer Strength, you are content with all that God has provided. Instead of looking for greener grass, you know that God has given you what you need for today. You live in the present, not too much in the past or the future. This makes you a pleasant person to be with, because you are grateful not only to God but also to those around you. While others are blessed and don't know it, you are aware of each blessing that comes your way and have a posture of gratitude.

To have gratitude is to express appreciation. While some think they have earned what they have, you see how everything you have comes from God's provision. This thankfulness shows up when you succeed and someone praises you for it. In these times you are quick to thank God and give him all the glory.

You know that your life is not a mistake. You likely have a deep appreciation for God's attentiveness to the little things. You see him moving in small ways that others miss, and when you do, you know how to give thanks to God.

Bible Prayer Partner

The apostle Paul will make a great Bible prayer partner for you. In his letters to the churches, Paul constantly thanked churches, individuals, and God himself for providing for him along the way. In Colossians he reminded the church that “we always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all God's people” (1:3–4 NIV). He recounted why he was grateful for the church in Colosse that was so close to his heart. He shared that since hearing of the church's good deeds, “we have not stopped praying for

you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives” (v. 9 NIV). Paul pointed out what God was doing in and through this church, and his gratitude inspired them in the process.

Building on the Gratitude Prayer Strength

Gratitude often goes hand in hand with worship. Thankfulness leads to a better awareness that God is the giver of all good gifts. Gratitude can be a foundation for the Worship Strength, as worship focuses on the essential goodness of God, who is worthy of thankful praise at all times. You can also surrender more of your needs to God as an act of gratitude and in doing so grow in the Trust Strength. Then increase in the Compassion Strength by thanking God for putting in your path those in need. Ask him to give you his compassionate heart for those he knows should connect with you.

Scriptures for Gratitude in Prayer

2 Samuel 22:49–51; 1 Chronicles 16:34; Psalms 75:1, 118:21, 139:14; Isaiah 12:1, 25:1; Luke 17:11–19; Romans 6:16–18; and Ephesians 5:20

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Your prayer strength is Gratitude. You are content with all that God has provided. Instead of looking for greener grass, you know that God has given you what you need for today. You live in the present, not too much in the past or the future. This makes you a pleasant person to be with, because you are grateful not only to God but also to those around you. Your Bible prayer partner is the apostle Paul, who learned was grateful in all circumstances.