

## The Groanings of Prayer

### Scripture Reading — Psalm 86

The Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.  
Romans 8:26

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Do you remember when you first learned to pray? I can still say the prayer my mother taught me when I was three years old. We knelt together next to my bed: "Jesus, tender Shepherd, hear me. Bless thy little lamb tonight. Through the darkness be thou near me, keep me safe till morning light." That prayer comforted me because I was afraid of the dark and felt unsafe unless I prayed—and unless Mom left the hall light on until my older sisters came to bed.

Some time later I said my first very own prayer. I prayed it for months after a Sunday school lesson when my teacher told us about our "forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." I was perplexed and worried. I knew the names of only three of our "four fathers" — Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. So after Mom or Dad went downstairs, I prayed earnestly, "Dear God, please help me learn who the fourth of our forefathers is. Amen."

Maybe I didn't have words to express my thoughts well, but the Spirit of God understood and perfected my prayers before the Father. A few years later I learned that God had given us thousands of forefathers and fore-mothers. They're that "great cloud of witnesses" from Hebrews 12:1, people who have prayed over the span of thousands of years all over God's world, in times and places of fear or suffering, hope or joy.

### Prayer

*Lord, thank you for your Spirit, who makes our prayed mistakes into meaningful conversation with you. Thank you for the Spirit's assurance that you always hear us. Amen.*

**Devotion topics:** [Christianity](#), [Discipleship](#), [Disciplines](#)

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