

Growing in Prayer: Six Books on Prayer

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by David Schrock

This Sunday we will continue our study of spiritual disciplines with a focus on prayer. With Bible reading, prayer is one of two primary disciplines. It is the breath of the Christian life and one that we should continue to cultivate as we walk with God. However, growth in prayer only comes as the Word of God teaches us about prayer.

For that reason, it is worthwhile to study what prayer is. With that in mind, here are six outstanding books on the topic of prayer. If you earnestly desire to grow in prayer, pick one of them, read through it and pray God would grow your praying.

Six Books on Prayer

[**A Praying Life**](#) by Paul Miller

If you feel bad about your prayer life, this is the place to begin. Instead of giving strenuous disciplines for improving your prayer, he reminds us that prayer flows out of an intimate relationship with our Heavenly Father. Just as a child begins to "talk" to their parents through means of guttural gibberish and playful (and ignorant) imitation, so we begin to speak to our heavenly father. He concludes with practical applications for prayer, but it is the beginning of the book that is most encouraging to those who have a hard time getting into their prayer closet.

[**Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God**](#) by Timothy Keller

As with everything Keller writes, *Prayer* is intellectually invigorating and spiritually inspiring. His book breaks down into five sections---Desiring Prayer, Understanding Prayer, Learning Prayer, Deepening Prayer, and Doing Prayer. Like Whitney, his methods are very closely aligned with the Bible, but even more illuminating in his book (in the parts I've read) are the theological considerations Keller gives. If you are wanting to know what prayer is and how it has been approached throughout church history, this is a great resource.

[**A Call to Spiritual Reformation**](#) by D. A. Carson.

Now updated and titled [*Praying with Paul*](#), Carson's book is both exegetical and practical. He examines the prayers of Paul and shows the kinds of things we ought to pray. When I read this book many years ago, two things stood out. Theologically, Paul repeatedly prayed for people who knew God to know him more. This apostolic pattern ought to have a profound impact on us and what we pray for. Sure, we can and must pray for healing and temporal needs, but all the more we ought to intercede for the power of God to open hearts to the depths of his love for them in Christ (cf. Eph 3:14--21). Practically, this book taught me how to pray for people I don't know, for members of my church whose particular needs were not known to me. If you wonder how to pray through a church directory for people you don't (yet) know, this book is especially practical.

[Praying the Bible](#) by Donald Whitney

Donald Whitney is well-known as an expert in practicing the "Spiritual Disciplines." His book by that title ([Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life](#)) on that subject are required reading in many seminaries. Not surprisingly, his book on prayer is equally valuable. And because of its size, it is more accessible. In less than 100 pages, Whitney teaches you how to use Scripture as a means of prayer. He argues that we never grow tired of praying for the same things; we grow tired because we pray for the same things *in the same way*. His solution? Pray the words of the Bible. If you have ever wondered what to say in prayer, this book will be a great help. Or if you are looking for freshness in your prayer life, *Praying the Bible* is a must-read.

[The Valley of Vision](#) by Arthur Bennett ([paperback](#), [leather](#))

To say that Arthur Bennett is the author of *The Valley of Vision* is a bit of a misnomer. Bennett collected a wide variety of Puritan prayers and arranged their content under a variety of headings and titles. These prayers are a goldmine of biblical theology, but even more they are a shaft of light that shines on parts of our darkness we rarely uncover (or even know we have). Better than any other source I know, *The Valley of Vision* teaches us how to pray like David in Psalm 51. It brings us into the depths of our sin and lifts us to the heights of God's grace and mercy. If your prayer lacks gravity and importance, a daily reading from this book is what you need.

[Operation World](#) by Jason Mandryk

1. What do you get when you mashup a prayer book with exhaustive data about world mission?
2. You get *Operation World*.

Operation World, now in its seventh edition, the essential resource for praying for God's kingdom to come. Mandrake, following in the footsteps of Patrick Johnstone, provides national, political, and religious demographics for every country in the world. If your heart yearns for Christ to be made famous among the nations---or especially if it doesn't!---pick up a copy of this book or use its online website to pray for the nations to come to Christ. (There is also a shorter, more readable version, [Pray for the World: A New Prayer Resource from Operation World](#)).

Take up and read one of these books. Read it with a friend. Talk about it. And pray that God would use it to grow you in prayer.

For His Glory and your joy,

Pastor David