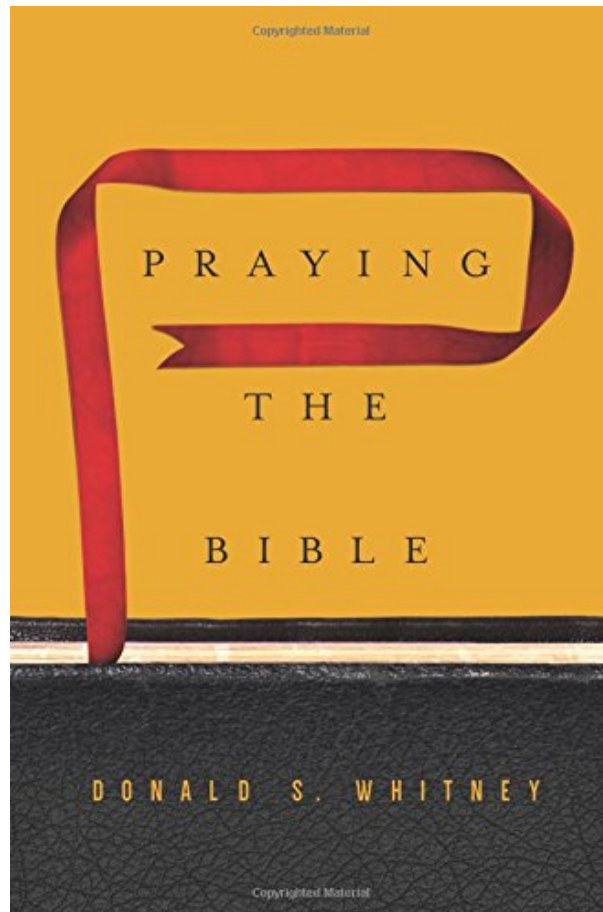
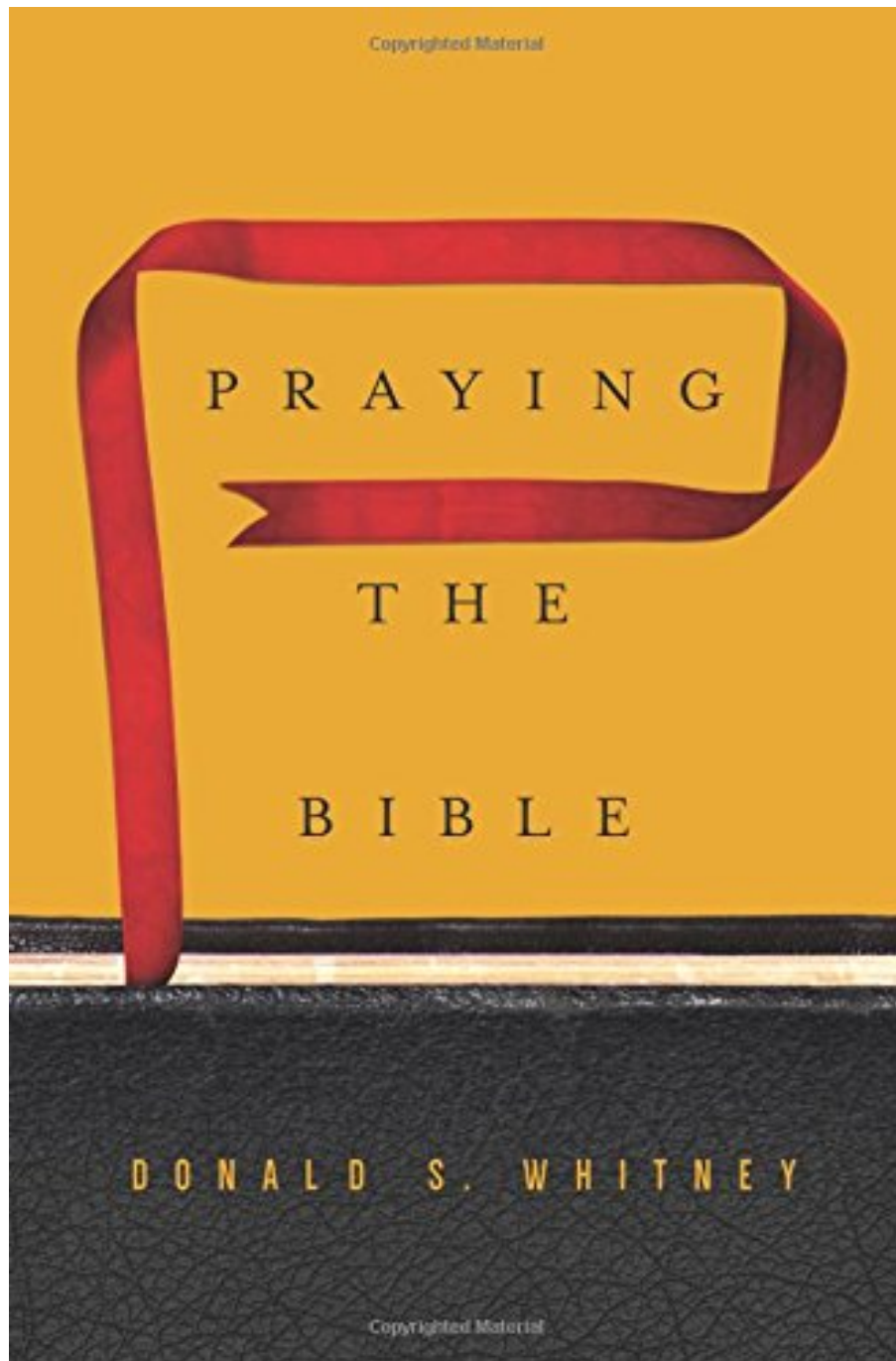


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Review

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“If you are looking for a book to teach you not only to pray but also to invigorate your intimacy with God through prayer, this is the one. I highly recommend this book written by a man who has instructed thousands of people about spiritual disciplines in academic circles and in church settings. My soul has been nourished as I have sat under Whitney’s teaching, especially on the topic of prayer. You and I need this book. You will be blessed in more than one way.”

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"All Christians know they should pray, but sometimes it's hard to know how—especially if the minutes start to drag and our minds start to wander. Offering readers hope, encouragement, and the practical advice they're looking for, this concise book by professor Donald Whitney outlines a simple, time-tested method that can help transform our prayer lives: praying the words of the Bible. Praying the Bible shows readers how to pray through portions of Scripture one line at a time, helping us stay focused by allowing God's Word itself to direct our thoughts and words. Simple yet profound, this resource will prove invaluable to all Christians as they seek to commune with their heavenly Father in prayer each and every day."

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Most helpful customer reviews

83 of 84 people found the following review helpful.

Simple but Powerful Help for Stale Prayer Lives

By Dave M

I struggle with prayer. I don't pray regularly or as much as I know I should. I don't have any excuses for this; it's the fruit of busyness and laziness and distraction. When I do pray, I sometimes run out of things to say, or my mind wanders. .

If you struggle with prayer like I do, Dr. Donald Whitney has a possible solution to help your prayer life. His upcoming book, *Praying the Bible*, describes an incredibly simple yet effective method for focusing our prayer using Scripture. This short and practical book lays out a simple method for praying through Scripture:

1. Select a passage of Scripture (usually a Psalm) and read it.
2. Read the first verse. If a subject for prayer comes to mind, stop and pray. Use the words of the Scripture to help guide your prayer.
3. When you're done with that verse, move on to the next verse.
4. Repeat until you run out of time.

It's really that simple. Dr. Whitney advises that the Psalms are the easiest Scriptures to pray through, and are most easily applicable to this method (though, with some modifications, you can pray through epistles and even some of the narrative portions of Scripture).

What Works

Dr. Whitney has been teaching this method of prayer for years as part of his "Personal Spiritual Disciplines" course at Southern Seminary, which is where I first encountered it when I took his course online. This method of praying through a Psalm is simple to do but I have benefited greatly from it. When I actually follow these steps, I don't have any problem finding things to pray for, and tend to have a rich prayer time. It's pathetic how little I actually put this into practice, because it really is beneficial.

Dr. Whitney says of this method:

"I have enough confidence in the Word and the Spirit of God to believe that if people pray in this way, in the long run their prayers will be far more Biblical than if they just make up their own prayers. That's what people usually do: make up their own prayers. What's the result? We tend to say the same old things about the same old things. And without the Scripture to shape our prayers, we are far more likely to pray in unbiblical ways than if we pray the thoughts that occur to us as we read Scripture."

I have to agree with this assessment. When I pray through Scripture this way, I find that I am turned outward more, focusing more on the attributes of God and the needs of others than on my own list of petty requests.

I also appreciate that Dr. Whitney avoids the trap of mystical language that is creeping into Evangelical/Baptist thought on prayer. He doesn't attribute this type of praying to an altered state of consciousness in which we are moved to pray in ways we don't intend as we get a "word." He is clear to say that we hear from God through His Word, rather than waiting for some mystical nudge that we attribute to the Spirit.

However, as much as I appreciate the method and approach of this book, I have a few concerns.

Possible Issues

First, there are a couple of quotes or stories that could be misinterpreted. For example, Dr. Whitney quotes Joni Eareckson Tada, who says that when we use God's words ("God's dialect"), we are "bringing God's power into our praying." I have no concerns about Tada's doctrinal soundness, and I think I know what she means here--praying God's Word leads us to pray God's Will, and when we pray God's Will, He works to bring it to pass for His great glory. However, in a day when Word-Faith heresy has been running rampant in Christianity, this statement can easily be misinterpreted as using God's words as totems and incantations to get what we want.

The bigger concern I have about this book is more about the intended audience. As I said, I first encountered Dr. Whitney's prayer method through his seminary class, and for seminarians (especially those like me who have a lot of head knowledge but need more passion in prayer sometimes), this method is perfectly appropriate. However, for new believers or those who have been taught/influenced by weak Bible teachers, this could be a bit risky. Why? Because there is a danger of narcissistic eisegesis (or, as Chris Rosebrough calls it, "Narcigesis.") Eisegesis means to read meaning into the text, instead of pulling the intended meaning out of the text (exegesis). Narcissistic eisegesis means to read oneself into the text, usually in the role of the hero of the story. What results is the terrible preaching of many popular megachurch pastors, in which every

Bible story becomes an analogy for you and your challenges. You are David facing your personal "giant." You are Daniel, working or going to school in your own "lion's den." You are Joshua, staring down a Jericho of work success or personal fulfillment.

What does this have to do with Dr. Whitney's book? Dr. Whitney says in the description of this prayer method that praying the Bible is different than studying the Bible. While Bible study involves mining the meaning and context of the passage in order to properly interpret the text, praying the Bible is not as focused on right interpretation as much as on using the language of the text for inspiration. To his great credit, he does provide several examples of how to pray through a text using proper interpretive approaches. However, if the reader has been trained to see the Bible in this narcissistic way, then even using Scripture in prayer becomes an exercise in pursuing selfish goals. David's prayers for the protection of Zion and the joy of God's people will become prayers for personal success and advancement. Psalms that point to the coming Messiah-King will be turned into cries for success over one's personal enemies. In short, if the reader doesn't understand what/Whom the Bible is really about, then praying the Bible may not produce the results Dr. Whitney hopes.

Final Analysis: Praying the Bible is really a great little book that can be a very useful tool for Christians who have a good basic understanding of the story of Scripture, and know how to read the text in context. With this knowledge in place, praying the Scriptures becomes a powerful tool in personal holiness. And even new or untrained believers can benefit from this book, as long as there is a more mature believer who can provide some practical guidance on the Scripture interpretation issue.

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Please Note: I was provided a complimentary electronic review copy of the book from the publisher in exchange for an unbiased review. The preceding thoughts are my own.

12 of 12 people found the following review helpful.

Simple yet powerful book on prayer

By johnre

This is a phenomenal book; indeed, I believe it has the power to rejuvenate and revolutionize my and others' prayer lives. In an effort to help his readers avoid "simply praying the same old things in the same old ways," Whitney basically urges his readers to read and pray through the Psalms and, to a lesser extent, other passages of the Bible. That may make it sound like the book itself is unnecessary, but I assure you, Whitney offers a good deal of practical advice and historical insight into how to practically "pray the Bible."

I'm docking it a star because of its repetition. For such a short book, I was a bit surprised by how many times Whitney repeated himself. Granted, the main idea behind the book (i.e. "Praying the Bible") is about as simple as it gets; still, Whitney might have done his readers a greater service by either shortening the book or including more instructive ways of "Praying the Bible" (that is, rather than repeating himself so much).

On a final positive note: a little over halfway through, Whitney urges his readers to pause and put into practice some of his advice. I was a bit hesitant to do so at first, but I'm glad I eventually bid farewell to my hesitation and obliged Whitney's request. I had one of the most rewarding times of prayer as a result of that practice, and in the month or so that I've been "Praying the Bible" since reading this book, my prayer life has gone from rather emaciated to quite robust.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful.

The Absolute Best Book on Prayer. Read it!

By Eric Mitchell

In a world overladen with books on prayer that leave one as overwhelmed as they were before, Dr. Whitney comes in with relief for the weary. This is - by far - the best book on prayer that I've ever read. That is no small compliment, especially in light of excellent books by devotional giants like Andrew Murray, Matthew Henry, and Martin Luther, to name a few. I cannot say enough great things about this book! There are several strengths to "Praying the Bible". Here, though, I will list only a few that come to mind:

1. Simplicity. It is the simplest book on prayer that you will ever find. Dr. Whitney is a scholar, but he is a pastor first, and it shows in how simple he lays out his tried and true method for prayer. He leads the dejected and spiritually parched Christian by the hand to an ever-flowing fountain of fresh spring water. My first-grader can follow this book and put it into practice.

2. Practicality. I've read some books on prayer that leave me lost in a fog, not knowing what to do. Prayer, above all, is a discipline to practice. It is something the Christian must do. Dr. Whitney gives the reader very concrete instructions and helps to immediately improve their prayer life. The reader leaves knowing exactly what to do and with a very clear plan on how to do it.

3. Theocentricity. That's the best word I could use to describe the overall flavor of the book. It points the reader back to his/her God. It drives the one who prays to the word of the One to whom they pray. It exalts the God of Scripture and his holy, inspired, inerrant word. This gives the reader a clear focus on God as they approach him in prayer. This is exactly what every Christian needs. Not just more methods, even simple, practical ones; but a reorientation to the glory of the Bible and the God who reveals himself to us there.

4. Brevity. I suppose this goes along with "simplicity" but it deserves its own mentioning. This book is very short. It is surprisingly short. You could pick it up and finish in a few hours, reading at a reasonable pace. However, I'd suggest taking a weekend to prayerfully work through the book. Dr. Whitney offers much profundity in very little space, and this is exactly what weary, prayerless sheep need.

Do yourself a favor worth a billion dollars to your soul. Grab your Bible and grab this book. Read every page of this book and do what it says. I did, and my prayer life has not been the same since. Thank you, Dr. Whitney!

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