

BOOKS FOR LENT

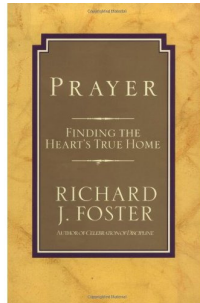
Reviewed by Sheila Veldman

Lent will be with us soon – a time for ‘spiritual stock-taking’, for ‘taking our bearings’ in life’s journey. Traditionally Lent observance is associated with the practice of prayer, fasting (or some other form of self-denial) & almsgiving. To help them draw closer to Christ at this time, many people devote more time to prayer, bible reading or study, or join a spiritual growth group or bible class.

Whatever approach you adopt, you may look for resources in the form of helpful books on spirituality, prayer or Christian living. We are blessed with many such books in our church library. To help prospective readers, a small selection of reviews follows.

PRAYER by Richard Foster

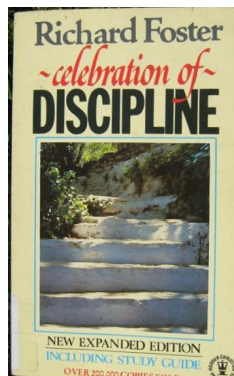
Genre: Prayer



One's approach to God in prayer depends on where one's coming from, each according to his needs. If you find prayer disappointing, frustrating, unsatisfying, this may be just the book for you. The writer shows us how to use the situation we are in, the here and now, as our starting point in the adventure of prayer. He makes plain how our day-to-day joys and sorrows, our needs and concerns, can draw us closer to explore "the many-splendoured heart of God".

A CELEBRATION OF DISCIPLINE by Richard Foster

Genre: The Christian Life



This is a highly practical, get-down-to-basics book on spiritual D.I.Y! The writer, a Quaker, gives plain and practical advice on how to deal with the needs and demands of Christian living in a world of superficial, materialistic values. He draws on the time-honoured Christian Disciplines : Meditation, Prayer, Fasting, Study, Simplicity, Solitude, Service, Submission,

Confession, Worship, Guidance, Celebration. He shows how these can serve to provide the right conditions for God's grace to operate in us and transform our lives. He convinces us that "God intends the disciplines of the spiritual life to be for ordinary human beings; people who have jobs, who care for children, who wash dishes and mow lawns".

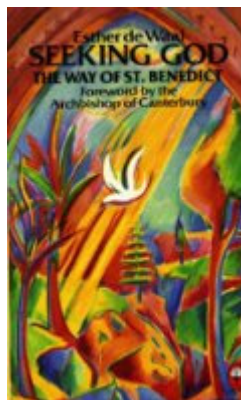
This book is particularly well suited for group use. The library also has the companion volume, a Study Guide with Notes, to assist group leaders.

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SEEKING GOD. THE WAY OF ST BENEDICT by Esther de Waal.

Genre: Christian Life



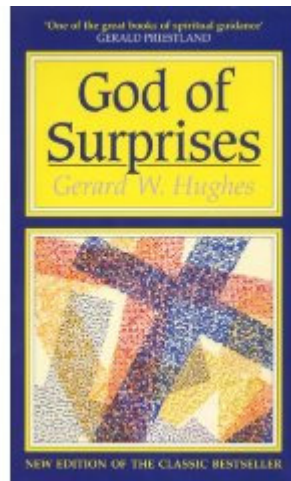
Here is an old 'Lent book' which has become a classic and doesn't date. The writer draws on wisdom drawn from her experiences as a wife and mother helping her husband in his career, bringing up children, running a hospitable home, and as an academic writing, teaching and lecturing. She takes the 6th century rule of St Benedict and shows how relevant its practical, balanced provisions are to life in the modern world.

The chapter headings – Listening, Stability, Change, Balance, Material Things, People, Authority and Praying – lead us to examine the challenges these issues represent in our own lives and to re-examine our own attitudes and responses to them. This book illuminated the way for me. I hope it may for you.

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GOD OF SURPRISES by Gerard Hughes SJ

Genre: Spirituality



The writer of this challenging book is a free-thinking Jesuit, unconventional and controversial. He likes to startle his readers and make them sit up and take notice! His objective in this book is to get us to re-examine our image of God and rid ourselves of the false perceptions that hinder spiritual progress and result in alienation from God. He makes us realize the importance of establishing at the outset WHAT KIND OF GOD? do we believe in.

He then leads us step by step, in pursuit of the “treasure of great price” buried deep within us. There is an uncompromising honesty and integrity about all Gerard Hughes’ writing. His spiritual ‘shock treatment’ is always stimulating and thought-provoking. This book is no exception.