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## Gonzalez's "Teach Us to Pray" (book review)

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# Book Reviews

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González, Justo L. (2020). *Teach us to pray: The Lord's Prayer in the early church and today*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans. 185 pp. \$16.99. ISBN 9780802877963

In *Teach us to Pray: The Lord's Prayer in the Early Church and Today*, prolific scholar and pastor Justo L. González argues that the Lord's Prayer is more than just a prayer for Christians to pray, but rather a guide for how Christians should always pray. González uses his skills as a historical theologian and a pastor to guide the reader through church history, word studies, discussions on biblical translations, and issues of canonicity to teach the reader what the Lord's Prayer means in its biblical setting, how it has been used throughout church history, and how to apply it in a contemporary setting.

Far from being an inaccessible academic tome, González's volume is readable and approachable. He writes for a broad audience ranging from motivated laypeople to teachers. Each chapter covers a section or word from The Lord's Prayer, showing its biblical and historical context and exploring contemporary applications.

He carries out his goal, with a few notable issues. Early in the volume he refers to the *Didache* in a manner suggesting he had mentioned it previously. After scouring the Introduction this reviewer found the reference to the *Didache* in a quote from the *Didache* in the Introduction; however, the only way one would know the source of the quote was by reading the end notes. While customary practice for academics to always read endnotes and footnotes, this could cause confusion for the average layperson who may regularly skip over endnotes and footnotes.

There is also not much context for the various historical pastors, bishops, and theologians that González cites throughout the volume. While this does not detract from the overall content of the book, Gonzalez's choice of historical figures could be confusing for some readers who have not had a least one church history class. While outside the scope of this volume, an appendix with a short summary biography on each historical figure or a suggested reading list would have been beneficial for the readers not as familiar with church history.

Overall, González masterfully takes the complexities of The Lord's Prayer and distills them into meaningful and rich teachings that are not only relevant to all Christians but provocative and challenging. The book ends with discussion questions for individual reflection or group discussion, end notes, and two indexes.

*Teach us to Pray* is suitable for personal, pastoral, church, and some academic libraries. While González wrote this for a broad audience, academic libraries that support degrees related to spiritual formation and pastoral ministry would find this book relevant to their collection development. It is also a notable example of a book that takes complex theological and historical lessons and applies them in a church setting.

**Reviewer**

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