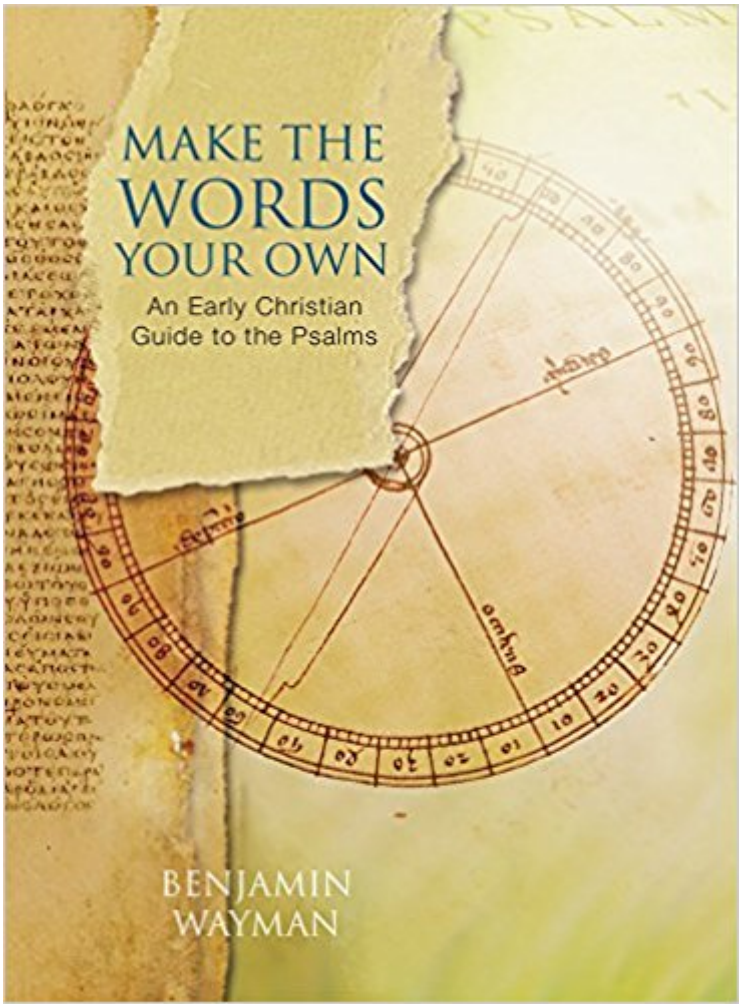
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Make The Words Your Own: An Early Christian Guide To The Psalms



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Synopsis

The Psalms have been the prayer book of GodÃ¢â ¬â„¢s people for three thousand years. But many Christians today are at a loss for how to read the Psalms, and so are largely unfamiliar with how the Psalms can teach us to pray.Make the Words Your Own: An Early Christian Guide to the Psalms recreates the earliest surviving Christian guide for personal devotion on the Psalms ever writtenÃ¢â ¬â •by pastor and saint, Athanasius. This book invites you to engage the Psalms just as you areÃ¢â ¬â •with the hope of becoming all you were meant to be in Christ.

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Customer Reviews

"An ideal guide to praying the Psalms. Athanasius has found a diligent and sympathetic advocate and friend in Ben Wayman."Ã Â Ã¢â ¬â •David Bentley Hart, contributing editor ofÃ Â First ThingsÃ Â and author ofÃ Â The Beauty of the Infinite"Since discovering the importance of fixed-hour prayer for a life of action, I've encouraged thousands of people to pray the Psalter as part of Common Prayer. Many of them have asked, "But how do you make these prayers your own?" Ben Wayman is enough of a scholar to know that others have asked this question before. I'm so glad he's given us this ancient resource from Athanasius, the same father of the church who gave us the first biography of a monastic."Ã¢â ¬â •Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, author ofÃ Â The Wisdom of StabilityMy first thoughts upon praying with this book for the last week were Ã¢â ¬Å“This guide is going to crack open the Psalms for me. I expectÃ Â Make the Words Your OwnÃ Â will have a permanent place on my bookshelf.Ã¢â ¬Â• After praying them for two weeks, I

thought Ã¢â ¬Å“This guide will crack me open to the Psalms. I expect it to be off my bookshelf, and in my hands, often.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã Â Ã¢â ¬â •Lauren F. Winner, author ofÃ Â Mudhouse SabbathÃ Â andÃ Â Wearing GodChristians today are at a loss for how to read the Psalms. Many of us know the Psalms have played an essential role in Christian life and thought throughout the history of the church, but we have fallen out of practice in praying them and so are largely unfamiliar with how the Psalms can make us better disciples. In Ã¢â ¬Å“Make the Words Your Own: An Early Christian Guide to the PsalmsÃ¢â ¬Â• (Paraclete Press),Ã Â Benjamin D. WaymanÃ Â Ã¢â ¬â • a pastor atÃ Â St. PaulÃ¢â ¬â„¢s Free Methodist ChurchÃ Â in Greenville, Illinois, and an assistant professor of religion at Greenville CollegeÃ Â Ã¢â ¬â • recreates the earliest surviving Christian guide for personal devotion on the Psalms ever written Ã¢â ¬â œ by pastor and saint Athanasius. Athanasius is one of the most important pastors in the history of the church. He is best known for his theological leadership in the tumultuous years after the first general church council at Nicaea in 325 and his adamant opposition to the controversial teachings of the popular Alexandrian priest Arius. Ã¢â ¬Å“Make the Words Your OwnÃ¢â ¬Â• introduces modern Christians to Athanasius the pastor who, in response to a request from one of his sickly parishioners, wrote a letter that offers a detailed guide to nearly every single psalm. Later Christians found the guidance of Athanasius so useful that they placed it as an introduction to the Psalms in their manuscripts of the Bible and circulated it broadly for the next thousand years. Ã¢â ¬Å“I wrote this book to introduce Christians today to a fresh reading of the Psalms that draws from the best of our ancient heritage. This book invites Christians to engage the Psalms personally Ã¢â ¬â • as you are Ã¢â ¬â • with the hope of becoming all you were meant to be in Christ,Ã¢â ¬Â• Wayman said. Ã¢â ¬Å“Thus, the Psalter meets us at the depths of our own suffering or betrayal or guilt and transforms our language and lives into the words and faithfulness of Christ himself. That Athanasius has been considered a saint is no small matter, and we would do well to follow the wise and mature guidance of this faithful follower of Jesus. Ã Â Ã¢â ¬Å“For modern use, I have retooled AthanasiusÃ¢â ¬â„¢ guide by dividing his counsel into eight categories Ã¢â ¬â œ Psalms for the Suffering, for the Betrayed, for the Harassed, for the Guilty, for the Thankful, for Reflection, for Instruction, for Daily Life. AthanasiusÃ¢â ¬â„¢ guidance is then accompanied by the respective psalm to allow for a devotional reading of the Psalter.Ã¢â ¬Â• Wayman holds a Ph.D. in historical theology from St. Louis University and an M.Div. from the Divinity School at Duke University.Ã¢â ¬â •Light and Life MagazineMake the Words Your OwnÃ Â is a book for reflection, meditation, and prayer. Like all Christian prayer, it invites us to pray, not as individuals, but with the company of Christians around the world and through the ages who have prayed the psalmsÃ¢â ¬Â| WaymanÃ¢â ¬â„¢s guide to

the psalms brings its readers into contact, not only with one of the ChurchÃ¢â ¬â„¢s great teachers, but with the living God who is present among us, as we make the words of this ancient book of prayer our own. Ã¢â ¬â •Robert Louis Wilken, University of VirginiaÃ Â

"Wayman reinvigorates the ancient voice of Athanasius, a true pastor of souls, by allowing him to speak tenderly to his flock, even today."Ã Â Ã¢â ¬â •Fr. David V. Meconi, SJ, editor of Homiletic and Pastoral Review (from the afterword) "We should be grateful to Ben Wayman for rescuing Athanasius'sÃ Â Letter to Marcellinus...Ã Â [T]his book defies the distinction between doctrine and devotion."Ã¢â ¬â •Stanley Hauerwas, author of HannahÃ¢â ¬â„¢s Child (from the foreword)

In a class with Dr. Ben Wayman, we spent a month praying three Psalms per day. I struggled with the process at first, but as time went on I found that it was an enlightening process. It helped me move from seeing God as cosmic and disconnected-- as is the wont of most Christians-- and seeing Him as being present and real in the face of trials, hardships, and joys. Through praying Psalms of lament, of reminder of God’s works, and expressing trust in Him, I grew to see God more solidly as a present help in troubled times. I am much more aware of Him and take much greater comfort in His works and promises as a result of this practice. This book is a beautiful help in such a practice, and I highly recommend it.

Praying the Psalms has connected me to God in a fresh way by teaching me that rehearsed prayer can be just as powerful as extemporaneous prayer. Growing up as a pastor’s kid, I lived under the assumption that rehearsed prayer was, for lack of a better word, heretical.. As I prayed Psalm 23 out loud, however, a since of peace that I have felt only one other time in my life washed over me. Dr. Wayman does a great job of helping to bring back a tradition that is at the root of Christianity.

Very happy with this book.

If I were to describe this book in one word, it would be "helpful". Wayman’s Make the Words Your Own: An Early Christian Guide to the Psalms is a practical help toward the reading, the utility and the praying of the Psalms. Wayman begins by succinctly describing the theology of the Psalms according to early church theologian and pastor, Athanasius. In his dual role as pastor and theologian, Athanasius encourages Christians to utilize the Psalms as personal prayers, to hold fast to the specific Spirit-filled words of the Psalter, and then to make the words their own.The balance of

the book is a guide to the use of the Psalms. Wayman helpfully categorizes the Psalms and provides simple summary statements to assist the reader/pray-er to practically apply each one. In doing so, he resurrects the previous work of Athanasius - a one-time household name in the Judeo-Christian West - and encourages us to heed his wisdom once again. I look forward to making use of this helpful and practical guide in my own prayer life.In addition, Wayman has re-whet my appetite for the writings of Athanasius. For about a year now, I've had a copy of Athanasius's Life of Antony and the Letter to Marcellinus on my shelf waiting to get to the front of the line and be read. After reading Wayman's Make the Words Your Own: An Early Christian Guide to the Psalms, I think it won't be on my shelf much longer.

I love the Psalms. They reveal and revel in the goodness of God for his people Israel. The point to the coming Messiah. They are ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Ëœa mirror for self-understanding,ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ exploring the whole range of human emotion and offering it back to God. Athanasius, one of the Church Fathers, said that in the Psalms you find depicted ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“all the movements of the soul, all its changes, its ups and downs, its failures and recoveriesÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• (xv). He saw that the psalms had words appropriate for the whole range of human of experience, and that by praying these words, we are taught how to speak to God about our life. We become involved in a ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Ëœself-involving discourse with GodÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ (xviii).In AthanasiusÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ letter to Marcellinus he exhorts his friend to take hold of the Psalms and to pray the words written on the page:Each person sings what has been written as about himself or herself, not at all as if receiving and reciting what was intended for someone else, they take it as their own, as if the words were theirs and offer it to God as though they had composed the words themselves (xviii)He goes on his letter to suggest different psalms for prayer in particular circumstances. Unfortunately AthanasiusÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ letter remains opaque to many ordinary, western reader. In part this is do to how he lists off references to Psalms, almost haphazzardly on a range of topics. Also his numbering of Psalms follows the Septuagint (which differs from modern translations which follow the Masoretic text).Benjamin Wayman has done us a service in his presentation of the Psalms employed by Athanasius in his pastoral counsel. In Make the Words Your Own he provides a brief overview of AthanasiusÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ theology of the psalms (and the importance he places in the actual words of the psalms for our own growth in virtue), and AthanasiusÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ litany of psalms under eight headings: (1) Psalms of suffering; (2) Psalms for the Betrayed; (3) Psalms for the Harassed; (4) Psalms for the Guilty; (5) Psalms for the Thankful; (6) Psalms for Reflection; (7) Psalms for instruction; (8) Psalms for Daily Life. The Psalms

in each section have as their heading AthanasiusÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ own words from his letter to Marcellinus.Because these Psalms are arranged topically, they do not fall in AthanasiusÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ original order; however this makes a useful guideÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â œdirecting readers to particular psalms which address their physical circumstances or emotional state. Wayman also follows the contemporary (Western) numbering of the Psalms with the versification from the Book of Common Prayer Psalter.AthanasiusÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ headings are generally insightful, though occasionally awkward for modern ears. For example, he introduces Psalm 2 with, ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“If you want to condemn the evil plot of the Jews against the Savior you have Psalm 2ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â (145). Centuries of Antisemitism have proven that ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Ëœcondemn the evil plot of the JewsÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ is a rather bad shorthand for the Jewish priesthoodÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s plot againt Jesus. Wayman lets AthanasiusÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ word stand without comment. I wonder at the wisdom of this.In general I think this is a really useful presentation of AthanasiusÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ pastoral insights of the Psalms and a accessible guide to the psalms for prayer. I recommend this to anyone interested in the spirituality of the psalms and wants to deepen their prayer life. Lay readers interested in patristics will also find this useful. I give this book five stars: ÃƒÂ¢Ã ËœÃ â | ÃƒÂ¢Ã ËœÃ â | ÃƒÂ¢Ã ËœÃ â | ÃƒÂ¢Ã ËœÃ â | ÃƒÂ¢Ã ËœÃ â |Notice of material connection: I received this book from Paraclete Press in exchange for my honest review.

This is a wonderful book. It’s practical without being simplistic. It introduces the ancient wisdom of Athanasius and shows why we should still care about what Athanasius cared about--being personally and communally conformed to the words of scripture, particularly the Psalms. Most Christians know the Psalms have mattered immensely throughout the history of the church, but such knowledge is not always enough to make us read the Psalms. This book, in the short time I’ve had it in my hands, has made me glad to read the Psalms. I can think of no one better to guide our reading of the Psalms than Athanasius, and I’m grateful Wayman has introduced contemporary readers to Athanasius’s direction.

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