

EXCERPT



Prayers for the Pilgrimage ***A Book of Collects for All of Life***

June 4, 2024 | \$25, 208 pages, casebound | 978-1-5140-0823-2

During the pandemic, priest and theologian David Taylor began writing collects (an ancient form of short prayer) as a daily spiritual exercise. As time went on, he began to receive requests for written prayers from friends and even strangers for a wide variety of circumstances and needs. His collection of prayers grew until it numbered in the hundreds. This book is a compilation of Taylor's prayers, arranged by topic and accompanied by a series of paintings by his wife, Phaedra. Here are prayers for morning and evening, work and play, public life and private life, doubt and faith from birth to death.

What Is a Collect?

Three questions that I've often answered over the past few years are: What exactly is a collect? Is it a *CAW*-lect or a *cuh-LECT*? (It's the former.) And why did I choose to work nearly exclusively with this form of prayer?

A collect is an old form of prayer, concise in form, and immensely useful to any circumstance of life. It is also a theologically disciplined prayer. Dating back to the fifth century, the collect is rooted in a basic biblical pattern that "collects" the prayers of God's people.² As C. Frederick Barbee and Paul F. M. Zahl explain:

This at-first extemporaneous prayer would later also be connected to the Epistle and Gospel appointed for the day. A Collect is a short prayer that asks "for one thing only" . . . and is peculiar to the liturgies of the Western Churches, being unknown in the Churches of the East. It is also a literary form (an art comparable to the sonnet) usually, but not always, consisting of five parts.

The "five parts" that Barbee and Zahl speak of include, nearly always, the following things:

1. Name God.
2. Remember God's activity or attributes.
3. State your petition.
4. State your desired hope.
5. End by naming God again.

While covering a good deal of ground, the collect is notable for its economy. It's a blessedly short prayer. It's short because it typically revolves around one idea only, which in principle is drawn from Scripture. In doing so, several benefits accrue to the one who prays it.

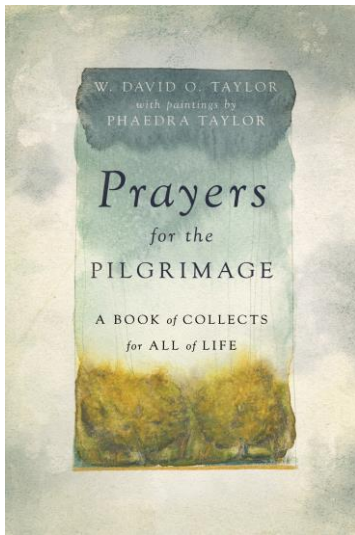
Most basically, it invites us to call to mind what God has done in the past before we make our present petitions known. We remember *before* we request, and we look back on the faithfulness of God in the lives of others *prior* to welcoming the faithfulness of God in our own.

The collect also offers an opportunity to discover how the triune God attends to the details of our lives. If the devil is in the details, as the common saying goes, God is in the details infinitely more so. God is intimately interested in those specific aspects of our lives—doing laundry, suffering illness, aging rapidly, fighting traffic, spending time with a friend—where we find ourselves actually believing, or disbelieving, that God wishes to meet us in the pain and pleasure of our life's circumstances.



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"I thank God for Prayers for the Pilgrimage. Prayer is the root system that feeds and nurtures our life with God. Author W. David O. Taylor has provided us with just such a root system. Watercolor paintings by Phaedra J. Taylor placed at the beginning of each section are a lovely addition to this collection. They encourage us to pause in our reading and praying for quiet reflection and meditation. Prayers for the Pilgrimage is a treasure. Get it. Read it. Pray it."

—Richard J. Foster, author of *Celebration of Discipline* and *Learning Humility*

Another way of making this point is that the collect is a concrete species of prayer. It deals with one concrete thing without, hopefully, devolving to idiosyncratic vocabulary. My prayer for the pandemic, for instance, was born out of a specific experience that was foisted upon our world, but its language is "open" enough to make it useful to present-day circumstances where plague-like tragedies may require a prayer drawn from the ancient language of the psalmists.

The stuff of life, then, that populates collect prayers is of a concrete sort, without being distractingly subjective, and in this way the prayers offer themselves as universally accessible, capable of being prayed by all sorts of people in all manner of life settings.

Collects are typically *written* prayers. Some of us who, like me, were reared in contexts where extemporaneous prayers were privileged over written ones may feel uncomfortable praying such prayers. While it may take a little getting used to, written prayers offer us a unique gift, as I have come to experience firsthand.

In this vein, I've given a good deal of attention to crafting these prayers in the hope they will reward repeated praying. Much like the poetry of the Psalms, collects involve a dense mix of language and imagery, and the words at best say exactly what needs saying to God and what needs saying *continually* to God.

For those who feel that their prayer lives have dried up, our hope is that they will discover in these pages fresh language to revitalize their prayer lives. For those who seek help to pray the common aspects of their lives—when grumpy or happy, after nightmares, or for tasks that seem impossible, like facing the onset of dementia or the possibility of an irreparable marriage—we trust that they will find plenty of practical assistance for such matters.

For those who find themselves at the margins of the church or, worse, on the brink of losing their faith, our sincerest hope is that they will find here language that lets them give honest expression to the hard edges of their personal lives, as with, say, a struggle against a mental disorder or to the damaged aspects of their common lives today, such as the warmongering of politicians or the abusive behavior of church leaders.

May these prayers help you to open up your heart to God anew and strengthen your bonds of affection with fellow pilgrims who earnestly wish for the same. And may you find joy afresh in your life of prayer with the God who meets you in the face of Jesus Christ and whose Spirit lovingly guides and guards you on the pilgrim way (Psalm 84:5).

—adapted from the introduction

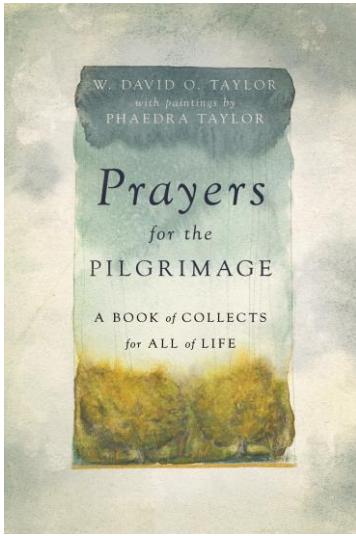


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"I'm so grateful for the work of David and Phaedra Taylor, as they both point us toward the heart of the Lord. May we all draw closer to the beauty of the Lord through these prayers and paintings."

—Jamie Ivey, author and host of the podcast *The Happy Hour with Jamie Ivey*

Dynamic, Creative, Liturgical Duo

"When two en-Spirited people, wife and husband, join to offer their gifts of writing and art in a single volume, the blessing is doubled for readers. As David and Phaedra Taylor share in this book what moves and inspires them, it will speak into your heart and mind as their words and images rise from the page to enrich you."

—Luci Shaw, writer-in-residence at Regent College and author of *Reversing Entropy*



DAVID TAYLOR is a theologian, author, speaker, priest, and director of initiatives in art and faith. A professor at Fuller Theological Seminary, he has lectured widely on the arts, from Thailand to South Africa. He has written for *The Washington Post*, *Image Journal*, *Theology Today*, *Worship*, *Religion News Service*, *Christianity Today*, and *Books & Culture*, among others. He is the author of *Open and Unafraid: The Psalms and the Life of Faith* (Thomas Nelson: 2020), *Glimpses of the New Creation: Worship and the Formative Power of the Arts* (Eerdmans: 2019), and *The Theater of God's Glory: Calvin, Creation and the Liturgical Arts* (Eerdmans: 2017). He is also editor of *For the Beauty of the Church* (Baker, 2010) and co-editor of *Contemporary Art and the Church: A Conversation between Two Worlds* (IVP Academic, 2017) as well as *The Art of New Creation: Trajectories in Theology and the Arts* (IVP Academic, 2022). He lives in Austin with his wife, Phaedra, a visual artist and gardener, and his daughter, Blythe, and son, Sebastian.

PHAEDRA JEAN TAYLOR completed her BFA in sculpture at the University of North Texas. Her work has been exhibited in juried, group, and solo exhibitions, and is held in private collections of various individuals around the globe. She lives in Austin, Texas with her husband, David, and two children, Blythe and Sebastian. Together they make creative liturgical resources for families and church communities.



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