



Theology Q1

Why pray?

Recommended Readings

Historical Resources

John Locke Works

1. "The Reasonableness of Christianity" (1695)

Examines the rational foundations of Christian practices including prayer

Discusses how prayer relates to faith and reason

Explores prayer as communication with the divine

2. "An Essay Concerning Human Understanding" (1689)

In Book IV, Locke discusses our knowledge of God and relationship with the divine

Explores the limits of human understanding in relation to divine communication

Provides a framework for thinking about how finite beings might relate to an infinite God

3. "Some Thoughts Concerning Education" (1693)



Theology Category - Recommended Readings

Discusses the role of prayer in moral education

Examines prayer as a practice for developing virtue

Considers habitual prayer as formative for character

Other Historical Works

1. "Pensées" by Blaise Pascal (1670)

Explores prayer as existential engagement with God

Discusses the paradox of communication between finite and infinite beings

Presents prayer as both rational and beyond reason

2. "The Varieties of Religious Experience" by William James (1902)

Examines prayer as a psychological phenomenon

Documents various forms of prayer across traditions

Explores the subjective effects of prayer on practitioners



3. "The Practice of the Presence of God" by Brother Lawrence (17th century)

Presents prayer as continuous awareness of God

Describes prayer beyond formal practices

Explores the integration of prayer into everyday activities

Contemporary Resources

1. "Prayer: Does It Make Any Difference?" by Philip Yancey (2006)

Examines common questions about prayer's efficacy

Explores both theological and practical dimensions of prayer

Considers prayer from both devotional and skeptical perspectives

2. "The Psychology of Prayer: A Scientific Approach" by Bernard Spilka and Kevin Ladd (2012)

Presents empirical research on prayer practices

Examines psychological benefits of prayer



Explores cognitive dimensions of prayer across traditions

3. "When Prayer Fails: Faith Healing, Children, and the Law" by Shawn Francis Peters (2007)

Examines ethical and legal questions about prayer's limits

Explores tensions between faith in prayer and other responsibilities

Presents case studies where prayer was chosen over medical intervention

4. "How God Changes Your Brain" by Andrew Newberg and Mark Waldman (2009)

Presents neuroscientific research on meditation and prayer

Examines neurological changes associated with prayer practices

Explores biological mechanisms behind prayer's reported benefits

5. "The Efficacy of Prayer" by C.S. Lewis (essay in "The World's Last Night," 1960)

Explores philosophical questions about how prayer might "work"



Examines whether prayer changes God, the person praying, or both

Addresses the paradox of petitionary prayer to an omniscient God

6. "Beginning to Pray" by Anthony Bloom (1970)

Explores prayer as encounter rather than technique

Examines prayer as relationship rather than transaction

Presents prayer as discovery rather than rote practice

7. "Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home" by Richard Foster (1992)

Categorizes different types of prayer (contemplative, petitionary, intercessory, etc.)

Examines prayer traditions across Christian history

Explores prayer as transformative practice

8. "The Phenomenon of Prayer" edited by Fran Porter, Mark Shelton, and Richard Tiplady
(2004)



John Locke Global Essay Prize 2025 Prompts Breakdown

Theology Category - Recommended Readings



Collection of interdisciplinary essays on prayer

Examines prayer from theological, psychological, and sociological perspectives

Explores prayer in various cultural and religious contexts

