

2010

# The Resource Page

... creative and practical ideas

Brought to you this month  
by C. Franklin Granger

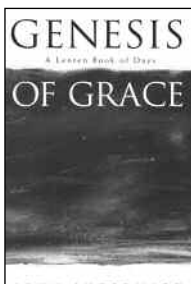


## Lenten studies on grace, biblical spirituality and prayer

Following are summaries of three study pieces appropriate for use during the season of Lent (or other times in the Christian year) and in various settings.

The following two books by John Indermark are collections of daily readings (2-3 pages long) that incorporate scriptural passages accompanied by comment and reflection. They may be used by individuals or by small study groups in Sunday school or elsewhere. The studies fit into a 6-7 week period with a study/leader's guide available for purchase.

*Genesis of Grace: A Lenten Book of Days* (Upper Room Books, 1997) offers readers the opportunity to experience Genesis as a narrative of real persons trusting God, failing God and being redeemed by God's grace with the invitation to discover God's grace within their own lives.

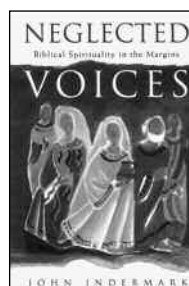


In the first reading, Indermark questions the connection of the goodness in Genesis 1 and the tradition of the fingerprint of ashes on foreheads at Ash Wednesday. He points out that these fingerprints on the characters in the Genesis text challenge the misconception that Old Testament is law and New Testament is grace.

The stories of Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Noah and the Flood, Abraham and Sarah and the patriarchs, and the Joseph narrative are all included. In Indermark's explanation of the renaming of Abram to Abraham and Sarai to Sarah, he notes that "their lives still cradle new promise" and that it is grace that enables these two to become someone new. Then he asks, "Who will grace enable you to become?"

*Neglected Voices: Biblical Spirituality in the Margins* (Upper Room Books, 1999) takes

readers on a scriptural journey with lesser-known biblical characters in the "margins." Indermark suggests that while these may be considered minor figures in scripture, their stories are not minor in meaning or significance. He reveals how these biblical commoners affirm "the existence of vital spirituality in persons far removed from the limelight."



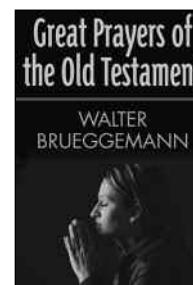
Three biblical characters are introduced and discussed in each week's focus theme. The daily reading includes the corresponding scripture passage for the character, a brief exploration with insight and meaning, and a brief sentence prayer/meditation. The final reading is a reflection on the theme for the week, incorporating the three characters reviewed.

The six themes are: beginnings, renunciation, trust, courage, servanthood and promises. Characters are taken from both testaments and include men and women such as Rahab, Barnabas, Dinah, a daughter of Jacob, Haman, Nathan and Phoebe. Indermark invites participants to explore biblical spirituality through these and other individuals, learning of the "possibility of fresh beginnings," "the discipline of renouncing old ways" and trusting God "with gracious abandon."

*Great Prayers of the Old Testament* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2008) by Walter Brueggemann could be used as a resource for preaching a series on prayer in the Old Testament, for a study in a Sunday school class or a weekday or evening group Bible study, or as personal reading to enrich one's approach and perspective on prayer.

In it, Brueggemann describes prayer as the "human reach toward Holy Mystery and Holy Ultimacy." He reminds us of our familiarity of the Psalms as a great source of the full range of types and emotions in prayer. However, in this exploration of prayers he points out that the prayers of the people of Israel also occur in the narrative.

Brueggemann calls the prayer of Israel "dialogical" reflecting a genuine transaction between two parties — a "real exchange between engaged agents." Prayer is a daring act, he says, intended to connect the present urgent situation and context with the authority and compassion and holiness of God. He does not imply that prayer is easy; prayer requires "great faith and courage." In fact, he says, "It would be safer (better?) not to pray."



Brueggemann claims the prayers voiced by Israel are applicable, even necessary, for 21st century living. They counter the idolatry around us and the sense of self-sufficiency fostered in our world and also reflect a commitment to be in active dialogue with God.

*Great Prayers of the Old Testament* is organized into 12 chapters, with each chapter focusing on a different character and prayer. Prayers of Moses, Hannah, David, Hezekiah, Daniel and Job are included, among others. Brueggemann includes commentary on the context and background of these prayers as well as a deep investigation of the prayer dialogue between the individual and God. Each chapter concludes with questions for reflection and discussion. **BT**

**THE RESOURCE PAGE** is provided by the Congregational Life office of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship in partnership with *Baptists Today* and for those dedicated lay leaders working in the educational ministries of local churches. This month's page was written by C. Franklin Granger, minister of education at First Baptist Church of Athens, Ga. Resource Page Archives are available at <http://www.thefellowship.info/Resources/Church-Resources/Baptists-Today-resource-page>.