

Kara K. Root. *Receiving This Life: Practicing the Deepest Belonging*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2023. 306 pages. \$25.

Kara Root has many years of experience serving churches and pastoring believers, including leading “a community shaped around noticing God together, then helping one another participate in God’s love in the world” (back cover). This work is the companion volume to Root’s earlier work, *The Deepest Belonging* (2021), which explored the places where God meets his people.

The present work is a creative endeavor comprising various sorts and modes of writing in order to accomplish Root’s purpose. “In this book I am inviting us to practice a kind of openness and receptivity to something we can’t conjure or create” (4). There are six parts to the book, and a total of thirty chapters. The six parts fall under the headings “receiving what is,” “receiving what’s difficult,” “receiving what God is doing,” “receiving what God has already done,” “receiving what will be,” and “receiving this life.” These subjects prod readers to awareness of and openness to God in their midst in various life circumstances. She writes, “Our living, every moment, is infused with the presence of God. . . . The most fundamental calling of the human being is to receive with gratitude this life we have been given” (10).

Each of the six parts begins with prose-style chapters, exploring these various themes. Root weaves together her own stories and excerpts from various source materials (especially theological) to bring readers to an appropriate disposition of receptivity. Each part also includes prayers and practices. For instance, Root offers a “Liturgy of the Cell Phones” with a “Prayer for Releasing Phones,” and a “Prayer for Retrieving Phones.” The book includes dozens of prayers and blessings, such as “A Garden Blessing,” “Prayer for the Remembrance of a Painful Day,” “The Hedgehog Blessing—A Back-to-School Blessing for Children and Teachers,” and “A Prayer for the Anxious.”

The merits of the book are many and these include its ushering readers into communion with God and others. The book is crafted sincerely, reverently, honestly, and joyfully. It invites readers and communities of readers into an experience of God. It engages readers holistically, not only cerebrally. The book offers devotional-esque chapters and practices. The work is more than a mere anthology of prayers. The prose chapters counterbalance the practical content, offering helpful commentary and guidance for readers. The interplay between the two (prose and prayer) is very helpful. Still, weaknesses of the work may be perceived. In places, the smorgasbord of materials lacks obvious unity and direction. In other places (within the prose writing, for example), greater concision in writing may have been achieved. But, these weaknesses are small in proportion to the many strengths of the work.

Audiences for such a book include anyone desirous of deepening their relationship with God, and especially those who have benefitted from Root’s first volume, *The Deepest Belonging*. The book also could function as a reference work (for instance, no one knows when they may need a “Prayer for a Difficult Person” (222–23) or any number of the prayers and blessings Root provides). The book would work well for small group gatherings, as something to guide discussion and practice which would also foster relationship. It would function well in a course that seeks to teach spiritual disciplines. The book has much to recommend it, including its broad appeal to various readerships.

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