An ongoing need in missiology today is the formation of spirituality for mission. Sometimes spiritual practices are divorced from missional application—seen as useful meditative moments to help believers escape from the world but not practices that attune them to what God is doing in the world. Yet missional activism can equally lose its connection with a spiritual wellspring that sustains and focuses it in the midst of everyday life and mission. How is mission and spirituality best held together? This is a huge topic. One simple and yet profound place to start is the Lord’s Prayer.

Mission workers can learn a lot from a fresh reading and practice of the Lord’s Prayer for a distinctively missional spirituality. And missiology as a discipline can welcome the socio-cultural background and literary analysis of the Lord’s Prayer offered by Catholic New Testament scholar John Dominic Crossan. One of the most influential writers on Jesus and his context, Crossan has been researching Jesus’ first-century world for forty years and wanted to test his conclusions against Jesus’ prayer. Crossan unpacks the poetic structure, prophetic background and justice-focused themes that make the Lord’s Prayer far more significant than simply something to religiously recite in church worship.

Crossan reminds his readers that to pray the Lord’s Prayer is to take an active interest in asking God to help the world be more in line with God’s purposes. Its essence is “a prayer from the heart of Judaism on the lips of Christianity for the conscience of the world…a radical manifesto and a hymn of hope for all humanity in language addressed to all the earth” (2). He describes it as revolutionary because of its vision of distributive justice for the world. He reads “Our Father” in a way that is beyond patriarchy and that appeals to God as householder of earth who wants to provide for all. To pray for God’s holiness evokes the holiness codes and Sabbath and Jubilee rhythms and their advocacy for those on the margins. To pray for God’s kingdom and will is to invite a “great divine cleanup” of peace, equality and banquette-like provision for all. Even the prayers that have apparently personal focus—provision of daily bread, forgiveness and protection from temptation—should also be prayed for those who do not have enough bread, who suffer from crippling debt, and who are tempted towards escalatory violence in an unforgiving world. Crossan describes it as the greatest prayer because it is so world-embracing in its scope and interest.

A valuable lesson which Crossan develops is that prayer is not divorced from action. He frames prayer as “empowerment by participation in and collaboration with God” (10). It is not just about request and gratitude, or saying “please” and “thanks”, but also participating and collaborating with God in action for justice. Moving through prayers of request and thanksgiving to prayers of empowerment is a healthy sign of maturity. Although not using the explicit term, Crossan encourages participating and collaborating in *missio Dei*, the mission of God. Crossan writes:

“...We owe it to God to run God’s world responsibly. We owe the divine Householder the conservation of the world house; we owe the divine Homemaker the conservation of the earth home. We owe God adequate care of all God’s creation. We owe God collaboration in hallowing God’s name, in establishing God’s kingdom, and in doing God’s will “as in heaven so also on earth”. We owe it to God to cease focusing on heaven, especially in order to avoid focusing on earth. We owe it to God to ensure that there is enough food and not too much debt in God’s well-run Household”

(155).

This is an accessible book suitable for thoughtful Christians or church study groups looking for inspiration in the background and themes of the Lord’s Prayer. It has inspired this reviewer to freshly pray and teach through the radically revolutionary themes of the Lord’s Prayer. But it also has a depth of analysis that will interest readers in Crossan’s field of expertise—New Testament biblical studies—as well as students of spirituality and missiology.