



Praying for Strangers: An Adventure of the Human Spirit

River Jordan

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What if there was something readers could do that could positively influence others and change their lives in the process?

As 2009 approached, New Year's resolutions were the last thing on River Jordan's mind. Her sons were both about to go off to war and all she could do was pray for their safety and hope to maintain her strength, until she unexpectedly came upon the perfect New Year's resolution-one that focused on others instead of herself. She would pray for a complete stranger every single day for a year.

In *Praying for Strangers*, River Jordan tells of her amazing personal journey of uncovering the needs of the human heart as she prayed her way through the year for people she had never met before. The discovery that Jordan made along the journey was not simply that her prayers touched the lives of these strangers, but that the unexpected connections she made with other people would be a profound experience that would change her life forever.

Praying for Strangers: An Adventure of the Human Spirit Details

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Author : River Jordan

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From Reader Review Praying for Strangers: An Adventure of the Human Spirit for online ebook

Ted Mallory says

I want to say something important about this book and another book. Eat, Love, Pray is weak compared to Praying for Strangers. Jordan's book is about genuine love, that other book seems to be about finding ones self and learning to accept yourself. That author went from putting herself first to letting others in and she did it by searching for other gods. Jordan's book is about removing your focus from yourself, ceasing to worry and wallow about your own problems by becoming sensitive to the needs of others and compassionate toward people without regard for what they can do for you. All the while, opening (and humbling) yourself to allow the one God to work through you.

Regardless of your faith, Christian, Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, other- I personally feel that this book shows more maturity and a more beautiful, valuable viewpoint. This one may not make much of a movie, but I wish it were as popular a Eat Love Pray was- because the world needs Praying for Strangers.

Mindy Williams says

I liked this book. It was a perfect book to carry around in my bag and read a chapter or a two at a time. It was inspiring and uplifting, and made me want to help and love all people. It was not the type of book you would want to read straight through, cover to cover. The paragraphs would seem super similar and boring read that way.

Elizabeth Castro says

Praying for Strangers rambles and doesn't introduce the main character well, and left me unsure who the I (character) was. It took me a few chapters to realize this book wasn't a fiction novel, but a nonfiction. I did enjoy the spiritual aspects of Praying for Strangers, and felt even though the book is directed towards a Christian audience in general, there is no reason a person of any faith could not read this book. The spiritual truths River taps into are universal for any faith. Uttering a simple prayer or good wish to strangers is not only for Christians. The world would be a better and far more interesting place if we took the time to listen to our hearts and take a second to notice people in our busy lives.

Overall, I did find a lot of the themes (however inspiring) repetitive, and towards the end of the book, River mentions previous strangers she has prayed for yet again. This felt forced, and honestly the book felt longer than it needed to, at 322 pages.

The last few pages of Praying for Strangers should have been the first few pages. The author introduces the project she was doing and how it changed changed her life personally. It is less preachy and brought her message in perspective for me. And then I wanted to give it a higher rating. Read the last chapter first, and then start at the beginning, in my opinion.

Linda Owen says

I read this one for my church book club, and it was absolutely amazing. I know at least two of the members are trying to do this for a Lenten discipline, if not every day at least several times a week. I am not there yet. The author made a resolution while her sons were deployed to pray for a stranger every day. This book describes her experiences, almost every one of them positive. She usually tells the person that she will pray for them and asks if there is something in particular she can pray for. As an author, she travels a lot so had a lot of opportunities to interact with strangers.

She humbly suggests that this is a really viable way to connect with others. There were so many things I took away from this book... that when we are stressed or busy we don't pay attention to the others around us, that when people seem cold, rude, or distant, there may be something going on in their lives that has them tied in knots, that prayer is a powerful force for good in the world. Well worth the read and the re-read.

Kiki says

Had a lot of potential and the writer clearly had the ability to write beautifully, but I felt like maybe she rushed through creating this one.

Lorraine says

If I could have given this book higher than a 5, I would have. This is a non-fiction book that reads as well as a novel. River Jordan, a southern gothic writer, according to her own words, makes a New Year's Resolution upon learning that both of her sons will be deployed one to Iraq and one to Afghanistan at the same time. Her resolution is to pray for a stranger each and every day that in hopes that someone will be praying for them. Never in her vaguest thoughts does she ever believe how this will affect her own life. The book consists of various chapter each dealing with a stranger that she comes across in her everyday life and for whom she prays from waitresses, cashiers, homeless, babies, widows whomever she feels led to that day. She always follows the same routine: approach the person, ask their name, tell her resolution, tell them she will be praying blessings for them that day, and ask if they have any special needs. In almost every instance, the person she approached ends up blessing her in some way. Her last few chapters include other ways you can pray for a stranger each day. I was overwhelmed and convicted that if each of us could undertake this idea what a difference we might make in the world around us.

Juanita Ellingson says

Praying for Strangers was amazing! I found her stories and how River Jordan was honest and real about approaching strangers so refreshing. It wasn't an easy journey, a I can't wait to jump out of bed and do this every day fluff and stuff... She was honest, more honest then some would be. Her stories were touching, in fact a few tears even rolled down my cheeks as I read some of the chapters. She also pulled the truth of what our world could become if we ALL cared even just a little bit more about who surrounds us, who passes us and who we interact will even for a second. Beautiful, brilliant and teaching! Loved this book!

Jlaurenmc says

River Jordan is an accomplished writer. Her novels have been praised by media sources (Publishers Weekly, Southern Living, and the Tampa Tribune) and also by some of my favorite authors (Silas House, Joshilyn Jackson, and Susan Gregg Gilmore). With the release of her new book, however, Jordan strayed from the "safe" path of fiction writing and delved into more personal writing.

Praying for Strangers is a compilation of sorts; there is little plot, and Jordan herself is the only true "main" character. Jordan was forced, in putting these words on paper, to leave behind her self-professed storytelling strengths and tell only true stories. Most are no more than two or three pages long. Despite her being outside her writing comfort zone, Jordan has managed to write a beautiful book that I have been pushing at people for weeks.

In Praying for Strangers, River Jordan tells the tale of one year in her life -- perhaps the most difficult year of her life. In this year, both of her sons were deployed: one to Iraq, one to Afghanistan. It is mind-boggling to wrap one's head around how she managed to simply survive that year. The experience must have been an excruciating one, fraught with sleepless nights and mind-racing worries. In spite of this emotional turmoil -- or perhaps because of it -- Jordan managed to do a single thing during this year. She prayed for strangers.

It began as a New Year's resolution, promises made to self that Jordan admits she rarely keeps. But for some reason, in this particular year, with her sons in harm's way and out of her ability to protect them, Jordan managed to keep this resolution. She prayed for people she met at the supermarket. She prayed for people she met waiting in line to pay a bill. She prayed for construction workers she passed. And for the most part, not only did she pray for them, but she also told them about it.

Now, if you stop to think about this, it seems an impossible task. How many people would appreciate a stranger accosting them in a parking lot, telling them she would be praying for them? In that scenario, my first thought would probably be to back away slowly and then high-tail it out of there. The people who Jordan met each day did exactly the opposite. They spilled their guts; they got teary-eyed; they hugged her. Some even prayed for Jordan.

Praying for Strangers was less about prayer, in the end, and more about human kindness. The act of a stranger telling you they will be praying for you turns your day around, no matter the prayer. Jordan brought her resolution to people of all creeds, colors, religions, and economic statuses, and every single one thanked her.

The changes to Jordan's own life were perhaps the most miraculous. She prayed for candidates on both sides of the aisle during the 2008 presidential campaign, and a change occurred inside of her: "[M]y amazing discovery is that the longer you pray for someone, the more you lose that crust of ambivalence, that twinge of not liking them. Those things fall away, and instead sometimes there's just a flash . . . that if that person walked through the door, I'd be pleased to meet them in that moment. Somewhere in that slice of time I spent praying . . . I became less frustrated by their presence" (210).

Jordan also found people who she needed as much as they needed her prayers. At a rest stop, she met a woman who was humming along happily, seemingly in need of nothing. Still, it struck Jordan that she was

"the one" for the day, and before long this happened:

"Anything special that you need prayer for?"

She nods yes as tears well up in her eyes. "My son died two months ago."

This struck close to home with me, the safety of my sons somewhat being a catalyst for this resolution. So I break my policy about public praying. Right there, in the middle of that rest stop, I wrap my arms around her and whisper a prayer for her broken heart. One mother to another. (188)

The true message of the book is, as I said before, less about prayer itself and more about caring for other humans. We all pass hundreds of strangers each day, week, month, and year, usually ignoring them as a whole. Jordan accomplished something extraordinary in her year of praying for strangers: she noticed them. She connected with them. She says near the end of the book: "It was one of those days again. For what felt like the three-hundredth time, I decided I just wasn't going to tell anyone that I was praying for them. It goes against my nature. It takes courage. It takes time; all those blessed interferences take me away from other obligations and pursuits. It takes some kind of faith to believe that my prayers might matter to a stranger. The bottom line -- it takes. But it also gives."

Cindy says

I met River at the 2012 Calvin Festival of Faith and Writing--actually she was a surprise addition to our author dinner! She is delightful and her book intrigued me. So I went to her talk which became my favorite of the year. The book is an inspirational idea and a spiritual challenge. After awhile the premise stretched a bit thin. Shorter might have been better. But it's a wonderful project!

Lee Ann says

The author makes a resolution to pray for a different stranger every day in the new year to try to take her mind off the deployment of both her sons. We're not told of 365 prayers, but we are given enough to make this a great idea for everyone to do. I intend to donate a copy to my church library.

Noah says

I liked the idea that this book presented more than the book itself. Once I'd read about 60 pages it was mostly more of the same - short chapters detailing a new stranger and how they reacted to her telling them she'd be praying for them. Somehow I wanted more from this book, though I can't exactly say what - I just felt as though there was something missing from it that I wanted to hear more about. I admit I was also surprised that none of her strangers seemed to have a negative reaction - I find it hard to believe the case would be the same if I did this. Kudos, though, to Jordan for sticking with her resolution; while the idea's got me paying more attention to "strangers" I'm spotty with it and my prayers are usually pretty lackluster.

Brandon Jolley says

Beautiful discovery and love for human kind

The book written by River is quite amazing and stunning. Some may feel it too simple, but I loved the easy to read stories and the heartfelt journey that she shared with the readers. It gives much to ponder throughout reading and after. Thank you for this beautiful book!

Linda says

I absolutely loved this book! This is a book I think everyone who prays or believes in prayer should read. I don't usually buy books but prefer to borrow them cause I rarely reread them but this I did wind up buying even before I was done reading the library copy! I just need my own copy to reread and underline and mark up with notes for myself. I'll be praying for you, River Jordan!

Shellie Tomlinson says

I considered titling this review "Everything I Thought I Knew About River's New Book When I Didn't Know Squat", but I decided that a) it was a bit long and b) I shouldn't use squat in the title if I want y'all to take me seriously. And I do.

So, let's go with the facts. I knew I would enjoy this book. I just didn't know how much. In the interest of full disclosure, River is a very good friend. Thanks to a 21 event/14 day book tour we did together in the Spring of '10, we know more about each other than either of us would care to share.

In other words, I know the author. I thought I knew the book. I mean, I've been there on River's journey, so to speak. I knew it was in the works before a word was put on paper. I watched it in progress, or at least I saw what could be seen. I've seen River stop, do an about face and disappear to hunt down someone she simply must talk to/connect with, when we were already a day late and a dollar short (literally) for the next book event. So, forgive me for assuming I knew what was unfolding around me. Little did I know how multi-layered the story being written in River's heart and the hearts of those crossing her path on this wild adventure of the human spirit. But let's back up, and start at the beginning...

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In *Praying for Strangers*, River Jordan tells of her amazing personal journey of uncovering the needs of the human heart as she prayed her way through the year for people she had never met before. The discovery that Jordan made along the journey was not simply that her prayers touched the lives of these strangers, but that the unexpected connections she made with other people would be a profound experience that would change her life forever.

The book I expected to read, a sweet tale of strangers passing in the night-- or day-- was not the book I lost

myself in from the very first page. Praying for Strangers is not a book. It's an experience and you need to take it. Open it and walk into River's world. Take her challenge and see if you ever look at people the same way.

Shellie Rushing Tomlinson

Prakriti Agrawal says

a must read...

If you've need for prayer or lost hope of it....take a pause to see the world around you. book gives much needed perspective
