



KAREN CAMPBELL

M E D I A

A Year of Living Prayerfully: Debut Author Meets the Pope, Dances with Rabbis and Walks on Coals

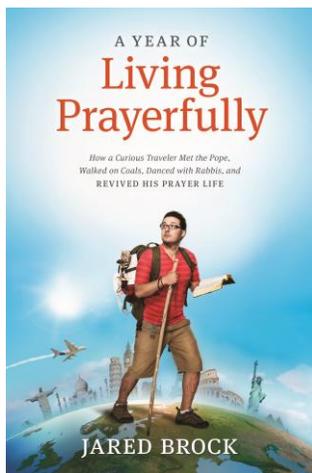
Carol Stream, Ill., January 29, 2015—What doesn't Jared Brock do in this uproarious book about prayer?

Living with monks on Greece's Mount Athos? Check.

Walking on hot coals with self-help guru Anthony Robbins? Check.

Meeting Pope Francis at the Vatican? Check.

Visiting North Korea? Why not.



In *A Year of Living Prayerfully: How a Curious Traveler Met the Pope, Walked on Coals, Danced with Rabbis and Revived His Prayer Life* (Tyndale, March 2015), debut author Jared Brock has written a humorous travelogue that occasionally gets serious—blending the improbable, downright silly, and sometimes sublime—occasionally all in one sentence.

Brock—a Canadian filmmaker—seeks to expand his understanding of prayer, and how various traditions use, practice and think about prayer, by undertaking a Middle-Ages-style prayer pilgrimage that spans three continents and nearly a dozen countries.

Along the way, he shares Passover with Hasidic Jews in Brooklyn, prays three times a day with the ecumenical Taize community in France, and tries to meet an elderly Billy Graham in North Carolina. Brock is absolutely tenacious in learning about prayer and then sharing the story with readers. He offers quotes from spiritual titans, gives interesting historical and background information on various prayer movements, and culls advice from wise people who have been shaped by silence and reflection; including the monks on Mount Athos in Greece, the founder of the 24/7 Prayer movement in the UK, and even Pope Francis in Rome, who not only gives Brock advice on prayer, but asks for prayer, too.

Brock doesn't merely limit his prayer-full quest to the wise, but also includes characters he (and many others) typically find unsavory, including a health-and-wealth preacher who can't stop talking about money, religious fanatics wandering the streets of Jerusalem, and members of “America’s most hated family” at Westboro Baptist Church in Kansas.



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By the end, Brock learns there is no one-size-fits-all approach to prayer; no shortcuts to a life shaped by the kind of communion that brings peace and changes lives. "I feel like I've changed a lot this year, yet not at all," Brock writes. "I guess Francis of Assisi was right when he said, 'true progress quietly and persistently moves along without notice.'"

At the end of his 37,000-mile trip around the world—the almost non-stop hustle of air travel and road trips—it would seem that true progress is about a movement of the heart.



Jared Brock is co-founder of Hope for the Sold, a charity that fights human trafficking, as well as a documentary filmmaker (*Red Light Green Light*). His writing has appeared in *The Huffington Post*, *Esquire*, *Converge* and *Relevant*. He is happily married to his best friend, Michelle, and you can follow his latest adventures at www.jaredbrock.com

A Year of Living Prayerfully

Jared Brock

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Suggested Interview Questions for Jared Brock, *A Year of Living Prayerfully*

- 1) What was the start of this project? Why were you so eager to learn more about prayer?
- 2) You visited lots of communities in this book, from Greek Orthodox monks on Mount Athos, to Protestants and Catholics in France, to Jews in Canada and the US. Which community made the biggest impact on your personal prayer life in terms of your understanding and practice of prayer?
- 3) In the book, you not only seek out those groups that you feel have wisdom and lead a prayerful existence, but also those groups that seemingly have little to offer, such as Westboro. Why?
- 4) One famous monk said something along the lines of, "your cell will teach you everything." Was a round-the-world trip necessary to learn the lessons you learned? What can someone without the time or budget do to learn about prayer?
- 5) Why do you think prayer is important?
- 6) How has your prayer life changed since writing this book?
- 7) You talk at various points in the book about the commercialization of certain holy places - particularly Jerusalem and Mount Athos - and how this bothered you. How does one avoid doing a similar thing when writing a book on prayer, which is intended to be commercially sold?
- 8) Can you describe how you came to meet Pope Francis, and how the meeting impacted you?
- 9) Why did you travel to North Korea for this book? What, if anything, did it teach you about prayer?
- 10) Were there similar qualities present in people you met who have dedicated their lives to prayer?

To schedule an interview with Jared Brock, please contact Karen Campbell at 616-309-4390 or karen@karencampbellmedia.com



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Selected Excerpts from *A Year of Living Prayerfully*

North Korea

"Our group of eight went up in two sets of four. I was part of the first set. With palms sweating and heart pounding, I managed to stay upright, refusing to even nod my head, as everyone else bowed... Instead of bowing, I prayed the Lord's Prayer. First I whispered it at Kim Il-Sung's feet. Then I prayed it at his left side, and then at his right. I prayed it again at the feet of Kim Jong-Il. And then at his left side, and then at his right. For good measure, I prayed the Lord's Prayer once more—in front of the statue of the two men together. I like to say that I planted seven prayer bombs in the very heart of North Korea."

Taizé Community, France

"A brother read a passage of Scripture, and then we entered into a time of silence to let the word of God sink in. It was a deep silence, broken only occasionally by a sneeze or a cough. It was so beautiful to share a prolonged silence with hundreds of brothers and sisters. In a world that competes for attention, that always has an agenda to push and a point to prove, it was incredible to share a moment of silence with a large group of people. For a small moment, we weren't talkers and speakers. We were transformed into listeners and hearers. But I'll be honest, it's hard to stay focused on God. Knowing this, Brother Roger mentioned it in *The Rule of Taizé*: 'If your attention wanders, return to prayer as soon as you notice your distraction, without lamenting over it. If you experience your weakness while actually praying, do not forget that the essential has already been accomplished in you.' The essence of prayer is a desire for relationship...See every distraction as a call back to Christ."

The Vatican

"Father Alfred explained that we'd have about one minute with the Pope, and could ask him one question about prayer. He turned to walk away. 'Wait, Father Alfred!' I cried. 'Does the Pope speak English?!' It was too late. The Pope walked into the room. I could feel my heartbeat thumping in my throat. Dressed in an all-white robe, Pope Francis wore a little white beanie on his head, and a small smile on his face. We shook hands. 'Hello,' he said. 'So nice to meet you.' He was soft-spoken, but not soft. He shook hands with Michelle. He was about my height, with big droopy puppy-dog eyes. He maintained very steady eye contact—an assured confidence won by decades of trusting God instead of self. 'Father, may I ask you a question?' 'Yes, of course!' he said in broken English. 'What does prayer mean to you?' I asked.