Although her writings must be read with a sieve, there are many gems as she was a lady who loved our Savior and longed for others to be able to know Him too.

Background: Jeanne Guyon is considered a Catholic mystic. She lived after the Reformation and before the French Revolution. Some of her doctrine is definitely more Catholic than traditional Christian doctrine. She wrote volumes in defense of her beliefs; yet, she was still seen as a heretic within the Catholic Church and was imprisoned for her beliefs (including being imprisoned in the Bastille). From the Catholic Church’s perspective, her ideas about having a personal relationship with God through Jesus (cultivating it, layman reading Scripture, writing about a devotional life, and telling others) were controversial. She even instructed clergy to “make the steps to salvation understood by even the least educated in the congregation. Their attention should be on Jesus Christ alone.” She was a bold woman!

She is referred to as a mystic primarily because of her emphasis on being united with Christ and how she viewed becoming united with Christ as something we can work toward. Scripture says that we are to work out our salvation, but she said things like “sink into nothingness before Him” and that you can be “removed from your sin nature” [both unbiblical when taken at face value]. In her era when so much of religion was intellectual, legalistic, and lacked emotion it is understandable why she would want to draw attention to our emotional inward responsiveness to the Lord. It seems like what’s missing though is that she didn’t emphasize that we are already united with Christ if we are believers. When reading her writings, it is hard to tell how much of my doctrinal quandaries are a result of a lack of clarity in her writings, the fact that she wrote over 350 years ago in Catholic France, perhaps a translation of her works that’s inaccurate, a different use of Christian terms than I’m used to, or simply my lack of understanding. Given that she lived during a time when her primary fellowship came from believing priests and her instruction came from them as well, it is amazing how much biblical truth does come through clearly in her writings.

With regard to prayer, she believed that prayer allows you to attain ‘perfection’ because prayer is communion with God. I don’t know what she meant by using the word ‘perfection’. ‘Perfection’ is an odd word to use since Jesus is God’s perfect sacrifice and His work of justification is already perfect. Praying is not in any way earning our position with God. Our position is secure because of the cross and sanctification won’t be complete until we see Jesus face to face—it’s not through prayer. But, if Jeanne Guyon meant prayer as the best way to commune with God or the perfect way to build our relationship with God—that is biblical and she has some wise exhortations of ways to develop prayer in our lives. She wrote her thoughts about prayer for the common man.
at a time when there was very little available to instruct others how to cultivate a relationship with the Lord.  *Although her writings must be read with a sieve, there are many gems as she was a lady who loved our Savior and longed for others to be able to know Him too.*

Notes:

**Meditating on God’s Word:** “Read only a small section and allow that passage to be ‘digested’ before going on to another. Draw from it its fullest meaning. Think it through. Try to relate it to other similar Scriptures. Commit it to memory….allow each individual truth to be meditated upon while its sweet flavor remains fresh. Don’t wander from truth to truth and from subject to subject.”

**Praying God’s Word:** “St. Augustine once blamed himself for all the lost time trying to find God’s will when, from the very beginning, he could have done so by [this manner] of praying the Word.” Her main point is to still our hearts, start with a Scripture and let that be the launching board to prayer. She says, “Your Scripture verse will keep your mind from straying to other things.”

Example: If you are reading the Lord’s Prayer in Matthew, start with “Our Father” then continue on to the rest of the verses of the prayer. “Dwell on the words. God has taken the initiative to invite you to become His child. He desires to be your Father. Pour out your heart’s desire to Him.” She encourages her readers to wait in silence regularly after pouring out your heart to the Lord to allow the Holy Spirit time to impress something on us.

**About prayer pre-written prayers:** “Read a little. Just enough to collect your own thoughts. But always stop when the Holy Spirit quickens you to your own prayer.” [My thought: what a great way to read books like *Valley of Vision.*]

**Pray aloud or silently:** “It is necessary to vocalize all prayer. If you are praying aloud, and it becomes burdensome to you, yield to your internal drawing and remain silent in prayer. Unless, of course, you are in a position with others where you are obligated to vocal prayer. In any case, what I want to impress upon you is not to become burdened by any one form of prayer. Don’t allow yourself to be tied down to the repetition of set forms. It is far better to be wholly led by the Holy Spirit in prayer…”

**The prayer of faith and stillness:** whether it’s remaining a little longer after prayer or simply stilling our hearts in silence, she recommends that this posture is a way to “simply enjoy God” and express our love to Him.

**Definition of prayer:** “It is simply pouring out the contents of one’s heart in the presence of God.”
“Go then, you poor children, to your heavenly Father. Speak in your natural language. Although it may be simple and crude to you, it is not so to Him. An earthly father is more pleased to be addressed with love and respect because it comes from the heart rather than dry, barren, elaborate words. Undisguised emotions of love are infinitely more expressive than all language or reasoning. ...There is no better way to learn how to love God than to simply love Him.”

“Allowing God’s will, God’s desire, and God’s Word to be first gives honor to the sovereignty of God.”

**Abandoning yourself to God:**  “Every moment of every day you must come to realize that you are in God’s immediate will....once you have given yourself to God, do not take yourself back again...Abandonment means casting off all selfish cares in order to be altogether at His divine disposal. (Matt. 6:34; Prov. 3:6; Prov. 16:3; Psalm 37:5) Attribute nothing that happens to you as coming from man, but regard everything, except sin, as coming from God.”

“Be careful also not to allow your mind to dwell much on your weaknesses and unworthiness. These excessive feelings spring from a root of pride and a love for our own excellence....The more miserable you see yourself, the more it should cause you to abandon yourself to God.”

Ask the Lord to “animate us with [His] life”.

“The ultimate purpose for each of us who knows God is to love Him and enjoy His presence. What a shame that we forget the simplicity of this great truth!”

“God Himself draws us. He causes us to run after Him.”

**With regard to suffering:**  “...you will not find consolation in anything other than the love of the cross and total abandonment. If you will not savor the cross, you cannot savor the things of God. (See Matthew 16:23)

“Abandon yourself to God, trust Him, and He will bring about good toward you and glory for Him.”

**Election:**  “Let me assure you that it is only by divine grace that we are able to know God. You must never presume that it is by your own efforts. You are not capable of coming to God unless He has chosen to call you first. (John 15:16)”

“Before we had invited Jesus to come into our heart, we were lost sinners. The only promise available to us was that our wages for sin was death (See Romans 6:23). But now that we have repented from our sin, turned to Christ to be cleansed from our sin, and invited Him to take up His abode with us, He brought with Him the Kingdom of God with all its benefits and promises.”