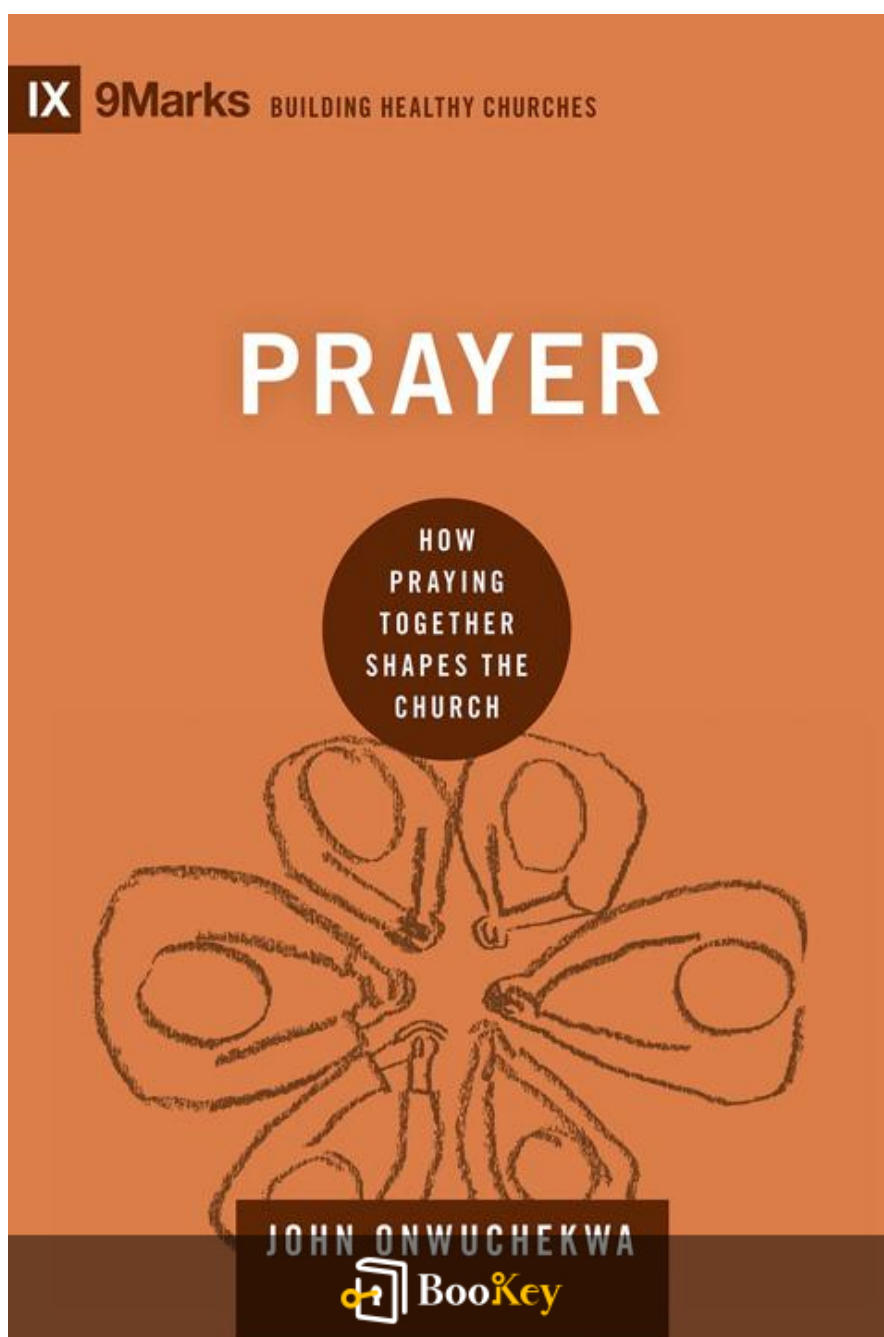


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Prayer By John Onwuchekwa Summary

"Exploring the Transformative Power of Prayer in Community"

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About the book

In a world punctuated by the relentless clamor of everyday life, our connection with something greater often wanes under the weight of overwhelming distractions. Yet, in "Prayer: How Praying Together Shapes the Church," John Onwuchekwa offers a profound awakening—a jolting reminder of the indispensable anchor that prayer serves in both our personal lives and the broader church community. With wisdom and humility, Onwuchekwa explores prayer not simply as a solitary ritual, but as a dynamic and collective heartbeat of the spiritual body, a practice that transforms and unites believers in divine fellowship. Prepare to embark on a journey that not only challenges personal spiritual notions but also revitalizes the communal essence of prayer, redefining how congregations can align their hearts with God's purpose. This book doesn't just encourage us to pause for prayer; it invites us to see prayer as the intentional rhythm of living, a catalyst for community and transformation.

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About the author

John Onwuchekwa is a vibrant pastor and prolific speaker deeply rooted in the realms of faith and spirituality. Not only renowned for his compelling sermons that resonate with audiences worldwide, John plays a significant role as a modern-day theologian navigating the intricacies of prayer and community development with heartfelt dedication. With Nigerian heritage enriching his perspectives, he has profoundly impacted many through his engaging discourse on spirituality, the intersection of culture, and deeply committed church leadership. As a pastor at Cornerstone Church in Atlanta, John combines traditional wisdom with contemporary insights, making spiritual practices accessible to believers of all ages. Through his writing, he eloquently conveys the transformative power of prayer, shedding light on its significance in fostering deeper connections with both God and one's community.

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Chapter 1 Summary: 1 Breathe Again

Chapter Summary: Breathe Again - The Problem of Prayerlessness

In "Breathe Again – The Problem of Prayerlessness," the metaphor of breathing is employed to underscore the fundamental importance of prayer in the Christian life. Prayer, like breathing, is essential to spiritual existence and vitality. Despite the recognition of its importance, there is a marked inconsistency between belief and practice; many Christians and churches engage in prayer infrequently, often only under pressing circumstances. This chapter begins by critically reflecting on this disconnect, noting that while prayer is discussed with fervor, it is often treated as an obligation rather than a vital practice.

The author identifies the most significant issue as not a complete absence of prayer, but rather the minimal and sporadic nature of praying within churches. This inadequate prayer life results in a superficial relationship with God, where prayer is utilized more as a tool for managing crises than as a constant element of spiritual life. The events surrounding the racially inflammatory incidents in the United States during the summer of 2016 serve as a powerful example: churches united in prayer during crises, but once the immediate urgency passed, so did the collective prayer efforts, revealing a misinterpretation of prayer as an emergency measure rather than

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a constant necessity akin to breathing.

A moment of personal honesty allows the author to reflect on their own struggles with prayer, acknowledging feelings of inadequacy and recalling the profound influence of their parents, who exemplified a life of dedicated prayer. The narrative shifts to a pivotal personal experience: the sudden death of the author's brother. This tragedy serves as a catalyst for a transformative understanding of prayer, as the author finds themselves pouring out raw emotions to God and experiencing prayer as genuine communion for the first time. The experience redefines their approach to prayer, illustrating how God uses difficult circumstances to deepen reliance on Him.

This revelation authoritatively shifts not only the author's personal spiritual journey but also the direction of the church they lead. The chapter concludes by emphasizing that prayer is central to effective ministry and the life of the church. It is vital to remember that prayer is neither dependent on expertise nor rituals; instead, it is an experience of the power of God as the gracious answerer of prayers. Churches that thrive in faithfulness to God demonstrate a robust commitment to prayer, acknowledging it as the lifeblood of spiritual and communal health.

Finally, the author introduces the purpose of the book: to explore prayer within the life of the church, urging congregations to view prayer as

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non-negotiable and as essential as breathing. The goal is for churches to cultivate prayer practices that are consistent, corporate, and deeply entrenched in their spiritual life, creating a community that truly breathes together in prayer. This aspiration is that one day, the necessity for such a book will diminish, and corporate prayer will become so intrinsic to church life that writing about it will seem redundant.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: Prayer is as essential as breathing for spiritual vitality.

Critical Interpretation: In the hustle of daily life, it can be easy to forget the profound importance of prayer. However, "Prayer is as essential as breathing" becomes a poignant reminder to nourish your soul just as your body requires oxygen. This paradigm shift transforms prayer from an obligation to a vital practice, encouraging you to embrace it as a continuous, life-giving connection to God. Let this understanding inspire you to infuse prayer into your everyday existence, cultivating a constant dialogue with God that enriches your spiritual journey and strengthens your resilience in times of adversity. By doing so, you're not just surviving spiritually, but truly thriving, as your relationship with God deepens and draws you closer to the heart of your faith.



Chapter 2 Summary: 2 A Class Act

Chapter 1: Breathe Again - The Problem of Prayerlessness

This chapter opens with the idea that prayer is as essential to Christians as breathing is to life—a metaphor that underscores prayer’s necessity and vitality. Despite its importance, many churches struggle to integrate prayer meaningfully into their practice, treating it more as a special occasion tool rather than a consistent life function. The problem is not a total absence of prayer, but its sparseness and lack of fervency, often used more for transitional moments in services than as a foundational life practice. The author shares personal struggles with prayer, recounting how a tragedy—his brother’s sudden death—became a catalyst for recognizing prayer’s true essence: raw, honest communication with God. This personal revelation reshapes his approach to prayer, highlighting its critical role in sustaining faith, especially during adversity. The author emphasizes that prayer is vital for the church as a collective, fostering humility and reliance on God rather than self-sufficiency.

Chapter 2: A Class Act - Teach Us to Pray

Here, the author reflects on the journey to understanding prayer as a practice that must be learned rather than assumed to come naturally, much like the necessity yet initial unnaturalness of breathing for his premature daughter. Drawing parallels to biblical figures like the disciples, who asked Jesus for

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guidance on prayer, illustrates the irony that, despite witnessing Jesus' miracles, they never requested instruction on those feats—only on prayer. Jesus provides a simplified but profound framework for prayer, emphasizing its foundational role. The author argues that prayer definitions vary widely, leading to potential misinterpretations and applications. The chapter underscores the importance of correct understanding as it sets the stage for an effective prayer life, reinforcing that prayer is about aligning with God's will and relying on his promises.

Chapter 3: The World Is Yours - A Family Led

In this chapter, the author delves into how prayer shapes not only individual lives but the collective experience of the church, drawing on the Lord's Prayer as a model. Prayer is depicted as a communal act that reflects shared hope and reliance on God's faithfulness. The strength of prayer lies not in impersonal, occasional interactions but in consistent, collective petition for God's provision, guidance, and forgiveness. The chapter highlights the communal nature of prayer in shaping church culture, emphasizing that it molds the spiritual life and cohesion of the community. This collective petition exemplifies corporateness, driving home that prayer strengthens the bonds among church members, cultivating a spirit of unity and dependency on God.

Chapter 4: Soul Food - A Family Fed

Prayer is likened to soul food, where the communal aspect of waiting,

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sharing, and resting together enriches the experience. Jesus teaches that prayer addresses three primary needs: daily provision, forgiveness, and protection from temptation. These aren't just individual needs but communal ones, using plural pronouns to emphasize collective responsibility and care. The author suggests that prayer should remind believers of their dependence on God and each other, countering pride and fostering gratitude. By praying for our collective "daily bread," believers recognize that all provision comes from God, encouraging them to support and provide for one another. This chapter underscores the importance of praying together as a community, with an emphasis on specific needs to avoid vague and ineffectual prayers.

Chapter 5: Roots - A Family Bred

Set against the backdrop of personal suffering, this chapter explores prayer as the roots that sustain in adversity. The author uses the metaphor of roots to explain prayer's fundamental role in strengthening faith. The chapter takes a poignant look at how adversity, like a punch to faith, can weaken but also fortify resolve when rooted in prayer. Using Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane as a template for enduring trials, the chapter discusses the juxtaposition of human weakness and divine strength available through prayer. Jesus demonstrates confident reliance on God's will, modeling how believers can find peace and strength through prayerful submission. This chapter also stresses the communal aspect, showing how early church leaders, despite persecution, anchored in collective prayer, drawing resilience and unity from it. The discussion paints prayer as both a preparatory measure against future



trials and a practice deeply embedded in Christian communal heritage.

Chapter 6: Glory - The Role of Prayer in Corporate Worship

The role of prayer in worship is examined, highlighting its power to unite believers in reverence and petition before God. Prayer is not merely an adjunct to worship but integral, elevating it to a deeply enriched communal experience. This chapter emphasizes how prayer nurtures a communal understanding and appreciation of God's majesty, serving as worship's heartbeat. Through collective prayer, the church shares in the exaltation of God, fostering a deeper connection among its members and enhancing the experience of divine worship.

Chapter 7: Lean on Me - The Role of Prayer in Corporate Care

Expounding on prayer in the context of community support, the chapter underscores its necessity in fostering mutual encouragement and care among believers. Prayer becomes a means through which the church supports one another, shouldering each other's burdens and sharing in collective strength. The chapter reinforces that prayer in care aligns the church's mission with God's compassion, emphasizing the necessity of thoroughly integrating prayer into the church's caring practices.

Chapter 8: Doing the Right Thing - The Role of Prayer in Missions

Prayer's indispensable role in missions is explored, illustrating how it fuels the church's outreach efforts. Prayer goes beyond mere support, becoming



the energy that propels missions forward, ensuring they are not just human endeavors but spiritually empowered endeavors. The author contends that prayer in missions moves beyond localization, embodying global outreach sustained by divine guidance and power.

Conclusion: Fighting Temptations

The author concludes by addressing common temptations associated with neglecting prayer. The chapter stresses the importance of perseverance and dedication in overcoming the temptation to deprioritize prayer. The author provides practical advice to reinforce communal prayer, which is essential for church life. Strategies include maintaining regular prayer meetings and encouraging shared prayer experiences. Prayer should not ebb with changing circumstances; instead, constant, communal petition signifies a healthy reliance on God.

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Chapter 3 Summary: 3 The World Is Yours

Summary:

In the chapters "The World Is Yours: A Family Led" and "Priorities over Process: Beginning to Learn How to Pray," the author addresses the critical need for prayer, describing prayerlessness as spiritual suicide. Emphasizing the biblical definition of prayer as taught by Jesus, the focus is on understanding prayer's importance individually and corporately within the church setting.

Prayer and Priorities:

The anecdote of teaching a child to ask for cake illustrates the difference between correcting process versus priorities. While the child's behavior aligns with learning the correct way to ask, Jesus' teaching on prayer, particularly using the Lord's Prayer, emphasizes prioritizing what we ask for in prayer rather than simply how we ask. The essence of prayer starts with recognizing and embracing not only our relationship with God but also our interconnectedness as a community of believers, bonded by calling God "Our Father."

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Understanding Our Father:

The phrase "Our Father" in the Lord's Prayer is highlighted for its rich relational significance. It signifies God's role not only as a sovereign deity but as a compassionate, loving parent, listening and caring for his children. This acknowledgment inspires believers to approach prayer not merely as a personal connection but as part of a collective practice, reinforcing the communal aspect of faith and shared responsibility.

Our Father in Heaven:

The reference to God being "in heaven" underscores His omnipotence and sovereign authority, suggesting that prayers are directed towards an all-powerful being capable of fulfilling divine promises. God's position in heaven represents absolute power and control, reassuring believers of His ability to act according to His will.

Balancing Compassion and Capability:

Beginning the Lord's Prayer with "Our Father in heaven" encapsulates both God's compassion and capability. This acknowledgment provides a

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foundation for bold yet humble prayer, encouraging believers to prioritize God's presence and will over personal desires.

Petitions in Prayer:

- **God's Honor:** Praying for God's name to be hallowed focuses on preserving His reputation and advancing His glory.
- **God's Kingdom:** The request for God's kingdom to come reflects longing for divine governance, intrinsic to genuine Christian prayer, rooted in the gospel's success and God's promises.
- **God's Will:** Praying for God's will to be done aligns believers with divine plans and purposes, reminding them to embrace God's ultimate agenda over personal ambitions.

Rejecting Self-Centeredness:

Unlike a genie that grants wishes, prayer rooted in Jesus's teachings emphasizes aligning desires with God's glory and kingdom, rejecting self-centered agendas. True prayer acknowledges dependency on God and values His presence over material provisions.

A Unified Family in Prayer:

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Through communal prayers aligned with the Lord's Prayer, church members overcome individual differences and conflicts, fostering unity and shared vision. Such prayerful practices redirect focus on honoring God's name and advancing His kingdom, serving as a remedy against self-interest and division, ultimately strengthening the church community's witness to the world.

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Chapter 4: 4 Soul Food

Chapter 4, "Soul Food: A Family Fed," explores the metaphorical and spiritual significance of "soul food" within the context of prayer and Christian community. The chapter opens with the author's critique of the commercialization of soul food in Atlanta, emphasizing that the essence of soul food lies not just in the culinary elements but in the communal experience of preparing and sharing a meal with loved ones. This analogy sets the stage for a deeper exploration of the Lord's Prayer, particularly its second half, which highlights the elements of provision, pardon, and protection.

The author draws parallels between the traditional experience of soul food and the act of prayer, suggesting that just as waiting is integral to the soul food experience, longing for God's presence and provision is fundamental to prayer. The chapter discusses how Jesus teaches his followers to pray for "daily bread," emphasizing daily reliance on God for sustenance, akin to the ancient wisdom found in Proverbs that advocates for neither poverty nor riches but just enough to rely on God continually. This need for daily dependence helps prevent pride and promotes gratitude, countering greed by reminding us that all gifts come from God.

The chapter proceeds to discuss pardon, illustrating how Jesus instructs his followers to seek forgiveness of their debts as they forgive others. This



request underscores the belief that peace with God is rooted in forgiveness rather than performance. The constant reminder of our need for forgiveness helps prevent holding grudges and emphasizes our inherent need for God's grace and mercy.

The final component of the prayer discussed is protection, as Jesus directs his followers to ask for guidance away from temptation and deliverance from evil. This section highlights how both anxiety and arrogance can skew our response to temptation and how prayer helps us realize that protection must come from God, shaping us by our reliance on divine rather than personal strength.

By using plural pronouns in the Lord's Prayer, Jesus encourages a communal mindset, emphasizing the importance of praying for others and acknowledging a shared need for God's provision, pardon, and protection. The chapter challenges readers to sincerely include others, even those who frustrate or antagonize them, in their prayers, thus embodying true Christian charity and expanding one's empathy and spiritual growth.

The author argues that the local church acts as the perfect environment for this kind of communal prayer, serving as the "us" in our prayers and providing a tangible expression of Christian fellowship. The local church nurtures the benefits of prayer while combating selfishness and pride, rooting Christians in a supportive community that reflects the enduring



nature of the church as a family of believers.

The chapter concludes with an exhortation to recognize our inherent neediness and God's overwhelming generosity, inviting Christians to savor the "soul food" of God's goodness through collective prayer, thereby experiencing the spiritual richness of faith and the familial bond it creates among believers.

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Chapter 5 Summary: 5 Roots

Chapter 5: Roots - A Family Bred

In this chapter, the author draws a powerful analogy between preparing for life's adversities and the world of boxing. Like Mike Tyson's famous quote, "Everyone has a plan until they get punched in the mouth," the message is that while planning is vital, true character is revealed when facing unexpected challenges. The abrupt loss of the author's brother shook his faith, much like C.S. Lewis's reflections on his wife's death, revealing personal vulnerability and leading to the realization that his foundation of faith was fragile.

The author shifts focus to how adversity uniquely impacts Christians, highlighting scenarios where faithfulness to God's teachings can result in personal sacrifices, such as job loss or prolonged loneliness. Here, the concept is that genuine commitment to one's faith involves stepping into challenges, akin to stepping into a boxing ring. To navigate these storms of faith, preparation is key, and prayer is presented as the foundation, acting as the roots that strengthen one's spiritual resilience.

The chapter delves into Jesus's time in the garden of Gethsemane as an exemplar of prayer under pressure. Despite foreseeing his suffering, Jesus



shares his vulnerability with disciples Peter, James, and John. His sorrow in the garden, referred to as 'the olive press,' is depicted as pivotal. Jesus's experience underscores finding strength in prayer, rooted in acknowledging human weakness and God's ability to enact his will.

The author emphasizes the necessity for a prayerful life, advocating that true strength comes from surrendering to God's will through continuous prayer. Jesus's persistence in prayer despite foreseeably unchangeable outcomes demonstrates faith in God's plan, reiterating that the ultimate source of power lies in surrendering to God's purposes.

Chapter 1: Breathe Again - The Problem of Prayerlessness

The idea of prayer as essential to spiritual life as breathing is introduced, underscoring its fundamental role in a Christian's existence. Despite this critical importance, many Christians treat prayer as optional rather than indispensable, akin to using it as a remedy for dire situations rather than a constant necessity.

The author shares personal struggles with prayer, aligning with readers who might feel inadequacy or hypocrisy when it comes to consistent prayer practice. A personal tragedy, the sudden death of his brother, acted as a catalyst for the author's deeper, honest communication with God,



transforming his understanding of prayer as truly vital. This awakening illustrates that genuine prayer is about open, candid dialogue with God, even in expressions of doubt and anger.

The emphasis then shifts to the role of prayer in community. Just as breathing sustains physical life, prayer is portrayed as sustaining communal spiritual life within the church. The chapter suggests that without collective prayer, churches risk becoming lifeless assemblies, emphasizing that communal prayer empowers and unites believers to follow God's will collectively.

Overall, these chapters frame the act of prayer as both a personal and communal exercise vital for sustaining faith, especially during adversity, fostering a community rooted in divine strength rather than human capability.

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Chapter 6 Summary: 6 Glory

Chapter 6: Glory - The Role of Prayer in Corporate Worship

This chapter invites readers to explore the essential role of prayer in corporate worship, drawing an intriguing parallel with the personal experience of playing baseball. Initially perceived as boring, the author's perception of baseball shifted dramatically once he actively participated, exemplifying the difference between spectating and engaging. This analogy is used to underscore the idea that corporate worship, like a dynamic game, demands participation rather than passive observation.

Corporate worship is portrayed not as a performance or spectacle, but as a vibrant, shared activity where participants engage directly with God. Churches often try to foster this participatory spirit through various means—ranging from pre- and post-service interactions to interactive sermon segments—but sometimes miss the crucial focus of engaging with God.

Understanding that prayer is central to corporate worship, the chapter delves into how varied prayers can deepen collective engagement with God. It outlines four types of prayers—Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication—rooted in the ACTS model, foundational to creating



meaningful corporate worship.

1. **Adoration** serves as a reminder of God's supreme character and attributes, building the foundation for worship. This prayer emphasizes the importance of familiarity with God without flippancy, instilling reverence and humility in congregants by unpacking God's character comprehensively.

2. **Confession** acts as a reflex to the realization of God's holiness.

Congregants are encouraged to admit their shortcomings like the prodigal son, with confession creating a community marked by gladness, growth, grace, and grounding. Through transparent acknowledgment of sins, congregants are reminded of shared struggles, leveling the playing field within the community.

3. **Thanksgiving** shifts focus to gratitude, resonating with the theme of grace undeserved yet graciously given. It contrasts entitlement with appreciation and urges the congregation to recognize and celebrate God's manifold blessings, fostering a spirit of humility and joy.

4. **Supplication** involves a direct appeal for divine assistance. It acknowledges burdens amplified by external pressures and current societal challenges, promoting reliance on God's strength. By demonstrating varied requests, churches exemplify the wide-ranging petitions that glorify God and rely on His providence.



To implement these prayers effectively in worship, the chapter suggests practices like involving competent leaders for guidance, encouraging prayer preparation to ensure meaningful engagement, and allowing time for prayer to maintain its significance in services.

Ultimately, the chapter envisions a corporate connection with God through varied prayer, echoing the relationship depth and richness desired by God. By integrating these elements into worship, the connection transforms from passive to participatory, inviting congregants to experience God's glory in shared worship. Just as the author's participation in baseball sparked enthusiasm, so does active involvement in worship enhance the communal encounter with God.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: Prayer as Active Engagement in Worship

Critical Interpretation: The key to unlocking a deeper, more enriching experience of corporate worship lies in active participation through prayer. Think of worship more like playing a sport than watching from the bleachers – when you engage, the experience transforms. Prayer is not merely a ritual or obligation; it's your personal invitation to actively connect with God within the community. Inspired by the ACTS model—Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication—your prayers become an entry point for both personal revelation and communal engagement. As you join in these prayers, you're not just speaking words; you're participating in a dynamic dance with the divine. Each prayer type adds a unique dimension to the worship experience, transforming passive spectators into engaged participants, and helping you experience God's glory in the company of others. By stepping into the rhythm of collective prayer, you're not only complementing the service but deepening your connection, much like how playing baseball transcended the delight of mere spectatorship for the author.

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Chapter 7 Summary: 7 Lean on Me

Chapter 7: Lean on Me - The Role of Prayer in Corporate Care

In 1992, at eight years old, my aspiration to become a gymnast taught me an invaluable lesson about dependence. Despite being inspired by the Summer Olympics and starting with a clear notion—a backflip—I quickly learned that reading about gymnastic moves in a library book was not enough; practice and reliance on physical support were crucial. Similarly, true dependence on God for a church community is realized through the practice of prayer rather than theoretical learning.

Our church's early days were marked not by celebratory milestones but by profound losses and challenges across consecutive months in 2015. From personal experiences of death within my own family to the losses endured by church members, these hardships made our need to lean on God through prayer undeniable. Often devoid of sufficient resources or wisdom, our community learned in these moments of affliction that looking to God in prayer was essential when life felt crippling.

This reflection prompts a question: is there a dedicated space at your church where believers learn to lean on God? Or is it assumed that scripted sermons suffice? Thankfully, the Bible is a rich guide for such dependence, where

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even a cursory look at the book of Acts highlights the significance of corporate prayer throughout the early church's story. Luke's meticulous account throughout Acts illustrates the importance of prayer within the Christian community, showcasing numerous instances where the church leaned on prayer for guidance, healing, boldness, and unity, despite opposition or adversity.

The early Christian prayer gathering was not an event to entertain but a vital practice. In a similar fashion, today's church gatherings should consider recovering the prayer meeting as a central purpose—to corporately entrust burdens to God. Unlike the innovative pressures society often imposes, the prayer meeting is an essential place where believers come together to lay down burdens publicly.

A revived focus on prayer meetings reinforces communal responsibility and offers a new way of measuring our church's spiritual health. Our shared prayer, much like in biblical accounts such as Ruth, often involves us in the very acts we pray for others. Running a successful prayer meeting involves intentional scheduling to accommodate the congregation, ensuring church resources are strategically provided to encourage attendance, starting with a scriptural basis, and constructing a prayer list that reflects the pressing kingdom and personal needs of the church community. This collective act of leaning on God should take precedence over personal comfort or traditions, just like in the early church.

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Ultimately, corporate prayer meetings do more than just gather believers in worship; they foster familial bonds among congregants. They remind the church that we are collectively part of God's family—each interconnected and dependent on one another. The battle for diversity and unity within the church is genuinely won in personal relationships built in these spaces of shared concern. With the understanding that we are not saviors, corporate prayer allows us to responsibly embrace our role in one another's lives while accepting our limitations, trusting in God's promise to fulfill His work in each of us.

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Chapter 8: 8 Doing the Right Thing

Chapter 8: Doing the Right Thing - The Role of Prayer in Missions

Introduction to Discontentment and Action:

The year 1997 marks a pivotal moment when Reed Hastings conceptualized Netflix due to his frustration with Blockbuster Video's late fees, illustrating how discontentment can spur transformative action. Similarly, in the realm of church missions, discontentment often lies in inspiring members to actively evangelize. Evangelism, in this context, involves mobilizing churchgoers to share the gospel, yet doing so successfully remains challenging due to underlying issues beyond competence.

The Real Obstacles - Anxiety and Apathy:

Upon becoming Christians, individuals are tasked with spreading their faith. However, the sovereignty of God intertwined with human responsibility breeds tension, often leading believers toward anxiety or apathy. Anxiety emerges from the fear of failure in converting others, or altering the gospel to ensure acceptance. Conversely, apathy stems from relying solely on God's sovereignty, reducing personal responsibility and compassion for others.

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Addressing Anxiety and Apathy through Prayer:

The remedy to these issues lies in prayer, which bridges God's sovereignty and human responsibility. J.I. Packer highlights two obstacles to salvation: human resistance and Satan's influence. Recognizing these, prayer becomes crucial in fostering a culture of evangelism, reducing anxiety, and enhancing compassion. It signifies dependence on God's control, ensuring that the burden of success is not solely on humans but shared with a powerful divine partner.

Defining Evangelism and the Role of Prayer:

Evangelism involves proclaiming the gospel and inviting people to respond. True evangelism is measured by faithfulness, not outcomes. Prayer aligns believers with God's work, filling them with concern for the lost without bearing the full burden. The church, through prayer, supports missionaries and local evangelists, reaffirming that the success of evangelism is rooted in divine sovereignty.

Encouraging a Prayerful Evangelistic Culture:

Prayer enhances boldness and compassion within the church, transforming fear and indifference into assets for gospel work. Regular prayers for conversions and expressions of gratitude for God's salvation reinforce this

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belief system. Jesus taught that prayer mobilizes laborers for the harvest, integrating prayer with the mission, and transforming church culture into one of active evangelistic pursuit rooted in God's sovereignty.

Chapter 2: A Class Act - Teach Us to Pray

Parallels Between Prayer and Breathing:

In 2017, the author's experience of adopting a premature daughter, who struggled to breathe unaided, draws an analogy to prayer's necessity to spiritual life. Although essential, like breathing, prayer doesn't come naturally. Biblical figures, from Adam and Eve to David, illustrate the natural inclination to avoid prayer despite profound need.

The Disciples' Unique Request:

Out of all Jesus's teachings and miracles, the disciples uniquely sought instruction on prayer, recognizing its distinct and challenging nature. Unlike describing miracles, teaching prayer required explicit guidance from Jesus, which he provided by summarizing broader scriptural teachings through foundational instructions on prayer's purpose and nature.

Understanding Prayer:

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Despite familiarity, prayer is often vaguely understood. Common definitions—communicating with God, demanding, aligning wills, or wishful thinking—fail to encapsulate its essence fully. The Bible’s depiction, especially in the narrative arcs beginning in Genesis, presents prayer fundamentally as "calling on God to fulfill His promises."

Genesis and the Origin of Prayer:

Genesis 4 recounts the first prayer as humanity, after the fall, began to invoke God’s name, pleading for fulfillment of His promise of redemption. This “calling on the Lord” concept delineates an appeal based on His character, analogous to an emergency call seen throughout scripture, linking prayer with the hope grounded in God’s promises.

Practical Application of Prayer in Trials and Life:

Prayer, akin to a prescription, mitigates the strain of life’s trials by providing hope and connection to divine promises, evident in David’s Psalms. Jesus reinforces this, encouraging believers to pray with the assurance of God’s attentive and responsive nature, emphasizing reliance not on human effort but divine provision through prayer.

Communal and Gospel-Centered Nature of Prayer:

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Prayer's focus on hope and redemption intrinsically ties it to the gospel and church community. As Mark Dever suggests, understanding a Christian's identity inherently involves the church. Thus, as a shared practice, prayer should reflect the collective faith and unity within the body of Christ, aligning corporate and individual spiritual pursuits.

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Chapter 9 Summary: Conclusion

In "Conclusion: Fighting Temptations," the author emphasizes the critical role of prayer in maintaining a vibrant church life. Prayer is likened to a lifeline, vital for the spiritual health of individuals and church communities alike. However, temptations often hinder consistent prayer practice. These common temptations include canceling prayer meetings, forming theology around God's answers, individualizing prayer meant to be corporate, assuming people understand prayer without teaching them, and measuring prayer success by attendance. The author encourages steadfastness in prayer meetings, a broader understanding of God's responses, communal prayer practices, and intentional teaching about prayer. The ultimate aim is to cultivate a culture where prayer becomes integral to church life, not as a last resort but as a fundamental practice connecting believers with God.

In "Roots: A Family Bred," the writer reflects on the inevitability of adversity and the crucial preparation needed to face it, particularly through prayer. Using the metaphors of boxing and agriculture, prayer is portrayed as the hidden strength that roots provide a tree amid impending storms. The narrative shifts to Jesus's prayer in Gethsemane, illustrating how prayer fortified him to face the cross. Unlike his disciples, who faltered in prayer, Jesus's earnest prayer exemplified confidence in God's ability and contentment in God's will, demonstrating trust and surrender. This chapter underscores the necessity of prayer as preparation for spiritual battles,



enabling resilience and faithfulness amid trials.

In "Breathe Again: The Problem of Prayerlessness," prayer is compared to breathing, an indispensable activity for spiritual health. The author acknowledges the discrepancy between the acknowledgment of prayer's importance and its practice within churches. While some prayer exists, it is often too sparse, functioning merely as a ritual rather than a powerful, indispensable part of church life. The text calls for churches to integrate prayer more fully and intentionally into their communal practices.

Emphasizing that prayer sustains and empowers the church, the chapter seeks to inspire a shift from minimal, sporadic prayer to a robust tradition of communal prayer, which is as vital as breathing for the spiritual vitality of congregations.

In "Soul Food: A Family Fed," prayer is likened to a communal meal that nourishes the soul, emphasizing the relational and communal aspects of prayer in the Christian life. Drawing parallels with the slow, communal experience of soul food preparation and consumption, the character of prayer is presented as a process reliant on God's daily provision, pardon, and protection. Emphasizing plural pronouns in prayer reinforces the notion that prayer is fundamentally communal, encompassing the broader church family rather than individual needs alone. This perspective on prayer seeks to dismantle selfishness, encouraging believers to pray with others in mind and portraying prayer as a unifying communal practice.

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In "The World Is Yours: A Family Led," the author discusses how Jesus's teachings on prayer provide a framework for church unity and living. By prioritizing God's presence over provision, the Lord's Prayer anchors the community in shared goals, inviting God's honor, kingdom, and will to prevail. This communal focus resists the self-centered urge to treat God as a genie, granting wishes without considering his overarching plans. Prayer, in this light, unifies the church under God's kingdom, aligning diverse individuals and diverse visions under one purpose, thereby underscoring the transformational power of collective prayer in shaping a church's mission and unity.

The book as a whole focuses on the transformational power of prayer when practiced collectively within the church. It challenges readers to elevate prayer from a mere religious duty to a profound act that binds believers together, aligns them with God's will, and prepares them for both personal trials and community-driven missions. Through insightful storytelling and biblical teaching, the text advocates for churches to prioritize communal prayer, fostering a deeper, more resilient, and unified church community.

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