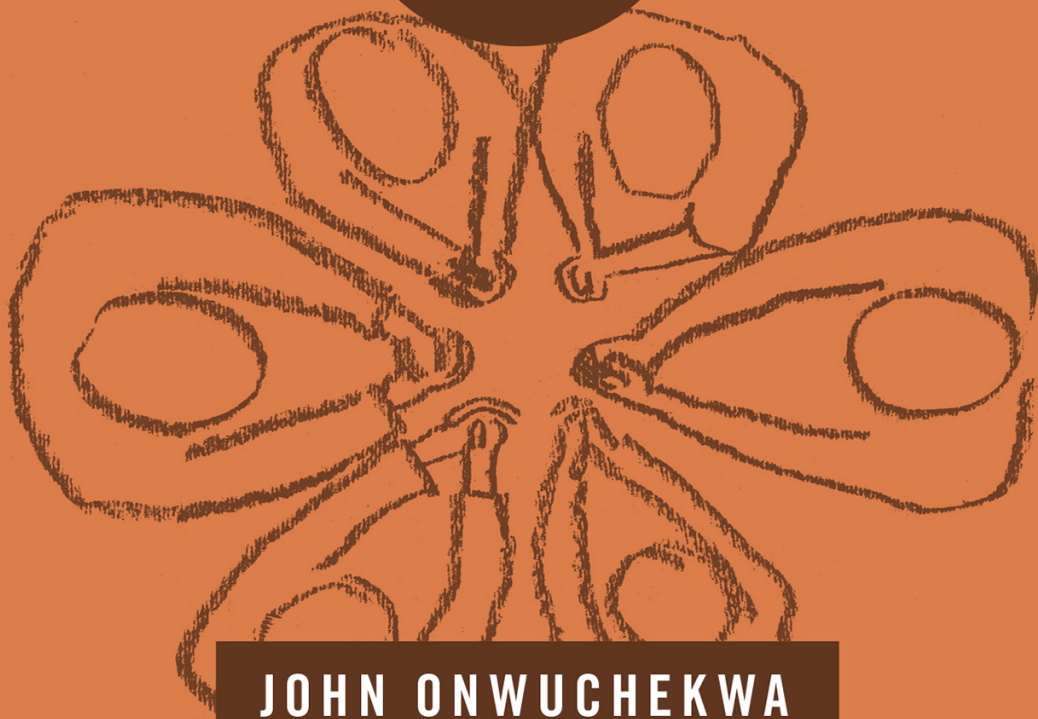


IX 9Marks BUILDING HEALTHY CHURCHES

PRAYER

HOW
PRAYING
TOGETHER
SHAPES THE
CHURCH



JOHN ONWUCHEKWA

By

Mark McGee

Prayer: How Praying Together Shapes the Church (Crossway, 2018) by John Onwuchekwa takes a look at prayer from a unique perspective – that of the church praying together.

“We gather to meet with God together. God has always intended that we would know him better through our engagement with others, but we don’t want our engagement with others to eclipse engaging with God. So it’s crucial that God’s Word remain central to our gathering. We hear the Word preached, sang, and read. And in response, we pray. We gather to meet with him together in large part through prayers that are responses to his Word.” *Prayer: How Praying Together Shapes the Church*, p 78

Pastor Onwuchekwa's perspective is that praying together as a church will shape the church.

“Corporate prayer is a way we teach our church how to engage with God. When we pray together, we want to address misconceptions about God, pray for those things many of us neglect, and show that substantial prayer doesn't have to take a substantial amount of time.” p 78

Onwuchekwa is the lead pastor at Cornerstone Church in Atlanta. He does not assume people know how to pray, so models four types of prayer as part of shaping corporate prayer time:

1. Adoration
2. Confession
3. Thanksgiving
4. Supplication

“Our God wants a deep relationship with his people. And the deeper the relationship, the more varied the communication. We explore the wonder of who God is during our prayer of adoration. We embrace the mercy he provides during our prayer of confession. We reflect on all he’s done for us during our prayer of thanksgiving. We lean on him and feel his strength during our prayer of supplication. By including these prayers in our Sunday service, we display the width and depth of our relationship with God.”

Onwuchekwa also has an interesting perspective on what we call The Lord’s Prayer and shares his thoughts in deep way that will encourage your heart and mind.

“There’s nothing more humbling than asking someone to teach you how to do something. Thankfully, Jesus doesn’t spend time beating his followers up; instead, he builds them up, highlighting the many incentives of prayer. Through his parables and other stories, Jesus highlights what we’re missing out on when we don’t pray. When teaching about prayer, Jesus graciously reminds us that God sees us—not

in the way a camera sees someone committing a crime, but in the way an undercover boss rewards an employee who is doing something right. Match that truth with Jesus's reminder that prayers are measured by their strength and not their length, and all of our insecurities should vanish. Our Lord's instructions leave us with no excuse for not praying, and every encouragement to pray in light of our hope." pp 36-37

I highly recommend this book about corporate prayer. Read it and share with your friends and your pastor. Praying together can shape your church!

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About The Author

John Onwuchekwa (MA, Dallas Theological Seminary) serves as pastor of Cornerstone Church in Atlanta, Georgia.

Publisher's Notes

What is the role of corporate prayer in the church?

Prayer is as necessary to the Christian as breathing is to the human body— but it often doesn't come quite as naturally. In fact, prayer in the church often gets subtly pushed to the side in favor of pragmatic practices that promise tangible results.

This book focuses on the necessity of regular prayer as a central practice in the local church—awakening us to the need and blessing of corporate prayer by examining what Jesus taught about prayer, how the first Christians approached prayer, and how to prioritize prayer in our congregations.

Endorsements

“I don’t know if I’ve ever read a book on prayer that left me feeling the entire range of human emotion—until reading John Onwuchekwa’s *Prayer*. Here is a human book—beautiful, poignant, funny, gritty, and pastoral. This book is better than a correction to our often languid prayer lives. There’s no guilt-based manipulation. Onwuchekwa writes like a fellow traveler, and as a fellow traveler knows what travelers need most: refreshment. Here’s a thirst-quenching encouragement to join together in seeking our great God. I pray every church reads *Prayer* together; it will change our congregations. Here’s a warm invitation to the entire church, beckoning the people of God to the wonders of prayer.” Thabiti Anyabwile, Pastor, Anacostia River Church, Washington, DC; author, *What Is a Healthy Church Member?*

“Prayer is an excellent book by my dear friend John Onwuchekwa. It is biblically and theologically rich. It is also real and honest. Want to get a corporate prayer meeting started in your church? This book is a very good start.” Daniel L. Akin, President, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

“Everyone remembers that auntie or uncle who hushed our fears with the words, ‘Baby, we just gon’ pray on that.’ John Onwuchekwa is that voice for today, calling the church back to one of the simplest and most powerful tools in her arsenal—the habit of communal prayer. He doesn’t merely want to reawaken our atrophied prayer muscles; he invites us into the much harder work of reorienting our priorities so that they’re more in line with God’s. Onwuchekwa’s call to return to such ‘first things’ is an excellent start to seeing Christian communities moving in the same kingdom direction.” K. A. Ellis, Cannada Fellow for World Christianity, Reformed Theological Seminary

“There’s likely something missing in your church, something you haven’t thought much of and likely haven’t even noticed. It’s prayer. Onwuchekwa shares compelling, insightful, and biblical reasons why corporate prayer should be a priority for the church. What a privilege it is to pray together as a family—this is the vision Onwuchekwa casts for us. This book has the potential to transform not only individuals, but also relationships and the culture in our churches. I highly recommend it.” Trillia Newbell, author, *God’s Very Good Idea; Enjoy; and Fear and Faith*

“The early church moved forward in power because they were a praying church (Acts 4:31). If we today are so proficient at ministry mechanics that we can succeed without power from on high, we have failed. But if our churches today will heed this compelling call to prayer by John Onwuchekwa, we too will prevail against all earthly powers, for God’s glory!” Ray Ortlund, Lead Pastor, Immanuel Church, Nashville, Tennessee

“This is a thought-provoking book about the life of prayer in the local church. Onwuchekwa builds a theological framework and then gives tangible and practical solutions for fleshing it out. I’ve had the privilege of working with John over the last decade, and I’ve seen no one better able to take lofty concepts and present them in a way that is palatable for the body of Christ. This book is an outworking of his gift. He takes biblical principles and communicates them in an effective way. His work on this subject is a gift to the church.” Dhati Lewis, Lead Pastor, Blueprint Church, Atlanta, Georgia; Executive Director of Community Restoration, North American Mission Board; author, *Among Wolves: Disciple-Making in the City*

“What more could be needed by our churches than a revival of gospel-centered spirituality? And what more could we do to experience this revival than to recommit to nourishing communion with our Father through prayer? This is why I’m thankful for this exceptional book by John Onwuchekwa. It is an accessible, practical, and relatable guide to the depths of the enormous, glorious privilege of speaking to the God of the universe.” Jared C. Wilson,

Director of Content Strategy, Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary; Director, Pastoral Training Center, Liberty Baptist Church, Kansas City, Missouri; author, *Supernatural Power for Everyday People*

“I have a lot to say about this little book, because it’s so good. In fact, I think this is one of the best books in this series. Brief and well written, this book by pastor John Onwuchekwa looks especially at two sections of the Gospels—the Lord’s Prayer, and Jesus’s prayer in the garden of Gethsemane. Onwuchekwa shares significant observations that seem intuitive, but are also surprising. It is well illustrated, biblically faithful, and theologically accurate. This book is useful to think not only about when we should pray, but also about how we should pray, and even what we should pray about. It reintroduces us to the ignored topic of praying together at church. Hope-giving and inspiring, specific and practical, the whole book is sweetened by touches of humor. You and others could benefit from investing your time in reading this small book on such a grand topic.” Mark Dever, Senior Pastor, Capitol Hill Baptist Church, Washington, DC; President, 9Marks

Prayer: How Praying Together Shapes the Church (Crossway, 2018, 144 pages)

[We received an electronic review copy from Crossway]

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