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A Rhythm of Prayer: A Collection of Meditations for Renewal

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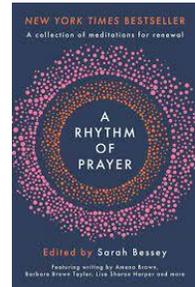
Book Review

A Rhythm of Prayer: A Collection of Meditations for Renewal

Edited by Sarah Bessey

New York: Convergent, 2021.

As we navigated through pandemic lock downs and protocols this year there was one resource that I used quite often in the classroom, worship and personal devotion. *A Rhythm of Prayer: A Collection of Meditations for Renewal*, a work of gathered prayers and mediations came to voice the concerns and hopes for this very strange and unique time. With an excellent variety of voices from multiple ethnicities, gender and faith traditions the learning went right alongside the refreshment. The book is divided into three parts titled: orientation, disorientation and reorientation. Each section holds multiple authors on the particular theme.



The first section, Orientation, lands the reader in examining where we have found ourselves over this liminal time. There are two pieces of special note in this section. The 'Psalm of possibility' written by Rev. Gail Song Bantum and the 'Liturgy of Longing' written by Rev. Sandra Maria Van Opstal are very helpful to engage this in between space. The reader is invited to recognize the important space of holding difficult conversations. They are called into challenging spaces alongside hope. Whether the author wrestles with issues around race, gender or vocation the reader is invited to reflect on their own reality and engage with what might be possible in their own context.

Section Two calls the reader to wrestle with disorientation. 'Prayer for when you don't even know what you want' by Sarah Bessey invite the reader to do the intentional work of listening and reflecting on what is happening in their world. It is important to note that a variety of styles of prayers are presented including invitations to movement as well as silence. Prayer is not a passive act, and this is implicit in the 'Prayer for those who cannot pray with words' which includes a blank space for what might be created.

Finally in section three the readers are invited to reorient themselves. The call is to a time and space where a new lens might be used to see this world. It is framed at the beginning and end with prayers written by Sarah Bessey. She begins the section with 'a prayer to learn to love again' and closes with the benediction. I would like to highlight a prayer written by Enuma Okoro, 'a prayer for when we have lost our way again'. In this prayer Okoro discusses the challenge of returning to the same issues and challenges again and again, calling on God for strength and energy. She reminds us that we are called to continue on, learning once again to love.

This resource has been helpful to navigate this in between time of new hybrid worship, a spiritual wilderness and new learning around every corner. It recognizes the messiness *and* grace of these spaces and times. It has been both a place to find grounding, challenge and freedom in prayer. The resource is heavily formed from an American perspective with the examples largely drawn from the American experience. However, there are many places it can find resonance for a Canadian reader. Inclusion of some prayers have sparked a few controversies in wider Christian circles. The authenticity of each voice remains in this work and the controversy in social media spheres was handled with grace and care by the editor and the focus of the book's purpose remains. I will continue to use this book for years to come.

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