



# Renovaré BOOK CLUB

## **Prayer in the Night: An Introduction** **By Tish Harrison Warren**

*Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who work, or watch,  
or weep this night, and give your angels charge over those  
who sleep. Tend the sick, Lord Christ; give rest to the  
weary, bless the dying, soothe the suffering, pity the afflicted,  
shield the joyous; and all for your loves' sake. Amen.*

### BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER

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When I first had the idea for this book sometime in 2018, part of me immediately wanted to write it. I love the “Keep Watch...” prayer and was eager to spend time with it. I was intrigued by the idea of exploring nighttime as a phenomenon. I liked how this prayer from *Compline*—like a guide line for a scuba diver—provided a tether that would allow me to plunge into murky and difficult questions.

Yet, I also did not want to write this book. So I tried to begin another book even as the idea for *Prayer in the Night* kept nipping at my heels. When I would feel the pull of this book, I would voice three protests to God, like I was a teenager arguing about having to clean her room.

First, I said, I’m not the one to write a book on grief and suffering because my life has been, all in all, pretty good. I haven’t faced unspeakable tragedy. I am not a victim of abuse. I haven’t had a child die. I’ve never faced extreme poverty or war. I have friends who have suffered deep and long, who face terminal illness or who have buried their three-year-old son or who suffer from intense forms of bipolar disorder. They should write books on grief. My life is rather ordinary (that’s what I have written a book on!). And my suffering is ordinary, which I felt disqualified me from this project. But—the question would come in silence—what if ordinary grief can and should also be explored? What if the relative average-ness of my life and pain reveals how loss, grief, and the power of Death isn’t the special property of a particular class of people but is part of our common humanity? The idea of addressing grief not from the vantage of horrific tragedy but as an ordinary human experience became intriguing to me. (Of course, at the time, I had no idea that COVID-19 would plunge each and every one of us into a time of turmoil and recognition of our collective fragility).

Second, I protested to God that if I wrote this book, I’d hear endless stories of pain from others. I was afraid I wasn’t up to that. I worried that I would become chronically anxious after hearing story after story of loss and tragedy from readers. I am a pastor and I know how receiving the stories of others is a gift—but sometimes a weighty one.



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But in the brief time the book has been out, I have found that I feel deeply honored by these stories that readers choose to share. When people have read my book and found that it resonates deeply with them, they almost inevitably begin to tell about how God brought hope or comfort in the midst of sadness. I was worried about hearing tales of tragedy, but what I wasn't expecting is how beautiful God looks when seen through these tear-filled stories from readers — how they tell, not only of tragedy, but of the grace that met them.

Lastly, I protested to God, I didn't want to write this book because, in my own life, I was ready to move on. I had faced grief in 2017 and I didn't want to have to spend 2018 writing about it—and meditating on it, processing it, recalling the pain and doubt in it. I was ready to move forward, look ahead, have some fun. But, the truth is, there was more work to be done in my own heart. I didn't want to have to face hard questions that I'd rather avoid. I didn't want to dwell in complexity and disquiet. And this is precisely why I needed to write this book. It slowed me down as I tried to speed to a quick recovery. Through the writing process, the Spirit of God did not allow me to paper over the uncertainties and unbelief that still lurked in corners of my heart. The novelist David Foster Wallace wrote, "The truth will set you free. But not until it is finished with you." And the work of God through grief, dimness, and doubt was not finished in me yet, even though I was ready to hurry along.

I'm well aware that as readers begin this book for Renovaré, each person will come from different starting points. Some may feel they haven't experienced grief in ways that count, that their grief is too average and their lives too good to have much to say on this subject. Others are reading this book having met deepest tragedy. Some will be uncomfortable confronting darkness in their own life or in the lives of others, worried about what diving into these dark places may cost them. Certain readers may be feeling weary after the political upheaval and global pandemic of this past year, and will greet these topics—nighttime, prayer, vulnerability, suffering—as a welcome balm. This book will hopefully allow them needed space to process a very hard year. But others may, like me in 2018, feel ready to move on and squeamish about having to spend any more time feeling hard feelings or asking hard questions.

Wherever you are coming from, I invite you to take up this book prayerfully and with curiosity about your own emotional life and experience of vulnerability. Depending on your starting place, different ideas or topics may strike you in different ways. But I, as the author, invite you to come to these pages just as you are—from wherever you are. You do not have to ratchet yourself up into any particular emotional state. No performance necessary. Simply sit in this book; read it slowly; and wait for whatever way God might be showing you his light and his truth.



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<b>Renovaré Book Club Session Three</b> <i>Prayer in the Night</i> Facilitator: Tish Harrison Warren (Author)			
Week/Date	Reading Assignment	Resources/Rhythm	Live Component?
Prep Week Monday, February 8	Book Club Introduction	Introduction & Reading Schedule	N/A
Week One Monday, February 15	Preface – Chapter 2	Article #1	N/A
Week Two Monday, February 22	Chapters 3 – 5	Podcast #1	N/A
Week Three Monday, March 1	Chapters 6 - 7	Article #2	N/A
Week Four Monday, March 8	Chapters 8 - 9	Podcast #2	N/A
Week Five Monday, March 15	Chapters 10 - 11	Article #3	N/A
Week Six Monday, March 23	Chapters 12 - 13	Readers' Questions Webcast (live & will be recorded and posted later)	Tuesday, March 23, 2021 at 1 PM Pacific Time
HOLY WEEK BREAK (1 WEEK)			
Week Seven Monday, April 5	Catch-up Week	Wrap-Up Week	Online All-Member Mingles: Wednesday, April 7 at 8AM and 5PM Pacific Time