

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR
CRAIG GROESCHEL



DANGEROUS PRAYERS

BECAUSE FOLLOWING JESUS
WAS NEVER MEANT TO BE SAFE

Moving from comfortable prayers to bold and faith-filled prayers doesn't happen automatically. I love how Craig teaches us, urges us onward, and models how to have the kind of prayer life we've always wanted. It's not about always getting what we want. It's about growing closer to the heart of God and truly trusting him with whatever happens next.

—Lysa TerKeurst, *New York Times* bestselling author; president, Proverbs 31 Ministries

The Christian life was never meant to be a safe life. Yet all too often we settle for comfort over risk and abandon our purpose in the process. Pastor Craig challenges us to put it all on the line with God and build our faith for a life of risk as we walk in our God-given purpose.

—Christine Caine, bestselling author; founder, A21 and Propel Women

In this book, you'll feel yourself neither pushed nor pulled toward more prayers that feel like they merely bounce off of the ceiling. Instead, you're invited to pray the kind of dangerous prayers which have the power to change yourself, the people you love, and the people God loves—which is everybody.

—Bob Goff, author, *New York Times* bestsellers *Love Does* and *Everybody Always*

To lean in to prayer the way Pastor Craig so brilliantly expounds on is to lean in to prayers that will change the world, and just might change you at the same time. This book is profound and prophetic and so, so helpful.

—Jefferson Bethke, author, *New York Times* bestselling *Jesus > Religion*

This book will challenge you to trade your stale, safe prayer life for one brimming with danger and excitement. Discover how to offer

genuine and gutsy prayers, the kind of dangerous prayers that change not only hearts but also our world.

—Lisa Bevere, *New York Times* bestselling author, *Without Rival* and *Girls with Swords*

If your prayer life needs a boost, you will enjoy this powerful new book. It will build your faith, strengthen your walk with God, and teach you to pray in dangerous ways.

—Mark Batterson, *New York Times* bestselling author, *The Circle Maker*; lead pastor, National Community Church

Craig Groeschel is convinced our prayers need to get bigger. In *Dangerous Prayers*, he tells us why and how. Taken to heart, this book has the potential to radically transform not only how you pray but also how you view the world and how you view God's activity in the world. Thank you, Craig!

—Andy Stanley, author; communicator; founder, North Point Ministries

If there's one mistake in prayer we should avoid at all costs, it's playing it too safe. In *Dangerous Prayers*, my pastor and friend, Craig Groeschel, will challenge you to embrace the uncertainty and lean into a more daring, more fulfilling prayer life.

—Steven Furtick, pastor, Elevation Church; *New York Times* bestselling author

This isn't another sweet book about the practice of prayer that will leave you feeling condemned and ashamed that you don't pray more. On the contrary, it's about what happens when we sincerely talk with a living God. And *that* can be beautifully, wonderfully dangerous.

—Judah Smith, lead pastor, Churchhome

DANGEROUS PRAYERS

Also by Craig Groeschel

Altar Ego: Becoming Who God Says You Are

Chazown: Discover and Pursue God's Purpose for Your Life

*The Christian Atheist: Believing in God
but Living as If He Doesn't Exist*

Daily Power: 365 Days of Fuel for Your Soul

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Fight: Winning the Battles That Matter Most

*From This Day Forward: Five Commitments to Fail-
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Soul Detox: Clean Living in a Contaminated World

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DANGEROUS PRAYERS

BECAUSE FOLLOWING JESUS
WAS NEVER MEANT TO BE SAFE

CRAIG GROESCHEL

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Dangerous Prayers

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*This book is dedicated to my mom.
Thank you for praying faithfully all those years.
Your prayers made all the difference.
I love you and honor you.*

Thank you for purchasing
Dangerous Prayers!

All of the author's proceeds
from this book will support
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efforts through the
YouVersion Bible App.

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INTRODUCTION

WHY YOUR PRAYERS NEED TO BE DANGEROUS

Hey, Craig, do you believe God still does miracles?”
“Of course,” I said.

“Good—because your prayers are so *lame*.”

I tried to laugh with him, but my friend’s joke stung—mostly because he was right. We had just left a prayer service together, back when I started working in ministry. My buddy knew me well enough to tease me, but I suspect he was also making a point. Left speechless, I offered no defense as I processed the truth of his observation. I couldn’t deny that he voiced a secret I already knew but didn’t want to admit: my prayers were pathetic.

As a young pastor at the time, I should have had a handle on prayer. It’s one of those job responsibilities, like preaching and greeting people after the service, I should’ve mastered.

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But praying long, focused, eloquent, and powerful prayers to the God-I-couldn't-see had always been challenging for me. I wasn't comfortable praying in a King James dialect of *thees* and *thous*—like trying to perform Shakespeare. But I wasn't satisfied just rambling in a shoot-the-breeze, best-buddy tone with the Creator and Sustainer of the universe either.

And even when I did pray, I had a difficult time focusing for long. Which meant I'd try even harder the next time. But no matter how hard I'd try, I always seemed to fall back into the same old prayer rut. I'd pray about the same things. In the same ways. Usually around the same time.

Looking back, I wonder if sometimes God got bored with my prayers. When I'd pray, "Lord, show us traveling mercies and keep us safe," I could imagine him saying, "What are you worried about? Just drive the speed limit and wear your seat-belt. You'll be fine." Or when I prayed, "God, bless our food," I just knew he was probably thinking, "Really? You want me to bless boxed macaroni and cheese and some potato chips?"

As I studied the Bible more, I marveled at the variety of prayers spoken by God's people. Not only did they pray about things that were incredibly personal—to conceive a child, for instance (1 Sam. 1:27)—but also their prayers were often so practical, for food and provision (Matt. 6:11) and escape from their enemies (Ps. 59:1–2). Sometimes they seemed to gently whisper to a loving God. Other times they yelled at him in agony and frustration.

They often pleaded with God sincerely. Then later they'd

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cry out from the depths of their anguish and rail at God like a tired toddler thrashing in the arms of a parent. They prayed for boldness to share their faith. They prayed for walls, both internally and externally, to fall. Daniel prayed for the mouths of hungry lions to be shut, and Jonah prayed for the belly of a hungry whale to be opened. Gideon prayed for his fleece to be wet one day and dry another. God's people prayed whether they were giddy with joy or crushed by sorrow.

Their prayers were honest. Desperate. Fiery. Gutsy. Real.

And there I was praying that God would keep me safe and bless my burger and fries.

My friend was right.

My prayers were lame.

Maybe you can relate. It's not that you don't believe in prayer. You do. But you're stuck in a rut. You pray about the same struggles and the same requests. In the same way. At the same time. If you even try to pray at all. Like me, you probably know you should pray more. And with more passion. More faith. You want to talk to God and to listen to him, to share an intimate conversation like you would with your spouse or best friend. You really want to but aren't sure how. So your prayers remain safe.

Flat. Dull. Predictable. Stale.

Boring.

My friend's wake-up call convinced me that it was time for a change in my prayer life. For too long, I had tolerated lackluster, faithless, and mostly empty prayers. I knew God wanted

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more for me, and I wanted to know him more intimately, despite my hesitation about what it would require of me.

To get there, I began by unpacking some of my spiritual baggage. For years, I'd felt deep shame about my half-hearted prayer life—me, a pastor. If you've ever felt insecure about your prayer life, think about what it's like to be a pastor. I'm supposed to be a prayer warrior—full of fierce, unrelenting faith and unbridled, Spirit-led power. And yet I found myself drifting while trying to pray.

In the middle of a prayer, whether praying silently or aloud, my mind would bounce from one thing to the next. *Dear God in heaven, I pray that you heal my friend who has cancer. Work in her life now in the name of. . . I really need to go to the hospital to see her again. Oh wait, I haven't changed the oil in the car. And we're out of cereal. The kids are gonna kill me. And Amy has a doctor's appointment today—did we pay that last insurance bill? I can't believe how much it's going up this year! Oh, yeah, this week's sermon—still need to find a strong illustration . . . Oh, I'm sorry, Lord, what were we talking about?*

To make matters even worse, I always dreaded prayer meetings. (Talk about feeling guilty.) They seem to last forever with people who not only know how to pray but also love to pray. Not to mention that whenever you have to hold hands with others in a prayer time, it seems to get weird really quick. On one side is always the Vise. The louder she prays, the harder she squeezes. “God, we bind up the work of the devil, IN JESUS' NAME!” Squeeze. Squeeze. *Squeeze*. Your knuckles turn white

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as you lose feeling up to your elbow. But then on the other side, you often have the Fish, a cold, pulseless hand barely grasping yours. The Vise cuts off your circulation while the Fish makes you eager to shrug off that clammy appendage passing as a hand.

And there's always the Power Pray-er, the person who loves to pray loud and proud. You know, the one who quotes tons of Bible verses and makes you feel even more inadequate. "God, you said in your Word in Deuteronomy 28 that we would be the head and not the tail. We know from John 3:16, Lord, that you so loved the world." With so many numbers thrown around, by the end you feel like you've been listening to a lecture on accounting.

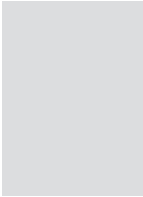
Then there's always the Competitor. When I was a new Christian in college, I frequently experienced this kind of prayer one-upmanship with my roommate. He'd pray loud and long, sounding so sure of himself, and display his vast knowledge of God and the Bible. Feeling pressure not to be outdone, I'd up my game but usually found myself taking it too far. Since I didn't know much about the Bible then, I'd just roll out things that sounded powerful and Bible-like. "God, you said in your Word that you are not only Jehovah Jireh but that you are also Jehovah, um, let's see, um, Jehovah Ni . . . um, *Nissan*. Yes—you are Jehovah NISSAN! And, Lord, you are good. You are good to, um, to the . . . God, you are good to the last drop. And your Word is so sweet, like honey on our lips, and it tastes so good . . . it, um, it melts . . . in our mouths . . .

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and not in our hands. Oh, God, like a good neighbor . . . you're always there!"

These weren't my only prayer problems. Too often, praying just didn't make any sense. It seemed like God would often respond quickly to my meaningless requests, like the time I almost jokingly asked God to heal our broken air-conditioning unit, and he did. Then I'd fast for days and pray my guts out for months that God would heal a friend from a disease, and he didn't. Sometimes I believed in the power of prayer, and other times I wondered whether it was all a big waste of time.

Since those early years, I've learned quite a bit about prayer. For one thing, God hates showy prayers, so there's no pressure, no right way other than being open and honest with him. Jesus repeatedly railed against the Pharisees for praying long,



loud, and fancy prayers that lacked authenticity. Christ taught us, "And God hates showy prayers, so there's no pressure, no right way other than being open and honest with him. when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full" (Matt. 6:5).

Instead of long, loud, and fancy, the prayers that move God are simple, authentic, and heartfelt. But simple is not the same as safe. And that's the reason I'm compelled to write this book. The biggest mistake I made in my prayer life, the reason my prayers were so lame, is because I prayed too safely. I was in a comfort zone with God, built on lame, half-hearted

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communication. I wasn't on fire and I wasn't cold. My prayers were tepid. But safe, lukewarm prayers don't draw us closer to God or help us reveal his love to this world.

Prayers are inherently dangerous.

This idea about prayer dawned on me while reading about Jesus talking to his Father in the garden of Gethsemane, just a short time before he gave his life on the cross. Knowing what was ahead, Jesus asked God if there was any other way. Then Jesus, not just a regular disciple or a person in the Bible, but J-E-S-U-S, the Son of God, prayed a vulnerable and dangerous prayer of submission: "Yet I want your will to

be done, not mine" (Luke 22:42 NLT).

Jesus never asks us to do something he wouldn't do himself. He calls us to a life of faith, not a life of comfort. Instead of coming to him

for a safer, easier, stress-free lifestyle, the Son of God challenges us to risk loving others more than ourselves. Instead of indulging our daily desires, he calls us to deny them for something eternal. Instead of living by what we want, he tells us to pick up our crosses daily and follow his example. In this book, we'll dig more deeply into these ideas through three powerful prayers drawn from Scripture. These three prayers may be short. They may be simple. They may be straightforward. But they are not safe.

In the next three sections of this book, we'll attempt to stretch our faith, expand our hearts, and open our lives to God praying these three dangerous prayers:

Jesus never asks us to do something he wouldn't do himself. He calls us to a life of faith, not a life of comfort.

WHY YOUR PRAYERS NEED TO BE DANGEROUS

SEARCH ME.

BREAK ME.

SEND ME.

When we're seeking to communicate with God in real, vulnerable, and intimate prayer, he's not wrapping us in a bubble of spiritual safety. Instead he bursts our what's-in-it-for-me bubble and invites us to trust him when we don't know what he will do next. Some days we feel blessed. Other days we face challenges, opposition, and persecution. But every moment of dangerous prayer will be filled with his presence.

I worry that for a lot of people prayer is like buying a lottery ticket, a chance at a life here on earth that's problem free, stress free, pain free. For others, prayer is merely a sentimental routine, like reciting favorite song lyrics or a beloved nursery rhyme from childhood. Yet others pray only because they feel even guiltier if they don't.

But none of these prayers reflect the life Jesus came to give us.

Instead, he called us to leave everything to follow him.

When a rich and powerful young man approached Jesus to ask some weighty spiritual questions, Jesus didn't lower the bar in his response. Instead, "Jesus looked at him and loved him. 'One thing you lack,' he said. 'Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me'" (Mark 10:21).

I've always been moved by the fact that *before* Jesus asked

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this man to leave everything, Jesus made this bold request in love. Jesus wanted the best for this man, who had everything on the outside but still lived with a void on the inside. Jesus loved him and almost dared him to abandon it all to follow him.

Jesus didn't just challenge others to leave their own wills behind. He too lived a dangerous faith. He touched lepers. Showed grace to prostitutes. And stood bravely in the face of danger. Then he told us we could do what he did—and more.

And that's why we can't settle for simply asking God to bless our food or "be with us today."

Are you ready for more? Are you sick of playing it safe? Are you ready to pray daring, faith-filled, God-honoring, life-changing, world-transforming prayers?

If you are, then this book is for you.

But be warned. There will be bumps. When you start to pray things like "search me, break me, send me," you may experience valleys. Attacks. Trials. Pain. Hardship. Discouragement. Even heartbreak. But there will also be the joy of faith, the marvel of miracles, the relief of surrender, and the pleasure of pleasing God.

It's time to stop praying safe.

It's time to start talking, really talking—and really listening—to God.

It's time for dangerous prayers.



PART 1

SEARCH ME

*Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know
my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in
me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*

—PSALM 139:23-24



CHAPTER 1.1

SEARCH ME

One of my first breakthroughs about prayer occurred years ago when my mother had surgery. My family and I had gathered in Mom's hospital room, trying to reassure her that the procedure would go smoothly the next morning. She was understandably nervous, so when a middle-aged man in a black suit and clerical collar knocked and asked if she would like him to pray for her, she exclaimed, "Well, of course I want you to pray for me!"

He smiled and nodded, confident in his demeanor as he produced a small well-worn leather book from his suit pocket. Standing beside her bed, he asked, "What is your denominational preference?"

"I'm just a . . . well . . . just a regular Christian. I don't have a denominational preference. Just Protestant."

I knew she had grown up attending a Lutheran school, but also that our family had been attending a Methodist church for as long as I could remember. It never seemed to be a big

PART 1: SEARCH ME

deal, really. Apparently, though, the chaplain didn't share our casual attitude about denominations. "Uh, I'm sorry, ma'am," he said, shifting his weight from one leg to the other. "It would just help me know which prayer to read if you could pick a denomination that you're comfortable with."

"Well, let's just go with Methodist then." Mom smiled politely, eager to help the chaplain do his job.

Relieved, he returned her smile and thumbed through his little book until he found the page he wanted. He then began reading the prayer, and honestly, the only way any of us knew it was a prayer was because he told us. With his cheery monotone voice, the chaplain could have been reading a nursery rhyme or his grocery list.

Before he could finish, Mom interrupted him. And you'd have to know my mom to fully grasp the impact of her interruption. She's the nicest, most thoughtful, caring person you will ever meet. She would give you her last dollar, walk across town to help you out, and write you a three-page thank-you note for the gift you sent her. She's absolutely as kind as they come—but she's also known for being a bit ornery. Not only does she enjoy having fun, she rarely minces words. If she thinks it, she will say it. Without holding back.

While the chaplain was still reading from his prescribed Methodist prayer, my mother interrupted. Loud enough to be heard all the way to the nurses' station, she playfully called out, "Will somebody please find me a chaplain who knows how to pray his own prayers?"

Search Me

At first, we all tried not to laugh, but it was impossible to hold it in. Even the chaplain, poor guy, had to grin. Everyone in my family still chuckles when we retell this story about Mom's frank assessment of this man's prayer. But Mom made a good point.

Praying from the heart is personal and unmistakable.

There's certainly nothing wrong with reading a prayer or using someone else's words to pray. In fact, reading prayers can be a good starting point in learning to pray

your own. Over time, though, if you want to know God intimately, you will begin to pray more unscripted prayers that come straight from your heart. As your faith grows, your

prayers will likely well up deep inside you. You may not even know how to express them in words. They're simply communication between you and your Father, the living God Almighty. Deeply personal and just as unique as your fingerprint.

Praying from the heart is personal and unmistakable.

You don't have to look far in the Psalms to see the honest cries from the heart of David. He questioned God. He complained to God. He petitioned God. From the depths of his soul, David cried out to his heavenly Father, asking, "How long, LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart? How long will my enemy triumph over me?" (Ps. 13:1-2).

But I'm afraid many of us aren't comfortable praying openly and freely. We assume there's a right way or a better way or a

PART 1: SEARCH ME

more eloquent way. We tend to stumble into ruts and pray for the same things over and over. We get bored with our prayers.

And if we get bored praying, then I wonder if we're really praying.



CHAPTER 1.2

TRUTH OR DARE

Prayer is sacred communication, the language of longing, a divine dialogue between you and your heavenly Father, your Abba, your Daddy. When you pray, the God of the universe listens. And not only does he listen, but he also cares. About what you have to say. About all the things you carry around in your heart that no one else knows about. Maybe even some things *you* don't know about. God wants to hear you and speak to you. He wants to communicate with you the same way you sit across from a loved one and enjoy an intimate conversation.

Your prayers matter.

How you pray matters.

What you pray matters.

Your. Prayers. Move. God.

We're told in the Bible that we can "come boldly to the throne of our gracious God" (Heb. 4:16a NLT). We don't have to approach timidly or feel awkward—we can come before him

PART 1: SEARCH ME

with confidence, assurance, and boldness. When we pray this way, then “we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most” (Heb. 4:16b NLT).

Do you need grace in your relationships with other people?

Do you need mercy for all the secret things you struggle with?

Do you need help to get through your day?

I do. In big ways. Every day. And in every way.

So let me share something that’s helped me grow some spiritual muscle in place of those wimpy prayers my friend pointed out. They are simply three prayers drawn from the Bible that you can pray and make your own. By this, I simply mean you can pray them in your own words, allowing them to rise up to heaven even as they sink into your bones. They’re tools for focusing your prayers and communication with God.

But I must warn you. They’re not safe prayers. They’re not benign or polite or tepid. You can’t just memorize them in hopes of a warm, fuzzy moment with God.

These prayers require faith. Courage. They ask you to risk.

They’re almost guaranteed to push you out of your comfort zone. To stretch you. To help you grow righteously uncomfortable. They will require you to look deep within yourself. To stop pretending about certain aspects of your life. To be honest with yourself before the One who knows you better than you know yourself.

These prayers may melt your heart and open an awareness of sin in your life. You may feel compelled to take a bold step of radical faith, trusting God as you follow him and go off

Truth or Dare

script from the predictable pattern of your life. You will likely be challenged to leave spiritual safety, comfort, and convenience behind you.

Instead of a safe, all-about-me prayer, you might pray for others first, hurting for them, hoping for them, reaching out to God on their behalf.

Instead of just asking for protection and safety, you might ask what God wants you to do and where he wants you to go.

Rather than always asking him for more, you might praise him for all the blessings he's already poured into your life. Recognizing all these blessings, you might then reach out to bless someone else.

Instead of just checking a box, your prayers might actually change eternity, shaking hell, scaring demons, and enlarging heaven. Sound extreme? I promise you it's not. More importantly, *God* promises. If you call out to him, God assures you that he hears the cries of your heart.

Your prayers become dangerous.

But following Jesus was never supposed to be safe.

He promised his followers they would face trouble (see John 16:33). Jesus

warned those who faithfully served him that they would be persecuted just like he was (see John 15:20). Jesus alerts us of upcoming challenges. Because we love him, we will face trials and opposition. But even in the middle of painful trials, Jesus invites us to respond with grace and pray what feels

If you call out to him, God assures you that he hears the cries of your heart.

PART 1: SEARCH ME

like a vulnerable and dangerous prayer. Jesus said, “But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matt. 5:44). Love those who want to do you harm. And pray for those who are intent on your demise.

Do you dare to pray in a way you’ve never prayed before? With all of your heart, soul, mind, and the full extent of your being? What would happen in your life and the lives of those around you if you started praying dangerous prayers?

Do you dare to find out?



CHAPTER 1.3

THE STATE OF YOUR HEART

The first prayer comes from David, and it's a doozy. In the Old Testament we see David squaring off against God's enemies left and right. In a raging fit of jealousy, King Saul falsely accused David of treason and attempting to assassinate the king. Saul sent his full forces after David in repeated attempts to take his life and remove what Saul saw as his biggest threat. And he knew how to hit where it hurts—he claimed David wasn't faithful to his God.

With all his heart, David wanted to please God. He fought against his anger in order to protect and show honor to the king. Yet knowing that his motives weren't always perfect, David surrendered his heart before God and prayed one of the most vulnerable, transparent, and dangerous prayers you'll ever hear. Wanting to honor God in every aspect of his being, David prayed, "Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any

PART 1: SEARCH ME

offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Ps. 139:23–24).

Not only is this prayer difficult to pray, but it’s even more challenging to apply and live out. Because if you have the courage to pray it, then you’ll need to exercise the courage to live what God shows you in reply. So don’t pray it if you don’t mean it.

Be forewarned, this prayer has the potential to convict you. To correct you. To redirect your life. To change the way you see yourself. To change how others see you.

Maybe you’re still thinking this is no big deal. Maybe you’re wondering why you should ask God to search your heart when he already knows all that’s inside you. You know what’s in there. He knows what’s in there. So why ask something so obvious?

This is where it’s tricky. On the surface, it seems like we would know our own hearts. Right? *I know my motives. I know what’s most important. I know why I do what I do.* Besides, you might tell yourself, *I’ve got a good heart. I’m not trying to hurt people. I want to do what’s right. My heart is good. I’m praying, aren’t I?*

But God’s Word actually reveals the exact opposite. It might be a shock when you hear it the first time, but Jeremiah tells us some straight-up truth. Jeremiah was the son of a Levitical priest born around 650 BC. During the reign of King Josiah, God raised up this young prophet to take God’s Word to Israel and the nations. Jeremiah flat out says you—along with me and everybody else—don’t have a good heart. In fact,

The State of Your Heart

not only is your heart not good, but your heart is wicked and sinful in all its ways. The prophet said, “The human heart is the most deceitful of all things, and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is?” (Jer. 17:9 NLT).

It’s easy to pretend we are good at heart, but the Bible teaches us that our heart deceives us and is desperately wicked. At its core, our heart is all about self—not Christ. It’s about what’s temporary—not eternal. It’s about what’s easy—not what’s right. It’s obsessed with what we want—not what God wants.

You might think, no, not me. My heart is good. Please remember, without Christ, it’s not. If we think it is, we are being deceived by our own heart. Our original nature at birth is sinful. (You never have to teach a two-year-old to be selfish, right?) Our ways are not God’s

ways. That’s why we need Christ. Not just to forgive us, but to transform us. To redirect us. To make us new.

If you still believe you’re inherently good, then let me ask you, how often do you lie? If you answer “not that often,” then you’re probably lying right there. If you answer “never,” then I know you’re lying.

Research studies reveal that most people tell multiple lies every day. We don’t want to hurt someone’s feelings. Or we want to make ourselves look good so we exaggerate. But the

Our ways are not God’s ways. That’s why we need Christ. Not just to forgive us, but to transform us. To redirect us. To make us new.

PART 1: SEARCH ME

most common lies are the ones we tell ourselves. Have you ever done this? You tell yourself what you believe is true in your heart: *I won't eat much. I promise. Just a couple of bites.* And

The most common
lies are the ones
we tell ourselves.

the next thing you know you're holding an empty bag of chips or licking the pan clean. We all rationalize. No one likes to face the ugly truth that they drink too much, that they think about things that they'd be

ashamed for anyone else to know, that they laugh at others' mistakes and gossip behind their backs. And the rationalizations continue. You tell yourself, I'm not materialistic; I just like nice things. I'm not a gossip; I'm just telling them so they can pray. I don't have a problem; this is just my one thing I do to cope.

I bet David was tempted to cope when he was running for his life from Saul. He could have used alcohol to escape. He could have turned angry, resentful, and bitter. Or David could have plotted to harm King Saul, justifying his actions in the name of self-preservation. But instead of taking the easy path, David chose a more daring one. The "man after [God's] own heart" (1 Sam. 13:14) decided to pray, knowing that his own heart was capable of tricking him again and again.

Without Christ, your heart is deceitful.

That's why this prayer of David's is crazy dangerous.

"Search my heart, Lord."



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

INTRODUCTION

1. On a scale of 1–10 (with one representing pathetically lame and ten representing passionately faith-fueled), what would you rank your prayer life last week and why?
2. How has praying been easy for you? When have you found praying to be more of a challenge? Why?
3. When you were growing up, was prayer a part of your life? If so, describe what part it played.
4. Is there a dangerous prayer that you know you should be praying but are afraid to pray? Talk about it openly.
5. If God helped you grow in one area of your prayer life, what do you think it would be and why? Describe.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

PART 1: SEARCH ME

1. A lot of people will say or believe that they have a “good heart.” But we learned in this chapter that the heart is deceitful (Jer. 17:9). Can you think of a time that your heart led you to do something that you shouldn’t have done? Did you rationalize something? How did your heart lead you astray?
2. When David was in a dark place, he prayed the dangerous prayer, “Search me, God” (Ps. 139:23). Have you ever asked God to search you? If not, why not? If you have, what did he show you?
3. David asked God to reveal his “anxious thoughts” (see Ps. 139:23). What concerns or burdens are making you anxious? Is something weighing on you or keeping you awake at night?
4. We also watched as David bravely asked God to show him if there was anything offensive in him (see Ps. 139:24). Have you ever asked God to show you your sinfulness? Did he ever reveal something in you that he wanted to cleanse or change? If so, describe what happened.
5. David prayed the dangerous prayer inviting God to “search him”—to lead him and direct his steps. Has God ever prompted you, spoken to you, or nudged you to do something after you prayed? Or maybe he showed you something through a sermon, or in a song, or from a friend. Talk about a time when you know that God was leading you.

Discussion Questions

PART 2: BREAK ME

1. Scripture shows again and again how hard times can make us stronger and bring us closer to God. Describe a time when you experienced something difficult and yet recognized God's goodness was with you in the trial.
2. In chapter 2, we looked at 1 Corinthians 11:24, which says, "When [Jesus] had given thanks, he broke [the bread] and said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.' If you have been around church, you may have experienced Communion or the Lord's Supper. What does this sacrament mean to you? Describe.
3. Some might say that inviting God to "break them" is the most scary of the three dangerous prayers. If you had the courage to ask God to break you, what are you afraid he might do? If your fears actually came to pass, how do you think God would show himself to you?
4. Who do you know that has experienced deep pain and is stronger spiritually on the other side of the brokenness? How is God using them now?
5. If you took time to invite God to break you, what do you think he'd want to remove from your life first? Would he break you of selfishness? Of pride? Of self-sufficiency? Or of something else? Talk about it and explain why.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

PART 3: SEND ME

1. In this chapter, we looked at the prayer of Isaiah when he said, “Here I am. Send me” (Isa. 6:8 NLT). I am sometimes nervous to pray this prayer because of fear of where God might send me or what he’ll ask me to do. Can you relate?
2. Are you surrendered—completely available—to God right now? Are you doing everything he is leading you to do? Or are you guarded? Resisting? Please discuss openly. Encourage each other toward deeper connection with God.
3. In the sixth chapter of Isaiah, the prophet experienced the presence of God in a way he never had before. When you think of experiencing God’s presence, what comes to mind? Have you ever sensed that God was with you? Is it a rare experience? Or is it often? How or when do you experience God best?
4. In this chapter, we looked at the principle, “what you feed grows and what you starve dies.” Can you describe a time when feeding your spirit with truth helped you grow? How did God give you the ability to overcome doing something wrong and grow closer to him? Describe.
5. Any act of faith can help you grow closer to God. Talk about the last thing that you did that required faith in God on your part. What happened? What did you learn? Are you ready to let God “send you” no matter where it leads?

Discussion Questions

CONCLUSION

1. If God said yes to every prayer you prayed in the last week, what would be different in this world today? Be specific.
2. In the conclusion we looked at a prayer attributed to Sir Francis Drake. He asked God to “disturb him.” How has God disturbed you as a result of reading this book? What is God showing you about your prayer life? About your faith?
3. Of the three prayers—*search me*, *break me*, and *send me*—which one is the most difficult for you to pray and why?
4. Of the three prayers—*search me*, *break me*, and *send me*—which one are you most ready to pray and why?
5. We looked at three dangerous prayers. If you think about it, I’m sure there are dozens of others that come to mind. If you added a fourth dangerous prayer, what would it be and why?



PRAY A DANGEROUS PRAYER TODAY

The Bible is full of dangerous prayers. King David, the apostle Paul, and even Jesus all prayed their own versions of dangerous prayers. As we learned in the introduction to this book, they prayed honest prayers—desperate, fiery, gutsy, real prayers.

In their own words they said *search me, break me, and send me*.

The dangerous prayers of the Bible can be the fuel for your dangerous prayers today. Isaiah's voice might help you find yours. Esther's words might help you discover fresh words for yourself.

What follows is a brief list of the dangerous prayers found in the Bible. If you are having trouble praying, then start with these. Read through them and adapt them to fit your situation. Allow the words of the followers of God who have gone before you to inspire you, and to help you find words of your own.

PRAY A DANGEROUS PRAYER TODAY

Getting Started with Prayer

Jesus taught his disciples to pray by providing them with an example, a passage now widely called the Lord's Prayer. You can pray the exact words of these verses as your own. Meditate on them. Memorize them. You'll probably recognize much of this prayer already.

“This, then, is how you should pray: ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.’”

—MATTHEW 6:9–13

Something great about this prayer is that it doesn't have an “amen” ending. It feels open ended. You can pray these words, then share with God a sentence or two from your heart before saying amen.

“Search Me” Prayers

Psalms 139 is an open and honest prayer before God about how nothing is hidden from him. Open your heart to God. Pray it as your own.

Pray a Dangerous Prayer Today

You have searched me, LORD, and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you, LORD, know it completely. You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.

Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

—PSALM 139:1–6, 23–24

Pray this short psalm from David that screams “search me!” during a time of stress and danger.

How long, LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart? How long will my enemy triumph over me?

Look on me and answer, LORD my God. Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death, and my enemy will say, “I have overcome him,” and my foes will rejoice when I fall.

But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing the LORD’s praise, for he has been good to me.

—PSALM 13

PRAY A DANGEROUS PRAYER TODAY

“Break Me” Prayers

Jesus set *the* example for us of what it means to pray “break me.”

When [Jesus] had given thanks, he broke [the bread] and said, “This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.”

—1 CORINTHIANS 11:24, PRAYED
DURING THE LAST SUPPER

“Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.”

—LUKE 22:42, PRAYED ON THE
NIGHT JESUS WAS ARRESTED

“Send Me” Prayers

Pray the prophet Isaiah’s dangerous, vulnerable words to God:

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” And I said, “Here am I. Send me!”

—ISAIAH 6:8

Pray like Esther, a young woman who was willing to put her own life on the line in order to protect God’s people:

Pray a Dangerous Prayer Today

“Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my attendants will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish.”

—ESTHER 4:16

Read and pray all of Psalm 40 if you can. This is an incredible chapter in the Bible. Pray out loud the verses that connect with your circumstances. David said, “Send me!”

I proclaim your saving acts in the great assembly; I do not seal my lips, LORD, as you know. I do not hide your righteousness in my heart; I speak of your faithfulness and your saving help. I do not conceal your love and your faithfulness from the great assembly.

—PSALM 40:9–10

Confession Prayers

Psalm 32 is a classic prayer of confession. When we don’t confess our sins, it’s like our “bones waste away.” But God loves you with an “unfailing love.” If there is sin in your life that you haven’t confessed to God, pray the words of this psalm. Confess. No matter what you’ve done, you can believe that he “surrounds the one who trusts him.”

PRAY A DANGEROUS PRAYER TODAY

Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven,
whose sins are covered. Blessed is the one whose sin the LORD
does not count against them and in whose spirit is no deceit.

When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through
my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was
heavy on me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of
summer.

Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover
up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the
LORD." And you forgave the guilt of my sin.

Therefore let all the faithful pray to you while you may
be found; surely the rising of the mighty waters will not
reach them. You are my hiding place; you will protect me
from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance.

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should
go; I will counsel you with my loving eye on you. Do not be
like the horse or the mule, which have no understanding but
must be controlled by bit and bridle or they will not come to
you. Many are the woes of the wicked, but the LORD's unfaill-
ing love surrounds the one who trusts in him.

Rejoice in the LORD and be glad, you righteous; sing, all
you who are upright in heart!

—PSALM 32

I cry aloud to the LORD; I lift up my voice to the LORD
for mercy. I pour out before him my complaint; before him I
tell my trouble.

Pray a Dangerous Prayer Today

When my spirit grows faint within me, it is you who watch over my way. In the path where I walk people have hidden a snare for me. Look and see, there is no one at my right hand; no one is concerned for me. I have no refuge; no one cares for my life.

I cry to you, LORD; I say, “You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living.”

Listen to my cry, for I am in desperate need; rescue me from those who pursue me, for they are too strong for me. Set me free from my prison, that I may praise your name. Then the righteous will gather about me because of your goodness to me.

—PSALM 142

Some of King David’s worst moments are recorded in 2 Samuel 11 and 12. His sins took the lives of others and broke one family apart. Psalm 51 records his confession after those events. No matter what you’ve done, use the words of this psalm and go to God in prayer.

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.

For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight; so you are right in your verdict and

PRAY A DANGEROUS PRAYER TODAY

justified when you judge. Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb; you taught me wisdom in that secret place.

Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice. Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity.

Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

—PSALM 51:1–12

When Life Is Unbearable

This psalm will give words to your pain and your waiting and remind you of God's incredible power and love.

Hear my prayer, LORD; let my cry for help come to you. Do not hide your face from me when I am in distress. Turn your ear to me; when I call, answer me quickly.

For my days vanish like smoke; my bones burn like glowing embers. My heart is blighted and withered like

Pray a Dangerous Prayer Today

grass; I forget to eat my food. In my distress I groan aloud and am reduced to skin and bones. I am like a desert owl, like an owl among the ruins. I lie awake; I have become like a bird alone on a roof. All day long my enemies taunt me; those who rail against me use my name as a curse. For I eat ashes as my food and mingle my drink with tears because of your great wrath, for you have taken me up and thrown me aside. My days are like the evening shadow; I wither away like grass.

—PSALM 102:1–11

Did you know that Jesus also prayed with the words of Scripture? He prayed parts of the Psalms as he hung on the cross. When life is unbearable, pray as Jesus prayed: voice your honest feelings before God, then commit your spirit—your life, your heart, your worries—to him.

About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “*Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?*” (which means “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”).

—MATTHEW 27:46

Jesus called out with a loud voice, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.” When he had said this, he breathed his last.

—LUKE 23:46

PRAY A DANGEROUS PRAYER TODAY

Prayers for Healing

When you or someone you know is sick or struggling physically, you can cry out to God and ask for healing. Consider praying the words of this psalm.

Have mercy on me, LORD, for I am faint; heal me, LORD,
for my bones are in agony. My soul is in deep anguish. How
long, LORD, how long?

Turn, LORD, and deliver me; save me because of your
unfailing love. Among the dead no one proclaims your
name. Who praises you from the grave?

I am worn out from my groaning.

All night long I flood my bed with weeping and drench
my couch with tears. My eyes grow weak with sorrow; they
fail because of all my foes.

Away from me, all you who do evil, for the LORD has
heard my weeping. The LORD has heard my cry for mercy;
the LORD accepts my prayer.

—PSALM 6:2–9

Paul knew what it was like to suffer physically. The Bible records that he was flogged, stoned, shipwrecked, and threatened on multiple occasions. Pray his words and find renewal in God's Holy Spirit.

Pray a Dangerous Prayer Today

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

—ROMANS 15:13

Prayers of Praise

Pray these words in the sunshine. Pray them in a storm. Pray them on bad days and good days. Pray them to remember that “you are his” no matter what your days are like.

Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth. Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.

—PSALM 100

Sometimes the circumstances of life are so ugly that we must look outside ourselves in order to praise God. Pray the words of this psalm to be drawn into the natural world and back into God’s Word.

PRAY A DANGEROUS PRAYER TODAY

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge. They have no speech, they use no words; no sound is heard from them. Yet their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. In the heavens God has pitched a tent for the sun. It is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, like a champion rejoicing to run his course. It rises at one end of the heavens and makes its circuit to the other; nothing is deprived of its warmth.

The law of the LORD is perfect, refreshing the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes. The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever. The decrees of the LORD are firm, and all of them are righteous.

They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the honeycomb. By them your servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward. But who can discern their own errors? Forgive my hidden faults. Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me. Then I will be blameless, innocent of great transgression.

May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.

—PSALM 19

Pray a Dangerous Prayer Today

Prayer for Unity

Did you know that Jesus prayed for you? John 17 records a prayer of Jesus that includes “all who will believe in me.” It’s a prayer for unity of spirit and purpose.

“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.”

—JOHN 17:20–23

Purposeful Prayers

When Paul prays, he prays on purpose. Notice in his prayers how often he uses or implies the words “so that.”

For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with

PRAY A DANGEROUS PRAYER TODAY

power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

—EPHESIANS 3:14–21

For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light.

—COLOSSIANS 1:9–12

Pray a Dangerous Prayer Today

And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.

—PHILIPPIANS 1:9–11

Prayers of Blessing

Our God is a kind, gracious, and loving heavenly Father who delights in blessing his children. As you spend time talking to God, you can ask him to bless you and those you love.

“The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace.”

—NUMBERS 6:24–26

Jabez cried out to the God of Israel, “Oh, that you would bless me and enlarge my territory! Let your hand be with me, and keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain.” And God granted his request.

—1 CHRONICLES 4:10

PRAY A DANGEROUS PRAYER TODAY

Prayers of Guidance

Sometimes knowing the next best step to take is incredibly challenging. Pray these words of David when you aren't sure what God would have you do.

In you, LORD my God, I put my trust.

I trust in you; do not let me be put to shame, nor let my enemies triumph over me. . . .

Show me your ways, LORD, teach me your paths. Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long. Remember, LORD, your great mercy and love, for they are from of old.

—PSALM 25:1-2, 4-6

“If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find favor with you.”

—EXODUS 33:13

Prayer for Boldness

Though we may truly love God, sometimes we hesitate to share our faith with others. We don't want to offend them or fear that we don't know enough to answer all of their spiritual

Pray a Dangerous Prayer Today

questions. When we feel timid or afraid, we can ask God to give us the boldness to share with others.

“Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”

—ACTS 4:29–30

Prayer for Salvation and Help

If you know the story of Jonah at all, then you know this prayer speaks volumes. Praise God today with these words. He has saved you. Salvation comes from the Lord! Shout it from the rooftops.

“In my distress I called to the LORD, and he answered me. From deep in the realm of the dead I called for help, and you listened to my cry. You hurled me into the depths, into the very heart of the seas, and the currents swirled about me; all your waves and breakers swept over me. I said, ‘I have been banished from your sight; yet I will look again toward your holy temple.’ The engulfing waters threatened me, the deep surrounded me; seaweed was wrapped around my head. To the roots of the mountains I sank down; the

PRAY A DANGEROUS PRAYER TODAY

earth beneath barred me in forever. But you, LORD my God,
brought my life up from the pit.

“When my life was ebbing away, I remembered you,
LORD, and my prayer rose to you, to your holy temple.

“Those who cling to worthless idols turn away from
God’s love for them. But I, with shouts of grateful praise, will
sacrifice to you. What I have vowed I will make good. I will
say, ‘Salvation comes from the LORD.’”

—JONAH 2:2–9



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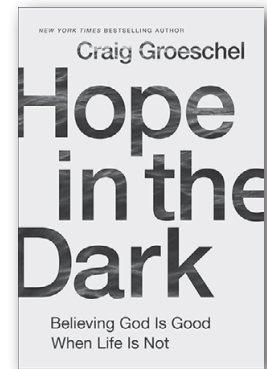
Amy: You are my favorite prayer warrior. I'm looking forward to growing old with you (which is happening way faster than either of us expected).

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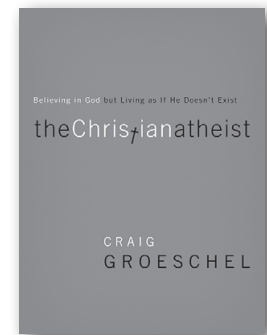
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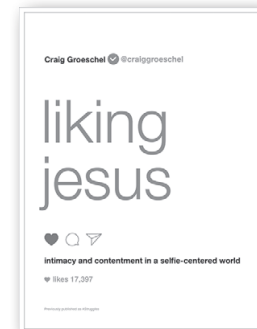
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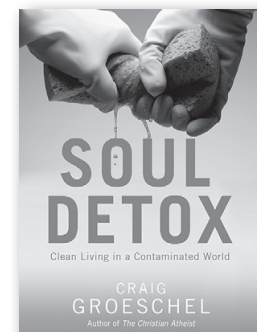
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Soul Detox

Clean Living in a Contaminated World

Without even knowing it, people willingly inhale second-hand cultural toxins poisoning their relationship with God and stunting their spiritual growth. *Soul Detox* examines the toxins that assault us daily, including toxic influences, toxic emotions, and toxic behaviors, and offers spiritual intervention with ways to remain focused on God's holy standards.

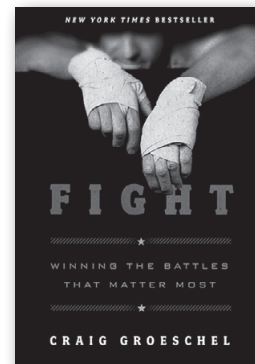


OTHER BOOKS BY CRAIG GROESCHEL

Fight

Winning the Battles That Matter Most

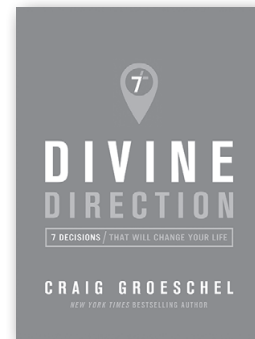
Fight helps uncover your true identity—a powerful man with a warrior’s heart. With God’s help, you’ll find the strength to fight battles you know must be won: the ones that determine the state of your heart, quality of your marriage, and spiritual health of those you love most.



Divine Direction

Seven Decisions That Will Change Your Life

In this inspiring guidebook, bestselling author Craig Groeschel illustrates how the choices you make connect you to God and can lead you to a life you’ve only imagined. The achievable, disciplined, and simple steps in *Divine Direction* can take your life to wonderful and unexpected places only God could’ve planned.



Daily Power

365 Days of Fuel for Your Soul

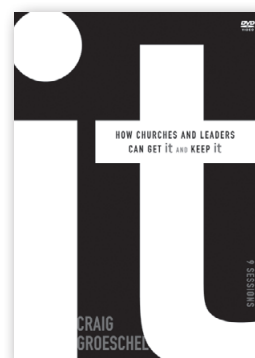
Bestselling author Craig Groeschel’s daily devotional will help you develop a consistent, daily pursuit of Jesus. In 365 brief devotions, Craig shares insights from his life that you can apply to almost every area of your own. *Daily Power* is here to help you grow and become strong every day of the year.



It Book with DVD

How Churches and Leaders Can Get It and Keep It

It. The life-changing, powerful force that draws people to you. What is *It* and how can you and your ministry get—and keep—*It*? Combining raw honesty with off-the-wall humor, this book explains how any believer can find *It*, get *It* back, and guard *It*.





Expand your leadership potential.

CRAIG GROESCHEL

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