

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, Churchome

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
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Love, Sex, and Happily Ever After (previously
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Soul Detox: Clean Living in a Contaminated World

Weird: Because Normal Isn't Working

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DANGEROUS PRAYERS

BECAUSE FOLLOWING JESUS
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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
Bible access and translation
efforts through the
YouVersion Bible App.

CONTENTS

Introduction: Why Your Prayers Need to Be Dangerous	11
------------------------------------------------------------------	----

PART 1: SEARCH ME

1.1 Search Me	23
1.2 Truth or Dare	27
1.3 The State of Your Heart	31
1.4 Hard Choices	35
1.5 Reveal My Fears	39
1.6 Uncover My Sins	45
1.7 Lead Me	55

PART 2: BREAK ME

2.1 Break Me	63
2.2 Burst Your Bubble	67
2.3 Status Quo	71
2.4 Broken and Released	75
2.5 Breaking Bread	81
2.6 Jack-in-the-Box	87
2.7 Breaking Bad	91
2.8 Bound by Brokenness	93
2.9 Blessed by Brokenness	97

PART 3: SEND ME

3.1	Send Me.....	107
3.2	When God Calls, Answer	111
3.3	Glory to God.....	117
3.4	A Sinner Saved by Grace	125
3.5	Daily Nourishment	133
3.6	A Single Act of Faith.....	139
3.7	Your Will Be Done.....	143
3.8	Now What's the Question?.....	149
	Conclusion: Disturb Me, Lord.....	155
	<i>Discussion Questions</i>	<i>163</i>
	<i>Pray a Dangerous Prayer Today</i>	<i>169</i>
	<i>Acknowledgments.....</i>	<i>187</i>



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?"

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.

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

Praying from the heart is personal and unmistakable.

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

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,

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 self-ish, 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.

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

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."



CHAPTER 1.4

HARD CHOICES

I was in high school the first time I came across David's dangerous prayer. On Wednesday nights at our Methodist church, my buddies and I would go to our weekly youth group meeting. While I'm not sure how much I grew spiritually at these meetings, a few things stand out. First would have to be our epic four-square battles. I don't think four square is mentioned in the Bible, but you'd think it was Armageddon considering the way we played it.

I also remember the refreshments in our small cafeteria. Each week, some of the older ladies would bake us goodies—brownies, cookies, lemon bars. Some weeks I went just to see what the spread would be. These Methodist ladies were serious about proving the Bible true when it says, "Taste and see that the LORD is good" (Ps. 34:8).

I also remember our youth pastors didn't last long. Most seemed temporary, like they were just visiting to see if we

PART 1: SEARCH ME

might be a church they wanted to settle in. It had to be tough, trying to connect with a bunch of moody teenagers all trying to impress each other more than wanting to learn about God. Despite the turnover, one guy had a real impact on me.

I must've been a junior in high school when several of us boarded a small bus to travel to the Methodist campground about two hours from our church. The first day at camp, after a time of worship, our youth pastor taught a lesson on David's introspective prayer asking God to "search him." At the end of his lesson, he encouraged us to go off alone and pray that prayer over and over again, listening for what God might tell us in response. I was into it but had no idea what God was about to set in motion in my life.

I left the crowd and walked to the edge of the playground where the trees hadn't been cut down. The air smelled fresh, like pine, as white clouds unraveled in the blue sky overhead. Sitting near the edge of the tree line, I took the assignment seriously. *It's time I learned to pray—really pray.* I couldn't see anyone else around so I said it out loud: "God, search my heart."

I wish I could tell you that God showed me that my heart was pure, my ways were holy, and my motives all about serving him. But on that day, I distinctly remember sensing an answer to my request. God didn't speak audibly, and I didn't see a sign in the sky. No parting clouds or thunderbolts. I just sensed a very personal and holy presence. And in the same moment that I felt an unmistakable heavenly love, I also simultaneously realized the extent of my sinfulness.

I was such a hypocrite.

My peers had voted me to be president of our youth group, a leader and role model for all the other kids at our church. But my life was a sham as far as my faith was concerned. I acted sincere and serious on Wednesday nights at youth group and then partied with a wilder crowd on the weekend. I pretended like I knew God, but my life and heart revealed how far from him I really was. I put on a show for one crowd and played a completely different role for a more comfortable audience.

So when I paused to pray “Search me” that afternoon at church camp, I was blindsided by the reality of the depths of my sinfulness. Years later I discovered a verse that says it well: “These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me” (Isa. 29:13). I gave God lip service, but my heart was wicked. I talked the talk, but I didn’t walk the walk. I pretended to be a Christian, but I didn’t know the Christ.

It was then that I realized the closer I got to Jesus, the more I’d have to face my shortcomings. My pride. My selfishness. My lust. My critical spirit.

Praying this dangerous prayer that day opened a channel of communication with God I didn’t know existed. Instead of simply asking

God to do something *for* me, I asked him to reveal something *in* me. And he revealed things to me that day that began my journey toward knowing God personally. It became clear to me

I realized the closer I got to Jesus, the more I’d have to face my shortcomings.

PART 1: SEARCH ME

that I was a mess. I lied. Cheated. Stole. And did what I wanted no matter who it hurt. What had seemed normal now felt wrong. The life I thought I wanted led me to become someone

Instead of simply asking God to do something *for* you, ask God to reveal something *in* you.

I hated. Unfortunately, this moment of truth with God didn't change me instantly, but it did help me recognize my spiritual need. I knew that

something would need to be different. And I would grow to learn that that *something* was actually learning to love and serve with every fiber of my being a *someone* named Jesus.

It's a dangerous prayer.

But it's one that could redirect your life.

"Search me, God."



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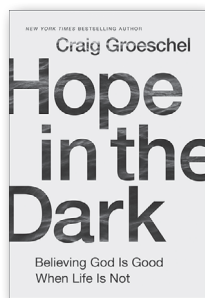
Amy: You are my favorite prayer warrior. I'm looking forward to growing old with you (which is happening way faster than either of us expected).

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Hope in the Dark

Believing God Is Good When Life Is Not

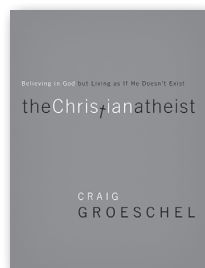
In the midst of great pain, we may wonder if God really cares about us. Pastor Craig Groeschel invites us to wrestle with our questions and doubts while honoring our faith and asking God to heal our unbelief. Rediscover faith in the character, power, and presence of God.



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Intimacy and Contentment in a Selfie-Centered World

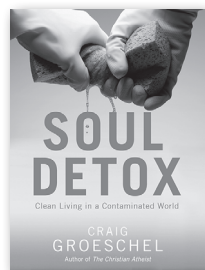
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Clean Living in a Contaminated World

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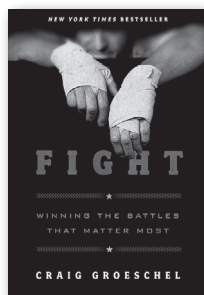


OTHER BOOKS BY CRAIG GROESCHEL

Fight

Winning the Battles That Matter Most

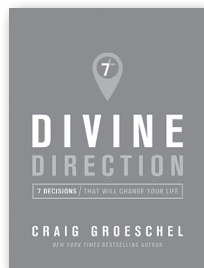
Fight helps uncover your true identity—a powerful man with a warrior's heart. With God's help, you'll find the strength to fight battles you know must be won: the ones that determine the state of your heart, quality of your marriage, and spiritual health of those you love most.



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365 Days of Fuel for Your Soul

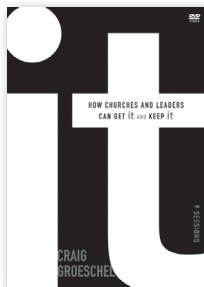
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How Churches and Leaders Can Get It and Keep It

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.

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