

# Dangerous Prayers

## Lesson 4

### BREAK ME

*And 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)*

#### Chapter 2.1 Break Me

##### A. Prayer of Jabez

- a. The prayer of Jabez is a simple prayer found in **1 Chronicles 4:9-10**. In the year 2000, Dr. Bruce Wilkinson wrote a bestselling book called *The Prayer of Jabez*. It was based on these two Bible verses.
- b. The name Jabez actually means “he causes pain.” His mother named him Jabez because his birth must have been exceptionally painful or traumatic for his mother to give him such a name. Perhaps that’s why Jabez prayed this particular prayer (see **1 Chronicles 4:9-10**).
- c. “Bless Me. Enlarge my territory. Let your hand be upon me. Keep me from harm that I will be free from pain. Is this the type of prayer we all want to pray? Give me more of what I want. Protect me (keep away from me what I don’t want).
- d. This prayer—although scriptural and useful—is focused on what we want, not necessarily what God wants. It’s safe. It’s comfortable. Someone could even argue that it’s somewhat shortsighted—even selfish.
- e. Even though trials are never fun or easy to endure, God can often use them for his purposes. In fact, James, the half-brother of Jesus, was bold enough to tell us we should be thankful for the way God uses hardship to perfect us: “Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything” (see **James 1:2-4** and **Romans 5:1-5**)

**Insight:** If we pray only for protection from trials, then we rob ourselves of our future maturity.

It’s fine to pray—for safety and blessing, but what if you want more? What if you desire power from the Holy Spirit, strength from heaven, unshakable faith, genuine intimacy with your Father? Instead of just asking God to keep you safe, give you more and protect your life, you may have to ask God to break you.

#### Chapter 2.2 Burst Your Bubble

At the ripe old age of twenty-seven, Pastor Groeschel said he felt called by God to start a new church. His wife, Amy, shared his vision, so they dreamed together and moved forward with a plan. They chose a name for the new church and filled out the paperwork. They also recruited friends who had already expressed interest in joining them and printed invitations for others they hoped to enlist as they got the new church off the ground.

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- B. He envisioned how it would be. He'd preach powerful messages. The atmosphere would be electric, with vibrant worship and dynamic music. Crowds of people would gather. Lives would be changed. God would be honored. The city would be different. And, he would live happily ever after.
- C. One day he sat across the breakfast table with one of his mentors, Gary Walter.
- a. Gary had helped many young church planters start thriving and life-giving churches. He was considered an expert. With fatherly concern and the wisdom of a spiritual veteran, he generously help give Pastor Groeschel direction and perspective.
  - b. Before Pastor Groeschel could convince Gary of how their little band of faithful people would grow into a worldwide movement, Gary stopped him midsentence. It wasn't rude or abrupt—in fact, just the opposite.
  - c. In a fatherly and pastoral tone of voice he asked if he could tell the young pastor something. He said, "I have one promise for you and one promise only." Then he paused for an awkwardly long time, letting his statement sink in.
  - d. He finally said, "My promise for you is this: God will break you."
    - i. Gary's word, slow and deliberate and kind, crushed Pastor Groeschel with their weight.
    - ii. He said he glared back. His expression likely displayed a mixture of betrayal and confusion. *"What do you mean? God will break me? What kind of promise is that? Why would God want to break me? What kind of mentor tells you that? And what kind of God would allow that to happen?"*

As much as he wanted to fight Gary's observation, he knew what Gary said was true. Gary hadn't burst his bubble—the truth did. God would break him. And at least in theory, Craig would be better because of it. If he survived.

Once he regained his stability, He remembers Gary explaining why this was the path that he would have to travel. Gary quoted the following insight from Christian author, magazine editor and spiritual mentor, A. W. Tozer.

**Insight:** It is doubtful whether God can bless a man greatly until he has hurt him deeply.

The author of *Dangerous Prayers* remembers thinking, "I'm not sure I like that idea."

Gary reminded him that God loved him. He always has our best interest in mind.

**Insight:** To be wholly useful to God, we have to be empty of self.

God at times has to break us of pride, self-confidence and or self-sufficiency, just to name a few things. God sometimes has to burst our bubble.

### Chapter 2.3 Status Quo

Status Quo means, the existing state of affairs, the way things are.

The author writes, it was a cold, blustery night in January. It was 15 degrees Fahrenheit, with a windchill close to zero. Despite the miserable evening outside, he, his wife and seven or eight other couples are in a warm comfortable living room on a leather sofa with a warm fire blazing. With stomachs full of homemade chili and cornbread the conversation is turned to dangerous prayers. *Dangerous Prayers* Craig Groeschel, Author, Zondervan; King James Open Bible, Thomas Nelson, Inc.; The Daily Walk Bible, NLT, Tyndale House Publishing, Inc.

They all agreed they wanted to pray dangerous prayers and mean it, but couldn't deny being afraid of the consequences.

The first woman who spoke up took the possibility seriously, but acknowledged her struggle. A loving wife and mother of four, she had followed Jesus faithfully since she was a sophomore in high school. She served in the kid's ministry at church, tithed faithfully, helped foster children, attended a weekly Bible study, and often volunteered to pray out loud in groups.

But when confronted with the option of asking God to break her, she refused. She said "Sorry, but I've got to be honest", she said, "I don't want to ask God to break me. I'm afraid of what will happen."

Most of the others in the small group nodded in agreement. At the end of their time together, though no one prayed it out loud, the cry of their hearts seemed clear, "keep us comfortable God." "Please, just keep us warm and cozy. Don't break us—it would hurt too much. Keep things going smoothly."

**Insight:** What are we losing by clinging to our comfort? What are we missing out on because we're so committed to avoiding pain and discomfort?

- Could there be something on the other side of suffering that somehow makes it worthwhile?
- Could breaking be as necessary to our growth as it is a baby bird cracking away the shell around it? As a butterfly coming out of the cocoon?
- Could being broken release us for more than we can even imagine?

Do we love the status quo?

## Chapter 2.4 Broken and Released

In Sunday's message the woman (Mary) broke open the jar and poured the perfume on Jesus' head (**Mark 14:3**).

- The audience immediately recognized the significance of this gift on multiple levels:
  - The value of the perfume—almost a year's worth of wages.
  - The sudden gift shocked some of the people in the room. Stunned, they barked indignantly to one another, "why this waste of perfume. It could have been sold for more than a year's wages and the money given to the poor. They rebuked her harshly. (**Mark 14:4-5**).

**Insight:** How much do you make in a year? Now imagine in one moment, with one single display of worship, giving that whole amount to Jesus. That is what this woman did. She broke the bottle and gave it all, holding nothing back.

## Chapter 2.5 Breaking Bread

From breaking a perfume bottle, Mark shifts our attention to another scene where Jesus himself broke something. It wasn't a jar of cologne but rather bread at the table he shared with his disciples. And this wasn't just any meal but the one that's become known as the Last Supper, the final gathering of Jesus prior to his death, with all his closet and most trusted friends.

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At this intimate meal, Jesus offered them bread and wine using grain and grape as visual aids to foreshadow his imminent suffering and death. Then he invited his disciples to celebrate the same symbolic meal in remembrance of him (**Mark 14:22-24**).

Notice exactly what Jesus did. He broke bread and explained that this breaking symbolized what would happen to him, to his body. It would be broken, bruised and crushed. His back would bear the stripes of brutal scourging. His face would be bloodied by fists and his head pierced by a garland of thorns. His hands and feet would be nailed to beams of wood. He would hang as the crowd spit on him, mocked him, cursed at him. Jesus would fight to gain his breath and cry out to God in pain. He would forgive those who hung him and give his life for us.

Like the bread he broke at the table, Jesus body would be broken. Then, after sharing the bread with his disciples, Jesus held up a cup of wine. Jesus slowly, deliberately, and lovingly explained that the wine represented his blood. Before long, he would spill his blood to cover the sins of guilty men. He was the Lamb of God; the sacrificial lamb would be slain.

- As Jesus looked into the eyes of those he had chosen, he knew that Peter would deny him.
- He knew that Judas would betray him.
- Yet he continued to love them and explain that he must offer his life (**Mark 14:12-31**).

**Insight:** “There is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (**John 15:13 NLT**).

Luke’s Gospel described the very same meal but noted something that Mark didn’t mention. Luke said, “And [Jesus] took bread, gave thanks, and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.’”

- Almost all Biblical scholars agree that Jesus’ instruction to “do this” provides believers a way to remember, honor, and celebrate his death and resurrection. As a result, for centuries, followers of Christ have gathered and shared in this act of breaking bread, offering wine, and partaking of both in an act of worship known as Holy Communion, the Lord’s supper or the Eucharist.
- This partaking of bread and wine helps us to recall the extraordinary sacrifice and price Jesus paid that we could be forgiven and have eternal fellowship with the Father.
- But, some scholars believe that Jesus’ instructions to “do this” included more than a simple and short act or ritual involving bread and wine. Some believe that Jesus’ “do this” also refers to how we are to live .
- We don’t just remember Jesus during Holy Communion at church; we remember him in how we live our lives daily.
- Because Jesus’ body was broken, because his blood was poured out for us, we too should live daily for him, broken and poured out.

It may not sound appealing at best, miserable at worst. But it’s in the giving of our lives that we find true joy. Rather than pursuing our will, we surrender to his. Instead of trying to fill our lives with all that we want, we empty our lives to make a difference in the lives of others.

Jesus told us that if we wanted to be his disciples “we would have to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow him” (see **Matt. 16:24**). We too are to die to ourselves, so we can live for him. Broken and poured out.

What if when Jesus said, “do this,” he wasn’t just talking about a ritual that we do occasionally at church? What if he was also inviting us to be broken and poured out daily? What if he was inviting us to a life of humility, sacrifice, generosity, and joy. What if, instead of praying, “God watch over me, protect me, and bless me,” we invited God to do something deeper in our lives?

What if we recognized that burdens can, with God’s help, become blessings? What if we embraced the truth that problems can make us stronger? That trials can strengthen our faith? That hurting can make us more compassionate for the plight of others?

What if we too lived broken and poured out lives for Christ?

**Homework:** Think about it. 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?