

Dangerous Prayers

Lesson 6

SEND ME (Part 1)

Then I heard the Lord asking, "Whom should I send as a messenger to this people? Who will go for us?" I said "Here I am. Send me." (Isaiah 6:8 NLT)

Chapter 3.1 Send Me

The streets of our nation's capital were covered with eight inches of snow on that freezing cold day in January 1961. John F. Kennedy, the youngest man ever elected to our highest office, walked to the podium for his inauguration without wearing a coat or hat. Then in a speech comprising less than fifteen hundred words and lasting less than fifteen minutes, President Kennedy delivered a famous challenge to future generations that still echoes today: *"Ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country."*

Pastor Groeschel says that years later those few words still inspire him to serve his country, but they mean even more to him as he consider his prayer life before God.

Insight: Rather than asking God to serve us, what if we told God we are available to serve him?

As a pastor for several decades, Craig Groeschel said he has seen firsthand the most intimate prayer request of thousands of people. Each week, hundreds of needs flood the church, from prayer cards, in their services, to phone calls during the week or online requests through social media or their church app. To no surprise, the most common phrase heard each week is "Pastor, will you please pray for...?"

- He was in no way complaining about the requests. He considered it a privilege, an honor, and a joyful responsibility to pause and lift up a need before the throne of God, asking him to have mercy, to move, to guide, to provide, to act, to do a miracle for people that he knows and love.
- Prayer requests covered a wide range of topics from healing loved ones and restoring marriages, to praying for jobs or someone asking for help to forgive a person that hurt them.
- Even though the requests vary, people were asking God to do something for them or someone they loved.

We should definitely pray that way. We should always invite God's presence, God's power, God's peace to intervene in our lives. We should ask God to do miracles on our behalf. We should lift up our loved ones and remind ourselves of how God can move in their lives. We should seek the Lord for all of our needs. But we shouldn't stop there.

Craig Groeschel noted: In the spirit of JFK's inaugural address, what if we refused to just pray for ourselves? He stated: "Forgive the paraphrase, but what if we prayed, ask not what God can do for you, but ask God what you can do for him?"

Insight: What if instead of always asking God to do something on our behalf, we dared to ask God to use us on his behalf? What if we prayed perhaps the most dangerous prayer of all? "Send me, Lord, use me."

Chapter 3.2 When God Calls, Answer

When I tell you that “someone called me,” you probably assume a friend, relative, or church member punched in my cell number in hopes of talking to me or leaving a message. But long before phones, landlines, and mobiles, there was another kind of “call”—an invitation from God to serve him, usually in a specific, unique way. His call usually requires us to surrender our own plans and preferences and go where he tells us, when he tells us, how he tells us, to meet who he tells us and do what he tells us.

It's not easy to answer such a call, and we might be tempted to think of many excuses. We might even correctly think we're unqualified, inadequate, or unprepared to do what God asks us to do. But that's not a problem. You see, God never calls perfect people. God calls imperfect, flawed, weak men and women just like you and me. He simply wants people willing to be vessels, and he invites them to use their lives to make a difference for him.

Remember, God called Moses, a murderer; David, an adulterer; and Rahab, a prostitute. Not only did God call people who did really bad things, but he also called unusual, insecure, and inconsistent people. Just consider some of God's chosen messengers, ministers, prophets, and leaders: there's Noah, who got drunk; Isaac, who was a daydreamer; Joseph, who was abandoned; Jeremiah, who was too young; and Abraham, who was too old. But still God called them and used them even though they were far from perfect.

In the Old Testament, we see at least three different responses.

1. The prophet Jonah represents one of the most common responses: *“Here I am, Lord, but I'm not going.”*
 - a. When the God of the universe saw a need in the city of Nineveh, he chose Jonah to go preach to the sinful and rebellious people there. Now Jonah had the gifts. He had the power. He had the ability. The problem is that he didn't have the availability. Jonah wasn't willing and flat-out told God, “No.” And please understand, when God spoke, his assignment was clear: “Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me” (**Jonah 1:2**).
 - b. Jonah could have said, “Yes, anything for you, God. You are my Lord, and I will do what you ask.” But that didn't happen. Instead of a willing heart, Jonah balked. He didn't just hesitate or make excuses; he ran away from God (**see Jonah 1:3**).
 - c. Have you ever responded this way? Maybe you sensed God's prompting, an invitation to do something on his behalf. It may have been something small like giving a gift or sharing a thought. It might have been something more significant like changing careers or asking someone to marry you. But like Jonah, you hesitated, stalled and then turned the other way.
2. The second response to God's call may not be as outwardly rebellious, but it's just as dangerous to our spiritual health. When God saw the oppressive power of Pharaoh to God's chosen people, he called Moses. God said, “So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt” (**Ex. 3:10**). Couldn't be clearer, right? God said, “I'm sending you. Now go! Out of all the people alive today, you're the one I selected. You're the one I called. You have what it takes. I'm sending you.”

- a. But Moses had a different response than Jonah. Instead of living in the confidence of God's calling, Moses was buried in his own insecurities. When God called his chosen vessel, Moses responded, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" (**Ex. 3:11**).
 - b. Then Moses quickly told God all the reasons that he wasn't the right person: "I'm not a good speaker; I stutter; I'm not good enough. Someone else would be way better than me." Moses was saying, "*Here I am, God, but send someone else.*"
 - c. We still do this today. When God challenges us to give, we say, "But God, I don't have much for myself. Someone else can give more." When God calls us to serve, we might rationalize, "I don't have enough time. Surely there are better candidates for this role than me."
3. There is a third response. And as you probably guessed, it's dangerous. It's not a safe, benign, or self-centered prayer. This prayer requires great faith. It's risky because it will almost always move you to action. It will probably lead you to do something that may not seem natural or easy. It will cause you to step out of your comfort zone.
- a. Isaiah prayed such a prayer of unreserved availability in the presence of God. The Old Testament prophet retells of his encounter with the holy One when God asked, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" (**Isa. 6:8a**). And without knowing the details, without knowing when or where, Isaiah prayed this stunning, life-altering prayer: "*Here I am, Send me*" (**Isa. 6:8b NLT**).

Chapter 3.3 Glory to God

Let's be honest, telling God you will do whatever he wants you to do is scary, right? How can you just do whatever God wants? He could ask you do something you'd never want to do! This type of dangerous prayer of submission is not easy to pray, especially if you don't have a deep trust and reverence for God. But when you get to know God, his character, his nature, his holiness, you become more willing to offer this prayer.

1. Isaiah didn't pray this prayer in a vacuum. It didn't come out of nowhere and for no reason.
 - a. In the first verse of chapter six of his book, Isaiah sets the context, explaining that his encounter with God took place in the year that King Uzziah died. Since Uzziah was a beloved and trusted king, Israel fell into a season of chaos, turmoil, and desperation without its popular leader. So, it would have been logical for Isaiah to begin his prophecy with something dramatically ominous.
 - b. During this time of desperation and fear, however, Isaiah wrote, "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne and the train of his robe filled the temple" (**Isa. 6:1**).
 - c. Isaiah didn't just read about God, He saw the Lord, and he experienced God's presence in a unique way. If you're going to ask God to use you, then a genuine encounter with him goes a long way in trusting him.

You may sense God's presence while reading His word. You may recognize that He is with you as you worship at church. You could find yourself overcome by His goodness while sitting on a mountaintop enjoying his creation. Or you might feel all alone in a hard season of your life. But, suddenly you become aware that you are not really alone. Not only is God with you in your pain, but He's always been there.

2. Isaiah saw the Lord and in God's presence, Isaiah was stunned. God was high and lifted up. God was on his throne. The train of his robe filled the temple.
 - a. The prophet did his best to use human words to describe heavenly creatures encircling God, praising His name. Isaiah called them seraphim, angelic, fiery beings with six wings surrounding the Lord God. Because of the holiness of the Lord, these heavenly beings covered their faces with two of their wings to shield themselves from the glory of the Most High.
 - b. These worshipers cried out to each other with loud voices, shouting, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory" (**Isa. 6:3**).
 - c. When was the last time you had such an encounter with God that you were left in awe at his glory and holiness?

Too often these days, many people treat God casually, even trivially. Familiar with popular perceptions of Him but unaware of his holiness, many people take God for granted. To some, He's the "man upstairs" or the "big guy in the sky". But, these pictures of God don't begin to come close to showing the Lord the respect, glory, and honor he deserves.

Insight: If you ever caught a true vision of God in his purest essence, I promise you would never refer to him like a pal from down the road.

He's not just our God, but he's also *my* God (personal). If you know Christ—if you have committed your life to following him as a disciple—he is your God, too.

James, the half brother of Jesus, instructs us to draw close to God and promises that God will meet us when we do. James said, "Come near to God and he will come near to you" (**James 4:8**).

In the Old Testament, God was talking about prayer, explaining that he listens when his people pray. Then, God boldly promises his children that you will find him when you seek him with your whole heart (see **Jer. 29:13**).

Insight: God is not playing hide and seek. He wants you to know Him and delights in showing Himself to you.

You may feel His presence in a supernatural way. You may know that He is with you. But, even if you don't feel Him, you can rest assured that He is with you. Sometimes you know He is with you, not by feeling, but by faith. How do you grow toward not only praying but living this dangerous prayer? It starts with experiencing God's presence.

Chapter 3.4 A Sinner Saved By Grace.

Before we can encounter God, it often helps to deal with the sin in our lives. To truly get to a point of submission and availability to God, and to be fully aware of His presence, we are wise to recognize and understand our sinfulness.

Just to say that we're "sinners" offends so many people today. In our culture, there are self-help gurus and motivational experts who tell us to reject the idea that we're sinful. Some believe that we should just love ourselves the way we are. They believe that there is no need to change unless we want to change and that we can do it ourselves.

When we see how good God is, we become acutely aware of how good we are not. His holiness reveals our sinfulness. This is what happened to Isaiah, and this is what happens to us in God's presence (see **Isa. 6:5**). Isaiah didn't just say, "I messed up. I did a few bad things." He cried from a heart of despair, "Woe to me!"

In a similar response, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look upon God (**Ex. 3:6**) (see also **Job 42:6; Luke 5:8**).

3. But why do we need to recognize our sin? Can't we just start following Jesus and move on? What is the big deal about looking at how selfish and rebellious we are? Because, until we see ourselves as sinners, we'll never fully understand Jesus as Savior.
 - a. The author says when he started praying dangerously—crying out to God and getting to know who he was—his self-confidence grew into self-awareness. He got to know the real Craig Groeschel.
 - b. When you pray dangerous prayers, you will see and understand more of God. It changes everything. Isaiah saw it.
 - c. As long as we compare ourselves to other people, we can deceive ourselves that we are not that bad. But when we compare ourselves to God, we see just how unrighteous we truly are.

At the depths of Isaiah's despair, he experienced the deepness of God's grace (**Isa. 6:7**). There is nothing better to fuel your prayer life than a deep appreciation for God's grace. Imagine God wiping away all our lies, healing all of our hatred, and forgiving all of our sins.

Insight: The moment we see God for who He is, we see ourselves for what we are not.

And, because of what Jesus did for us and the grace he lavishes on us, suddenly the dangerous prayer of surrender doesn't seem so daunting. In fact, though still dangerous, it might feel somewhat inviting. When God asks, "Who will go? Whom shall I send?", our immediate response from a forgiven and surrendered heart is the faith-filled, fully available prayer: "Here I am, Lord, Send me."

And when you pray this dangerous prayer, it's not out of obligation or guilt. You know, because of what Jesus did for me and all others, I've got to be available to Him now, I guess. No, it's a daring prayer of faith. It's the deep realization that your life is not your own. You belong to God.

Insight: When you surrender to Him, you will have eyes to see where He's working—a heart to feel what touches His heart and hands to show his love.

Homework: Read these "Send Me" Prayers: **Esther 4:16 and Psalm 40:9-10**.