

Don't Look for Loopholes When You Surrender to God

About 26 years ago, I found myself at a church altar in Orlando, Florida. God had been dealing with me about leaving my comfort zone. I had a great job with nice benefits, yet I felt spiritually unfulfilled. I knew there was an amazing adventure in front of me, but I had placed serious limitations on my obedience.

As I buried my head in the carpet in that church, I realized God was requiring unconditional surrender. He wanted me to wave a white flag. I knew what I had to say, but it was difficult to form the words. Finally, I coughed them up. I said the same thing the prophet Isaiah prayed long ago: "Here I am, send me!" (Isa. 6:8b).

This is what I call a dangerous prayer. It should include a warning label!

I believe when you utter these simple words, heaven takes a picture of you with your hands up—and an amazing process begins. God closes in on us in order to crush our fears and demolish our selfishness. Then He gives us the holy boldness to obey.

When I prayed this prayer in 1998, I immediately had a vision while I was still on the floor. I saw a sea of African faces. I knew I'd be going to Africa, and I was scared to death. I had no idea how I would get there, what I would say or who would pay for the trip. So I swallowed hard and prayed again: Here I am, send me!

Less than two years later, I stood on a huge stage in a sports arena in Port Harcourt, Nigeria, speaking to 7,000 pastors. I did not enjoy the bumpy flight across the Sahara, and my knees were knocking when I preached. I felt as if I had been pushed

way out on a limb.

But even though I was terrified, my fear was mixed with incredible joy. The Lord had overcome my resistance, and He was using me. Since that trip, I have ministered in 39 countries. This week, I will preach in Uganda—all because I prayed a dangerous prayer.

Grace is so amazing. God not only gives us the power to serve Him; He plants in us the desire to surrender to His will even if we are scared of the consequences. This is what the apostle Paul described when he said: “For God is the One working in you, both to will and to do His good pleasure,” (Phil. 2:13).

God has an uncanny way of wooing us into obedience and submission. Our flesh may protest; our fears may paralyze us. But in the end, if we lift our hands in surrender, grace takes over. He gives us power, strength and a willing heart. And the results are supernatural because it is God at work in us.

Jesus taught His disciples to cultivate this willing spirit and to pray another dangerous prayer found in Luke 10:2. He told them: “The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest,” (Modern English Version).

This is what I call a trick prayer. You pray it at your own risk. When we ask the Lord to send workers into His fields, we usually pray that God will send others. (“Here I am, Lord. Send Mike, Denise or Jeff.”) But the Lord of the harvest will likely tap you on the shoulder and say, “I want to send you.”

The church has advanced throughout history because of people who surrendered to God. One of them was David Brainerd (1718-1747), a brave missionary to American Indians during the First Great Awakening. Although he died of tuberculosis at age 29, his legacy of total consecration lives on in his journal, published by his friend Jonathan Edwards.

Brainerd recorded this very dangerous prayer in his diary: "Here am I, send me; send me to the ends of the earth; send me to the rough, the savage pagans of the wilderness; send me from all that is called comfort on earth; send me even to death itself, if it be but in Thy service, and to promote Thy kingdom."

We rarely hear prayers like that today. Brainerd's passion would be considered politically incorrect fanaticism today. We don't promote self-sacrifice; we have a new gospel of self-fulfillment. We don't talk about carrying a burden for lost people; we ourselves are lost in our comfortable materialism.

I wonder what would happen if all of us prayed Isaiah's prayer with full sincerity. What if you raised your hands and left all your fears, worries, excuses, stipulations, limitations and conditions on heaven's altar—and invited God to use your life in any way He wants? I invite you to take the risk. Pray a dangerous prayer, and see how God will use you.

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