

Warning: Pray This Prayer at Your Own Risk

When I said to God, “Here am I, send me,” a real adventure began.

More than 12 years ago I found myself at a church altar in Orlando, Fla. 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! (see Is. 6:8.)

This is what I call a dangerous prayer. It’s risky because God immediately takes you up on it. I believe when you utter these simple words, heaven takes a Polaroid picture of you with your hands up—and an amazing process begins. He closes in on us in order to crush our fears and demolish our selfishness.

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 found myself standing 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! And since that trip I have ministered in more than 25 other countries.

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 it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13, NASB).

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 will simply 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 this dangerous prayer. He told them: "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest." (Luke 10:2).

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 are really praying, "Here I am Lord ... send Mike ... or Chuck ... or Barbara." But the Lord of the Harvest will likely tap you on the shoulder and say, "Well? What about you?"

The church has advanced throughout history because of people who surrendered to God. One of them was the brave David Brainerd (1718-1747), a 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, which was 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 before this year is over. 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 dare you to try it.