



EXTREME PRAYER

The Impossible Prayers God Promises to Answer

Foreword by Max Lucado

GREG PRUETT

As someone whose ministry is prayer mobilization, I have read hundreds of books on prayer in the last twenty years. None is better than *Extreme Prayer*. It is an easy read that combines inspirational stories with practical instruction. And as chairman of the board for Pioneer Bible Translators, I've been able to observe up close that Greg really does believe that "prayer is the strategy."

DAVE BUTTS

President, Harvest Prayer Ministries; chairman, America's National Prayer Committee

When I was asked to read Greg Pruett's book, I was almost reluctant to do so because books about prayer tend to make me feel guilty. *Great*, I thought, *let the guilt trip begin*. But the next several hours of reading were filled with African adventures, stories of miraculous healings, and some amazingly fresh insights into the sheer beauty of tenacious prayer. Read this book and you will learn that prayer is as much about listening as it is about speaking and as much about courage as it is about faith. *Extreme Prayer* will enable you to unleash the power that God desires to display in your life.

DREW SHERMAN

Lead pastor, Compass Christian Church, Colleyville, Texas

Extreme Prayer is a short, readable guide to taking your prayer life to a higher level. Drawing on his experience as a Bible translator and missionary, Greg marries solid biblical exposition to some interesting stories from his life on the mission field. Even more appealing is that Greg writes from the perspective of a Christian man who wants to know God better and to align his life with the will and Kingdom of God. His manuscript inspired a sermon series that was a great blessing to our church.

DR. BARRY McCARTY

Senior pastor, Peachtree Christian Church, Atlanta

God has seasoned Greg and his family for the greater service of getting his Word to the poor and illiterate people of the world. This book is a wonderful blend of Scripture and authentic personal experiences. As I read, I kept thinking, *Yep, that's how it has worked for me. He knows what he's talking about!*

GERALD A. JACKSON

President and founder, Hosanna/Faith Comes by Hearing; author, *Get God's Word to Every Person*

Brilliant! This book ignited a fire in me that had nearly been extinguished. It inspired me to follow a path I knew all along but that had nearly become overgrown. Thank you, Greg, for sharing your adventure with us.

HARRIET HILL, PhD

Trauma Healing Institute program director, American Bible Society; coauthor, *Healing the Wounds of Trauma: How the Church Can Help*

God wants to conform us to the image in which he created us—the image of God. In this brief but poignant book, my friend Greg Pruett shows how God, through Jesus' instructions and example, accomplishes that conformation. Becoming what God intended us to be is the purpose of our walk with Christ. The secret to that walk is ACTIVE prayer, which Greg takes to the *extreme*.

R. DANIEL SHAW

Professor of anthropology and translation, School of Intercultural Studies, Fuller Theological Seminary

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GREG PRUETT



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I dedicate this book to the men, women, and children of Pioneer Bible Translators, who faithfully serve Bible-less peoples. They leave behind self-interest, and they risk their lives every day so that others will experience the transforming power of God's Word in their own language. They alternate between laughing together like family and weeping in loneliness because they miss their homelands and loved ones.

Some walk through steaming jungles and take motorized canoes just to get to their homes. They dig water wells for their families. At times they lie awake for hours, sweating through the night as they ache for the comfort of air-conditioning. I've seen others eagerly move their families to the frozen Arctic to make sure that, even there, none will lack Scripture. Still others have fled in the face of war, not merely to protect their lives, but so that they may later return to the field and serve again.

It is the great privilege and honor of my life to work alongside these ordinary people with extraordinary vision. I am always amazed at how joyfully they struggle to see the Word impact the lives of the Bible-less peoples around them. The world is not worthy of them (see Hebrews 11:38).

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Foreword

MY OFFICE WINDOW overlooks a busy avenue. At any point during the day, I can witness a steady flow of traffic. Though I know little, if anything, about the driver of each car, this much I can assume. He or she has gassed up the tank. Each one has paused long enough in front of a gas pump to refuel. No gas means no power.

Can't the same be said about prayer? A stream of individuals passes through your world. Some of them accelerate with little or no effort. Many of them, however, are huffing and puffing. Their tanks are empty and their load is heavy.

They need some power. They need some prayer.

Oh, but prayer is such a puzzle. Why would God listen to me? Why do my thoughts matter to him? Do my prayers have an impact on his eternal plan?

My friend Greg Pruett says yes! We can be grateful that he has compiled his thoughts on prayer in this extremely helpful volume. I cannot recommend it enough.

I cannot recommend Greg enough either. I have

known him for over a quarter of a century. When my wife and I moved to San Antonio from Brazil in 1988, his family met us at the airport. I have served with his parents in leadership, worship, and outreach. I have seen Greg grow into one of the most effective leaders of our generation. He is trained as an engineer, linguist, and Bible teacher. He currently serves as the president of Pioneer Bible Translators, a vibrant ministry that is committed to translating the Bible into the language of Bible-less people groups around the world.

Greg, his wife, Rebecca, and the entire PBT team are teaching us the power of a ministry built on prayer. During the recent economic recession, when other ministries struggled, PBT flourished! When others were losing ground, they gained ground. Why? Their answer is this: prayer. Specific, continual, radical prayer.

God is using them to remind us . . . *Gas up the tank! Come to me for power! Enough relying on natural strength—lean into my supernatural, high-octane energy.*

Do yourself a favor and read this book! Let Greg mentor you into a new era of strength.

Greg, thanks for writing this book!

God, thanks for giving this book!

May we put it to use.

Max Lucado

AUGUST 2013

INTRODUCTION

Shaken but Not Stirred

Extreme Prayer Begins with Need

THE INTENSITY OF the sun almost forced me back into the shelter of my West African home, but I was too focused on my stinging heart to feel the burn on my skin. Puffs of dust marked my pace as I stormed out of the village, across the road, and down the footpath leading to the jungle. That was it! My ministry was over; my marriage, finished. I was done. Like some kind of missionary recluse, I would stalk off into the bush and never return.

Silence gradually dominated the scrubby trail as I distanced myself from home. Only the drone of a passing bug or the cry of an occasional bird disturbed the still heat of the day. But inside, I was far from quiet. I angrily challenged God, *You did this to me!*

After all, he was the one who had wooed me into following this crazy dream to minister to a culture that had just one tiny, struggling church in an ocean of people who had never understood Jesus, never even heard that God

loved them. Here I had given my life to him and settled into a small African village with only a few dozen known Christians to translate the Bible among a people who treasured the Qur'an as their holy book. I had planned to live for decades in this place and to help this people get the Word of God in their language. I wanted to help the small group of Christians multiply until every nearby village had a church. I had so hoped to make God proud of my life.

As I tromped down the path to nowhere, I interrogated God. *How could you let our mission die from such a basic thing as failure to live at peace with my wife?* I thought about how our screaming baby had robbed us of sleep. I ruminated over how we had fallen into a sleep-deprived pattern of shouting at each other.

Daytime had been no more peaceful. For weeks carpenters had been building a ceiling in our home, hand-crafting every board from felled trees in the forest. We could find no place of refuge from the deafening pounding. On top of that, we had no running water or washing machine, so hand-washing cloth diapers absorbed much of our energy. It just didn't seem worth staying when we were investing all our time in survival instead of making progress on the mission.

By now, everyone in the village had to know we were collapsing under the weight of our dreams. If they had known English, anyone within an echo of our home

would have heard us decide not only to quit the mission but also to go straight home and get a divorce. We might have actually left the mission field by now if we hadn't been so far from the airport. That monumental trek across hard roads may have been the last thing holding us back. We were teetering on the edge, and I just couldn't face it anymore. I had walked off into the bush swearing I would never come back, picturing myself as the next Tarzan, all the while grumbling to myself and to God.

Hours of sweaty miles later, I wasn't walking quite so fast. I began to face the prospect of my first night exposed to the swarming cloud of mosquitoes. What about the deadly green mambas that slithered in the dark? My resolve began to sink with the sun. Just as I started having second thoughts about life as a jungle hermit and began estimating how far I had wandered from home, I heard cars again. It suddenly dawned on me that my Tarzan career had been cut tragically short for lack of a GPS. I had turned on the wrong trail and walked a vast circle back to the highway that ran by our house. I felt like Jonah heaved up on some beach near Nineveh. God just wouldn't let me go. As it grew dark, I slunk back into the frosty atmosphere of the house without a word. I didn't tell Rebecca about my Tarzan act.

In desperation, we decided to grasp at one last-chance, lifesaving branch before sliding completely over the emotional cliff. We dedicated one week to go cry out to God in

a cabin in the mountains. Could God fix the mess we had become? No sooner had we arrived at our prayer retreat than the baby came down with mumps and Rebecca became ill with some anonymous tropical plague. All week long, the baby wailed and Rebecca ailed. I just tried to nurse them both back to health. We did finally pray, but it was mostly on the way home in the car.

We decided to grasp at one last-chance, lifesaving branch before sliding completely over the emotional cliff.

Even though we had been too beaten down to manage much coherent prayer, God honored our decision to pray instead of giving up. He carefully considered our “groans that words cannot express”

(Romans 8:26). In fact, Rebecca and I both point to that week as the turning point of our married lives and of our ministry. I remember talking and praying excitedly on our way home from that place. We enjoyed a new resolve, a new commitment to prayer, a new passion for each other, and a new hope for our work.

Our lives began to change as we drove away from that cabin, and nothing has ever been the same. The baby started sleeping at night, and our other problems suddenly became much more manageable. We struggled along the way, but the despair had lost its grip on us.

Over the next twelve years, we translated the Bible into that obscure West African language. We raised three kids

in that village. Every anniversary, I would struggle to cultivate some blooming tree or bush in the rocky red gravel on the hill where our home stood just to make Rebecca smile. Today, a forest of flowers engulfs our former primitive, concrete-colored home—a monument that whispers of the love that blossomed in that place. I love my wife more every day, and I would never trade the life I have now for any other.

But to make our life of ministry work, we had to make a choice. To survive the challenge of the mundane, we had to choose prayer over despair. I believe God took me out on a limb and sawed it off because he wanted me to find out that he is real. I had always believed in him in the abstract, but now I knew him as an active participant in my life. He wanted me to learn that when it comes to success or failure, prayer is vital.

What do you do when your whole spiritual life seems to implode? Is God real to you, or do you rely on yourself? As you begin this book, you may find yourself distant from God in a parched spiritual wasteland. Your heart may no longer be stirred with any passion for him. Maybe you are troubled by unbelief because your past prayers seem to have gone unanswered. Well-meaning friends may have told you that the way to overcome your plague of doubts is just to

**To survive the challenge
of the mundane, choose
prayer over despair.**

pretend, to continue acting like you actually do believe. Eventually, they assure you, you will.

Pretending to have faith is not the way. You need to call to God to reveal himself to you in his power, and then wait for him to come and find you. “I waited patiently for the LORD; he turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the slimy pit. . . . He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God” (Psalm 40:1-3).

Effective prayer starts from a humble position of crying out to Jesus. Get on your knees in a quiet place and whisper, “God, I’m lost and I can’t find you. I’ll wait for you, but please come find me.” Fall on your face and lift up the words of blind Bartimaeus, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” (Mark 10:47). Try it again and again until you sense the distance closing between you and God. He meets us in our weaknesses and begins to move in power. The same Jesus who turned to meet Bartimaeus’s need comes to us: “Go, your faith has healed you” (verse 52).

The eyes of the Lord roam the whole earth probing for people to strengthen,¹ not just spiritual giants but all those who choose to reach out to him in their darkest places. It’s the trembling, outstretched arm that catches his attention—the undignified person begging for help whom he sees as bursting with potential, not only to be rescued, but also to strengthen others.

In fact, all good prayer begins from a position of weakness—not a lofty idea of our own spirituality. If we want

our prayer life to be like climbing a ladder to heaven, that first rung needs to touch the mud in which we live. Once we choose prayer, God will lift us to the next step.

**All good prayer begins
from a position of
weakness.**

If you find yourself mired in ordinary struggles, you are not disqualified from practicing extreme prayer. That's actually an ideal place to start. Jesus prefers the cry of the person who says, "God, have mercy on me, a sinner" (Luke 18:13) over the pious smugness of those who have more faith in their own righteousness than in God.

I don't mean to say that once you start crying out to God from a point of desperation, you gradually become more confident and less dependent on God. No, desperation is pretty much the starting place for extreme prayer every time. The reason the Bible says God's mercies are new every morning² is that we need new mercy every day.

I hope we don't begin in a place of *despair* every time, but we need to pray from the posture of dependence that we learn from despair. Such reliance on God opens us up to the possibility of practicing extreme prayer. That's because the "extreme" in this type of prayer means trusting God to fulfill his promise to do "whatever we ask," to unleash his immeasurable glory in our families, communities, and ministries when we pray in the way Jesus prescribed.

When we call out to him with the impoverished spirit of a blind beggar, a sinful tax collector, or a prodigal child,

God always sweeps in to lift us up to a place we could never imagine. From our position as sons and daughters of the King, children of the Creator of the universe, we learn to ask without hesitation and without limit. That's how extreme prayer begins.

Questions for Reflection

1. Think of a time when you felt as if God had taken you out on a limb and then sawed it off. How did you grow spiritually in the process?
2. Describe a time when you felt spiritually dry and separated from God.
3. How do you think you ended up in a condition of spiritual dryness?
4. How have you overcome spiritually dry times in your prayer life?
5. Tell about a time when you were driven by your circumstances to pray more desperately than ever before? How were your prayers answered?

CHAPTER 1

BLANK CHECKS

Extreme Prayer Accesses the
“Whatever You Ask” Promises

AT THE START of our missionary career in West Africa, my wife and I moved into a dusty, tin-roofed shack in a small village, bringing only some basic supplies and two bicycles with us. We had visited the village with a more experienced colleague a few times before this to get to know the people; now we would live with the villagers as we began learning their language and culture.

Rather than house us in a grass-roofed hut, one of the church leaders sacrificially emptied his little square home for us. This house was like no dwelling we'd ever seen. I could reach up and touch the tin roof without stretching. The mice had burrowed through the floor and would pop up at night to eat anything not hanging from the ceiling. One night I heard a cataclysmic struggle in one corner. When I got up to investigate, I discovered a colossal spider wrestling a majestic roach. Rebecca and I cheered for the spider.

Outside, the drooping branches of a mango tree brushed up against the screenless window, providing convenient access into our home for green mamba snakes. Without a ceiling, our rafters were home to a host of bats roosting between the wood and the tin. Like some kind of bat cave, our little home had so many bat droppings on the floor that we could have supplied enough guano for the gunpowder used in the American Civil War.

In spite of our initial squeamish reaction, that house holds a special place in our hearts. The generous church leader who had allowed us to temporarily move into his home tried to help us adjust to the “openness” of our dwelling by explaining, “It’s not only people who live in a house.” His sacrificial loan enabled us to make our home among the people with whom we would work to translate the Bible into the Yalunka language.

When we first arrived in West Africa, we pulled our water out of a hand-dug well with a bucket. We cooked outside on a kerosene burner. I remember taking bucket showers out under the stars in a grass enclosure, thinking, *This is probably not what the Centers for Disease Control means when they caution Americans to avoid night-biting mosquitoes.* As I showered, I could look up to a night sky so stunningly bright that at first I mistook the Milky Way galaxy for a huge, wispy cloud stretching the width of the sky. One night about three months into our stay, I had an epiphany that I was gazing into a vast fog of distant stars.

A long, awestruck “oooh” flowed unbidden from my chest as I gaped at the same stars that had been God’s visual aid for Abraham. I love Africa.

Living like the local people helped us get to know our neighbors. Just down the hill from us was a clearing where vendors set up a market every Saturday. Early our first morning, I heard trucks roaring to a halt outside. I tentatively opened the door to discover that our front steps were part of the market. Since our house was so close to the clearing, vendors were in the habit of stacking piles of rice just outside our doorway. Hundreds of people were milling around, hoping to catch a glimpse of the foreigners.

Another morning, the chilling wails of a mother in distress woke us. We found someone who could explain the woman’s situation: her three-year-old son was dying. I felt so sad for this mother that I asked, “Could we see the child?”

I could tell by the villagers’ faces that they had never considered that we might be able to help them. I wasn’t a doctor. I had a good book on tropical medicine, but that was the extent of my medical training. Even I didn’t know what I was thinking when I offered to help the dying boy.

They answered, “The child is out in the bush being treated by a traditional healer, but we will go out and get him.”

It took a while for them to bring him back to the village, and I took advantage of the time to ponder my next move.

When Rebecca and I were finally brought to the boy, he was lying on the earthen floor of a grass-roofed hut belonging to one of his relatives in the village. His breathing was labored, and his pupils, wide like inky wells, did not respond at all to my flashlight. The words “pupils fixed and dilated,” which I’d heard countless times on TV hospital dramas, echoed in my memory. Hopelessness crept into me as I realized that his mother was right; her son might not live long.

In hushed tones, Rebecca and I talked with the local pastor about what medical procedure might save the boy. “It can’t be meningitis because we don’t have any medicine for that,” I mused, applying dubious diagnostics. “It could be cerebral malaria, but I don’t know how to get an unconscious child to take the malaria tablets.”

At some point I suggested, “We should pray for the kid. After all, we are missionaries.”

At the simple mention of prayer, I saw the boy blink, and his eyes began to wander around the room focusing here and there.

I thought to myself, *We had better hurry up and pray, because I think God is healing him!* By the time we had finished praying, the boy’s breathing was normal, and we were able to give him a dose of malaria medicine. Later

that night, the family laughed festively over their little boy, whom they had given up for dead just hours before. We tried to give him the second dose of medicine that night, but he fought us like a rabid bobcat. His strength in combat proved to everyone present that he was fully recovered. Today he's nearly a grown man, and he still attends the village church.

In that dark hut a permanent little light blinked on inside my soul: *God is real, and he wants me to rely on him first, not as a last resort.* That's when I began to learn not to pray about my strategies, but to make prayer *the* strategy.¹

**I learned not to pray
about my strategies,
but to make prayer
the strategy.**

I thought of that night twelve years later. My family was still living in that village, but by this time we had built a baked-brick home with solar power and a well with an electric pump that supplied running water. I was handed the receiver of our satellite telephone and heard the voice of the chairman of the board asking me to become the president of our mission, Pioneer Bible Translators.

When the euphoria of accepting this new challenge wore off, it occurred to me: *I'm in trouble. I need a really clever strategy.* Our ministry had a distinguished record in Bible translation; however, its growth had plateaued over the previous decade. As the new president of the mission, I couldn't show up without some kind of brilliant plan for success. People might figure out that I didn't know

what I was doing! And the strategy had better be good, too, because if it didn't work, the failure of my leadership would be obvious to everyone.

Well, I *was* a Bible translator. So in desperation, I turned to the Bible and came across the “whatever” passages in the Gospels, the ones where Jesus says that when you pray a certain way he will give you “whatever you ask.” I was stunned by Jesus' sweeping promises to answer our prayers, no matter how bold. Then I reflected on how God had answered so many prayers during our years serving in that village.

I thought, *Well, it sounds unsophisticated, but what if this prayer thing would really work? I'm supposed to believe the Bible; what if I tried doing what it says? How crazy is that?*

I decided to search Scripture² to discover the kinds of prayers that God has promised to answer and then to focus our whole mission on praying those prayers. That's as clever an approach as I could come up with. Prayer became our strategy. I thought, *What if we really could tap into the power of the reckless, blank-check promises Jesus makes? What if you could too?*

Prayer is a challenge for most of us. Some of us have never been taught what to do. Others are not convinced of the power of prayer. I consider myself a man of action, and prayer doesn't look like action. Many of us would rather work to get something done than pray. Leaders

are especially activity oriented and typically not known as prayer warriors. We might be tempted to look at long prayer times as navel gazing. We can pray for a little while, but then we get antsy. We feel like we need to get out there and make things happen.

While at a convention recently, I heard a man announce over the loudspeaker, “We have just made a miracle happen here.” Any miracle we can make is not from God. However, I believe I have finally learned something about how to access the promises of Jesus to answer *whatever I ask* in prayer. The power unleashed by this approach has made me want to pray longer and more often. I’ve come to see prayer as *the* work.

So when I returned to the United States to lead our mission, I came with the strategy of prayer. I knew that several Bible-less people groups had been asking our mission to translate the Bible for a decade, but we’d never had enough people. Thinking about that, I was filled with a sense of dissatisfaction. It just wasn’t good enough for a Bible translation mission to leave people without Scripture for a decade while they continued to hunger for it.

I decided we needed to roughly double in size to meet the needs we already had identified in the countries we served, as well as to begin work in four new fields. I knew

**We get antsy after
praying for a while.**

**We feel like we need to
get out and make
things happen.**

that our tiny, packed modular building would not support the goal of doubling in size. So I announced new goals that were big enough to make me nervous:

- > We would double in size over the next six years.
- > We would construct a permanent headquarters facility.
- > We would start projects to meet all the translation needs in our current fields.
- > We would start translation work in four more countries.

How would we do that?

- > We would pray the kinds of prayers Jesus promised he would answer with unlimited power.

The strategy would have been pretty lame except for one detail: God is real. He's more real and powerful than any forest fire, hurricane, or tsunami. He will release his incomparable power into your ministry for the purpose of his Kingdom if you learn to pray the prayers he promised to answer.

Our ministry team decided to stake everything on God's power and on trusting him. We decided to become people of faith. God has overwhelmingly blessed that approach. His timing hasn't always matched ours exactly,

but he has doubled the size of our mission. He has given us twenty-two acres and a building. We can see him working to meet the translation needs in our original fields. We have started work in seven more countries instead of four.

Now we know that no other strategy will be good enough for us. We are becoming a people of faith, gradually increasing our commitment to prayer as we see God moving in increasing power.

So what do I mean when I say *extreme prayer*? I mean intentionally praying the kinds of prayers that tap into all of Jesus' open-ended promises about prayer in a way that achieves maximum Kingdom impact.

I base the idea of extreme prayer on a study and application of the scriptural promises of Jesus to do whatever we ask when we pray certain ways. The idea of extreme prayer is that Jesus sprinkled "whatever you ask" passages throughout the New Testament to coax us into trying them out. When we begin to experiment with them, God will build our faith in him through his mighty answers to prayer. He will teach us how to come to know him by learning what he is passionate about and working alongside him to accomplish his mission.

Extreme prayer is not the only way to pray; it's not a replacement for praying about your individual needs. I'm

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proposing an addition to the normal kinds of prayer that people usually pray. You may have learned the memory aid ACTS to help you remember how to pray. It's helpful to point out that your prayer times should start with adoration (*A*) and include confession (*C*). You should not forget thanksgiving (*T*). After covering those basics, you can go on to supplication (*S*) and make the kinds of requests Jesus modeled for your basic needs, such as "give us this day our daily bread." It's important to intercede for leaders in the world. It's crucial to pray for the sick people in your community. I'm not trying to replace all that. Rather I'm proposing you add an *E* on the end to include boldly praying the kinds of extreme prayers that Jesus commanded you and me to pray.

Since ACTSE doesn't spell anything, I think a better memory aid is to strive to have an ACTIVE prayer life.

Adoration—worshiping God for who he is

Confession—admitting and repenting of our sin

Thanksgiving—lifting up our gratitude for what
God has done

Intercession/Supplication—praying for ourselves and
others

Vanquishing Satan—practicing regular spiritual
warfare

Extreme Prayer—maximizing all the prayer promises
of Jesus

By the way, take note of the *V* for vanquishing Satan and his demons by practicing regular spiritual warfare. I learned this type of prayer in Africa, too, and Scripture explains why it is so critical. Revelation 12 teaches that demons were angels whom God kicked out of heaven after they rebelled against him. They are filled with bitter hatred, but since they can't harm God, they do the next best thing. They attack the people God loves, trying to wound him indirectly by hurting his children and persuading them to turn away from him.

If you're like most Americans, though, you have a hard time imagining that you are surrounded by unseen spiritual forces. You may believe that demons are real, but you may not think they impact you in any concrete way. That's similar to the response I got whenever I tried to explain bacteria to a Yalunka villager:

“This disease is caused by germs.”

“Where are they?”

“They are too small to be seen.”

“Well, how can they hurt me then?”

“There are millions of them. They are on every surface, and they can cause disease.”

“Really?”

Even I could tell that I sounded like a lunatic. The Yalunka people would just shake their heads at the poor deluded Westerner.

And yet demons are very real to the people of West

Africa. In the area where Rebecca and I worked, people have been sacrificing chickens and sheep to demons for hundreds of years. I remember a time when the Yalunka church prayed for a man who was so full of demons that it took four people to hold him down. The demons left and he became sane again. Demons are a real but unseen power in the same way bacteria are real, powerful, and unseen.

Paul teaches us to fight against our unseen enemy. He says,

Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

EPHESIANS 6:11-13

The word translated “stand your ground” means to stand in front of these powers. Paul is telling us to stand up to demons, to “resist” them.

The Bible uses the same word two other times:

BLANK CHECKS

Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

JAMES 4:7

Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith.

I PETER 5:8-9

The *V* reminds us to follow the example and command of Scripture to “resist” Satan and his demons. Follow the example of the Lord’s Prayer, saying, “Lord, deliver us from evil: evil thoughts, evil people, evil accidental events, and evil spirits. Lord, post your angels around us and our house to keep out evil. God, we give up all evil in our lives.” Praying for God’s protection and verbally rebuking the evil one can help prevent temptations from leading into addictions, conflicts into bitter fights, and sickness into death.³

While the *V* of ACTIVE is important, this book is centered on *E*, or *extreme prayer*—the discipline of maximizing Jesus’ promises about prayer. Each of the following chapters unveils a different kind of prayer that Jesus backs with a blank-check promise. But watch out! Don’t read this book to get your own wishes out of prayer. God wants something so much bigger than that. He longs to draw you to his side and to show you his dreams for your

life and the lives of the people around you. Do you have the courage to let him?

Questions for Reflection

1. Which of your prayers has God seemed to answer with miraculous power?
2. When you pray, how much adoration, confession, and thanksgiving do you find yourself practicing before asking for what you want?
3. Why is it important to practice all the different aspects of prayer?
4. Do you spend time in spiritual warfare as you pray? If so, explain.
5. What does it mean to you that Jesus promises to do *whatever you ask*?