



"This latest in Conrad's series of devotionals is masterfully conceived. Its narrow organizational center (God's calling, leading, guiding) distills its characters' responses down to the richest essence of what it means to really abandon oneself to Christ. And happily, the author knows how to tell a good Christian story simply, skillfully, and with what strikes me as inspirational *spirituality*. Highly recommended—especially for gifting to teens and young adults on their special occasions."

**—MARK MINNICK, Senior Pastor, Mount Calvary Baptist Church,
Greenville, SC**

"*Daring Decision* is a captivating walk through the lives of saints of old—men and women marked by courage, boldness, and love for the triune God. From Adoniram Judson to Betty Greene, it reminds us that we serve a God whose heart beats for all peoples and all nations. Through His people—fallen as they are—the gospel of Jesus reaches to the ends of the earth. This short, eminently readable book offers a beautiful reminder of the kinds of individuals God uses and the extraordinary ways He works through them, especially in pivotal moments."

—BROOKS BUSER, President, Radius International

"The fact that 'we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses' (Heb. 12:1) significantly informs how we ought to live our daily lives. Don't underestimate the brevity of Conrad's devotional tour through this great cloud: this book could change your life. One of the more daring decisions you make might be to invest time and thought into the personal reflection questions at the end of each chapter. *Daring Decision* will serve Christians from every walk of life as we run the race set before us."

**—GLORIA FURMAN, Missionary and Author of *Missional Motherhood* and
*Treasuring Christ When Your Hands Are Full***

"*Daring Decision* shares the compelling stories of thirty-one believers who risked everything to follow God's leading. Each devotional offers a glimpse into how God still leads His servants into His harvest today, pairing biblical reflection with accounts of believers who stepped into the unknown for the sake of the Gospel. Let these real-life accounts ignite your faith, stir your heart toward deeper commitment, and challenge you to obey His call in your own life!"

**—LES LOFQUIST, Professor of Practical Theology at Shepherds Theological
Seminary, Executive Pastor at the Shepherd's Church, Former Executive
Director of IFCA International**

"M. R. Conrad's *Daring Decision* is an inspiring and instructive collection of devotional readings that explore the vital issue of how God calls and guides people to serve Him with their lives. It features the outstanding, worthy examples of thirty-one individuals who carefully sought then faithfully followed God's leading in serving Him, whether at home or abroad. Each chapter is written in an interesting, engaging fashion, and brings out a unique facet of how God leads in people's lives. Suggested Scripture readings and relevant application questions assist readers in thinking through each chapter's emphasis and relating it to their own lives. Extremely beneficial and highly recommended!"

—**VANCE CHRISTIE, Christian Biographer**

"*Daring Decision* is a powerful 31-day devotional that highlights the lives of missionaries who followed God's call in the face of immense challenges. Each story is brief yet deeply impactful, exhorting readers to reflect on their own commitment to Christ and take bold steps of faith. One story that especially stood out to me was about Betty Greene, the first female missionary pilot to fly across the Andes. She courageously chose obedience to God's leading—despite societal norms that discouraged women from such roles. Each daily reading is compelling and encouraging. I gladly recommend this book, especially for families, as a way to introduce children to the world of missions and inspire them to live lives that make an eternal difference."

—**DONNA BIXBY, Missionary and International Director of Jonathan's House, Central African Republic**

"Like his earlier volumes, *Daring Devotion* and *Daring Dependence*, M. R. Conrad's *Daring Decision* helps us rehearse and celebrate God's work in and through many brothers and sisters in Christ who have already finished their race. Conrad opens a window into their hearts and lets us read in their words the kind of Christ-centered, Scriptural thinking that inspired and shaped their devoted choices. Many today idolize safety and cling to the illusion of security, and we desperately need the Spirit of God to fire us with God-dependent courage in the cause of Christ. Conrad rightly reminds us that 'those who have gone before us stir our imaginations about what God can do through ordinary people surrendered to Him.' This is true not only for missionaries but for all followers of Christ. May the Lord use this book to stir in His people increased consecrated ambition for the glory of God!"

—**JON CROCKER, Executive Director, Gospel Fellowship Association**



DARING DECISION

A 31-DAY JOURNEY

WITH THOSE WHO

FOLLOWED GOD'S LEADING

M. R. CONRAD



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Daring Decision: A 31-Day Journey with Those Who Followed God's Leading

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WHERE GOD LED THOSE WHO DARED TO FOLLOW HIM

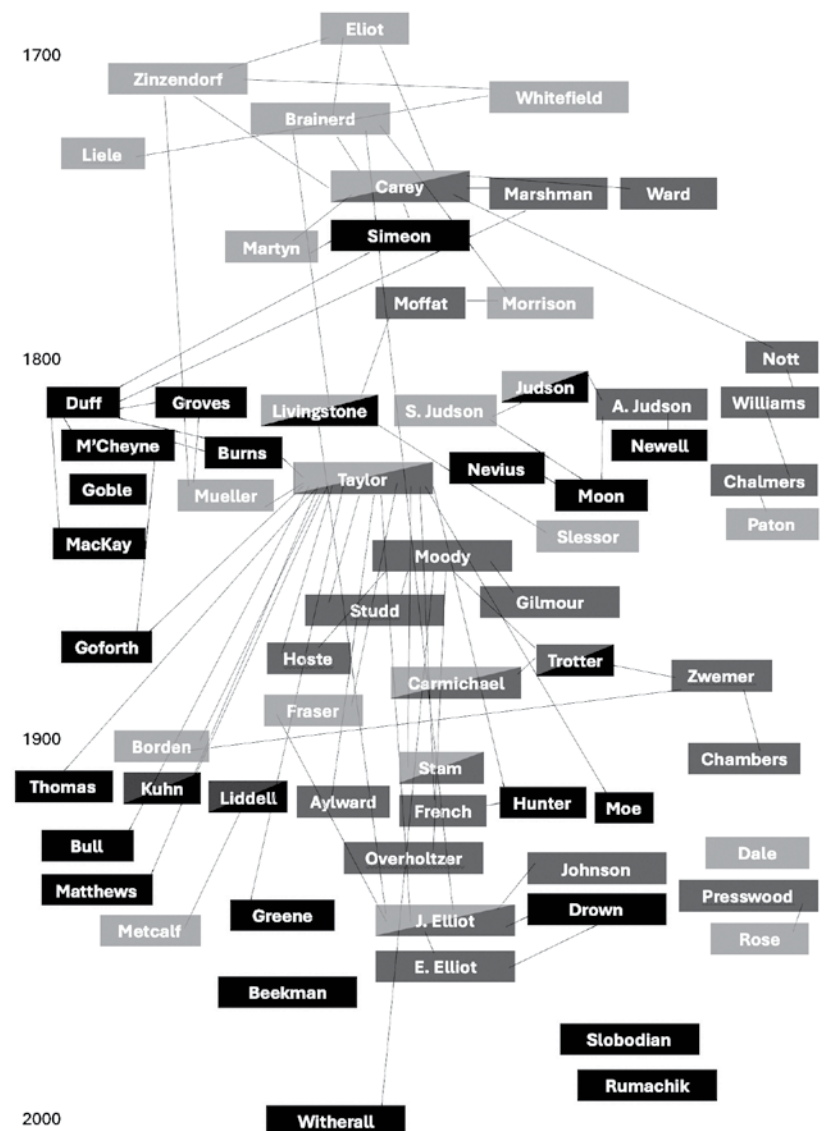


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CHART OF INFLUENCE



P R E F A C E



JOURNEY BRIEFING

*"I heard the voice of the Lord, saying:
'Whom shall I send, And who will go for Us?'
Then I said, 'Here am I! Send me.'"*

—ISAIAH 6:8

How do we hear God's call today? Isaiah received a vision of the throne room of God. He saw angels—the seraphim—and heard their voices, singing, “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts” (Isaiah 6:3). He felt the ground beneath him shake. Isaiah tasted the coals of fire on his lips and smelled the smoke. His emotions welled within him as he realized his sinful smallness in the overwhelming presence of the Creator of the universe. Then, Isaiah heard the unmistakable call of God: “Whom shall I send, And who will go for Us?” (Isaiah 6:8).

I invite you to read this book as an echo of the call of God that rings throughout the centuries. Adam and Eve heard the voice of God in the Garden of Eden as they walked with God. Abraham answered God's call out of pagan Ur and into Canaan. Moses discovered God calling to him from a burning bush. Samuel literally heard God calling his name at the outset of his

prophetic ministry. David responded to God's call through the prophet Samuel's anointing. Struck down by a light from heaven on the road to Damascus, Paul cowered as the voice of Jesus rang from the sky. In many ways and in vastly differing places, God has called men and women to serve Him throughout the ages.

Yet, not all of God's callings in Scripture were so dramatic. Except in pivotal moments of God's revelation to man, the vast majority of God's calls have been much more subtle. For example, God led Timothy step by step from his youth. His mother and grandmother raised him, teaching him the Word of God (1 Timothy 1:5; 2 Timothy 3:15). He faithfully served in his local church in Lystra. His testimony spread in the region and caught the attention of the apostle Paul (Acts 16:2). Still a young man, Timothy apprenticed under the apostle Paul and joined his missionary journeys (Acts 16:3; 19:22; 20:4). He became Paul's trusted representative (Philippians 2:19–23). His later ministry included pastoral work in Ephesus. For Timothy, the call was gradual as he followed God's leading into greater arenas of service.

As the first century closed, God ceased giving direct revelation to His people. The canon of Scripture stood complete, ending with the book of Revelation and its stern warning about adding to it (Revelation 22:18). The gift of prophecy, essential during the church's foundation, faded from the scene (Ephesians 2:20). Yet, God did not stop seeking men and women to serve Him. For over twenty centuries, God has continued to call individuals to follow Him into His work in their own countries and across the world.

Daring Decision tells these stories. This devotional recounts how God called His servants into ministries and led them at pivotal points in their lives. This book explores how God's

guidance came and how God's people discerned it, risking their lives in daring endeavors for the cause of Christ and His Great Commission.

This book is primarily descriptive, not prescriptive. Just because God led someone in a certain way in the past does not mean that this is the way He leads everyone. In some cases, the subjects of this book may have misunderstood God's guidance, and God worked despite their misapprehension. This book seeks to observe rather than critique. However, discerning believers must always test subjective experiences and the testimonies of others against the objective truths of God's Word.

In this book, I have used the terms *calling*, *leading*, and *guiding* interchangeably. Acts 16:10 sets a precedent for this usage, employing the word *calling* to describe how God led Paul and his team to take the gospel to a new geographical region. Some traditions emphasize a specific call to ministry, especially the pastorate, and differentiate this ministerial call from God's leading in any Christian's life.¹ However, that discussion is beyond the scope of this devotional. For the purposes of this book, *calling*, *leading*, and *guiding* will refer more generally to how God directs believers to follow Him into His work and throughout their lives.

Daring Decision is the third book in the *Daring Devotion* series. *Daring Devotion*, *Daring Dependence*, and *Daring Decision* can be read in any order. Each highlights a different aspect of how God leads, strengthens, and sustains His servants in any age.

As with the first two books in the series, this devotional contains thirty-one readings, designed for one month of daily devotions. Better yet, *Daring Decision* could help you establish a new habit. Instead of replacing a morning time with God in His

Word, consider adding a second time with Him before bed or around the dinner table with your family, reading this devotional and accompanying Scripture passages. I pray that the Lord will use His Word and the accounts of His working in this book to call you to a greater commitment to His work.

INTRODUCTION



THE STARTING POINT

*“Faith comes by hearing,
and hearing by the word of God.”*

—ROMANS 10:17

Blame the cat. The family cat convinced Anton Slobodian to become an atheist.

Slobodian was a thug. He enjoyed bar fights in his native Ukrainian town of Hlibiv. He struggled to put food on the table for his family, and the vodka he drank could not wash away a feeling of emptiness. *Surely, there was more to life than this.*

So, Anton Slobodian bought an idol. He had never been a religious man, but maybe this was what he was missing. For two years, he and his wife saved up to purchase a towering image of the virgin Mary. When he finally brought it home hanging off his cart, his neighbors thought he had stolen it. The local priest assumed the statue was a gift for the Roman Catholic Church in town. But Slobodian defended his purchase and chased the

fawning priest from his doorstep. Finally, his luck would turn, he thought. A shrine to the virgin Mary would change his life.

Enter the cat.

On a lovely spring day, the cat watched birds out the front window of Slobodian's home. Suddenly, one bird ventured close to the windowpane, and the cat lunged for it, forgetting the glass. The cat hit the window and lost its balance. On its way to the floor, the cat bumped the statue. The virgin Mary tottered and fell, shattering on the floor.

Slobodian exploded in anger but then had an epiphany. He told his wife, "I thought that statue was going to save me. . . . But if she can't even protect herself from a cat, how in the world could she help us? Now I see that religion is nothing but a sham. The priests invented religion in order to keep people enslaved."¹ From that moment, he never darkened the door of a church. He was an atheist.

Since God was not going to help him, Slobodian decided to help himself. The Great Depression had hit Ukraine hard. When he heard of an opportunity to make his fortune in Argentina, he convinced his wife to let him go. He promised to return with enough money to change their lives.

Instead of wealth, Slobodian discovered employment as difficult to obtain in Argentina as in Ukraine. Worse, he had no money to return home. For three years, he lived hand to mouth in Argentina, looking for a job.

One day, Slobodian and some unemployed Polish migrants sat alongside a road and argued over the cause of the economic woes of Eastern Europe. Slobodian blamed Poland and declared Ukraine to be superior in every way. As the discussion grew more intense, a young Argentine man traveling down the road interrupted them.

When he heard that Slobodian was Ukrainian, he dug into his large bag and pulled out a Ukrainian New Testament. He offered to sell it to Slobodian. The atheist had no interest in the Bible, but he felt he could not refuse it in front of his friends since he had just touted the superiority of all things Ukrainian. When he bought the New Testament, his friends warned him: “Don’t read it! People who have read this book began to think funny in the head. They go insane!”² Slobodian buried the Bible in the bottom of his bag. There was no way he was taking that risk!

Months passed. Still, he could find no work. His money ran out. For three days, he had nothing to eat. He sat under a tree and rooted through his bag for food. Instead, he found the Ukrainian Bible. Should he read it? What could he lose? If he started to feel funny, he could slam the book shut.

Slobodian cautiously read a few chapters. He paused to see if anything felt strange. Nothing seemed out of the ordinary, so he continued reading. The Gospel of Matthew’s account of the life of Christ drew him in. Soon, Slobodian came to the climax—the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. He knew about his own sin and the death of Jesus Christ from the Roman Catholic Church. But he had never connected the two until that moment. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus had paid the penalty for his sins and offered him eternal life!

An Argentine man journeying along the road passed by the tree. Beneath it, he saw the foreign thug weeping over a book. God had used His Word to call a lost Ukrainian in Argentina to salvation.

How does God call men and women to know Him? How does He offer them a life with real meaning and purpose? The starting point is the gospel of Jesus Christ found in the Word of God.

Romans 10:17 explains, “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” First Peter 1:25 clarifies, “The word of the Lord endures forever. Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you.” Second Thessalonians 2:14 reveals that people are “called . . . by our gospel.” Far from home under a tree in Argentina, Slobodian heard the call of the gospel. Have you?

What is the gospel? The word *gospel* means good news. First Corinthians 15:1–4 clearly defines this good news:

I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved. . . . For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.

The gospel is the good news of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and how He saves those who believe on Him.

However, before anyone can appreciate this good news, they must first understand their spiritual predicament. Salvation has no significance unless one perceives an imminent threat. God reveals that sin is a much graver danger than most people realize.

Though we like to think of sin as something extreme and “out there,” sin lurks within each one of us (James 1:14–15). God knows our true state and warns us: “There is no one who does not sin” (1 Kings 8:46). We all miss the mark (Romans 3:23). No one is perfect like God (Ecclesiastes 7:20).

Our sin puts each of us in danger. God reveals that “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). We are condemned by our own deeds (John 3:18). The wrath of God awaits us (John 3:36). We

may try to ignore our sin, but God does not—and cannot as our just Creator and Judge.

Everyone sins, and so everyone needs a Savior. This is why the gospel is good news. As 1 John 4:14 declares, “The Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world.” And that Savior is Jesus Christ—just like the gospel declares.

Jesus is God in the flesh. Over two thousand years ago, He descended from heaven and entered human history as a baby. God clearly communicated that this child would grow up to be the Savior of the world (Matthew 1:21). Though Jesus never sinned, He willingly died on the cross to take the punishment for our sin. Government officials certified His death and guarded His tomb. But three days later, Jesus rose from the dead, proving that He is God and able to save.

Yet, we reject Jesus, the Savior, by trying to save ourselves. We vainly hope that our good works will outweigh our bad works. We try our best, but it can never be enough (Isaiah 64:6). Titus 3:5 explains, “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us.” We need a Savior.

Today, Jesus offers to save you and give you the gift of eternal life. You receive that gift by faith in Jesus alone (Acts 4:12). Repent of your sin, admitting you are a sinner and unable to save yourself (Ephesians 2:8–9). Trust that Jesus died for you and rose again (John 3:16). Ask Him to save you. He promises that “whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Romans 10:13). This is the gospel message. Do you believe the gospel?

In Argentina, Anton Slobodian believed the gospel. While his eternal destiny immediately changed, his outward circumstances

remained bleak. He was still a poor immigrant. But he was no longer alone in a foreign country. God was with him.

In the following months, God provided Slobodian with a job. He saved his money. Eventually, he had enough to pay for his family's journey from Ukraine to join him in Argentina.

Slobodian's wife and children immediately noticed a change in his behavior. The thug had transformed into a loving follower of Jesus Christ. One by one, each member of his family accepted the gospel, leaving the superstition of their former religion. The last to come to Christ was Slobodian's son, Peter, who would go on to become an evangelist and church planter on three continents. Peter Slobodian's story is highlighted later in this book.

The gospel was the starting point for every person in this devotional. Long before any of them heard God's call to serve Him around the world, each trusted Christ for salvation. Without the transforming work of the gospel, none of them would have had the ability or courage to do what they did for God. However, once saved, God used them to further His Great Commission work of proclaiming the gospel, teaching those who believed, and planting churches around the world.

DAY 15



NOT BY CHOICE

“I wouldn’t have gone there on my own volition.”

—PETER RUMACHIK, PASTOR IN RUSSIA (1931–2019)

“Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.”

—REVELATION 2:10

Siberia. The threat of a sentence to Siberia would intimidate even hardened Russian criminals. Yet, Peter Rumachik took the risk in 1956 to plant a new church in Dyedovsk near Moscow. The government of the U.S.S.R. forbade evangelism, church planting, and religious training for children. Rumachik dared to pursue all three. In 1961, Rumachik found himself on a train to Siberia.

Rumachik viewed his sentence as God’s leading for ministry. He later shared, “All during the trip while I was being shipped to distant Siberia, I was praying that the Lord would send me now to precisely that place where in His consideration I would be

needed.”¹ Rumachik soon found that he was “alone in the midst of a great mass of people that didn’t know God.”² Through the atheistic government of Russia, God guided Rumachik to His work in Siberia.

Rather than incarcerating the preacher in a walled prison, the Soviets exiled Rumachik to a remote village. His sentence required him to work long hours at a local forge, but he lived in his own rented home. Soon, his wife and two children joined him. As he witnessed to coworkers and villagers, Rumachik discovered a group of elderly women who professed salvation but had no church or pastor to teach them. They told Rumachik, “Brother Peter, the fact that you’re here is an answer to our prayers.”³ God used their words to confirm His leading. Rumachik later explained,

I also came to understand that I wouldn’t have gone there on my own volition, considering that I had a family and that it was nice living in Dyedovsk, in the Moscow area. So in this way the Lord had sent me here (to Siberia). That is to say, I could see that His will was in this, and I began to listen very carefully to determine what exactly the Lord wanted me to accomplish here.⁴

What the Lord wanted was to use Rumachik to plant a church in the hard ground of Siberia.

Like the apostle Paul, the exiled pastor went about “strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, ‘We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God’” (Acts 14:22). Though the authorities found out what Rumachik was doing and threatened to banish him beyond the Arctic Circle, God gave Rumachik favor with the warden.

When his five-year sentence ended in 1966, the Rumachik family left behind a growing little church in the Siberian tundra.

Rumachik returned to his home church in Dyedovsk and dared to resume gospel ministry. Once again, he attracted the authorities' attention. For most of the next thirteen years, this dedicated servant of God found himself not in exile with his family, but alone in deplorable conditions. He struggled to survive in prisons and concentration camps scattered across Russia from the Ural Mountains to beyond Lake Baikal in the East. God now called Rumachik to a jail ministry from the inside.

Both guards and prisoners quickly learned why Rumachik was there. Upon arrival in each new prison and every new cell, Rumachik told whoever would listen that he was an innocent Baptist pastor, jailed for preaching the Word of God. He shared the gospel wherever he was—on transport trucks, in interrogation rooms, while waiting in lobbies, through the thin walls of his cell, and even out the slot in the door through which he received his daily bowl of gruel. He sang Christian hymns and taught the bored criminals around him the songs.

And while proclaiming the truth of God, Rumachik was suffering for his faith. He often found himself in overcrowded train cars or prison cells, jammed together with criminals next to open latrines. At other times, he endured isolation chambers with diabolical methods for sleep deprivation. Once, the floorboards under his bed hid masses of flesh-eating centipedes, waiting for him to give in to exhaustion. Even something as simple as a purposely unheated cell in the extreme cold of the Russian winter could make falling asleep a fatal mistake.

Prison officials tried to bribe him to renounce his faith with offers of freedom. Once, KGB officers attempted to convince him to spy on prisoners in return for his release with plans to keep using him to spy on Christians once he returned home. Rumachik saw the trap and refused to become an asset.

When bribes did not work, prison officials resorted to threats: “If you don’t stop praying to God, then we’ll keep you in prison for the rest of your life.”⁵ Rumachik stood firm. He had made his choice early in his incarceration: “I decided that even if the Lord allowed me to spend my entire life suffering for His name in prison—even if I should die there in jail—then I wanted all of that to bring glory to Him.”⁶ And so his unjust imprisonment extended indefinitely.

As prison officials and criminals observed Rumachik’s faithfulness to God despite prolonged physical and psychological abuse, they often asked him why his God would allow him to suffer so much. His fellow inmates knew they deserved punishment for their crimes but could see that the pastor was different. If God truly existed and loved His own, why did He allow Rumachik and his family to go through this?⁷ Rumachik would reply, “I am here to serve the Lord. No one would willingly put himself in these kinds of situations. . . . So God has brought me along this path so that you might be able to hear about God while I am here in prison.”⁸ The atheistic government would not allow Christian chaplains or missionaries to minister to the thousands of criminals in the Soviet prison system, so God had sent them a prisoner. Rumachik viewed this as his calling for the years he spent behind barbed wire for his faith.

Peter Rumachik should not have survived his eighteen years of labor and deprivation in the Soviet prison system. Many faithful believers did not. Yet, when he walked out the prison doors for the final time in 1987, Rumachik left behind a church in Siberia, a smattering of believing convicts across the country, and a testimony before guards and prisoners of the love and grace of God (Acts 5:41; 1 Peter 4:13). Even in the darkest prisons of Soviet Russia, God could be seen because He had placed His lights there. Peter Rumachik was just one of His lights.

Life sometimes forces us to go where we do not want to go. Governments, world events, health challenges, and other circumstances beyond our control push us onto paths we would not have chosen. We can view ourselves as victims and become bitter, or we can choose to see these things as God's direction in our lives. Sometimes God leads us to "walk through the valley of the shadow of death" (Psalm 23:4). No one chooses that path willingly. But when we find ourselves on it, what do we do? We can remember that God uses people to reflect His light among those shadows. He may put you there to do it—to suffer, to witness for Him, and even to rejoice despite the hardship.

When suffering overtakes you, recall that Jesus also suffered and warned His followers to expect the same: "Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you" (John 15:20). With each trial comes the potential for growth, a deeper knowledge of God, and His blessing as you endure. Jesus said, "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted

the prophets who were before you” (Matthew 5:11–12). Paul similarly encouraged the persecuted believers at Philippi: “For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake” (Philippians 1:29). Many who follow Jesus’ leading will walk where He walked—down the path of witness through suffering.

But know this: no Christian walks in the dark alone. Even through the valley of the shadow of death, God promises that He is with you (Psalm 23:4). The Hand that holds yours will strengthen you to endure and to shine as His light.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

- What conditions have I placed on God regarding where and how I am willing to follow His leading?
- How much suffering is too much suffering for Christ?
- What Scripture passages have I memorized that could sustain me in a time of persecution and enable me to share my faith?

FURTHER READING

Matthew 5:1–16

Rumachik, Peter, Pavel Rumachik, and Luba Rumachik. *A Path Not Lined with Roses*. Danville, IN: Baptist International Evangelistic Ministries, 1999.



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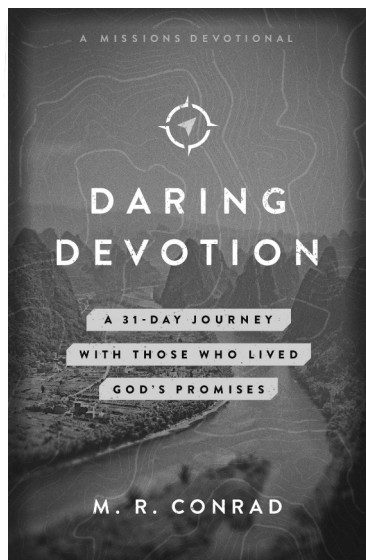


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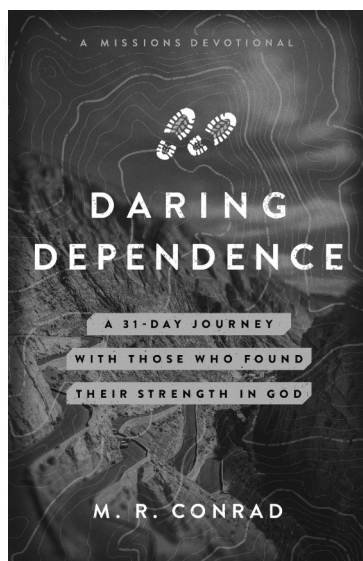
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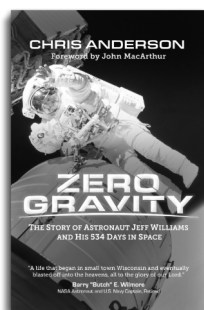
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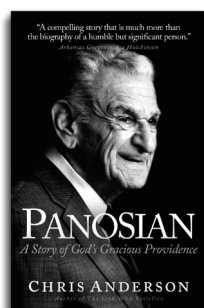


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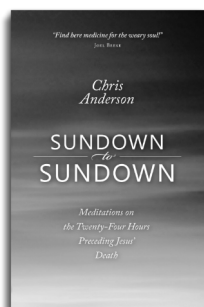
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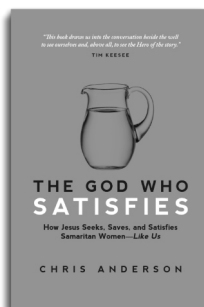
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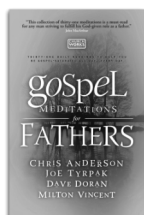
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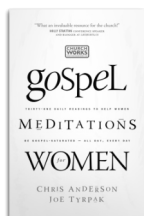
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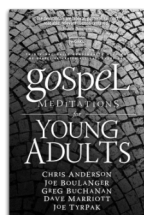
—**John MacArthur**, late pastor of Grace Community Church, Sun Valley, California, chairman of Grace to You, and author of dozens of books



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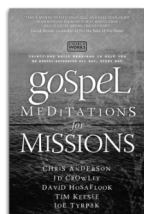
—**Holly Stratton**, women's conference speaker



Gospel Meditations for Young Adults

"These devotionals are biblical, pastoral, succinct, readable, relevant, and relatable. More importantly, the focus is cross-centered and theological without being forced or trite. This would be a great tool to use in parenting, personal discipleship, group study, or even pastoral counseling."

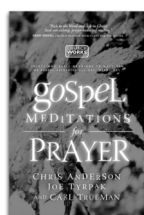
—**Voddie Baucham**, late author, president of Founders Seminary, and founding dean, African Christian University, Zambia



Gospel Meditations for Missions

"This devotional helps us slow down to consider what is of first importance that we might hold this treasure of the gospel more fully in our clay hearts. I joyfully commend it."

—**Thabiti Anyabwile**, pastor of Anacostia River Church, Washington, D.C., and author of *The Decline of African American Theology*



Gospel Meditations for Prayer

"Brief and biblical, these meditations are full of sharp edges. They lead us to pray as cross-bearing disciples of Christ. Yet the authors also comfort us with Christ's perfect grace for fallen people. This devotional is an encouraging book, but one designed to stretch you."

—**Joel Beeke**, president of Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, Michigan, author, and editorial director of Reformed Heritage Books