



Pre-Release Sampler

extravagant

living out Your response to God's outrageous love

bryan jarrett
foreword by mark batterson

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*living out **Your** response to **God's** outrageous love*

 Influence



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foreword

February 6th has always been a special date for my family. It's my youngest son's birthday. This year Josiah turned nine, and one of the greatest dreams of his young life came true on that very day. He watched our family's favorite team, the Green Bay Packers, win Super Bowl XLV—in person. It'll be tough to top that gift! But I'm not the father who “spoiled” my son by taking him to the Super Bowl as a birthday present. No, the dad who did that was Bryan Jarrett, a man who allowed himself to be used by our mutual Father in heaven to lavish an inexpressibly memorable experience on a little boy He and I both love.

Our trip to the Super Bowl started three weeks before the big event. On Monday morning after the Packers had clinched their spot, I sent out a light-hearted “Tweet” about my son's birthday falling on the day the Packers would play in the Super Bowl. Seeing an opportunity, Bryan called from his church in Dallas to say he wanted to buy my son and me tickets to the Super Bowl and give us an expense-paid trip to the championship game. There was only one catch—and in light of the immensity of his offer, it was truly a very small one. Pastor Bryan wanted me to preach at his church on Super Bowl Sunday. It took me less than a nanosecond to decide that rearranging my schedule was worth that price.

Bryan's present was beyond extravagant. His church's love offering paid every penny for our trip to Dallas and the game. As I look back, it's no wonder. His church is accustomed to outrageous generosity because it's a church Bryan has introduced intimately to a God who will stop at nothing to love His people. They've learned their extravagance from the Original Extravagant One.

The story of how God progressively introduced Bryan to His extravagant love reads like an unbelievably great novel. You can't guess what God will do next. Bryan couldn't. And like me, I'm sure you'll relish seeing how the nature of God's extravagance elevates human devotion to remarkable levels.

I share some experiences in common with Bryan. We attended the same seminary (a few years apart). We're both pastors, and we talk now and then about sermon ideas and leadership challenges. Over the last few years I've come to respect Bryan as a gifted leader and humble man of God. His passion for the Lord is contagious, as is

his willingness to go out on a limb for God. After reading this book, you'll want to go out on a limb too! I know I do.

MARK BATTERSON

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Washington, DC

June 2011

i n t r o d u c t i o n

extravagant by nature

Who comes to mind when you think of the world's wealthiest people? Warren Buffet? Bill Gates? Your great uncle (wouldn't that be nice)? Whoever it might be, the lavish riches at their disposal are unimaginable to most of us. And in many cases, the level of generosity of which they're capable is beyond what we could give away in a hundred lifetimes at whatever our current income level may be. Yet if you were to compile the tens of billions of dollars in net worth of one of these people, every penny they have would not be enough to match the donation made by one man in the Bible to the work God called him to.

Before he died, David, the second king of Israel, wanted nothing more than to be the person to build a temple to the God to whom he had given his whole heart for most of his eighty years. Ever the obedient servant, he begged the Lord to release him to the task, but God turned him down. Instead, David's Lord decreed that the king's son, Solomon, would be the one honored with the job of constructing a house for the one true God. Yet God's re-direction did not dissuade David from his vision to see a temple built. No, he became all the more determined to guarantee the success of the project. He created a plan to make sure Solomon had everything he needed to build a temple that would outshine all others. So David made a donation and with it gave Solomon these instructions:

I have taken great pains to provide for the temple of the Lord a hundred thousand talents of gold, a million talents of silver, quantities of bronze and iron too great to be weighed, and wood and stone. And you may add to them. You have many workmen: stonecutters, masons and carpenters, as well as men skilled in every kind of work in gold and silver, bronze and iron—craftsmen beyond number. Now begin the work, and the Lord be with you. (1 Chronicles 22:14-16)

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Let's put these quantities into modern terms, just so you'll have a perspective on the overwhelming size of David's gift. A talent of metal weighed about 70 pounds. That means David gave roughly 3750 tons of gold or about 7.5 million pounds. Multiply that by 16 to get the number of ounces, and based on today's price per ounce, David's gold donation alone was worth about \$180 billion. Add to that his 37,500 tons of silver worth today about \$42 billion, and even without considering the other materials given, you come up with an offering that is three or four times larger than the entire fortune of one of today's richest people. We don't know how much David had left for himself after giving it, but his was undoubtedly the largest donation to anything in history.

What in the world could possibly motivate such extravagance?

I believe it was David's crystal clear recognition that every single thing—every shekel, every cow, every sandal, every fringe on his garment—had come to him from the hand of God, and it was only right to give back lavishly as a demonstration of his gratitude. While I can't say whether or not it was an easy thing for David to give so much, I can say that his response to God was completely natural for one so in touch with his heavenly Father. We are extravagant in our response to God because He is extravagant by nature.

2

When people think of "the nature of God," theologically correct ideas come to mind: God is love; God is just; God is holy. And they're all true. But we miss something by not recognizing the superlatives that go with each of those descriptions of His nature. The angel in Isaiah's vision cried, "Holy, holy, holy!"—an extreme exclamation. "Holy" by itself is already perfect, sinless, pure, righteous. But the angel felt compelled to shout it three times for emphasis. That's because God isn't just kind of holy or kind of loving or kind of just. He is lavishly, immoderately, abundantly, excessively, sumptuously, bountifully, prolifically holy, loving, and just in every iota of His infinite being. God is, in a word, extravagant. His very being is extravagant. The extent of his every quality is limitless.

It is this extravagant reality of God that King David responded to. The closer a person walks with the Almighty, the clearer His extravagance registers in our consciousness. And when it does, it unleashes in our hearts and minds an extravagance of devotion that transforms life into an experience inconceivable to anyone who hasn't yet "gotten it."

It's this experience of an extravagant God that I hope to draw you into with this book. David is only one example of people in

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the Bible who “got it.” I’ll point out some others. I’ve also dipped my toe in this water of God’s extravagance and have some stories of my own journey that I hope will encourage you to see that the “extravagance cycle”—God is extravagant to us which triggers an extravagant response from us which prompts further expressions of extravagance from God—is as real today as it was in 1000 B.C. when David was king.

In this book, I’m neither calling people to a vow of poverty or to an expectation that God will flood material riches their way. There’s nothing particularly holy about being poor, and there’s nothing biblically guaranteed about getting rich. We can be sold out to God whether we are wealthy or indigent. A heart of extravagance can be demonstrated by people in the penthouse as well as the poorhouse. My purpose is to call you to make a radical, dramatic, complete commitment to him in response to the outpouring of God’s immense love for you.

A heart revolution changes how we view our possessions, positions, and relationships and will teach us to define “rich” in a very different way than the world does. In his riveting book, *The Pursuit of God*, A. W. Tozer explains “the blessedness of possessing nothing”:

3

*Our woes began when God was forced out of His central shrine and “things” were allowed to enter. Within the human heart “things” have taken over. Men have now by nature no peace within their hearts, for God is crowned there no longer, but there in the moral dusk stubborn and aggressive usurpers fight among themselves for first place on the throne. . . . Let me exhort you to take this seriously. It is not to be understood as mere Bible teaching to be stored away in the mind along with an inert mass of other doctrines. It is a marker on the road to greener pastures, a path chiseled against the steep sides of the mount of God. We dare not try to by-pass it if we would follow on in this holy pursuit. We must ascend a step at a time. If we refuse one step we bring our progress to an end.*¹

1. A. W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God*, (CreateSpace, 2010), page 18.

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If I encourage you to take a single step, and then another and another, I'll be satisfied that this book has done its job. With just one hint of God's extravagance, living your own life of extravagant devotion will become irresistible.

chapter

a word from the wise

Solomon got the message. His father's over-the-top devotion to God captured the young king's heart, and he responded through his own life of lavish commitment to the Lord.

When Solomon came to the throne, he inherited a united empire. David's wars had brought peace to the land—and heavy responsibility to Solomon's shoulders. A conscientious leader, Solomon knew his limitations and determined to make sure he would not let anyone down—not the people of Israel, not his father on earth, not his Father in heaven. So he turned first to the Father whose plan for world history and Solomon personally had put him on the throne.

According to Scripture, Solomon sought the Lord by offering sacrifices of praise at Gibeon. While there, the Lord appeared to him in a dream and made him a remarkable offer: “Ask for whatever you want me to give you” (1 Kings 3:5).

The third king of Israel could have asked for military might, fabulous wealth, or political fame, but instead, he asked God to give him wisdom so he could adequately lead his people:

Now, O Lord my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David. But I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties. Your servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number. So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours? (1 Kings 3:7-9)

Solomon's request thrilled God's heart. In response to the king's humility, God gave him uncommon spiritual wisdom, but in addition, he also gave him fabulous wealth and honor among the nations.

In keeping with his father David's wishes, Solomon made plans to build a temple that would be a marvel of beauty and architecture.

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Workmen brought the finest cedar logs from Lebanon. Craftsmen sculpted the billions' worth of gold and silver. Men quarried blocks of marble so skillfully that construction workers didn't need hammers and chisels to fit the stones together at the building site.

When the temple was complete, Solomon sponsored an elaborate dedication service. Priests carried the ark of the covenant into the Holy of Holies, and a cloud filled the temple with God's presence. Solomon offered a prayer of dedication and then provided an enormous sacrifice on the new altar. He "offered a sacrifice of fellowship offerings to the Lord: twenty-two thousand cattle and a hundred and twenty thousand sheep and goats. So the king and all the Israelites dedicated the temple of the Lord" (1 Kings 8:63).

6 We have a hard time grasping the significance of the moment. What are the sounds, smells, and sights of sacrificing 142,000 animals in a colossal worship service? This was, to be sure, an extravagant display of worship by Solomon and his people for the goodness of God in establishing their nation, giving them a home, and guiding them uniquely among all people. The Lord hadn't commanded Solomon to sacrifice so much. It was simply the overflow of his intense gratitude for all God had done for him and his people. And God kept the cycle going. In response, He opened heaven's storehouse to honor the one who honored him. Back and forth God and Solomon went: Solomon honoring God, God rewarding the king, and the king humbly praising God and trusting him for further guidance.

Some of us might think, "Well, that's fine for David and Solomon to offer such extravagant gifts. They were rich kings and could afford it." The language of extravagance, though, isn't a dialect reserved for the wealthy and social elite. Jesus made clear that anyone can live this kind of extraordinary life and communicate with God in this way. Mark's gospel takes us to a scene during the last week before Jesus' crucifixion:

Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny. "Calling His disciples to Him, Jesus said, 'I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but

she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on.” (Mark 12:41-44)

Why did this poor woman give everything to God? Because she had a heart of overwhelming gratitude and glad obedience. And how much was her gift worth to Jesus? Enough for Him to point to her as a shining example for all of us. This woman was a thoroughly forgettable historical figure and an insignificant visitor to the temple—until her extravagance captured God’s heart. Jesus noticed her, and because her unsparing gift attracted His attention, she will never be forgotten. Throughout the Scriptures, we see that lives of extravagant devotion and surrender to Him captured the heart of God. And they still do.

Calling God’s Bluff

I began to learn about the importance of such devotion when I first became a Christian at age seven (more about that later), but the Lord took me to a new level of understanding a few years into a ministry through which I thought I had already come to understand a lot about the workings of God. How little I really knew!

At the time, I was a young (really young—I started preaching at age 16!) evangelist traveling around the country speaking at church revivals and other events. Several years into a remarkably “successful” ministry, my young wife and co-ministry enthusiast, Haley, and I were driving to our next engagement, in Clinton, Mississippi, between Memphis, Tennessee and Jackson, Mississippi. Haley was asleep beside me in the car when I heard the Lord whisper, “Bryan, surrender.”

I figured He must have wandered into the wrong car. His direction was certainly intended for someone else. My less-than-instantly obedient response was, “Lord, what else do You want me to surrender? I’ve already given enough!”

After all, I had planned on being a doctor but gave up that “worldly ambition” to become an evangelist. I had dreamed of going into medicine specifically so I could have a more well-to-do life than anyone in my family had ever enjoyed. If I could go to medical school and become a physician, I’d thought, I would have it made! I’d really be somebody. I’d have proven that I was someone with special skills and intelligence. I would be admired in our society. But when I answered God’s call to be an evangelist, I knew exactly

what that meant—meager pay, worry about money for bills, and perhaps worst of all, being one of “those” people.

With all that in mind, I was more than a little resentful when God whispered to me on the road that night, but He took my response in stride. “Bryan,” the Lord continued, “in reality, you don’t know much about surrender, but I’m going to teach you about it for the rest of your life.” I’m not sure that’s what I wanted to hear, but God was true to His word.

Even though I’m writing this book, I’m still very much learning, and I have a long way to go. I feel like Winston Churchill after the British victory over the German Afrika Korps at the Second Battle of El Alamein in Egypt. He famously reflected, “Now this is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning.” My insights about surrendering to God are, at best, the end of the beginning of my learning process.

8 To show you my level of spiritual perception and devotion in the car that night: I ignored the Holy Spirit’s message to me. I continued life and ministry on my terms, as if the conversation with God had never taken place. In the months that followed, however, the Lord often reminded me of His whisper so I would understand He was calling me to give Him more of myself.

During these years as a traveling evangelist, Haley and I had two sons, Cadyn and Gavyn, and God showed favor to our ministry. Our calendar was full with large events and mega-churches. But the commitment God had made in the car on the way to Clinton to teach me about surrender got suddenly serious on one of my more splendid evangelism trips to New York City.

I had been invited to minister in the Big Apple by one of the largest Korean churches in the city. My hosts reserved a room for Haley, the kids, and me at the pricey, plush Crown Plaza Hotel. The church even appointed a chauffeur to show us the sights. This farm kid thought he had arrived! I said to myself, “I could do this kind of ministry the rest of my life!”

Wrong idea.

On the way to the Statue of Liberty, my cell phone rang. (Beware when that happens.) It was a pastor friend from a church in Pine Bluff, Arkansas. He explained that he was resigning to take a church in Memphis and had asked each of his five elders to give him the name of one person they would recommend to be the church’s next pastor. He brought a name to their meeting, too, and told me succinctly the results: “Bryan, when we met, all six of us had written the

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same name—yours.” My friend paused for a moment, then pointed out the obvious: “I think this is a sign from God.”

In my continuing less-than-fully-surrendered mode, I chose not to arrive at the same conclusion. After all, I had become a big shot (even without having to become a doctor!), speaking at one of the most prestigious churches in the country, riding around in a chauffeured car. I was on top of the world. Why would I leave all this (and the promise of even better to come) to pastor a church in the backwoods of Arkansas? It was ludicrous. And besides, I was an evangelist, not a pastor. Being the shepherd of God’s flock, I rationalized, requires very different talents and passions than I’d ever shown before. I liked blowing in, blowing up, and blowing out of town. Even if I wanted to be a pastor, I wasn’t sure I could do it. There were more than enough reasons to say “no.” Since the pastor and I were good friends, I could talk honestly with him—and I did.

“I can’t see this happening, but I’ll pray about it for three days.” To which I added glibly, “and then I’ll call and tell you I’m not coming.”

He didn’t seem offended by my brush-off, but as soon as I hung up, I had butterflies in my stomach so big they felt like helicopters. Although I have photographs to prove that I went to the Statue of Liberty, I don’t remember a minute of it. I was consumed with the possibility God just might be changing my direction.

I’d preached a revival at the church in Pine Bluff and loved the people there, but the town is a little different from most. When I drove in for the revival, I hadn’t seen a sign that said “One of the Best 100 Places to Live in the U.S.” Instead, the notice at the city limits warned, “Beware of hitchhikers. Prisons nearby.” In fact, there are six prisons in the Pine Bluff area.

To make things even less attractive, the city has another major industry: paper mills. If you don’t know what a paper mill smells like, I invite you to drive downwind of one for a few minutes and inhale. You’ll never forget it! And one more thing: after September 11, 2001, it became known that the second largest stockpile of chemical weapons in the country was located just outside of Pine Bluff. Although it has since been dismantled, back then, if you found an odd box or canister on the side of the road, anyone with sense would leave it completely alone. It might not contain a pleasant surprise. So my idea of Pine Bluff was: wonderful people, but prisons, pulp, and poison—not an attractive combination to lure a young family.

The night after the call from Arkansas, I didn't sleep a wink, even in my elegant Crown Plaza bed. I tossed, turned, and moaned under the burden of an unwanted tug from God.

Finally, Haley smiled sweetly and said, "Bryan, you're bothering the kids, and I can't sleep either. I know you and God are up to something, but would you mind taking your prayer somewhere else?"

I got up and shuffled to the bathroom where I lay on the floor wrestling with God about my future. As I prayed, cried, and poured out my heart to the Lord, the Spirit showed me that, while I thought I was on the pinnacle, God really had me under a pot. I believed my future was too bright and full of potential to go to Pine Bluff as a pastor, and in fact, some respected leaders even told me later it would be the end of me if I went there. But God wanted me to go because He was planning to use the amazing people and that unique city to transform me into the man God wanted me to be. His leading became insufferable in those three days.

I surrendered and moved our family to Arkansas.

Downward Mobility

10 Author and psychologist Larry Crabb observes that the poison of "demandingness" is deeply rooted in the hearts of almost every person on the planet.² If we've done anything for God—even giving up a wretched sin and found freedom in His forgiveness—we conclude that He now owes us. We long to be on top, to be admired, to have the trappings of wealth so people will notice us.

This description of the human condition isn't about mafia crime bosses. It's about me—and perhaps you. As I wrestled with the Lord by the commode at the Crown Plaza Hotel, God showed me that my heart had become enamored with His gifts of prestige and possessions, so much so that they had crowded out the Giver. I had come to the conclusion that I deserve all this stuff. My demands were ruining my relationships, stealing my heart, and poisoning my walk with God—and I didn't even know it.

One of the lessons of surrender God has to keep teaching me (and unless I miss my guess, He has to continue teaching all of us) is what Pastor Bill Hybels calls the principle of downward mobility³. We're in good company. The disciples had been with Jesus almost every day for over three years, but on the night he washed their feet

2. Larry Crabb, *Inside Out*, (Navpress, Colorado Springs, 2007), pp. 143-166.

3. Bill Hybels, *Descending into Greatness*, (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1994), p. 17.

a word from the wise

and explained (again!) that He was going to pay the price to ransom them, they were too self-absorbed to understand. At the moment of His greatest sacrifice, they argued about who would be the greatest in His kingdom!

Whether or not Jesus rolled His eyes, we don't know. Luke only records the conversation. In response to their ladder climbing, Jesus explains that in His kingdom, things are turned upside down: "Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves" (Luke 22:26-27).

Among other things, when Jesus said, "Follow me," He meant we should follow His example of humility and service. If He, the Creator and Ruler of the universe, would step out of heaven to become a man and die a horrible death to honor His Father and bring others into the kingdom, why should we think surrender wouldn't be required of us?

Over and over, Jesus taught humility, and He modeled it powerfully and persistently. The King of Glory was born in a stable. In the kingdom of God, the last shall be first, up is down, to live we have to die, and the outcasts are welcomed in. We rise only when we bow to worship and stoop to serve. Jesus' display of character wasn't in titles but in towels.

The rewards of obedience, however, were never lost on Jesus. He made sure His followers understood they would experience honor for their humble service. In the conversation when He corrected the disciples' lust for greatness, He reminded them, "You are those who have stood by me in my trials. And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Luke 22:28-30). The rewards of humility are immense, but they are seldom immediate. And the lessons don't necessarily come easily—as I would soon learn.

11

Think Outside the Box

1. Why are you reading this book? What do you hope to get from it?
2. How would you define or describe "extravagant devotion"?

extravagant

3. Have there been moments in your life when your worship, devotion, decisions, or surrender could be described as extravagant?
4. Who is someone that reflects in his or her own way the kind of extravagance modeled by David and Solomon? How does this person's love for Christ inspire you—or scare you?
5. Have you ever received a call—literal or figurative—from God that you wish you hadn't? How did you respond? Is there a call like that coming in to you right now that you need to acknowledge?
6. Is there anything about the Pine Bluff story that inspires you? Repulses you?
7. How do you react to the idea of “downward mobility” in your life?

chapter

2

bittersweet surrender

We will never come to a point of surrender—and we certainly won't continue to surrender—unless we develop the heartfelt conviction that God is supremely trustworthy. We don't have to have all our questions answered, but we must at least be confident that He has the answers.

To help us get there, we see in the Bible a repeated pattern of godly spiritual life: command, obedience, and miracle. When Jesus stepped up to the tomb of His newly deceased friend Lazarus, He could have moved the stone with no assistance, but He commanded the people there to roll the stone away. He gave them “the dignity of causality” by letting them participate in His miraculous work.

At another point, Jesus asked His followers to pray God would provide workers for the harvest. Almost immediately, He told them, “You are the answer to your own prayers;” as He sent them out to preach the gospel and heal the sick. Jesus told the man with the withered hand to stretch it out, and then, when he obeyed, Jesus healed him. He told the crippled man next to the pool to pick up his mat, and he was healed. In the Old Testament, in the New Testament, and still today, God gives commands to His people. When we find the courage to surrender our wills to His in an act of obedience, the Spirit is let loose to work miracles.

Even when things appear to be hopeless, God uses this template of spiritual vitality. Jairus, the synagogue ruler, came to ask Jesus to heal his little girl who was on the verge of death. On the way to the man's house, Jesus stopped to cure a woman of a chronic disease. While He was talking with her, some friends brought news to Jairus that his daughter had died. End of story? Not quite. Jesus looked at the heartbroken father and said, “Don't be afraid; just believe, and she will be healed” (Luke 8:50). In that pivotal moment, Jairus could have thought, “You had your chance to take care of my daughter, but you blew it! I'm done with you.” But even in the face of death, Jairus obeyed, trusted, and escorted Jesus to his house. It wasn't

hard for the Lord of life to raise a dead girl, but it never would have happened if her father hadn't obeyed the command to trust Jesus.

God asks us to obey and do the natural thing so He can do the supernatural thing. We can't raise Lazarus or a sick girl from the dead, but we can roll away a stone and take a walk. We can't multiply loaves and fishes, but we can carry baskets. We can't heal the sick, make the lame walk, and give sight to the blind, but we can pray. We can't redeem anyone from sin and hell, but we can open our mouths and share the gospel message.

The problem is that we keep trying to do what only God can do, and we forget our part in the process. We may say we're trusting God with a burden, but too often, we're just worrying. We carry our concern to the altar like it's a sack of potatoes, and we tell God, "It's all yours. You take it and work a miracle, Lord." But when we get up, we put the sack over our shoulders, take it home with us, and our anxiety multiplies. God won't work the miracle because we won't let go of the problem. If He were to work supernaturally before we trust Him with our need, we'd somehow think it was our doing, and we'd become arrogant. But God is immensely patient. He'll wait until we are humble enough to trust Him to do what only He can do and identify our small part in the process.

14

Years ago, German theologian Reinhold Niebuhr wrote a prayer that helps clarify the difference between our role and God's:

*God grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change;
courage to change the things I can;
and wisdom to know the difference.*

Certainly, God's commands sometimes seem odd. When Jesus asked the men to roll the stone away from the tomb, Lazarus' sisters voiced the objections of many in the crowd: "He's been in there four days, and in case you don't know what happens after that long, he's going to stink!"

At that moment, the men had a choice: to obey and roll the stone away, or to shake their heads and walk off because Jesus' command didn't make sense. They chose to obey, and they became participants in one of the most noted miracles in Scripture. If we'll do what only we can do, then God will do what only He can do. If we'll do the possible, God will perform the impossible. If we'll do the natural

thing, God will move heaven and earth to do the supernatural thing. He's that extravagant.

The Trapeze

I believe God in His grace gives us moments of choice, to remain stuck in our usual, natural ways or to step out and risk trusting Him. Christian psychiatrist Paul Tournier said that the most important choices in life are like a trapeze. We hold on to one trapeze bar as we swing in the air. We see the other one near us, but to grab it, we have to let go of the one we're holding. We can think about it for days, weeks, or even years. We can plan the release and grab in our minds until we believe we've covered every angle, but we simply can't grab the new one until we let go of the one we're holding and reach out in faith.

This concept illustrates what it means to take the risks of extravagant faith. We are holding on to the trapeze bar of old habits, old expectations, and old values. We see the freedom and purpose that God wants to give us, but we have to take bold action: we have to let go of the old and grab the new. In *The Adventure of Living*, Tournier described the opportunity: "The adventurous life is not one exempt from fear, but on the contrary, one that is lived in full knowledge of fears of all kinds, one in which we go forward in spite of our fears." A life of extravagance means taking action to trust God even when we're afraid. Courage isn't the absence of fear, but acting in the face of fear.

Many of us look at a new opportunity God has put in front of us, and we want to grab it, but we also want to cling to our current comforts. We remain suspended in mid-air, longing for a glorious future but too timid to let go of the past. At that moment, we have a choice. We can't hold both bars at the same time. To grab the new one, we simply have to let go of the old one.

To me, the choice to let go of the old and reach for the new is the "sweet spot" of my faith. My life as a popular evangelist may feel like a magnificent way to serve God—and it may have begun with a significant step of faith. Yet God remains more interested in who I become for Him rather than what I do for Him, so when it's time to stretch me again, a new level of surrender is required. I never feel more spiritually alive than when I face this challenge and find the courage to take a bold step—like making a ridiculous career move to a pastorate in Arkansas. At the moment I say "yes," let go, and grab on, I'm risking it all.

Extravagant God —> Extravagant You. Experience the Extravagance Cycle.

God is lavishly, excessively, outrageously loving in every iota of His infinite being. God is, in a word, extravagant. It's His nature.

When we realize just how extravagant and outrageous His love is for us, it unleashes in our hearts and minds an extravagance of devotion that transforms life into an experience previously inconceivable.

But that's not all. Our extravagance of devotion prompts further expressions of extravagance from God. This is the extravagance cycle, and it is as real today as it was in 1000 B.C. for David or in 30 A.D. for Mary of Bethany.

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