

Give God Thirty Days and See What He Will Do



BECOMING
A VESSEL OF
GOD'S POWER



DONNA PARTOW
best-selling author of *Becoming a Vessel God Can Use*

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*Sing to God, O kingdoms of the earth,
sing praise to the Lord,
Selah*

*to him who rides the ancient skies above,
who thunders with mighty voice.*

*Proclaim the power of God,
whose majesty is over Israel,
whose power is in the skies.*

*You are awesome, O God, in your sanctuary;
the God of Israel gives power and strength
to his people.*

Praise be to God!

PSALM 68:32–35



Day 1

Experience the Real Thing

*The kingdom of God is not a matter
of talk but of power.*

1 CORINTHIANS 4:20

A freight train full of roaring lions.
At a distance but closing in fast.

That's what it sounded like. Then the floor beneath me started shaking. The room began swaying from side to side. As I stood on the eighteenth floor of the Ala Moana Hotel on Oahu, my first thought was that I was imagining things. It occurred to me that I might be physically ill and about to pass out. But as my ten-year-old daughter sat up in the bed, looking equally alarmed, I realized we were in the midst of an earthquake. Six point seven on the Richter scale, I later learned—the largest to hit the Hawaiian Islands in more than fifty years.

Miraculously, God enabled me to remain uncharacteristically calm. Tara and I quickly dressed and headed out into the hallway. Before we made it to the stairwell, all the lights went out and we were engulfed in darkness. Feeling our way down the stairs, we soon encountered a growing throng of frightened hotel guests. I missed a step, twisting my ankle,

but we pressed onward, inching our way through the dark, finally making it down to the street below. Just when we didn't think matters could get any worse, we stepped outside into pouring rain.

I struck up a crisis-driven friendship with a doctor and her husband who agreed to let us hop in their car, and we drove away from the towering buildings. We wanted to be as far from concrete and glass as we could possibly get if any strong aftershocks hit. After about thirty minutes, I looked at my watch and announced, "I'm scheduled to speak at the hotel in five minutes!" We decided the worst was behind us, and the couple agreed to drive me back to the Ala Moana where, sure enough, many of the retreat attendees were standing outside, wondering what to do.

I had previously been in several conferences that had been disrupted by fire alarms, but in every case, it turned out to be a false alarm. That was distressing enough. This was the real thing. A real-life disaster. Calling it an act of nature or an act of God, people were reminded once again that life doesn't always turn out the way we plan. We had all been shaken with a fresh realization that there are forces at work more powerful than any human being.

I think that's a good thing. It's so easy to deceive ourselves into thinking we've got the world figured out and under control. But in life, as in earthquake-prone regions, every once in a while, God lets everything that can shake, shake. Whatever is left standing is a foundation worth building on.

The hotel staff set votive candles along the floor, creating a path through the lobby and up the stalled escalators, guiding the way to our second-floor conference room. Here, a continental breakfast awaited those of us attending the Salvation Army Pacific Region women's retreat. The candles also lit the way for everyone else who was frightened, hungry, and desperate for that first cup of coffee. People began streaming in. Pandemonium doesn't begin to describe it. Unfazed, the conference director,

Major Jonette Mulch, simply smiled and said, “We’re the Salvation Army. This is what we do. We feed people.” Then she started singing. And she kept on singing. And the women sang. And they kept on singing.

We sang “This Little Light of Mine” and “He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands.” We sang “Shout to the Lord” and dozens of old praise choruses. I delivered a short message on what it means for Christians to be a light in the darkness. Ironically, that was my planned message, even though I hadn’t planned to deliver it by candlelight! A woman pulled out her ukulele, and we sang some more. A hotel guest walked up and started drumming along, then shared how much our impromptu church service meant to him. Other guests expressed the same sentiment.

We welcomed everyone who entered, offering them breakfast and a word of encouragement. We laughed, we cried, we prayed, we hugged, and we sang. My daughter went around the room, hugging people who looked as if they needed hugs. Later she passed out handmade bookmarks that she had made by candlelight. She even did cartwheels in order to entertain some small children whose parents had come into the room, wondering what all the singing and laughing was about.

A group of Polynesian women from a homeless shelter on Maui performed a hula dance as they sang praise to God. Micronesian women from the Marshall Islands, many of whom never have electricity anyway, worshiped God in their own language and with their own form of dance. An African American woman belted out “Amazing Grace” as if she meant it with all her heart. And she did. We all did. We knew we served an amazing God and that we were part of something amazing. We had witnessed God’s power. We knew it. Everyone in the room knew it, even those who did not yet know God personally.

We had experienced the power of God. Not in the earthquake, but in its aftermath. Not in what shook, but in what had not been shaken: our faith, our hope, and our love. Those three things remained. Later that day,

many of these same women found themselves stranded at the airport. Rather than wallowing in self-pity, they continued singing and helped serve more than three thousand free meals (compliments of the Salvation Army) to fellow travelers.

The electrical power in the hotel remained off all day, giving me ample time to ponder the power of God—the power I had seen demonstrated *after* the earthquake. I couldn't help thinking about Elijah. Shortly after seeing God send fire from heaven in response to his prayers, Elijah was so discouraged that he hid out in a cave. God came and gave him these instructions: "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by" (1 Kings 19:11). No doubt Elijah expected to witness the power of God in yet another dramatic fashion. But that's not what happened. "Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper" (1 Kings 19:11–12).

Finally, I understood. God's power isn't always where we expect to find it.

For many months leading up to the earthquake, I had been thinking, praying, and attempting to write about the power of God. It seemed to be the missing ingredient in the lives of many Christians. Unfortunately, I spent much of my so-called writing time staring at my blank computer screen. Hours turned into days and days turned into months as I sat with motionless fingers, wondering if I was the only one agonizing over the lack of power in the lives of so many Christians. The blank computer screen stared back at me, defying me to write something worth reading. A contemptuous voice kept whispering in my ear, *This is a stupid waste of time; you're just obsessed with something no one else cares about.*

The blank screen prevailed until one Sunday morning. Waiting for the worship service to begin, I thumbed casually through the church bulletin. The day's sermon topic? You guessed it: the power of God. My pastor preached with tremendous passion and urgency. Every word he spoke confirmed everything God had been showing me about the need for Christ's followers to begin walking in the power of God. At the end of the service, my pastor did something I've never seen him do. Before asking for new believers to come forward, he invited anyone who wanted to experience more of God's power to come to the altar. Hundreds, including me, poured forward, tears streaming, hands lifted, hearts crying out to God in desperation. It was a dramatic display of emotion rarely seen at our fairly subdued, suburban megachurch. By taking the socially risky step of getting up out of their pews, they made a bold statement for all to see: *I want to experience the power of God, and I don't care who knows it. What I have is not enough, and I'm willing to admit it.* In that moment, I knew I wasn't alone. I believe millions of Christians are yearning to experience the power of God. We want to taste it, not just read about it in the Bible or church-history books, not just hear what's taking place in Uganda or China. We want to see God's power in our own lives, in our families, in our churches, and in our nation.

We want a clear, dramatic, immediate, unmistakable, life-altering encounter with the transforming power of God. Throughout the Bible, when God showed up, everyone knew it. Joseph went from a prison to a palace overnight. Peter led three thousand to Christ with one sermon. The walls of Jericho fell with a shout. The waters of the Jordan parted while the Israelites slept. When that fire fell from heaven on Elijah's sacrifice, it didn't start as a spark to get a fire going. It fell in a consuming fire, demonstrating the overwhelming power of God. But God also demonstrated his power when he cared enough to track Elijah down and speak to him in a whisper. Sometimes God's power is revealed in powerful circumstances;

sometimes it manifests in powerful demonstrations of his personal care for his children.

The world needs to see both, just as the hotel guests did when they wandered into our postearthquake worship service. Today, people around the world look at Christians in frustration and say, “Show us the power! If your God is real, if your faith is true, why isn’t it working?” Good question. Wimpy excuses just won’t do anymore. Our lives need to be distinctively different. Not only do our actions need to be different, but so do our reactions to the earthquakes of life. We need to leave people scratching their heads in wonder. Like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, our faith needs to be so power packed that it enables us to boldly say, “We’d rather make fools of ourselves expecting God to do something dramatic and lifesaving than meander through life, claiming to believe something we don’t really believe. In fact, we’re so sure of God’s power, we’re willing to stake our lives on it.” Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego walked straight into a fiery furnace. God didn’t snuff out the flames; instead, he walked through the fire with them and enabled them to come through unscathed and unbowed (see Daniel 3).

God did not spare Christians from experiencing the earthquake in Hawaii. He didn’t demonstrate his power by holding our hotel steady while the rest of the island shook. Instead, he held us and enabled us to smile and sing—he granted us the power to shake without being shaken.

Do you long to experience the power of God—and not just experience it for yourself, but to demonstrate it to a watching world? Is it the cry of your heart as well? If so, you’ve picked up the right book.

One lesson God has determinedly taught me, over and over again, is this: the world doesn’t need to see what we can do for God; the world needs to see something only God can do. Only the power of God can transform a heart, a family, a city, or a nation. Only the power of God can

bring about lasting change in people and circumstances. We cannot manufacture the power of God. Yes, we can create religious programs and activities, but they'll never take the place of the power of God. And because programs lack true power, the minute they end, their impact on people's lives declines. That's why too many churches have become Activity Generating Stations rather than conduits for God's power, and that's why so many Christians are trapped on the treadmill of church busyness rather than living the Great Adventure that God has ordained for us.

When I knelt down, alone beside a quiet riverbank, and surrendered my life to God in 1980, my heart longed for two things: to be different and to make a difference in the world. I believed God could transform my life and use me to help transform the world—well, at least a small corner of it. Although I've taken many missteps and endured some painful misadventures along the way, those two dreams have remained foremost in my mind. As a result, I've spent more than twenty-five years studying the power of God, determined to discover how God radically transforms a person and how one individual can touch the world in a significant way. This book is the fruit of that ongoing quest.

I want to help you understand what we can do to allow God to change us into conduits for his power. In *Becoming a Vessel of God's Power* you'll discover:

- *Power through purification.* God's power flows most consistently through a pure vessel, so you'll learn some practical ways you can experience ongoing spiritual purity.
- *The power of the Word.* You'll see how to tap into the power of God's Word with a fresh approach to reading, memorization, meditation, and usage.
- *The power of prayer.* You'll find some practical tools for unlocking the power of praying Scripture for yourself, plus the effectiveness

of God-directed prayer, corporate prayer, and praying with authority.

- *God's provision for power.* You'll learn to make the most of what God has provided for you to walk in his power, including the support of prayer warriors, insightful counselors, and gifted teachers.
- *The power of balancing solitude and service.* You'll be challenged to balance rest and service, in order to strengthen both the internal reality of God's Spirit at work within you and the external expression of the Holy Spirit's power upon you, enabling you to impact people and situations.
- *Power in practice.* You'll discover that as you walk in obedience and listen to God's Spirit, he directs you to situations where his power is already at work. You simply get the joy of being part of it.

If that sounds like what you're looking for, I challenge you to make a serious commitment. Right now. Make the decision. For the next thirty days, open your mind, your heart, and your life to the power of God. Give God thirty days—and see what he will do! Each day along your journey to becoming a vessel of God's power includes a Scripture verse to meditate on, a prayer to pray aloud, a truth to affirm, five questions for reflection, an action assignment, and an opportunity for you to write out your own prayer to God. (If you would like to do this study with a group, there's a free Leader's Guide available at www.donnapartow.com/power.)

I pray that before you've finished this book, you will see a powerful move of God in and through your life. That's a bold prayer, but we have a bold God and a bold book (the Bible) filled with bold promises. Don't settle for cheap substitutes; God wants you to experience his power in you and through you. Are you ready to experience the real thing? If so, let's go!



Dear heavenly Father, I want to experience your power. I want to know, not just believe, that you are awesome in power and mighty in deeds! I'm willing to openly admit that I need more of you in my life. I invite you, Holy Spirit, to be my Teacher and Coach for these thirty days. My heart is open to whatever you want to do in and through my life. Amen.



AFFIRM

I can experience the power of God.

APPLY

1. When you think of the power of God, what's the first biblical example that comes to mind?

2. Do you believe God can still demonstrate his power in similar ways? Why or why not?

3. What is the most dramatic example of the power of God you know of? (Perhaps someone you know was miraculously healed, or you heard about a miracle from a missionary, and so on.)

4. How have you witnessed the power of God at work in your own life?

5. What are your hopes for this thirty-day journey?



1. Purchase a spiral-bound notebook of 3 x 5 inch white or multi-colored index cards (widely available wherever office supplies are sold). If you'd like, decorate and even laminate the cover.

Each day, record the daily Affirm statement (for example: "I can experience the power of God") along with the day's Scripture verse. Use the reverse side to record key points from this book and other sources, such as songs, sermons, radio programs, and poems.

As you ask the Holy Spirit to teach you about the power of God, he will answer that prayer with insights that go well beyond this book. Record those insights in your index-card notebook. Carry it with you wherever you go. Jot down thoughts, Scripture, and God-ordained experiences.

I have dozens of such index-card notebooks, and each one is a special treasure, reminding me of the power of God operating in my own life.

2. Write out today's affirmation and scripture on the first index card.
3. Write out your own prayer, expressing what God has shown you today about his mighty power.
