



Compelled

*The Irresistible Call to
Share Your Faith*

DUDLEY RUTHERFORD


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PUBLISHING

“*Compelled* is pure gold. Dudley Rutherford insightfully helps us overcome fear and engage with others in a loving way while pointing them to their greatest need—the mercy and forgiveness of God.”

Jud Wilhite

Author of *Pursued* and senior pastor of Central Church

“Dudley Rutherford’s faith in Jesus and amazing and genuine way of sharing the gospel is something of complete joy. Once again he has created a must-read—and his labor of love is a true call to action that helps us all spread the joy of the gospel!”

Adam Housley, Emmy Award-winning journalist, former MLB player

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“Dudley Rutherford has simplified the call of God and clarified the commission of Christ. In a clear, sensitive, and practical manner Rutherford declares: you can do it!”

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“*Compelled* is not theoretical; it is practical and practiced. Long before I was challenged by Dudley Rutherford’s words in this book, I was challenged by Dudley’s example in everyday life. This book will give you the courage and confidence to share Jesus everywhere you go.”

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Teaching pastor, Southeast Christian Church, Louisville, KY

“Dudley Rutherford gets back to the basics of how to share the gospel and why it matters. You’ll be convicted, empowered, and inspired.”

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Filmmaker, media consultant, and author of *The Way Back*

“So many books talk about stewarding our finances, but *Compelled* is about stewarding our hope. Dudley Rutherford believes the gospel is the hope of every man. Read and digest his wisdom and passion, and you’ll start investing hope in those who need Jesus!”

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Dave Stone

Pastor, Southeast Christian Church, Louisville, KY

“*Compelled* offers overwhelming motivation and practical tools to do what God has called every believer to do: participate in the amazing process of leading people to salvation.”

Miles McPherson

Pastor of Rock Church, San Diego, author, and former NFL player

“Pastor Dudley reminds us that gratitude for our personal experience of God’s grace, forgiveness, and healing should compel us to tell others how they can find relief from the agony of defeat through Jesus Christ.”

Dr. Jerry Taylor

Assistant professor of Bible, Abilene Christian University

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CHAPTER 1



A Once-in-a-Lifetime Opportunity

“The Church exists for nothing else
but to draw men into Christ. . . .
God became man for no other purpose.”

C. S. LEWIS

It was a beautiful night at Dodger Stadium. Loyal fans sporting their team apparel formed a patchwork of blue and white across the multilevel stands. Above, the stadium lights sparkled like diamonds against the near-black sky. Below, not a blade of grass was out of place on the baseball field. And the Dodgers were up by two. Everything seemed perfect.

I was sitting behind third base next to a preacher friend of mine named Ron. He had flown into town, and I was thankful to spend a few hours catching up with him while we watched America’s pastime. Sitting next to Ron was a kid around the age of twelve, who I realized right away was completely blind.

To this day, that boy is one of the greatest pictures of faith I’ve ever seen.

The entire game he had his baseball glove on with his hand outstretched toward the field. His mother sat next to him, and during every play, she leaned over to the boy's ear and quietly explained what was taking place.

"That was a hit to right field."

"The pitcher just struck out the batter."

"That was a double play."

Throughout the entire game, the mother described every pitch and every play for her son. And throughout the entire game, the boy sat with his glove out as though he was going to catch a fly ball.

In about the fourth or fifth inning, something surprising happened. Just like that, a foul ball popped up and headed precisely in my direction! I looked up and thought, *Man, this ball is coming straight at me!*

What happened next, for a moment, seemed extraordinary at least and miraculous at best. I don't know if it was the spin on the ball, the wind, or the Holy Spirit, but as that ball began its downward trajectory, it started to move away from me and toward the blind boy sitting patiently with his baseball glove wide open.

My first thought was *not* that it might land in his glove. That wasn't even a possibility as far as I was concerned. My thought was, *That ball is gonna hit that boy in the head! It's gonna kill him!* Thankfully, the baseball flew over his head, missing him by an inch, and landed in the next row. In an instant, four or five guys scrambled down on the floor, fighting for the baseball. During the scuffle, the ball rolled way down the aisle until a lady picked it up.

The guys were still fighting for it, so I said, "Guys, guys! She's got the ball over there!"

They looked up and there was this woman, happy as a clam, with the baseball in her hand. She put the ball away and continued to watch the rest of the game.

The whole scene bothered me. In my opinion, the ball didn't end up with the right person. After a couple of innings went by, I leaned over to my preacher friend and said, "You know what? I'm going to go ask that lady if she'll give me the ball so I can give it to that kid."

Ron said, "No, no, no, let me ask her."

And I said, "No, no, no, no, let me ask her."

He said, "No, let me ask her."

"Okay," I relented.

As Ron stood up, I said, "Hey! Before you go, here's a twenty-dollar bill. If she won't give it to you, offer her that twenty bucks, and if you wanna give her twenty bucks of your own, that'll be forty. I bet she'll give it to you for forty dollars."

I handed him my twenty and went upstairs to get a Coke. When I returned, Ron was sitting there with a dejected look on his face.

"What's wrong?" I asked him.

"She wouldn't give it to me," he replied.

"What happened?" I asked.

"Well, I went over there," Ron began, "and I said, 'Ma'am, you see that kid over there? He's twelve years old. He's totally blind, and he's been sitting there the *entire* game with his baseball glove. Is there any way you would give me that baseball so I could give it to that kid?' She said, 'No.'"

Ron continued, "So then I took out the forty dollars and I said, 'I'll give you forty dollars for that baseball.' And she said, 'Okay,' and she started to hand me the ball. But her boyfriend reached out and grabbed her hand and said, 'No. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, to go to a Dodgers game and get a foul ball. We're not giving it to the kid.'"

Now, I know I'm a preacher, and preachers are supposed to

have good thoughts about other people. But when Ron told me what happened, I did not have good thoughts.

I wanted to turn around and say to the couple, “Do you wanna know what a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity is? It is *not* going to a Dodgers game and having a foul ball roll right over to you out of nowhere—and you just look down, pick it up, and take that baseball home. That is not a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.”

When we walk closely
with Jesus, He gives
us a clearer vision.
We become more like
Him, and we begin
to notice people.

I wanted to say, “A once-in-a-lifetime opportunity is going to a Dodgers game and having a foul ball roll right over to you out of nowhere, and you reach down and pick it up. Then you look over, and you see a twelve-year-old kid who has never seen

anything in his entire life, let alone a baseball, and yet he’s sitting there in faith, believing that he’s going to catch a fly ball. And you take that baseball and you go over there, and you stick it in that kid’s glove and you say, ‘Here you go, kid. Here’s a baseball.’ Now that’s a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.”

A Clearer Vision

What happened that night at Dodger Stadium is a remarkable picture of the gospel and what we choose to do with it once we receive it. Many of us are just like that couple. We’re sitting somewhere minding our own business, unconcerned and unaware of spiritual matters. And all of a sudden God—who is loving beyond our wildest imagination—graciously places salvation in our hands. We weren’t even anticipating it. We weren’t cognizant of the fact that God was working behind the scenes, before the beginning of time, to prepare and provide a way for us to be saved.

Yet He sent Jesus to die on the cross. Christ was buried and

resurrected on the third day, and once we put our faith and trust in Him, the Lord God Almighty gives us eternal life.

What do we do next with this incredible gift? Do we hand it to the next person who needs it, or do we hold on to it tightly like a brand-new foul ball at a Major League Baseball game? Are we so overcome with joy and gratitude that we can't help but share it with others, or do we keep it to ourselves and think, *I'm saved. Thank God I took advantage of a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity?*

But there are people all around us who are in need of this incomparable gift too. There are people who are lonely and broken. There are people who are depressed, hurting, and hopeless. There are people who are spiritually blind. There are people who are in bondage to sin and need to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ.

When we walk closely with Jesus, He gives us a clearer vision. We become more like Him, and we begin to notice people. Not only do we notice them, but we also start to see people as Jesus does. Our perception changes. Instead of looking at people on the surface, we realize there's more than meets the eye.

In Matthew 9:35–36, we get a glimpse into how Jesus views mankind:

Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them.

Now, let's be honest. Seeing huge crowds of people usually doesn't spark compassion within us, right? If you are like me—living in a large, metropolitan community like Los Angeles, California—you are constantly surrounded by large numbers of people. Sitting on the freeway with thousands of cars crawling in

front of you usually produces more frustration than compassion!

We're more likely to think, *I wish these people would get out of my way!*—not, *Gee, I wish I could tell all these people how much Jesus loves them!*

But when we examine what Jesus taught and how He lived (1 John 2:5–6), we will see people as He sees them—even in a big crowd. For the Christian, the greater number of people we encounter ought to equal greater compassion and awareness of the deep, spiritual needs of mankind. We should become compelled to tell them about the hope we have found in Jesus.

Where Are the Workers?

Matthew 9:35–38 reveals the type of people for whom Jesus had compassion: they were sick, harassed, lost, and helpless, “like sheep without a shepherd.” In verse 35, His compassion turned to action when He not only healed their diseases and sicknesses (which is to serve their physical needs) but also verbally shared the good news of salvation with them (which is to meet their spiritual needs). Then He issued this edict to His disciples in verses 37–38:

The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.

I've often wondered what Jesus would say about the lost people in our world today. Did you know that the population of humanity has grown from 300 million people in Jesus's day to almost 7.5 billion today?¹ Cities, towns, and villages across the globe are teeming with people who need to hear about how they can be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ. If our Lord asked two thousand years ago for workers to be sent forth into the fields that were ripe

for harvest, what would His prayer be for the present-day fields that have *twenty-five times* more people than in His time?

What would He say if He saw so many sheep without a shepherd in your city, in your country, and in other nations around the world? The truth is, our planet is in desperate need of people who are compelled to share the hope of Jesus Christ. *We* are Jesus's workers—you, me, and everyone who professes the name of Christ. He is counting on us to take His message to a world that is spiritually bankrupt. Pause for a moment and silence the many distractions competing for your time and attention, and you'll hear the faint whisper. A gentle yet irresistible call in your spirit. An invitation nudging you toward something greater than you could ever imagine.

A Compelling Call

In 2 Corinthians 5:11–15, after writing about our responsibility to “persuade others” about the good news, the apostle Paul made this beautiful assertion:

For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.
(vv. 14–15)

When the New Testament was written, the word *compel* referred to the privilege Roman officials and soldiers had to force people (as well as their horses, equipment, and family members) into public service.² Our contemporary definition of *compel* carries the idea of driving or overpowering something or someone. It also means “to have a powerful and irresistible effect, or influence.”³ But

Paul identified that it was not Roman officials, nor force or obligation, that compels us to share the gospel with our fellow man, but Christ's love! You might say that to compel is to propel into action.

After meeting Jesus on that dusty road to Damascus, Paul's life was changed forever and set on a different course. No longer fervently persecuting the Christian church as he had done before, he literally had seen the Light. And he spent the remainder of his life traveling the known world to tell about the Light of the World (see John 8:12 and 1 Corinthians 15:8–10).

The gospel's irresistible effect is the reason why Paul went on missionary trips and voyages across tumultuous seas. His travels put him in unspeakable amounts of danger, distress, and brushes with death. But Paul could not help himself. He was compelled to tell others about the love of Christ.

In the same way, though you were once on a path away from God, you now have a miraculous story of conversion. You've met the Lord and have been changed by Him. Just as He did for Paul, God wants to put your life on a different course for His glory. When we truly examine the depth of God's love and the truth of His gospel, we will become compelled to share it with others just as Paul and so many other fearless believers have done throughout the history of the world.

This once-in-a-lifetime opportunity is not unique to Los Angeles where I live. The same is true for your city and for any city—big or small—on earth today.

The Lost in Lodz

Vance and Jennifer were living an enjoyable life in Southern California. Vance worked at a law firm as an assistant manager, and Jennifer helped to plant one of our Shepherd Church campuses in the West Valley of Los Angeles before moving to Iraq to become a

church planter and an English teacher. When Jenn moved back to the United States, she and Vance got married and had a son.

The young couple had intended to move to Iraq together and even took their infant, Nathan, there for a trip to find work. They became team leaders, sold all they had, and started raising support. It was in the middle of this process that they felt increasingly uneasy about the decision and sought the Lord for more direction. Over several months, God closed the doors to Iraq and led them to Poland in 2013 instead.

Poland has a population of nearly 38.5 million people—coincidentally, almost the exact same population as the state of California. Vance, Jenn, and their son moved to Lodz, which is the third largest city in Poland. Their second son, Josiah, was born there. Not a single person in the hospital spoke English when Jenn delivered him!

Although Poland is technically a “Catholic country,” less than 0.3 percent of the population is evangelical Christian.⁴ There are two Jehovah’s Witnesses to every evangelical—in Lodz it is more like thirty-five Jehovah’s Witnesses to every evangelical. Vance and Jenn bear witness to the fact that there is a huge need for believers to share the gospel there.

Enduring extremely cold weather, the country’s communistic mind-set, spiritual attack, loneliness, and occasional health issues, Vance and Jenn are filled with certainty that Poland is where God wants them to be. Just as the Holy Spirit did in my heart three decades ago, He has called Vance and Jenn to serve a people in unfamiliar territory. To bring Jesus Christ into a country that needs Him, they’ve left behind the comforts of family, friends, and yummy food (Jenn says there’s only so much you can do with sausage and potatoes, which are plentiful in Poland).

Jenn started with a small discipleship group of four girls and

Vance started with six guys. Through the ministry that God has allowed them to begin in Lodz, there are now over fifty people who have either been discipled or are being discipled. There are now three house churches as well.

Vance and Jennifer could have looked at the country of Poland and said, “You know, there are hardly any Christians living in Poland, and that’s just the way it is.” Or, “There are millions of people there who have never heard the gospel, but that doesn’t really have anything to do with us.”

Instead of believing that the spiritual state of Poland could never change, they believed in the power of the Holy Spirit moving and working through believers throughout the world to transform hearts indiscriminately. Christ’s love compelled them to abandon everything they knew to gain His heart for the lost.

Later in this book I’ll share more of Vance and Jennifer’s journey with you. It will encourage you greatly! Their lives demonstrate the joy that can be had, and the impact that can be made, when we choose to take seriously Jesus’s words in Matthew 28:18–20, which is the mandate of our faith:

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

God has done truly remarkable things in Lodz through two willing vessels. And He is changing lives not just in Los Angeles, not just in Lodz, but all over the world. Yet I am convinced that

there is so much more Jesus wants to do, can do, and will do when we become open to a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. This does *not* necessarily mean that God will ask you to move to another city or country, although He sometimes does. But what I do know for sure is that God desires to change your mind-set to be open and ready to do His will, to influence those around you with truth and boldness.

No Regrets

I will never forget something an elder in our church told me right before he died. He had served the congregation faithfully for sixty years, and as his frail body prepared to step into eternity, he told me, “Dudley, one of my biggest regrets in life is that I cannot recall actually leading someone to Jesus Christ.”

My heart grieved along with his. This man had knowledge of the Scriptures. He knew the Lord. He had likely sat in more than three thousand church services in his lifetime, sang worship songs, tithed, and served others. But one thing was missing: he never used what he knew to bring salvation to one person. Not one.

Friend, this does not have to be the deathbed regret of any Christian. My guess is that there is an undeniable prompting in your soul to share the life-changing message of the gospel with others. I’m so glad you are responding to it by reading this book! With every fiber of my being, I believe we serve a mighty God who invites us into a powerful partnership with Him and will equip us to do His will here on earth.

God desires to
change your mind-
set to be open and
ready to do His will,
to influence those
around you with
truth and boldness.

When I look around, I see a lot of good things committed Christians are doing in the world as the hands and feet of Jesus. But I would say the majority of professed Christians are not engaging the culture as we ought to be. We are concerned with our own affairs, our careers, and our calendars. We are distracted by our phones, social media, TV, the Internet, our pets—and even cute videos of *other people's* pets. (I get it; I like adorable animals as much as the next guy!)

Instead of setting our hearts and minds on things above, we often pursue earthly things (Colossians 3:1–2). And it's so easy to do in this technologically advanced age of comforts and conveniences.

When we *do* engage the culture about the things of God, it's often in a way that is obnoxious. Or we are ill-equipped. Just look at the comments section of any article or social media post on the topic of faith. You'll see that at the first sign of opposition, timid believers begin to question what they know and become silent. Meanwhile, overzealous believers take an argumentative approach that lacks the gentleness and respect we are called to have in 1 Peter 3:15 when defending the faith.

Not to engage the culture at all, or to share God's Word in a combative or arrogant tone, are two unnecessary extremes. Yes, we are to be unashamed of the gospel (Romans 1:16). Yes, God's Spirit gives us boldness and power (2 Timothy 1:7). But our partnership with God, which beckons people to salvation, preaches in humility and love.

Hope of the World

We have the hope of the world living inside us. The most pressing crisis at hand is that there are people who are lost without Jesus—prisoners to their sin, searching for answers, lonely, hurting, confused. Some are suicidal, thinking there is no way out of

the situation they're in currently. Many need healing spiritually, physically, and relationally. The message of the cross is lifesaving, and I'm convinced beyond any doubt that the best life anyone could possibly live is one that serves God and obeys His Word. This includes sharing His Word with others.

My passion is to see this current generation of believers become so compelled by the love of Christ that we cannot help but try to persuade our fellow man that He died for all. I want to see the modern-day church more closely resemble the early church, which was fearlessly and singularly focused on spreading the gospel—to the degree that the early disciples were accused of turning the world upside down by those who opposed them (Acts 17:6). With all my heart I believe that same boldness can be mustered in the church today to transform the world for Jesus!

Most likely you are reading this book because you believe that too—and I'm overjoyed and thankful for that! But perhaps when it comes to articulating your faith, you don't know where to start. Maybe you're afraid you'll say the wrong thing or that you'll get rejected. It's not always going to be easy, but if you are willing to join me on this journey, you will find that sharing your faith is the most rewarding thing you will ever experience. Through my story and through the stories of many others, you will be encouraged and equipped to take your faith to those around you without fear.

Can you begin right now by writing down, in the study question section below, five names of people you know who need Jesus? Just five people. Your list could include a relative, coworker, or friend . . . or perhaps someone you're intimidated by, or a neighbor, or someone you doubt will ever give their life to Jesus. Please take a moment to write their names below and keep these names in mind as you read this book. You can even start praying now that God will help you introduce them to the hope of the world.

Extravagant Grace

For these loved ones and acquaintances of yours, hearing the gospel is a matter of life and death. Paul explained unequivocally in Ephesians 2:1–3 that without Christ, we are dead in our transgressions and deserving of God’s wrath. That’s bad news—a tragic reality for everyone on this planet who has not put their faith in Jesus Christ. Now let me show you what Paul wrote in the very next few verses, because it is unfathomably good news:

But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. (vv. 4–7)

Paul also explained this same idea more simply: “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).

We have been saved by the excessive love, mercy, and grace of God. And since it exceeds us, we should not keep it to ourselves. The *greatest* assignment we have ever been given by Almighty God is to grab ahold of the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity in front of us—which is sharing the gospel with others before they enter into eternity.

Our God wants everyone to come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9). He “wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God

and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all people” (1 Timothy 2:4–6).

Through His extravagant grace, your heavenly Father has made a way for all who put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ to have everlasting life. Even the difficult coworker or the classmate who uses sarcasm or humor to mask his or her pain. The friend who seems to have it all together and is disinterested in “that Jesus stuff.” The businessman consumed with chasing the next deal. The problematic teenager who won’t listen. The grumpy cashier at the grocery store. The homeless person on the street begging for spare change. The PTA member who causes drama. Yes, even the family member who seems to do everything in his or her power to flee from the things of God.

Everywhere you go, people need Jesus! They need answers. They need the truth and hope, and they need a solution to life’s greatest burdens.

Yet many people have never heard a clear and simple explanation of how forgiveness and redemption take place through faith in Christ alone. It’s our obligation to tell them. Paul left no room for debate when he wrote,

How can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them? And how will anyone go and tell them without being sent? That is why the Scriptures say, “How beautiful are the feet of messengers who bring good news!” (Romans 10:14–15 NLT)

When we truly examine what the Bible says about evangelism,

Compelled

I believe we will find that becoming a messenger who brings the good news is a compelling call. In fact, I think we will discover that this calling is so wonderful, so fulfilling, that it is quite irresistible. It's almost as though we have no choice but to preach the gospel.

For when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, since I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! (1 Corinthians 9:16)

Just as if a foul ball landed right at your feet, you have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to pick up the gospel and take it to desperate souls. No one is out of God's reach, and He uses Christ followers like you to carry His message of truth. What an incredible honor! Starting today, may you look around and truly *see* those around you, asking the Lord for the courage and the opportunity to share the good news with them.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Write down five names of people you know personally who need Jesus. As you think about these people, what do you think the power of salvation, restoration, and redemption—through Jesus Christ’s sacrifice—can do in their lives? Begin the process of praying for the people on this list regularly.
2. Read 2 Corinthians 5:11–15. According to this passage, what compels us as believers to persuade others to fear the Lord? Why does it compel us (see verses 14 and 15)?
3. How has your experience with God’s love and grace compelled you to go beyond what is comfortable or comprehensible?
4. Read Matthew 9:35–38. Why do you think the workers are few when the harvest is so plentiful? What steps can you take today to become a willing and faithful worker?
5. Many of us are like the dying elder mentioned on page 11. What regrets would you have if you knew you were going to die today? How many of those on your list involve conversations with people that you haven’t had yet? What do you think is stopping you from having those conversations?

About Dudley Rutherford

Dudley Rutherford is the senior pastor of Shepherd Church, a 15,000-member congregation. Through the Lift Up Jesus television ministry, Pastor Dudley's sermons are broadcast on TV and radio nationwide. He is the founder of DreamofDestiny.org, a ministry designed to foster ethnic diversity within the Christian Church. He is the author of *Walls Fall Down*, *God Has an App for That*, *Unleashed*, *Romancing Royalty*, and *Proverbs in a Haystack*. He has had the distinction of speaking for several professional sports teams and has been a featured chapel speaker for the World Series. Dudley earned his bachelor's degree from Ozark Christian College and his master's degree in church growth from Hope International University. He also obtained an honorary Doctorate of Divinity from St. Charles University. Dudley and his beautiful wife, Renee, have three children and reside in Porter Ranch, CA.