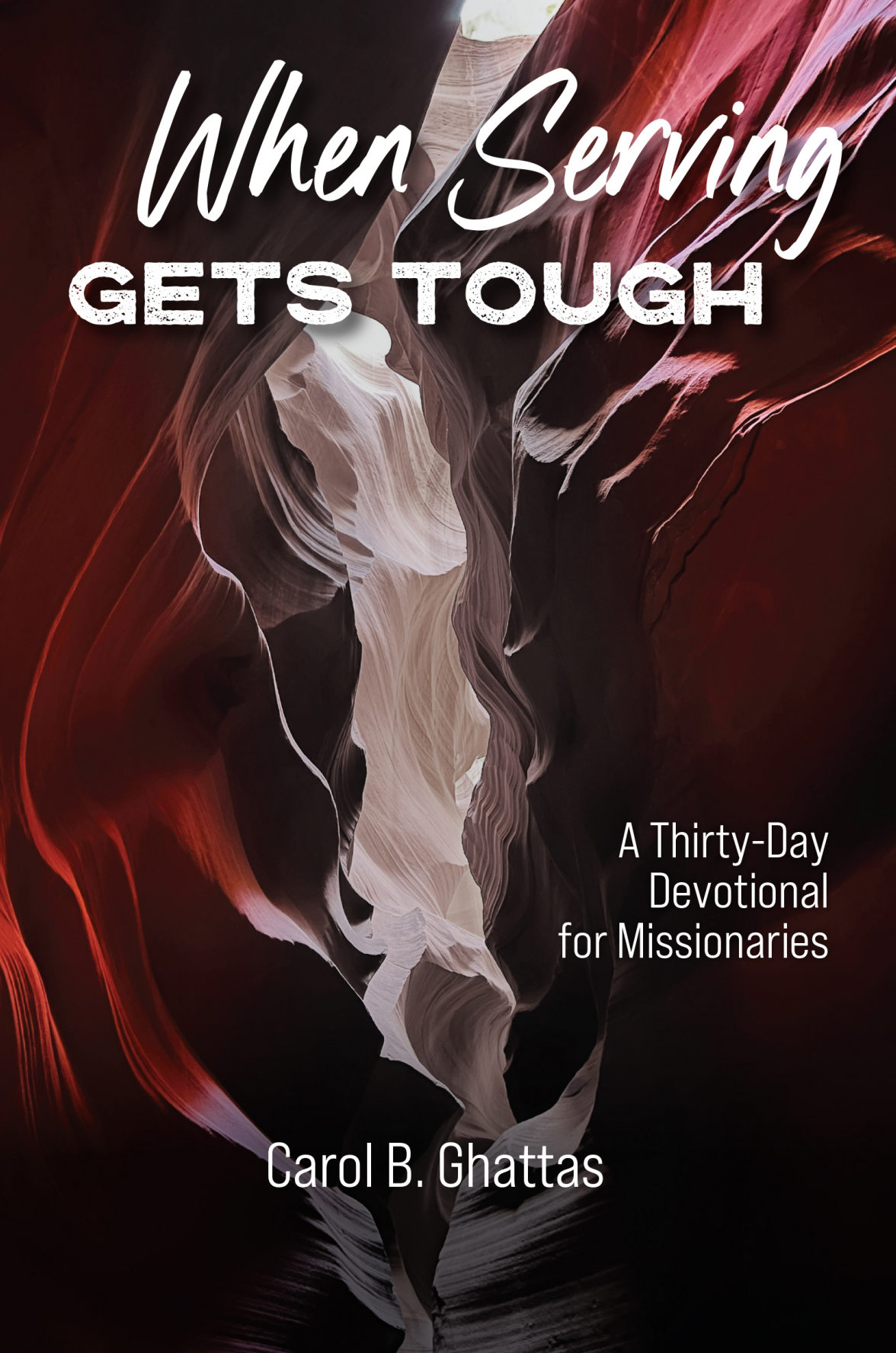

When Serving
GETS TOUGH
A Thirty-Day
Devotional
for Missionaries
Carol B. Ghattas

When Serving Gets Tough: A Thirty-Day Devotional for Missionaries
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Day 1

Who Am I?

For it was you who created my inward parts;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
I will praise you because I have been
remarkably and wondrously made.
Psalm 139:13–14a

———

"I used to be recognized in my community. Everybody knew me, and I knew everybody. I could easily check on people, get a feel for their spiritual health, and encourage or witness with ease. Nobody knows me here. I'm just another strange foreigner trying to fit in. The cultural differences make it hard to understand their issues and speak into their lives."

———

"The culture in which I serve is male-dominated in every aspect of life. Fitting in means I keep my mouth closed more than open and defer to my husband or other men in most situations. Not only does this mess with my mind, but since I lack a good grasp of the language, I have to stay quiet, because I have no idea what is going on. When a local pastor told my husband that he had such a wise wife, I realized it was because I had not spoken a single word!"

———

"I don't know me anymore. I was so sure of myself back home; so sure of where I stood with the Lord. Something's changed. I've changed. This new language and place of service have messed with my identity. I've lost myself in this constant striving to fit in—to become all things to all people for your sake, Lord! Is it supposed to be this way?"

Help Me, Lord!

You are made by him.

Look at these verses again, this time reading them aloud:

> *For it was you who created my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb.*
> *I will praise you because I have been remarkably and wondrously made.* (Ps 139:13–14a)

Do you hear the wonder in David's voice? There is true amazement in the fact that God knits us together. Every child is born with a special touch from the Lord of Creation. There is no happenstance in you—only purposefulness. There is nothing in this sinful, fallen world that can change the fact that you are a child of God. You are created and chosen according to his foreknowledge "before the foundation of the world" (Eph 1:4).

You are loved.

His love for us came at a great price, yet one he was willing to pay. He paid it while we were still sinners, undeserving of his redemption (Rom 5:8). His love is sure despite the current circumstances of our lives.

> *I have loved you with an everlasting love;*
> *therefore, I have continued to extend faithful love to you.*
> (Jer 31:3)

You are loved. Just as the people of Israel found the Lord's favor in the wilderness, you can know his favor in this wilderness of struggle. He sees you and hears your cry for help.

You are chosen.

> *But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his possession, so that you may proclaim the praises of the one who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.* (1 Pet 2:9–10)

Underline the words he proclaims here through Peter. What do these terms and phrases say about who you are? About your identity in Christ?

The Lord has called you—snatched you—out of darkness and into his marvelous light. Why do we seek the darkness when we are filled with the light?

We are God's. We belong to him. Even in our weakest moments and in our times of trial, we have full access to his mercy.

How do you respond to these words of truth? Who are you? What sin does this lead you to confess? Has your identity been lost because you had it in the wrong place or person? Did you lose your sense of self because you took your eyes off of the Lord?

Paul proclaimed to the people of Athens that in God "we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28). God has appointed the time and places in which we live so that we might seek him (Acts 17:26–27). As you live in your appointed time and within the boundaries where he's placed you to serve, may you live, move, and have your being in God, as his Spirit works in and through you for his good purpose.

Denying self is the price we pay.

If the Lord Jesus was willing to take on flesh that we might know God, should we not be willing to identify with those we're called to serve? Paul spoke multiple languages and lived among a wide variety of peoples—Jews and Gentiles. This former Pharisee of Pharisees willingly chose to leave his familiar and comfortable life behind for the sake of the gospel.

> *I have become all things to all people, so that I may by every possible means save some.* (1 Cor 9:22b)

Paul considered all he was—his entire identity—a loss because of Christ (Phil 3:7). Will you do the same? Resting secure in our identity while denying self seems like a paradox, but both are made possible in Christ. We rest in his love and press forward with purpose, while willingly abandoning self to his service.

For Further Meditation

Read through Psalm 139 and Jeremiah 31. Take in God's loving language to his people and hear his voice speaking love and restoration to you. Changing your dress or language can do nothing to change the essence of who you are in Christ Jesus. Find your balance by being anchored in him. Offer up your identity as a spiritual act of worship in order to do his will.

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