

Praise for Gangster Prayer

“In *Gangster Prayer*, Autumn Miles brings her extraordinary combination of moxie and devotion to the page to guide her readers through the most challenging questions of their lives. It is an engaging and heartfelt project that is both warm and encouraging—and fiercely uncompromising.”

Eliza Griswold

Writer for *The New Yorker*

Pulitzer Prize–winning author of *Amity and Prosperity*

“*Gangster Prayer* . . . what a book! I am so pumped for the world to read it! This convicting book will draw you into the presence of God! This book makes PRAYER exciting! Happy Read!”

Kimberly Jones-Pothier

aka Real Talk Kim, author of *When Your Bad Meets His Good*

speaker and pastor of Church of the Harvest

“Autumn Miles awakens in the heart of the reader the many lies often believed on the subject of prayer. She illustrates with great authenticity the power of prayer when truly embraced. *Gangster Prayer* will deepen anyone’s walk with the Lord, as well as encourage prayer warriors never to give up.”

Dr. Monica Rose Brennan

Liberty University associate professor and

Director of the Center for Women’s Leadership

“What a wake-up call! Autumn’s book *Gangster Prayer* challenged me to drop to my knees and reclaim my prayer life—to take it seriously again and to recognize its importance.”

Susannah B. Lewis

Author of *Can’t Make This Stuff Up!*

“As I began reading *Gangster Prayer*, I had to stop several times to reflect, confess, and pray. My spirit resonated and my soul said, *Amen!* Having been a church girl my whole life, it is so easy to pray out of duty and miss the devotion. I needed the reminder that our Father loves me and longs for me to bring my requests to Him. By calling out the lies and reinforcing God’s beautiful truth, Autumn lovingly stirs us to rise up, cry out, and look forward with great expectation to what God can do when His people boldly pray!”

Dorena Williamson

Speaker and author of the children’s books
ColorFull, *GraceFull*, and *ThoughtFull*

“As a Christian, I’m often amazed and astonished by the discipline that folks have for other religions, the dedication that gangsters and mobsters have for their own code of ethics and criminal enterprises, and the zeal that cult members have for their misinterpretations of sacred texts. Basically, isn’t it sad how extremely passionate some people can be for a lie, while at the same time we Christians can be extremely lazy with the truth? That is why *Gangster Prayer* by my friend Autumn Miles is such a timely message. Read this book. Be encouraged by it. Be challenged by it. Then, share it with someone else.”

Shane Pruitt

Author of *9 Common Lies Christians Believe*

“Autumn Miles has done it again! With genuine authenticity, *Gangster Prayer* both challenges and encourages us to go, via prayer, into a deeper more committed level of loyalty with God. This isn’t just a ‘catch phrase’ book; it lays out concepts of realistic, living prayer. I recommend this book to anyone who is passionately in love with Jesus but wants more! My prayer life has been rejuvenated!!!”

Lisa Kratz Thomas

Speaker and author of *Light in Our Darkness*

“*Gangster Prayer* should come with a warning label. The very first page cut me to the quick! My walk-off at the end of speaking is to say, ‘Expect always the unexpected and anticipate miracles, knowing that with God all things are possible.’ Autumn Miles stopped me cold and made me consider whether or not I actually pray those truths. Do I pray with expectancy? Do I pray anticipating God to show up and show off? Do I pray with the power and conviction that comes through the Holy Spirit? Do I pray believing that with God ALL THINGS are possible? After reading *Gangster Prayer*, I am praying differently.”

Carmen LaBerge
Speaker, radio host, author of *Speak the Truth*
ReconnectWithCarmen.com

“*Gangster Prayer* is a powerful compliment to the full armor of God we read about in Ephesians 6. Through these God-breathed pages, we learn that prayer is a weapon underutilized by many of us. With candor, conviction, wit, and grace, Autumn awakens a fresh sense of urgency in all of us, compelling us to return to our prayer post. *Gangster Prayer* is going to equip us to be bold in our petitions as we are reminded that breakthrough is not only on the Father’s heart but is waiting to push through the atmosphere with our brave prayers.”

Oneka McClellan
Lead pastor of Shoreline City

GANGSTER PRAYER

GANGSTER PRAYER

RELENTLESSLY PURSUING GOD *with* PASSION *and* GREAT EXPECTATION

AUTUMN MILES



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To my most precious Jesus:
I count it a privilege to daily commune with you in prayer.
I am in awe of You, my blessed Savior.

To my most precious family:
You are the absolute evidence of prayer in my life.
Each of you a desperate prayer answered in my life.

To my most precious readers:
I adore each of you. My desperate prayer is that
you have a prayer revival in your own life.
Thank you for allowing me to serve you.



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CHAPTER ONE



MY WAKE-UP CALL

Fight the lie: *Prayer works for some people but not for me, so I should focus on other spiritual things.*

Criminals are more passionate about doing evil than you are about praying,” God said to my spirit. Sitting in my cozy, king-size bed with three pillows to support my back and enough memory foam to make anyone jealous, I froze under the weight of conviction. I was comfortable in my prayer life—unfortunately, it was dying.

For several weeks, I had been intrigued by a television series that chronicled the lives of gangsters, and tonight, the Lord was using it as a conduit to speak to me. I grabbed the TV remote, turned down the volume, and processed.

The show, a documentary of sorts, intrigued me by showing the passion with which gangsters or mobsters pursued their mission to climb to crime fame. Many rose to “success”

GANGSTER PRAYER

because nothing was off-limits to them—not stealing, breaking the law, or even killing. The more they risked to obey their crime bosses, the better they were in their line of work. Disobedience was not an option, even if it cost them their lives. (Actually, *not* following orders was a more certain way to go.) The quest for money, power, and position was at the root of many of these crimes. But I found the gangsters' loyalty to be their most interesting character quality. They defended their bosses if anyone was disrespectful. If the gangsters were mistreated, they stayed the course. Even if someone went after their families, they would passionately claim loyalty to their brotherhood and, in some cases, dismiss the assault as a casualty of the cause.

So, while I was observing real-life gangsters' loyalty to their evil causes, God convicted me about my lack of loyalty to His.

My prayer life was weak. It was pathetic. I don't even know if I would call it prayer. All I did was say a few words and add "in Jesus's name, amen" at the end. It was a sad excuse for anyone who claimed to have a relationship with God. When I prayed, I had no faith, thus I saw absolutely no results from prayer. Prayer really confused me. I easily and quickly gave up if God didn't answer my prayer in the short amount of time I expected Him to. If anything, prayer only helped me check off an action item I felt was necessary to maintain the status of "good Christian." I would ramble the line "I am praying for you," but I didn't follow through. I just said it for the sake of appearances.

Honestly, I was a prayer fraud, and I didn't like what I had become. I had watched God answer other people's prayers. I had

seen people healed from terminal cancer and brought through financial woes. I had seen couples once labeled “infertile” give birth to children. I’d witnessed marriages destined for divorce suddenly be restored. But these miracles didn’t seem to happen to me. I often wondered why God wasn’t answering my prayers while constantly answering other people’s. I desperately wanted to see results from prayer, but I had absolutely no idea how to make that happen.

I was offended when the Spirit of God told me that criminals are more passionate about doing evil than I was about praying. But it sparked something inside of me. I couldn’t deny that it was true. In the days and weeks to follow, I began to understand that I was missing out on a world of possibility because I was too lazy in prayer and too comfortable with my faith. That challenged me to begin a prayer life that produced results. I wanted to be the one that got my prayers answered.

During that time years ago, God gave me the term *gangster prayer*. For a while, it was just something that I said to myself, a challenge of sorts to keep me accountable in my prayer life. I never wanted to go back to a prayer life that was dead. I wanted my passion for the mission of prayer to be greater than any gangster’s passion.

Now listen, I’m going to add a disclaimer here: I am not trying to be “cool.” I fear the title of this book could be misinterpreted as a trendy cultural way to express something extremely holy. In no way am I trying to demean or cheapen the incredible privilege of communicating with the King of Majesty. The title *Gangster Prayer* is not religious; it won’t appease the legalistic or

fluffy Christian. It's honest. It's real. It's descriptive. It's convicting. And I believe the Spirit of God is calling out every believer to champion the power that prayer will produce in their own lives and in the body of Christ.

I am also not claiming to be an expert on prayer. If anyone claims to be so, check some ID to see if it says SON OF GOD. Jesus was the only expert on prayer, because everything He prayed produced results. He is our example and our guide.

Now that we've gotten that out of the way, here is why I wrote this book: I am obsessed with seeing what God does for His children when we seek Him on His terms through prayer. This book is a serious look at prayer and what it actually takes to see God's promises—something I believe the Christian culture needs to relearn, or even learn for the first time. It's a mission that God asked me to champion, and He knows there is nothing that I would not do for Him.

I am writing specifically for those who feel, as I did, hopeless in prayer and are wanting to see results. This book is for anyone who is serious about approaching God Almighty and claiming those promises in prayer that are ours for the taking. It's for the believers who can't sit still or even sleep because they must see the Almighty at work on their behalf. The ones humble enough to admit that their prayer life needs an overhaul. I am praying, even as I type, that this book will be the overhaul your prayer life needs, and that it will catapult your relationship with our Mighty God to the next level of intimacy. The results of prayer are up to God, but abiding by the principles of prayer are up to us.

This book will be the long definition of what I call *gangster prayer*. However, the short version can be defined this way:

Gangster prayer: intentional, tenacious, relentless communication with God that focuses on His might as the source for the answers we seek and on the gospel of Jesus Christ, which gives us access to that power.

SATAN WAS THE GANGSTER ATTACKING MY PRAYER LIFE

One thing I realized when God gently yet powerfully confronted me was that Satan had planned and executed a full-out attack on my prayer life, and I had let him win. He fed me numerous lies that I believed, because they often made sense. For example, he would tell me, “God doesn’t care about that thing you are asking for—it’s too small” or “God answers other people’s prayers more than He answers yours because they are holier than you are” or even “You might as well quit, because if God hasn’t answered you by now, He never will.” All these little lies assaulted my prayer life. They seemed so realistic, but what I didn’t realize was that Satan didn’t want me to pray because he wanted to keep me from the power that prayer would produce in my life.

Satan’s objective is to keep you from communication with the Lord, and he will stop at nothing to kill your prayer life. He isn’t polite or nice in his mission. He isn’t a cute red cartoon with a smile and a pitchfork. He will heap on distraction, doubt, hurt, busy schedules, or whatever he can to stop you

from accessing the power of God through prayer. And if we Christians passively let him, we will forever be powerless prayer wimps. If your prayer life is dead, it's because Satan has become victorious over you.

One of the biggest ways Satan is destroying the church is by supplementing our desperate need for true communication with God with counterfeit, powerless connections. Social media has proven humankind's ravenous desperation for communication and connection. The more we feel connected on social media, the more we want to connect. The more likes, follows, shares, and comments we get, the more we feel validated. But social media is Satan's pacifier for prayer, and it will never truly satisfy us. It doesn't meet our greatest need, which is hearing from the Lord.

You may be thinking, *Blah, blah, blah . . . here comes the social media lecture again*. But let me be straight with you. How many times have you logged on to your socials today? Now how many times have you prayed? I'm betting your need to communicate with God has been pacified by many brief, non-life-giving virtual connections with others. If so, Satan has successfully sabotaged your communion with God. But lies and distractions only work if we allow them to. No doubt the temptation from the enemy is strong, but now that you know about it, it's time to fight back.

OVERHAUL AND UNLEARN BAD HABITS

Once I became aware that I was being sabotaged by evil, I began fighting to reclaim the privilege of prayer in my life. I

unlearned the horribly destructive habits I had been developing. It's one thing to believe the enemy's lies, but it's another entirely to act on those lies and build habits based on those actions. For example, because I believed that God wasn't interested in every detail of my life, I'd settled for offering very basic and general prayers. Not surprisingly, results were incredibly hard to see. I would also give up in prayer if I didn't get a yes quickly, because I believed that God's answer must be no. My bad habits were endless.

I always prayed with doubt in my heart, so as humbling as it was, I had to admit to myself that I was a professional Christian with an amateur prayer life. I needed an overhaul. I had to start at the beginning, with a fresh sense of what it meant to pray. The object of prayer is not to get things from God, but to communicate with Him. Of course, God tells us frequently in Scripture to make our requests known to Him (Philippians 4:6), but that isn't the main reason to pray. When I began to regularly seek the presence of the Lord first through prayer, I found that many of my would-be petitions were met simply by connecting. For instance, I used to pray for peace because I struggled with anxiety. When the object of my prayer time became connection time with God, the peace I'd once requested was simply a by-product. I started to see the benefits of prayer my soul had longed for—things like assurance, confidence, and affirmation.

Like I said, I started at the beginning. In my adventure of unlearning and overhauling my prayer life, I sought the Bible's truths about God and prayer. These are the simple truths I

began to internalize and believe and base my new, alive prayer life on:

1. “Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.” (Matthew 6:33 ESV)
2. “Ask, and it will be given to you . . .” (Matthew 7:7)
3. “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find . . .” (Luke 11:9–13)
4. “All things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.” (Matthew 21:22)
5. “Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do . . .” (John 14:13–14)
6. “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.” (John 15:7)
7. “Truly, Truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you. Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full.” (John 16:23–24)
8. “He will call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him and honor him. With a long life I will satisfy him and let him see My salvation.” (Psalm 91:15–16)
9. “Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I shall rescue you, and you will honor Me.” (Psalm 50:15)

10. “If . . . My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land.” (2 Chronicles 7:13–14)
11. “They will call on My name, and I will answer them; I will say, ‘They are My people,’ and they will say, ‘The LORD is my God.’” (Zechariah 13:9)
12. “Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be granted you.” (Mark 11:24)
13. “This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.” (1 John 5:14)
14. “Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven.” (Matthew 18:19)

While reading scriptures about prayer, it became clear that God wanted to do more for me than I could even attempt to ask—I simply had to apply His principles. These truths began to breathe vitality into my dead prayer life. Neglecting the lies of the enemy, God’s truth became the basis of my communication with Him. And in internalizing these prayer promises of Scripture, I heard God remind me, over and over, “What is a miracle to them can be normal to you, Autumn.”

MIRACLES CAN BE NORMAL

Feeding on that word from the Lord, I recalled how the disciples saw miracles on a regular basis. When I looked at the life of Paul and all of the miraculous things God did for him, I realized the same God wanted to do miraculous things for me. He hadn't restricted His power just to Jesus's disciples or to Paul; it was readily available to me if I would simply ask Him for it.

Believers who don't pray don't hinder God's power—they just hinder God's power at work in their lives. I did not want to be that person. I realized I had one life. One chance to experience the might of the Almighty this side of heaven. And I began to call on the name of the Lord, believing that He was engaged in my prayer and would answer my requests based on His good pleasure. God's revelation about prayer changed me. It altered my life in such a way that I can honestly pass along this hope to you too: what is a miracle to "them" can be normal to you.

So where are you today? Have you allowed Satan to assault your prayer life? Are you sick of seeing other people's prayers answered but not your own? It's time to overhaul your prayer life and unlearn those bad habits that are keeping you from experiencing the might of the Almighty at work on your behalf. Together we will attack the lies that the enemy has fed us and replace them with the truth—the principles of God's Word. With truth as your foundation and bad habits gone, you will see the results from prayer that you have been longing for. It's time to adopt the slogan God gave me and pray you some

MY WAKE-UP CALL

“gangster prayer.” It may take work, and your prayer life may look like a construction zone for a time, but rest assured the work will be worth it. Let’s do it!

CHALLENGE TO CHANGE

1. Be honest: Are you 100 percent satisfied with your prayer life?
2. What lies have you believed about prayer?
3. Getting real here, how often do you pray?
4. What bad habits do you need to stop in order to move forward?
5. Are you living a life of miracles, or does it feel like miracles are meant only for others?
6. Are you ready for an overhaul?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



AUTUMN MILES is the founder of Autumn Miles Ministries, an organization devoted to spiritually challenging the way women think. She is a dynamic speaker who produces regular inspirational content for her over 120,000 Facebook followers in addition to speaking at conferences nationwide. Additionally, Autumn is the host of *The Autumn Miles Show*, a daily radio talk show that brings its audience bold truth coupled with raw faith. You can listen live on Salem Radio Network's The Word 100.7 FM in Dallas or via audio podcasts.

As a survivor of domestic abuse, Autumn is passionate about educating the church on how to effectively assist victims. In 2017, Autumn partnered with Lifeway Research to sponsor a study on domestic violence in the church. When the results showed that only 50 percent of churches have a plan in place to respond to domestic violence, she published the pamphlet, "10 Steps to Prepare Your Church for Domestic Violence," which has been used by many churches.

Autumn has shared her story of overcoming abuse and finding God's purpose for her life in many media outlets including *The New Yorker*, *Christianity Today*, TLC, *The 700 Club*, Cornerstone TV, and Voice of America. Her writing has

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

appeared on prestigious outlets including *The Washington Post*, Religion News Service, *The Dallas Morning News*, The Blaze, Faithwire, and CafeMom. She is a passionate advocate for domestic violence victims, women in ministry, and adoption.

In addition to her latest book, *Gangster Prayer*, Autumn has authored *Appointed: Your Future Starts Now* and *I am Rahab: Touched by God, Fully Restored*.

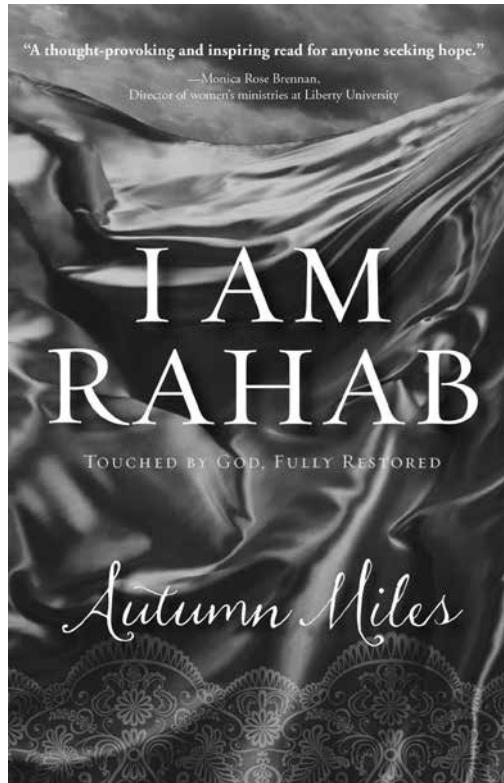
Autumn married Eddie Miles in 2004, and they have four beautiful children: two biological, Grace and Jude, and two adopted, Moses and Haven. She and her family reside in Dallas, Texas.

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I Am Rahab provides a better understanding of God, with a focus on the breadth of His reach to use and redeem all people for the good of His purposes and for their benefit as His beloved children. You will find comfort in relating to Rahab and to Autumn's own raw story of surviving domestic abuse and will be encouraged to know you are not alone in a life disrupted by bad choices, nor are you meant to stay there.