

**holylibido**



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**CRAVING PASSIONATE LIFE IN GOD**

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To my wife, Rosa Maria Silva-Smith, my abiding joy and  
inspiration. You continue to amaze me with the  
gift of your extravagant love.

And to Rusty and Romeo, my mother and father.  
Thank you for introducing  
me to Jesus, and for living your lives to bless  
others and bring honor and glory to God.





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# Introduction

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This is a disruptive book. It may rouse an insatiable craving—or libido—for the passionate flow of God’s Spirit in your life. The unrestrained flow of his Spirit in our day-to-day lives reignites a hint of the original splendor of what our life on earth was designed to be.

Of all the things in life that have perplexed me, nothing has baffled me more than this: If God breathed himself into us, making us humans in his image, why do we tend to live such disoriented lives—spiritually speaking? If the infinite energy that makes us *us* is energy that radiates from God himself, it seems to me that we should need to exercise extreme caution so as not to explode with his splendor. But we don’t explode with his splendor. We rarely even sense a quiver of his splendor in our day-to-day lives.

We’re invited to be a part of something so much bigger—so grand in scale—we can only begin to imagine the height and depth and breadth of the plan. This book is a quest to discover in greater depth what that “something” is—becoming the person we were designed to be. The good news is this: *We only need to be willing to imagine the possibility.* Sometimes that’s where we begin—simply considering the

possibility. Possibly the longing in your spirit is there because God put it there. Could it be true? If so, we can be assured that everything we need to know in order to experience this life will be revealed to us ... in the fullness of his time.

I have an idea about why our lives are so “ordinary.” I believe that we accidentally block the flow of God’s Spirit in our lives. Over time, we adapt to the anomalies within us and along our path, and our adaptations impede the flow of life, which is the flow of God’s Spirit within us.

But even though we’ve learned to adapt, we’re not altogether happy about our adaptation. Something within us still wonders if we’re missing something. A part of us yearns, or craves, to experience more of the splendorous image of God in our life.

As a marriage therapist for nearly twenty years, I was invited into the personal life stories of hundreds of people. I was invited into the profound struggles and the anguish of life gone wrong. Early in my practice, I mistakenly believed that if I offered godly counsel to those who came to see me for help, their lives would change. But frankly, I saw very little authentic life change. Most clients were happy to settle for a momentary reorientation that made life a little more manageable—temporarily.

I think there are a couple of key reasons for this. One reason is that too many people are hoping that the world around them will change to make their lives more suitable and comfortable. Few people I’ve met are truly willing to allow God to do the deep work of healing that needs to be done within them. And the second reason is that too many people seem to be blind to the truth about themselves. We all have the uncanny ability to see clearly the truth about others, but we fail to see the truth about ourselves with as much clarity or keenness.

But there were a few that experienced deep transformation within their hearts, and the change within their hearts inevitably resulted in radical transformation in their lives and in their relationships. I wish I could say these true transformations were the result of some profound wisdom I shared with them. But that would not be true. The eruptions of transformation were simply the result of God’s Spirit igniting a dynamic desire—or craving—for an intimate relationship with him. It was as if he supercharged their spiritual libido. And along the way of

transformation, God's Spirit began blowing away the obstacles—whatever they were—that obstructed the flow of his Spirit.

So I have no fantasy in my mind that I will be able to say anything in this book that will change your life. Not even a fleeting fancy. Every libido-fired transformation I've witnessed has been triggered and facilitated by God. He simply invited me along for the adventure to behold our Creator at work to restore a bit of the original design in a person's life.

I wrote *Holy Libido* to share what I believe is the profound possibility of passionate life in God. I pray that you will sense his Spirit stirring something within you as you read. And I pray that you will begin to crave him deeply, and that you will experience more of the splendor of all that he wants to be in your life.

## A World of Decisions

As I stood frozen in place at the jagged-edged gaping hole in the ice, my eyes peered into the murky water. My brother Freddy was in there somewhere, and I had to find him.

My grandpa had taken my cousins, brothers, and me ice fishing on the Flint River in Michigan. It was late spring, and the ice was getting thin. We were safe as long as we stayed in a small cove away from the flow of the river, but four-year-old Freddy had wandered out of the safety zone toward the center, and I was right behind him. Suddenly I heard a crack, and in a split second the ice gave way. My little brother disappeared into the frigid water.

After what seemed like an eternity, I got a glimpse of what I had been straining to see. The top of Freddy's head was just beneath the surface, and I lunged for it. I caught some of his short hair just as the ice shattered beneath me. I'm not sure how it happened, but somehow I snagged the edge of the ice with my elbow while I desperately clenched his hair in my fingers. My cousin CJ slid to our rescue on his belly across the fragile ice. As we tromped soaking wet and ice-cold toward the riverbank, I remember Freddy saying something about telling Mom I pulled his hair.

Life is full of decisions. We sometimes like to imagine what we would do if we were faced with a big decision—a life-and-death

situation. Would I run into a burning building to save the life of someone who was trapped inside? How about giving up an organ to save the life of my child? Of course, I suppose it would depend on which organ it was and possibly which child it was (but we're just theorizing, so never mind that). Would we sacrifice one of our children to save a trainload of people we don't even know? What if our other child was on the train?

Along with big decisions, we also have pestering questions that come to our minds. Are we living accidental lives in an accidental world? Some very well-credentialed people have told us there was a cataclysmic explosion billions and billions of years ago that scattered rocks and gases throughout the vast emptiness of space. This cosmic space litter was the stuff that eventually became stars and planets and, well, us. Although we have no way of knowing if what they're telling us is true (and neither do they), many people assume they're right, since those making the claims have scientific minds that discover "truth." Many of us believe that the "cosmos-shattering explosion was an accident" theory is way off.

There's another theory floating around. Could our world be the handiwork of a grand Creator who masterminded the entire display of spectacular complexity and beauty? Could there be a Supreme Being who literally spoke the galaxies and solar systems into existence and they exploded onto the scene? And if so, could it be we actually were created in the image of that Creator and that our life has meaning and purpose?

I don't know, since I wasn't there when it happened. Nobody was there to see it, unless of course the theory of a Creator is true. He would have been there. So we're left to our own speculation.

My dear friend Steve speculates the accidental theory is true. He's talented, he's generous, and he's an atheist with a heart as big as they come. Every now and then, Steve and I have an opportunity to kick around the differences in our perspectives, especially with regard to the origin of life. One of the most recent opportunities was on New Year's Eve following a rousing game of Sequence. It was after midnight, and although we were already winding down for the evening, we quickly wound back up for a lively discussion. I have the utmost respect for Steve and for his knowledge. I enjoy hearing about his views, which come from a godless perspective.

Something that puzzles me about the accidental theory of life is this: If humans have been evolving for millions of years into progressively more advanced creatures, and all the adaptations are ultimately improvements that better equip these creatures for their existence on earth—survival—why did they evolve with a sense of God in their soul? I think it's the only question I've ever asked Steve that he had to ponder.

From my vantage point, the fingerprints of a Creator are everywhere. I find evidence of a Supreme Being in the laws and majesty of nature and in the intricacy of the human body. Every single human cell is an elaborate microscopic system of machines and functions that confound our minds. The universe we call home is a work of genius and divine design, and humans are the masterpiece, from my point of view.

Most notable is that we have a sense of God in our souls, and we have a longing to connect with him. I believe he designed us with a longing—or craving—for a relationship with him.

Life is full of decisions. Most of the decisions we make are rather ordinary. They are the stuff of day-to-day life, and unfortunately day-to-day life gets in the way of our pursuit of answers to our deeper, eternal questions. As I mentioned, my hope is that you will pay close attention to whatever questions are stirred in your spirit as you read this book. I believe God's Spirit does the stirring.

I've engaged in more than my fair share of debates about God. I've even been so arrogant as to explain God. Imagine that—me explaining God. I ask for God's forgiveness in advance for overstepping my place as one of his created beings if I misrepresent him in what I've written. It's not intentional. I'm pleased he knows my heart, and he knows that in my enthusiasm to proclaim him, I sometimes assume beyond his revelation.

I have no desire to change your mind about what you believe. My motivation is clear: I believe life continues beyond what we are able to see in the physical sense. And I have a scene in my mind that haunts me at times. I don't know if this is the way it's going to happen, but if our paths have crossed somewhere along our personal journeys, I picture you and me in a place where we can see each other at the final

judgment. As we lock eyes, I dread the possibility that the look in your eyes might be asking why I didn't tell you about *this* part of the plan.

It's not my place to convince you of anything. Everything can be explained, but not everything can be proven. Jesus did not try to convince people that they should believe. Many walked away from him because they could not believe—and he let them walk. Rather than trying to convince you, I am inviting you to open your mind and heart to search the Scriptures, and to ask God to reveal himself to you the way he wants you to know him. And I'm praying you will take the next step he shows you, whatever that step might be.

A few are discovering their way to God and his design for their lives in a life-trajectory-altering way. They have blown past the lies of the world into an intimate and honest relationship with their Creator. They've found their way home to their heavenly Father, and they are beginning to experience life that offers fulfillment and purpose and peace. They are experiencing life that was designed by a profound Creator.

Every now and then a fire ignites in the hearts of God's people who find their way to the original relationship God designed for them—to cherished fellowship with their Creator. The fire within them lights up the world around them, and it captures our attention. We're drawn to the light. But people are drawn for different reasons. Some are simply bored with their own life, so they're looking for something to entertain them. You'd find these people gawking at a house on fire simply because they have nothing better to do.

Others are drawn to the fire because they sense it could ignite something in their life too. They're bored to death with their own emptiness, like the gawkers, but they're different. Yes, they too live purposeless lives—going through the motions like a hamster on a wheel. But at least they wonder. Dare they hope a fire might ignite within them too?

Too many people are living heartless lives. Too much of life has become ordinary. It has become a day-to-day replay of the same old stuff with just a different date on the calendar. Surely, if we have indeed been created by a passionate Creator, we must be designed for a great adventure. But we've been numbed by ordinary life that bears no resemblance to anything adventurous. It's not even much of an event, let alone an adventure.

As I stood at the edge of the hole in the ice, I faced a matter of life and death. We're all in the same place, spiritually speaking. We're confronted with decisions that are a matter of spiritual life and death. Unfortunately, much of the time we're not aware of the critical nature of the moment—not until we hear the crack of the ice beneath our feet.

Some clever person said, "Living in reality is for people who lack imagination." Here's my spin: "Living in the reality of what can be *seen* is for those who lack the faith to believe in the reality of what *cannot be seen*." May we experience what Soren Kierkegaard meant when he encouraged us to be "weaned from the worldly point of view that insists on visible evidence."





## CHAPTER 1

# Created for Splendor



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Life is meant to be a fantastic heart-pounding adventure. At least that's the way it seemed to me one day when I was in my early teens. It was a picture-perfect morning in Michigan, and I was riding Cheetah, my quarter horse, at a reckless gallop across a field of alfalfa. With the spring-fresh wind in my face, the exhilaration of the moment filled my entire body with delight. It seemed natural to release my grip on the reins and lean back in the saddle with my hands stretched high into the air. It was something I had seen in a movie, and I was living it—the unrestrained freedom of such a breathtaking adventure. At that moment I determined to live my life at a wild speed—with the wind in my face.

The next moment I was tumbling through the alfalfa like Raggedy Rod. My immediate thought was that it would have been better if I'd been holding on to something when the ring-necked pheasant flew up directly in front of Cheetah. I'm sure she was as surprised as I was when it happened. She veered to the left and I didn't; I went straight. I think that's called inertia, one of Newton's laws of motion. I also experienced the law of gravity.

Cheetah circled back around to pick me up. As I climbed back into the saddle, I felt a little dejected. The reality of how fleeting these moments of elation are came crashing down on me—literally. As I rode back toward the barn with a firm grip on the reins, I remember the distinct realization that the thrill of life could be easily tripped up. Taken off course. The sensation of tumbling through the alfalfa has come to my mind several times throughout my wild, crazy ride through life.

But I've never given up on the idea we are created for something more profound than the lives we live. Knowing we are the brainchild of the One who spoke the magnificence of all creation into being, somewhere deep within me I believe we are created for something much greater than ordinary life. Possibly just knowing we were created for something more than the life we're living today (even if our knowing is nothing more than a faint sense that something is missing) may be all we need to get on with allowing our original splendor—actually *God's* splendor—to flow in our lives.

I believe the life that many of us live is missing the point. It seems the original arrangement has been all but lost. For many of us, the radiance of life has simply faded; for others, it seems to have been extinguished. In the past, my personal, internal craving to connect with my heavenly Father drove me to pursue everything but him. The wrecks in my life were the result of my misguided pursuit of meaning and purpose. I lived much of my life as a misshapen man, contorted by my pursuit of false gods and my quest for personal pleasure. And I'm not alone. I have shared my life journey with a sea of fellow travelers who also live with a gnawing sense there's something more to live for.

### **Born to Dance**

My Montana cowboy buddy, Jim, was excited to tell me about a new baby that had been born on his farm to her reining-horse mom. The way some animals move is nothing short of artistic, and reining horses in action are a sight to behold. They seem to defy the laws of physics as they whirl and spin and stop on a dime. With rippling muscles orchestrating a dance of obedience to the subtle commands of the rider, these amazing animals leave me spellbound.

Shortly after the filly's birth, Jim was amused to see her "making her moves" in the stall. There was no mistaking the genetic pool flowing through her veins. She didn't even know her daddy was Jacs Electric Spark, a stud whose offspring earnings exceed one million dollars, or that she would one day be called Electric Diva. It didn't matter. This little filly was ready to dance, and she was just minutes old. She couldn't help it. It's what she was born to do.

Every new baby resembles its mommy and daddy in ways that are unmistakable. You will never mistake a baby hippo for a newborn horse, and you will not mistake a baby whale for a minnow. Each creature has features that set it apart from all the others, each according to its kind.

Not only do these animals look the way they're programmed to look but they also act the way they are designed to act. Every songbird sings the song it was designed to sing—naturally. It's easy to distinguish the song of a robin from the song of a canary. Animals have specific dietary preferences too. Condors feast on rotting cadavers and hummingbirds delicately lap up the sweet nectar nestled away in the inner sanctum of the flowers of the field. The hummingbird does not wallow in putrefying flesh, and condors do not hover effortlessly before a butterfly bush.

All animals know instinctively what they are meant to be, and that's what they are. They live the way they are meant to live. Apart from human interference, they live in harmony and balance with all other things living in their world. They run, they walk, they slither, they swim, and they fly exactly the way they were designed to move. The sounds they make distinguish each of them from every other animal. They eat whatever they are supposed to eat; some are tasty morsels for others.

We humans are the only creatures on earth that struggle to be what we are designed to be. So what makes people so different from the rest of creation? Why don't we see more faithfulness to the original design? Just a quick perusal of the evening news tells us that we have missed the mark. People are often the instigators of unimaginable damage and destruction. The monstrous cruelty of some who otherwise resemble humans has left us feeling disgusted, sometimes enraged. Others of us are simply dumbfounded by the stupidity of our fellow humans, and sometimes by our own foolishness. People are self-serving and harsh

too much of the time. Surely this was not the intent of the One who designed us.

Do you feel your brain recoil a bit as you read these words? We like to believe we're not all that bad—overall. Possibly the kindness of humanity comes to mind. We have all experienced that as well. Snippets of the original design do, in fact, leak out on occasion as we see hints of loving and caring acts of service along the way. But isn't it fair to say that even those of us who have done the best job of loving can also be hateful?

We see glimmers of humanity at its best, for a minute, and then something ugly erupts onto the scene. We ourselves, the “civilized,” have done things that are, in retrospect, unimaginable. How far back in our brain do we have to search to find the last time we spoke—or thought—harsh or even horrible words to someone we love? When was the last time we turned away from someone in need, pretending not to see? When was the last time we looked at a stranger with disgust or contempt simply because of the way he looked or smelled? Last week? Today? And remember, we're the civilized, not the mentally deranged and psychologically tortured.

We want to be good. And yes, we see fleeting signs of human goodness all around us. Crisis situations seem to bring out the best in people, and they bring out the worst in people too. We've all heard of the diabolical opportunists who slither onto the scene to capitalize on the chaos.

Honestly, much of the time it just seems too unnatural to be the person I desire to be. It seems like an awful lot of work to live naturally—the way I was intended to live. The things I want to do get pushed off to another time, which seldom comes. The things I do not want to do keep popping up like corks bursting from beneath the surface of the water. Before I delve into some of the ways in which I believe we have gotten off track, let's see if we can come to some sort of agreement about what we believe we are designed to be in the first place.

Perhaps I should confess my personal foundational bias: *I believe we are created by God according to his purpose.* Everything I believe about life is built on this foundation. All our interpretations and reactions to everything that goes on around us and within us are orchestrated

by our perspective. Our perspective is driven primarily by our biases. The adage that suggests *I'll believe it when I see it* is actually mistaken. Truthfully, *I'll see it when I believe it*. I believe we are on this earth on purpose—God's purpose—so that's what I see everywhere I look.

I do not have enough faith to believe we are the haphazard result of accidental organization. I realize some of you reading this book do have faith to believe we live in a world that simply evolved from gases with no divine intervention. And since many of you are undoubtedly brighter than I am, I will not try to convince you my perspective is right.

I enjoy lively discussions with bright-minded theorists. I'm both impressed and amused by the guys and gals who speak with heartfelt authority about things they can only guess. I respect the validity of inductive and deductive reasoning—up to a point. I'm aware of the evidence, and I'm also aware that all along the path of scientific discovery researchers are compelled to take giant leaps of faith. We are inclined to rely too much on our logic to try to explain things that do not submit to our scientific methods.

In fairness to the theorists, I do the same thing—I'm guessing my perspective is true. My confidence arises from a place within me that I can neither explain nor defend. My guess is based wholeheartedly on God's Word, the Bible, and my faith that the words contained in its pages are true. I believe God breathed himself into that book, and I believe he breathed himself into those of us who have chosen to believe actively in his way. So when I read God's Word, something within me is quickened to respond to him with faith and allegiance. It doesn't matter to me how he did what he did. I believe all creation bears witness to the Creator. Somewhere in our souls we know this is true.

### **Flickering Embers**

The flicker of desire to live for something grander than our fleeting selves is not extinguished, even though at times it seems to be. If it was dead, the angst we feel would have died along with it. Even though the desire for something more may be weak, there's still some life left in it. All it takes is a spark of hope and a breath of inspiration to reignite a flickering ember.

Something within us longs to fulfill the original design even though we don't fully understand what that means. Just as a seed germinates, unlocking a sprout that wiggles its way to the surface of the earth and then continues to reach upward as it grows to be what it was programmed to be, so the human spirit reaches for the fulfillment of what it was designed to become. It's in the DNA—the genetic code for all human life.

If you believe you are living an accidental life in a world of chance and circumstance, is it possible you have simply become disenchanted by the disappointments of life? Possibly you've experienced a few tumbles of your own in the alfalfa field. Could it be that your past experiences have convinced you you're better off abandoning your quest for a more meaningful life? Life, for now, is simply something you get through the best you can. Possibly you're hoping when this life is over, it really is *over*. "Lights out," as they say.

Some of us have bet our lives there's something more to live for—not only here on earth but also after our bodies die and we enter into the next and eternal phase of life. We agree with George MacDonald when he said, "You don't have a soul; you are a soul. You have a body." So we are committing ourselves to what we most deeply desire—to love and serve our Creator—and to experience life as he designed it to be lived to the best of our understanding and ability.

In order to experience this life, we must overcome the gravitational pull of ordinary life. Sometimes it's not the difficult things in life that interfere with us becoming what we were designed to be; more often it's ordinary life that gets in the way.

Interestingly, in the face of seemingly insurmountable challenges, many of us have sensed the surge of something within us that compels us to "take it on." These challenges help us discover a principle that makes all the difference in how we approach life: *Obstacles are opportunities disguised as opposition*. Understanding this principle is a master key to unlocking a life of splendor.

But for the most part, the natural course of life is ordinary. One minute I'm contemplating the mysteries of the universe and the next minute I'm rinsing out bowls of yesterday's crusty mac & cheese left over from the grandkids' visit. Ordinary life is waking up every

morning in a familiar place with a familiar person who has a familiar first-thing-in-the-morning look. Following a few biologically related sounds and functions and after rinsing and primping and pruning, we head out to begin our ordinary day.

For those of us who work outside the home, possibly the greatest adventure of our day is simply surviving the seemingly text-starved drivers and their obliviousness to the rest of us trying to share the road with them. For stay-at-home moms and dads, every day is filled with more of yesterday, and yesterday was so ordinary they've already forgotten the details.

### **Quiet Time with Papa God**

In order to enjoy the life of splendor we were designed to experience, we need to begin our day with the One who created us with this craving at the core of our being. The philosopher and theologian Soren Kierkegaard once said, "Just as in earthly life lovers long for the moment when they are able to breathe forth their love for each other, to let their souls blend in a soft whisper, so the mystic longs for the moment when in prayer he can, as it were, creep into God."

What if we approached our day with the anticipation of something *extraordinary*—something with a hint of splendor? For those of us who begin our day enjoying time with God, we have come to realize he cherishes time with us—and us with him—more than we had imagined. Virtually nothing is more important than our treasured appointment with God.

My wife, Rose, calls him her "Papa God." I think that makes him smile. The image of a loving daddy has been shattered for too many men and women, and it was for Rose too. But over time, as she opened her heart to his healing touch, she was able to restore the image of her Papa God to what it was intended to be (at least in part)—a safe and loving heavenly daddy.

I discovered a few months ago I was unwittingly interfering with Rose's intimate time with Papa God. We built an addition on our home a couple of years ago to help with the overflow situation of our family gatherings, and we situated a couple of cozy recliners near the wood-burning fireplace. Rose has her chair and I have mine. She always

springs to life much earlier in the morning than I do, so when I finally stumble my way toward the living room, she's already there.

If a guy is paying the least bit of attention, he's noticed his wife has a certain body language that alerts him to listen up. You've seen the deer-in-the-headlights look on the guy's face when he senses something's up. Chances are most of us guys have been in the headlights a time or two ourselves. In retrospect, this particular morning was primed for a real awakening on my part.

So as I sat in my cozy place next to the fireplace groggily waiting for my eyes to focus on the words on the page of my Bible, I sensed an unmistakable coolness in the air. The draft seemed to be coming from Rose's direction. So as any red-blooded guy would do, I cautiously asked if everything was all right.

Rose has a way of expressing herself that makes reading between the lines unnecessary. She simply informed me I was sitting in "his" chair. As I quickly learned that morning, Papa God sits in my chair during their time together, and I was in the way.

Rose's jealous dedication to her time with her heavenly Father is nonnegotiable. Before we were married, in the spirit of full disclosure she told me I would have to accept second place in her life because the first place was already taken. Her "first husband" is her Papa God. I agreed. How awesome to be second in line to the Creator of the universe—at least in Rose's world.

Why do we spend time with our Father in the morning? One reason is simply because we can't help it. He is the pure life-giving air we breathe. We are obsessed with our longing to know him, and we crave the life we find in his Spirit. He deserves the first fruits of our day—our undiluted devotion and admiration—and we are honored by his presence in our life.

The second reason we show up is to prepare our minds and hearts for our *daily* assignments. Our assignments are whatever God wills for us to accomplish by the power of his Spirit at particular moments throughout the day. As we fulfill our daily assignments, we are also fulfilling our life assignment. We don't necessarily get our daily assignments at the time we meet with God before we begin our daily activities. They might come later in the day when the opportunities arise.



But when we meet with him, we are prepared for them when they *are* assigned. It could happen at any time during the day, and if we're not prepared we'll be thrown off guard when they pop up. We might even act surprised or even be tempted to pretend we didn't get the memo.

What if we started our day with something like "Yes, Lord, the answer is YES! Now, what's the question?" We need to be prepared for our assignments because God's daily assignments are the remedy for ordinary life.

Unfortunately, we sometimes blow past our time with God and jump right into our day. When we do that we're missing out on more than we realize. Possibly we should install interlock-like devices on the doors of our homes so we are not allowed to leave until we have been instilled with an awareness of the presence of God's Spirit. Without taking time to connect with our Creator, we're inclined to wing it through the day. That's not the way we are designed to live. We are designed to live lives of splendor as he fulfills his purpose in us and through us every day.