

# Spiritual Survivor Man



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# Dedication



I dedicate this book first of all to my wife Ann, who has been by my side for over thirty-six years and counting.

I also dedicate this book to my two children, Jeremiah and his wife Amber, and Missi and her husband John. And to my grandchildren: Hunter, Dylan, Maddi, Alexis, Josiah, and Amaziah;

To my Mom who has kept in touch with me through the years and has been there for me whenever I needed her.

To the faithful few in the pews who have stuck with me through thin and thin for nearly three decades at Calvary Baptist Church;

To George and Cheryl Coker, and Loren and Diane Edwards who are special friends who have encouraged me often;

To Bro. Joe Atchison who put into my heart the love for expository preaching, gave me the opportunity to be his minister of outreach, took me to the Holy Land, married Ann and me, licensed and ordained me into the ministry, and I suspect has spent many hours praying on my behalf;

Finally, to my evangelist friend, Sam Moore, who for some reason never seems to give up on me.



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# Introduction



I have to confess I rarely read introductions to books; I can only hope I do not reap what I have sown. This introduction is the key to getting a real blessing out of this book. It is a plea to the reader to open the Bible to Exodus 32:1-34:9. The task will be to read through these passages over and over again—at least seven times. Or as nobody says, “The eighth time is the charm!” And then read it again!

This is not as easy as it might sound, because most of us think if we have read something one time we have sufficiently read it. However, when it comes to the Word of God one reading is not sufficient to give God room to work the passage into our hearts. We must prayerfully and repeatedly get into it before the Holy Spirit gets it into us. The burning question always in the back of our minds should be exactly what He is saying to our yearning hearts.

Throughout this book we will assume that those passages of Scripture are almost memorized. We have all heard those familiar words that familiarity breeds contempt. But such is

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not the case when it comes to the Word of God. The truth is, familiarity brings insight and supernatural strength. How could this not be the case since it is alive and sharper than a two-edged sword?

So, I recommend that you lay this book down, and pick up the Book, opening it up to Exodus 32:1 and begin to read, read, and read again. The more you read, the more blessed you will become. Hopefully, after reading those Scriptures repeatedly you can pick up this book again and by God's sheer grace and mercy be ministered to by my woefully inadequate attempt to bring you and God together. And always remember, my friend, God cannot be found unless He wants to be found.

# Hungering For God's Presence



## Forsaken

I have always enjoyed watching the television program *Survivorman*. In my book, Les is the best! It seems to me the episodes have a spiritual application to be made to the Christian life. I must confess I am always saddened that these shows do seem to promote self-sufficiency with a disregard for the need of prayer. Les seems to pride himself in saying he goes it alone with not even a camera crew.

But, such is not the case. There is Someone on the journey with him whom I fear our friend has overlooked—God. It is my intention to bring God into the context of survival and introduce a sort of spiritual survivor man.

If the title “Alone and Forsaken.” sounds like an old Hank Williams song it’s because that is exactly what it is. It is a song that has the ability to hit the deepest part of my inner being from time to time. Hank sings about everything fading and dying, whippoorwills and crying, and then asks

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God to understand and hold his hand. That song gives me the feeling you get when you're out there in the woods, lost, alone, forsaken and desperately trying to remember all of those *Survivorman* episodes.

Do not misunderstand; I am no expert at surviving in the wilderness. Oh, I have had my little adventures to be sure. On several occasions I have survived out in a tent in Colorado on a deer-hunting trip. I assure you, I was not on this adventure alone. If I had been, I would not be writing this book. I'd still be out there somewhere trying to find Colorado! If by some miracle I found the great state, I would by now be hopelessly lost and maybe eventually the remains left by some bad-tempered bear.

To be honest, I prefer a box of matches to rubbing some sticks together to get a fire going. Nonetheless, I still find myself intrigued by the art of survival. In a weird sort of way it all seems to fit well with my Christian experience. Often I have felt alone and forsaken in my Christian experience, while all the time totally convinced, at least intellectually, that God's promise never to leave nor forsake me is always intact.

The gnawing question is how does one go from feeling alone and forsaken to reveling in God's manifested presence? Can one go from forsaken to fantastic? That is what this book hopes to attempt to explore.

### Fire

The basic need for survival is fire. While there are many things that are needed to survive— food, shelter, water, etc.,

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one of the most important is fire. Fire! It provides warmth, protection from wild beasts, a way to boil water to make it safe for drinking, a way to cook food, light to see and be seen by potential rescuers, and a psychological boost.

The need in the spiritual realm is the manifestation of God. Fire is a symbol of God Himself. It warms our hearts and protects us. Nothing backs down the devil and his minions like God's glowing presence. It purifies as the rivers of living water flows to us and through us. It gives us insight into what we need in any situation; and, oh, what peace of mind it ushers in!



I began my Christian life on May 7, 1974. I heard the Gospel from two men who were involved with a group called the Navigators. It is an international, interdenominational organization for Christ. My first brush with God's manifested presence was listening to Matt Martin pray. When he prayed there was this indescribable presence that landed. Later, I remember an evangelist named Bill Fitzhugh. He could stand up and give the announcements and that same presence was there.

I had the great privilege of being a counselor in a Billy Graham Crusade in Brussels, Belgium in 1975. It was a thrill to hear Billy Graham night after night. But, it was not Billy or his message that stirred my heart—it was God's presence, that same presence I had sensed before, and I was hooked. I realized then all I ever really wanted in life was to walk in the manifested presence of God.

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I have learned that if we can sense His presence we can survive and even thrive in any and all of life's trials and tribulations. It is not only the need of the hour; it is the need of life. After all, one day in glory when there will be no more souls to win, no more sermons to preach, and no more prayers to be answered, there will still be the presence of God. That is the essence of heaven.



Getting a fire started is a necessity. Now in a survival situation one usually has no matches, no lighter, and no apparent means to get this needed fiery friend to appear. But the need for fire is so great we must find a way to get a fire started. From watching *Survivorman* I know we need to prepare. We must make conditions right for fire. There must be adequate, and sometimes strenuous, work involved in the process of getting a fire started. You have to gather starting material—moss or small twigs or leaves or whatever small insignificant stuff you can find—for an ember to ignite.

Once you have your insignificant pile, you need to make a bow. Take a bent stick and tie a string at each end—a shoelace will do. Next make a fireboard—a flat piece of wood with a hole in it. Then cut an opening and put in a large leaf or something that can catch your spark. Find a straight stick about as thick as your thumb and about eight inches long. Take a piece of wood, rock, or bone about the size of your fist that can fit over the top of your stick. Now wrap the string from the bow around the stick and place the stick in the hole on

## Hungering For God's Presence

your fireboard. Holding it down with your foot, move the bow back and forth to cause friction. Now the hard part begins. This takes time, patience, and a good deal of effort. Keep the bow moving back and forth until you get a small spark.

All of this is a picture of prayer. We must seek God's face until He anoints us with His Spirit. We are the small insignificant stuff that will be set aglow by God's ember. Big branches will not do. And big egos filled with self-importance and self-sufficiency will not be ignited by a tiny spark. We are at a standstill until God's presence is manifested upon us. What is missing from our preaching, or ministry, or life is we are trying to generate some warmth with our pilot light out.

Now, I'm not talking about getting more of God. If we have trusted Christ as our Savior, He is already inside of us. I'm talking about the Lord Jesus Christ showing Himself to us in a way that we know that we know He is here. We must labor in prayer until the spark of God's manifested presence is upon us. This is the starting point of all revivals. We must determine to have God's hand upon us whatever the cost. It is something that cannot be ignored or bypassed.

In starting a fire, once you get the ember it must be carefully guarded. It can be so easily extinguished. Then the process of getting it back must be started all over again.

The Holy Spirit can easily be grieved, or quenched, or resisted, or even ignored. If the spark is going to explode into a flame, it must be cherished, protected, guarded, and nurtured. This means that we must not allow any known unconfessed sin to blow it out. We must protect it from those many "self

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sins” such as self-will, self-pity, and self-sufficiency, and the like. We may be tempted to get discouraged thinking what we have is only a spark. But, “despise not the days of small beginnings.” It will grow and glow and eventually become a flame that will consume the bush, igniting us and what is around us.