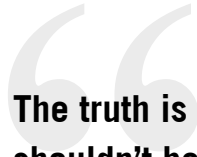


## PREFACE

I'm a cage fighter. A resilient, faith-filled cage fighter. No, not the kind in Mixed Martial Arts. I wouldn't last ten seconds with the likes of those guys! And trust me, I don't even come close to looking the part! I am speaking about a real-life cage fighter. That's what this book is about. It chronicles my journey through some of the toughest physical, emotional and mental cages I have ever had to fight in my life.

In November of 2007, I had a life altering experience. It began in an instant, with a sudden turn of events that shook my normal way of life and tested my character and faith for nearly two years. To this day, I find it ironic that my two early "heroes of the Christian Music world," Keith Green and Rich Mullins, both died in sudden, terrible accidents: Keith in a small airplane and Rich in his Jeep on his way back from a concert. Little did I ever know one day I would come so close to joining my two heroes in heaven with a similar fate.

The truth is that I shouldn't be here. I'm a miracle. However, this book is more than the story of a miracle survivor. While that part of my story is inspiring, to say the least, it simply isn't where most people in

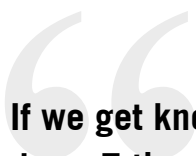


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today's world live. In fact, very few people experience miracles of this magnitude in their lives.

While I definitely wanted to give God the glory for His miraculous power for the fact that I'm a living, talking, walking miracle, I really wrote this book so others could experience the long, uphill journey of healing afterwards. The journey of being "trapped in a cage" and fighting to get out, which is the less "sensational" part of my story, but the part that most people relate to. I want others to feel the ups and downs, the highs and lows. I want them to experience the pain and disappointments along with the spiritual, emotional and physical victories along this journey out of the cage. I want them to realize they are not alone in their struggles to get out of cages that make them feel trapped in life.

Beginning several years ago, the big prayer for my life was, "God, make my second half even more significant than my first half." Well, as you come to know my story, you will see God sometimes has a unique and unconventional way of answering those kinds of prayers! I believe God took me through this journey so He could help others through my story. Even those who dedicate their lives to serving God full time and those on a public platform are human. We experience the same struggles as everybody else. None of us is immune from pain, disappointments, discouragements and body blows that life deals us. We live in a broken world, and we are a broken people; however, we can learn from other people's stories. Knowing how somebody else overcame some of the same emotions and struggles we have gives us hope and strength to deal with our own circumstances. We can learn to get up from those body blows and finish the fight strong. We may get knocked down in life, but with God's strength, we can get back up and rise to victory. If we get knocked down 7 times, we get up 8.



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My God-given identity and purpose in life are tied up in two statements. I'm a resilient, faith-filled encourager, and I help others succeed in their life journey so that they can make their life count for God. Maybe by going through my roller coaster journey with me, you can get a sense of my identity. More importantly, maybe you can begin to succeed in your life journey, especially the faith part of that journey so that you can make your life count for God.

This book is written in sequential order, from the day of the accident, as much as I could remember. You'll get a sense of what I was feeling throughout the story as I share my thoughts in first person. Throughout the book are short "Teachable Moments," which are things I learned or was reminded of through that part of my journey that can also be applied to your situations. I italicized these "lessons learned" to set them apart from the time line of my story.

So, here goes. I pray this book inspires you, encourages you, strengthens your faith and gives you a healthy perspective when life throws you a curve ball. I pray that it helps bring out the cage fighter in you!