

Soul Survivor: A spiritual quest through 40 days in the wilderness, Paul Hawker (Lion 2000) 219pp £12.99, hbk

There is a growing interest in spirituality. This is not matched by the ability of writers to define it. For some pastoral carers, the concept has replaced religion as an acceptable way of tackling the non-physical dimensions of the human project. This both engages the reader with some of these questions and goes beyond them with the account of a spiritual search.

Hawker feels restless and rudderless in his mid 40's, mid life and mid career. Despite success as a filmmaker, a family and enviable lifestyle, he still feels pangs of melancholy. To address this crisis he decides to take a trip into Tararua Mountains in New Zealand with the necessary means to stay for 40 nights. His quest is to find spiritual fulfilment.

Soul Survivor is an honest attempt to hear the voice of God and obey it. Hawker describes the challenge of letting go and attending to the rich chaos that emerges out of silence. Hawker is cautious about what he hears, rejoices more when he understands and reveals the extraordinary beauty in creation and a deepening relationship with God. He also gains, sometimes painfully, an increasing appreciation of how enormously he is loved.

In chapter 17, Hawker articulates how God asked him to describe his life in detail and provokes him to dig into all sorts of matters and events Hawker had regarded as trivial. In doing so he realised that God is intensely interested in the minutest personal components of our lives.

This is an excellent account and reading it should dig deeply into any receptive soul. In a church so full of distractions and noise, the age demands this counter-cultural silence and contemplation.

James Woodward
Temple Balsall