

**BOOK
REVIEW**

Soul Survivor

by Philip Yancey

When you're lost in the woods, it's good to have a map and a compass to find the way out. And it's even better to have a guide to lead you home. Happily, when Philip Yancey was finding his way, he had both. His book *Soul Survivor* is a testimony to what a great gift that was.

Like many 60s youth, Yancey felt let down by the church where he'd grown up. Unlike many youth from the 60s, Yancey did not give up on the church. By the 70s, he had joined the staff of *Campus Life*, a youth ministry magazine, and had sold articles to many other publications. In 1977, he began publishing books with provocative titles like *Where Is God When It Hurts?* and *Unhappy Secrets of the Christian Life*.

I first encountered Yancey's writing when I was a young Christian in university trying to make sense of my faith. The columns he and Tim Stafford wrote for *Campus Life* let me know it was okay to ask questions, and the Christian faith had good answers to those questions. His books simply deepened and extended his line of thought. Reading them helped me put down roots into the Christian faith.

I understood why Yancey's writing connected with a searching student when I finally read *Soul Survivor: How Thirteen Unlikely Mentors Helped My Faith Survive the Church*. He was searching too. He had his map and compass to help him search — the scriptures he had been taught, the Spirit

still leading him. And he had guides to lead him home: "thirteen unlikely mentors"; people, he writes, who "helped restore to me the mislaid treasures of God."

Yancey writes he grew up with people who fit the stereotype many have of Christians: "people less likely to celebrate vitality than to wag our fingers in disapproval." Many contemporary writers grew up in similar environments, and went on to write books wagging their own fingers in disapproval of their flawed heritage.

Yancey found a different path because he found people who showed him a different path. Some were people he met on interviewing assignments. Some were people he read about. "Not all are orthodox Christians," Yancey writes, "and one, Mahatma Gandhi, decided against the Christian faith. Yet all were permanently changed by their contact with Jesus."

The author of books like *Disappointment with God* and *The Church: Why Bother?* appreciates the reality of unfulfilled dreams and unsatisfied longings for something better. In writing *Soul Survivor*, he remembered how his guides helped him avoid a "tired and cynical" spirit and look with hope to a better future. Reflecting on his spiritual guides, Yancey writes, "was a wonderful tonic, one I would recommend in smaller doses to anyone. Make a list of the people who have shaped your life for