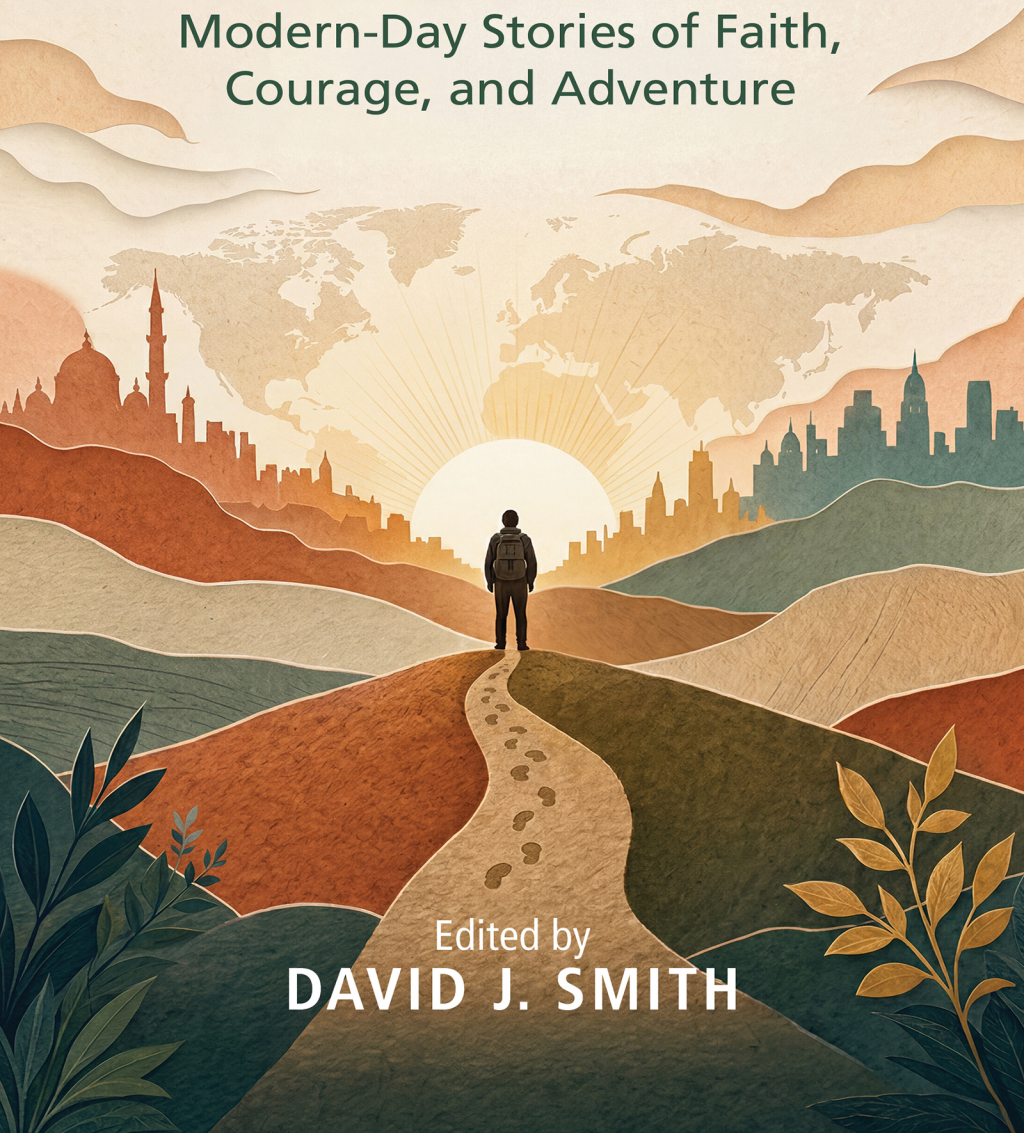


To The Nations

Modern-Day Stories of Faith,
Courage, and Adventure



Edited by
DAVID J. SMITH

To the Nations: Modern-Day Stories of Faith, Courage, and Adventure

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Introduction

Across generations, the Great Commission of Jesus to carry the gospel to the ends of the earth has resulted in amazing stories of ordinary men and women being used by God to do extraordinary things. These stories have stirred hearts with courage, sacrifice, and deep joy. Yet today, in many parts of the Western world, that call to give one's life to missionary service seems quieter. Fewer are stepping forward. Fewer are saying yes. The urgency has not diminished, but our attention to it often has.

This book is a timely and needed reminder.

Within these pages are not abstract ideas or distant legends, but real stories—windows into the lives of men and women who are faithfully serving across cultures and continents right now. These are not polished, idealized accounts. They are honest reflections filled with challenge, risk, uncertainty, and unmistakable evidence of God's presence, power, protection, and provision.

Each story carries with it something deeper than inspiration—it carries testimony. Testimony that God is still calling, still sending, still saving, and still worthy of our lives.

These devotional stories invite the reader into daily reflection. Each account is paired with Scripture, making this book more than a compilation of missionary experiences. It becomes a devotional journey. Families who read together will find not only stories to admire but also truths to wrestle with, pray through, and live out. Around dinner tables, in living rooms, and at bedside moments, these pages can help cultivate hearts that are attentive to God's voice and responsive to his mission.

For children, these stories expand the imagination. They show that a life of purpose may look very different from what the world offers. For young people, they challenge assumptions about success, comfort, and calling. For adults, they offer both encouragement and conviction, reminding them that the Great Commission was never meant to be optional or distant.

To The Nations

Perhaps most importantly, this book does not simply call us to admire missionaries. It invites us to consider our place in God's global story. Some readers may be stirred to go, others to send, support, or pray with renewed commitment. But no reader will come away unchanged if they read with an open heart.

May these stories ignite something lasting in you and in your family. May they awaken a deeper love for the nations, a clearer vision of God's purposes, and a willingness to say, "Here am I, Lord, send me."

The story of God's mission is still being written. And perhaps, as you turn these pages, you will discover that you are meant to be part of it.

Dr. David J. Smith

Note: Some stories include descriptions of suffering, persecution, and danger. Discretion is advised for younger readers.

Part 1

Stories of God's Protection



When I Heard the Lion Roar

David J. Smith | Tanzania

Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil
prowls around like a roaring lion,
seeking someone to devour.
—1 Peter 5:8

It was February 23, 1989, a day that I will never forget. This is the day that I came face to face with a lion. Five men and I were on safari in the Maasai Mara. For our first two days, we camped in the bush and enjoyed seeing many of the species of wildlife that are plentiful in Tanzania: giraffes, zebras, wildebeest, hippos, elephants, and even rhinos. But what we really wanted to see was the “king of the jungle.” So, on our third day, we set out to locate lions.

All morning long we searched. At noon we set up a makeshift camp to enjoy our lunch by the hippo pool, watching the hippos while trying our best to keep the monkeys and baboons away from our food. After lunch we packed up the truck to continue our search. Before taking off, I looked to the west and thought I saw something flicker in the bush.

On this hunch, we drove the short, one-hundred-yard distance to a brushy area and saw a beautiful male lion sitting majestically in the grass. I drove the truck within fifteen feet of the beast so we could watch it and take some good pictures. It was then that my buddy came up with a brainy idea.

“Hey Dave,” he said, “Why don’t we do something cool! You slip out of the truck and stand with the lion at your back, and I’ll get out and stand in front of you. I’ll videotape you doing an interview about what it’s like to be a missionary. You can ham it up, talking about the great dangers that we face every day . . . all the while the lion will be directly behind you!”

Cool, huh? Well, I slowly opened the door and stood next to the truck, keeping my hand on the door for security. My friend (the brainiac) got out, stood in front of me, and hoisted the video camera to his shoulder to begin filming.

“Dave, what’s it like being a missionary in Africa?” he asked.

“Well, it certainly has its dangers,” I said. “Every day the missionary puts his life on the line . . .”

That’s when it happened. Roar! Mid-sentence, behind me came the most chilling, bloodcurdling sound I had ever heard. It shot a spike of adrenaline through my veins. I flung myself into the cab of the truck, shutting the door behind me in one fast motion, leaving my friend outside the vehicle. He dropped the camera and grabbed the roof rack of the truck, hoisting himself to the roof, clinging to the metal bars for dear life.

Our buddies in the truck burst with laughter. They had witnessed our brush with death and somehow found humor in the fact that we almost lost our lives! Unbeknownst to us, a female lion was also in the brush behind the big male. While we were busy making light of the danger, she crept up from behind and let out the deafening roar. Fortunately for us, it was only a warning. If these lions had been hungry or sufficiently agitated, they could have easily pounced on us and ripped us to shreds.

That was the day I heard the lion roar. It was a day that I shall never forget. And it was a day that I learned something about lions. They are crafty, powerful, and can easily sneak up on you. That’s what the Bible makes clear in 1 Peter 5:8. Because our

To The Nations

enemy, Satan, is like a lion, we need to be careful and not take foolish risks like my friend talked me into that day. The verse says, “Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”

Something else I learned on that day: The only real safety that we had from the powerful lions was the Isuzu Trooper 4×4 made of steel. It was our safe place. It was our salvation. We were no match for the lions, but we were safe inside the vehicle. That’s a good illustration of how we can be safe from the attack of our spiritual enemy, Satan.

When we are in Jesus, we are safe and protected. He is our fortress and our defense. Like Psalm 18:2–3 says, “The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. I call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised, and I am saved from my enemies.”



Lioness behind bush. Photo by Nick Dale from DepositPhotos.

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