

**Be Prepared**  
**Guest: Jack Spirko**  
**November 4**

***Jack Spirko is the host of The Survival Podcast (thesurvivalpodcast.com).***

**WOODS:** Let's start off with a simple question: why preparedness? Is this the sort of thing that only people who are afraid of the government should be worried about? Of course that's 99 percent of my listeners, but what kinds of things should people be prepared for and why?

**SPIRKO:** You bring the government up, and there are a lot of people that come into the preparedness world because of the government, whether they look at the government and they have fears due to their incompetence or their malice. And I think both of those are actual threats. But it's actually not the main reason I would give somebody to be prepared. The main reason is, things go wrong in the world. The government and the things government does are just one of the things that can cause you to need something that you don't have.

I grew up as a country boy in the Appalachian mountains of Pennsylvania, and a lot of the things that we're doing today that we call preparedness my grandparents just called living. We understood that if the power went out, you needed to have ways to deal with that. That if you didn't have your furnace working in the winter that you'd be very, very cold. We all hunted and fished. That was the way that we supplemented our food supply, so I came to this whole thing with that bent in mind. But as I looked around at society as I left small-town America, and I became very successful in business, I started to make the same mistakes everybody else does.

I started watching simple things like the news. You watch big events like Hurricane Katrina or Hurricane Sandy or some of the major tornadoes in the outbreak of 2011, and that wakes a lot of people up. But if you think about it, there are people that are going without power on a daily basis somewhere. It's some small insignificant thing that we don't even hear about. I always try to actually take the people that are like, "I've got to get prepared, because the governments going to bankrupt the country," or whatever. It's like, can we just back up and get you prepared for the power to go out for three or four days or to get you prepared for losing your job and having to go 30 days without a paycheck? If we started there, then all of it starts to fit together a lot easier.

A lot of people are likely to say, "I don't know anything about this." And the reality is you know everything about this, because you know the things that you depend on. And you know the things in your life that are most at risk. Tom, the way I put it for people is, let's say that we were in Miami, Florida, and you wanted to go to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. We're going to go through Jacksonville. For those that know the East Coast, anyway, and we can get there without

going through Jacksonville, but it won't make anything easier. It's going to be much easier to take that straight line approach up the coast, follow I-95 all the way up through the District of Criminals into Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Since we want to get to Philadelphia if that makes sense, and we're going to go through Jacksonville and other places anyway, we start off with very, very simple things to get prepared to deal without systems of support.

My biggest thing I try to teach people is you do not prepare for a disaster. You know that show *Doomsday Preppers*. They've got people coming on, "I'm preparing for an economic collapse." People say, "What are you preparing for?" I'm preparing to deal without systems of support whether it's a few or all of them. So look at the most critical needs first, and if you do that the biggest reason I can give you to do so is you actually live your life a lot more boldly day to day even when nothing goes wrong, and one of the biggest things that government uses, if you want to come back to that here at the end of this to actually make people willing to take their deals to compromise to give up their liberty, is the fear of "what if." "What if we weren't here for you?" The more we can build of a culture of preparedness, the less we have people that are willing to make that deal. So everything from a small inconvenience to a job loss to simply empowering this nation to be able to take their sovereignty back—those are all great reasons to be more prepared.

**WOODS:** Let's take an example of the kind of a skill that you teach on your survival podcast that the average person can learn relatively easily and then can be part of their survival approach.

**SPIRKO:** There's a lot to that one. That gets pretty deep. If folks want to get on my site, it's [www.thesurvivalpodcast.com](http://www.thesurvivalpodcast.com). I think I did Episode 1,238 today to give you an idea of the volume of information that we've put out. We do that five days a week, but you're hitting on something very important. So I'm going to back off that for just a second and talk about things and stuff versus skills just real quick.

**WOODS:** Yeah, sure.

**SPIRKO:** So the first thing that people think is, well, I need food. I need water. I need some kind of backup energy source and the basics of that we could do an hour and just cover the basics of that. But that is a great place to start, is the stuff. Where you need to move to very quickly from there, though, is skill sets and knowledge. And like one of the things I focus very, very heavily on is being able to produce your own food. I'll start somebody out with anything from an herb garden in a pot to getting them to terraforming an entire yard and produce half of their own food or more. And the reason I'll do that and focus so much on that is I'm going to ask you a couple of questions, and they're not rhetorical. I want an answer from you. Have you ever had to shoot anybody in your life, Tom?

**WOODS:** No, although if I said yes, people would demand another episode on that.

**SPIRKO:** Other than schoolyard fights and stuff like that do you regularly get into physical conflicts with people?

**WOODS:** No.

**SPIRKO:** How often do you eat?

**WOODS:** Multiple times a day.

**SPIRKO:** Correct, and you'll do that every day until you're laid to rest, so to speak. You're going to have to feed yourself, and the problem I see in preparedness—and I'm a huge advocate of the Second Amendment. I'm a big believer in tactical training, self-defense training. I'm not saying those things aren't important. I'm just saying that that's what people gravitate towards, and the first thing you've got to think about is how am I going to be able to feed myself. So the skills that I want to teach people are, one, how to produce your own food. Two, how to preserve your own food. Three, how to procure food, so learning basic wild crafting. There's probably something that could provide food for you within a mile of your home if you learn what it is.

I also want people to understand how to adapt to situations, so we start walking the line of critical thinking. I know you're big on that. I've heard some of your talks about government, which are outstanding by the way. The way you lead people to an understanding that government isn't all it's cracked up to be is to critically analyze: let's take the free market, and let's compare it to government. Let's see how the two don't quite get along and which one is really a superior solution. That critical thinking aspect then needs to be applied to things like preparedness. There are people that could be in a situation where they have everything they need to survive, but because they don't have the knowledge to go along with it they end up really miserable or dead.

Here's like a wilderness survival example. There's been hunters out in the woods who get lost, freeze to death or just spend a couple of nights really miserable, because they can't get a fire started. They can't do a friction fire or whatever, but they're walking around with a gun and ammunition. Now, if you have that and a little bit of knowledge, you should be able to start a fire using one of the cartridges by removing the projectile, dumping out most of the powder, put a little bit of powder back into it, take a piece of cotton like off of the shirt or something, put that into the cartridge, fire that with the primer and a pinch of powder out of rock. Pick it up, blow on it, use the rest of the powder as an igniter for your tinder.

Every single hunter that I know of that hunts in firearms season is walking around with a fire-starting kit. But yet we have people that end up lost in that situation that end up huddling under a bunch of leaves freezing cold when they could have a fire. That's just one thing, so I think the skill set stuff it's so big. It's hard for me to pin down a lot of specific examples for you, but what it really comes down to is just critical thinking. Start looking around. And the biggest thing I wish I could teach people is whenever you're in a situation, whether it's you're stuck in business, or you're stuck in a survival situation, first rule: Stop. Don't panic. Think. Assess the situation. Two, ask yourself, What are my tools? What do I have available to me? Three, how can I apply them? And if we did that, we'd get further in life. We'd get further in crisis situations, and frankly we would turn a lot of crisis situations into simple inconveniences.

**WOODS:** Jack, a lot of times when the media doesn't really like a group, it will invent a name for that group, so you've got the "Birthers." You've got "Tenthers." Now you have the "Preppers." But on the other hand, though, the fact that they're developing a name for a group means the group is growing, means the group is identifiable. If it were just ten people, they wouldn't bother to come up with a name for them, so I take that to mean that the community of people who are interested in the kind of things you're doing is on the rise. What do you attribute that to? Do you think it starts with the antigovernment people and then once they get deeply into this, they realize, "Wait, there's a lot more than preparing for economic Armageddon in 2035. There are things to prepare for here in 2013."

**SPIRKO:** Correct. I think it's a mixture of things. I think the antigovernment sentiment has something to do with it. I think that when people start looking at a national debt and seeing it cross \$17 trillion—I think to be fair to some of the people out of the establishment, Comptroller David Walker, when he started doing his thing seven, eight years ago now, coming out and talking about unfunded liabilities, a lot of these things have shaken people to at least start asking some questions, and that really gets you in the right direction. I actually think it's a much deeper thing. I mentioned my grandparents. My grandparents were part of the World War II generation, what we commonly refer to as the Greatest Generation. I'm not sure—I think maybe the greatest generation might have been the Homesteader Generation of the mid-1800s, but we'll leave that aside for now.

One thing we do know is our grandparents were tough people, and they understood how to get through tough times. That gave way to the baby boom generation. The Baby Boom Generation gave birth to the tweens and Gen X and Gen Y. We got into a point where people were living off the fruits of the labor of the previous generation and had lost a lot of the wisdom and had gone into what I call a false happiness. I'm happy, because I have shiny things, paid for with plastic. Over time, a lot of that started to wane, and the supposed dream began to cave in for a lot of people. You have people coming out of college today—not just the people with a degree

in gender studies or some nonsense like that that they paid \$150,000 for—but people with legitimate degrees that are having a hard time finding jobs. What they end up doing is starting to figure out everything's not the way it was promised to be, and they start asking questions.

When you get into the preparedness mindset, you start to learn again traditional skills. You start thinking about growing your own food. You start to find out what's wrong with the food supply. And there's about a million different avenues that people can come into this world from. Once they get in they are all interconnected. You learn your food's covered in poison. You learn that the government's not taking care of you. Everybody that comes in initially is either a Democrat or a Republican. Few remain that after a few years into the analysis, because they realize it's just marketing.

I think it's when you touch the power of knowing, I can take care of myself, it actually feels really, really good. I think when people feel good they tend to keep doing something. When they feel good, and they keep doing something, they start telling other people about it. I can tell you the exponential growth I've seen with my show. I started my show in 2008, in June, and I was screaming at people to get out of the stock market. I was largely political and financially focused at the time, because that was the big crisis I saw coming. I had about 2000 people listening by the end of 2008. As of this week, I get an average of 85,000 plus downloads of my show a day. So that's the growth that you're talking about there, but you would think the survival podcast was all gloom and doom. It's probably the most positive survival show out there.

Just coming back to where you started this question about how they've taken preppers and tried to almost put a negative connotation on it, the ironic thing is the word "prepper" came from people that were called survivalists who wanted to soften the name itself. So it started out with "survivalist," going, "You know what? We'll call ourselves preppers, because you're getting the wrong idea." So the media just said okay fine, we'll spin that. I mean the reality is I call it modern survivalism. Because I am concerned with my survival and your survival, and the survival of all the people in my community. Anybody that says that they're not a survivalist, I'm going to ask them to stand still while a bus hurls at them at 80 miles an hour. As soon as you jump out of the way, I'm going to call you a survivalist, because clearly you don't want to die, right? Or you don't want to be miserable. That's the big part of it. I'm as much concerned with trying to keep people alive as I am trying to keep them out of as much misery as I can.

**WOODS:** Anybody who, by the way, would think that you specifically are involved in doom and gloom should just look at the topic list on the Survival Podcast, because to me, even though I'm very, very new to all this, I never thought of it as being something negative or scaremongering. What it actually is doing is saying, "Look at how much you have in your own two hands that

you're capable of doing, and you just don't know it yet." In other words, instead of just saying everything's going to hell in a handbasket, and there's nothing you can do, they're plenty of things you can do. There are plenty of things you specifically can do. You've also been giving advice to people about creating more stable incomes for themselves. It's not just a matter of, "we rely too much on Frankenfood or agribusiness," but we rely too much on an employer to put food on our table, to put money in our pockets. You've also been talking about prepper sort of stuff related to that.

**SPIRKO:** I'm telling people to build businesses, and I'm building multiple business units myself. People are like, "Why are you building businesses if the economy might collapse?" And I'm like, because the economy might collapse. I mean this is the problem that when people start thinking about economic collapse, they think of it like a light switch. It's on one minute. It's off the next. But if we look at societies that actually experience economic collapses, it's not like everything just goes away. It's that there's a lot of misery and pain, but I know one thing. Tom Woods probably won't fire Tom Woods. Jack Spirko's not going to fire Jack Spirko. Even if the business you've built doesn't survive, by building a business now, you teach yourself the skill set and the mentality necessary to be an entrepreneur, because there will always be opportunities.

In some cases, the greater the crisis, the greater the opportunity. But what would we do if X wasn't available? I'd say, well people that know how to do that have a great opportunity at that point whether it's for cash, whether it's for barter, whether it's for silver. It doesn't matter what it is. When we look at Argentina, we look at the economic collapse of the Soviet Union. You go all the way back to the fall of Rome. None of these societies simply dried up and blew away. And a lot of times, there's an economic collapse, and there's a period of prosperity after it. I'm not betting on that one this time around, and you're probably not, either.

But just to give you a classic example: whenever somebody wants to sell you gold, they always talk about—you know what it is?—Weimar Republic. What they don't tell you is that lasted about three years, and for ten years after that, there was an economic period in Germany called the Golden Era, and that ended when we went into the Great Depression. That whole piece of that story gets left out, so there's always cycles in economics. I don't like where the next cycle's going but I think if you're prepared, and you understand how to capitalize on opportunity, know how to build businesses, know how to build teams, I'm not saying everything's going to be hunky-dory, but you're sure as hell a lot better off than the guy that has a job just bolting tires on cars or working in a government office processing paperwork or programming a computer. If you program computers today, you really probably shouldn't be working for anybody else. You probably should be freelancing and working for yourself.

**WOODS:** When you started this podcast back in 2008, and you had the 2000 listeners by the end of the year, you probably didn't imagine where you would be in 2013, but are you basically doing this kind of activity full-time now?

**SPIRKO:** Yeah, I actually was a partner in three different traditional businesses. One a majority partner and a minority partner in two others, and actually a partner in a holding corporation that owned the whole lot of them. And I was doing the traditional thing, and when I went to leave, and I basically sold my interest out for next to nothing to all of my partners in the other businesses, they thought it was crazy. I did not know it would become what it has become. I knew that if I took this and ran with it, because I'm good at what I do, I would be successful as a business with it.

What's actually been astounding to me is the community that's rallied around it. We've been able to do things for people all over the country. We've taken up certain causes and certain fights to help people keep their property or to deal with situations where government was oppressing them. In one particular instance, we picked up an issue for a lady named Jan Cline out in Oregon. I don't know if you've ever heard about this. She's pretty big in the news. She was dying of bone cancer, and Glenn Beck picked up her story and ran it on The Blaze. My little podcast out-fundraised Glenn Beck and The Blaze. That's not me. That's the people in my audience. The forum that's formed around that. And we're doing training now at my property. It's a limited number of people we bring per training, but we've had people come out here, spend time here, and learn.

But the after-hours stuff, hanging out at the campfire, talking to each other, we've had people that have been to our events say that if you guys do an event on paint drying I'm coming back, because it's that type of a community. It's that type of people that really understand that we are to be looking out for each other, but we're also supposed to be responsible for ourselves and our families first. That's the bigger story. Building a podcast into a business is one thing. Building a community of people that self-replicate and do good things in the world, that's the bigger thing as far as I'm concerned.

**WOODS:** And it's so hard to predict. As I said, when you got started, you probably had no idea where it was going to go, and now you look at it in absolute amazement. I see that too. I just had this guy, Robb Wolf, who's one of these paleo eaters, on.

**SPIRKO:** Yeah I love Robb. He's a friend of mine.

**WOODS:** Okay. I mean he's another example. He's built up a tremendous community around the kind of information that he spreads, and he had no idea that all of a sudden he'd be able to

make a living at this doing something that he knows is making a positive contribution and where he would be difficult to replace. There aren't a whole lot of Robb Wolfs in the world.

**SPIRKO:** In fact, I have to say that I owe my current state of health to Robb. I found his book several years ago. I was almost 300 pounds. I'm about 205 now, somewhere in that range. I played football in high school at 190. I'm in my 40s now, so that's about as good as it's getting on my end as far as I'm concerned, as far as the weight that I'm carrying. He had a tremendous impact on my life, and if I had to say what makes him successful, what makes shows like mine successful, I think as a bigger thing, it's having this impact on people's lives. It's not just you can't be easily replaced. I've had vets tell me that what we're doing—it's hard for me to even say this, because I don't feel like I get this credit—what we're doing and what we gave them is something they can grab onto, prevented them from committing suicide. I had a woman at an event I attended come up to me. She was probably in her late 60s. She found the show, because her friend said she needed to listen to it. She thought that we were crazy at first, honestly, but what we said started to make sense.

She was very, very high paid, but something clicked, and she started just doing these basic things and setting her life up with more redundancies. And then she got hit with some sort of an illness. I don't remember what it was, but she ended up on disability. So she went from a six-figure income to disability salary. And she was like, "My life is still okay, but if I had not been prepared for that I would be in a real hard way today," and she had tears in her eyes. When you can hit people like that, and at the same time you're trying to get them prepared for the worst of the worst—but I mean I'll put it this way, the catchphrase, the worst catchphrase in marketing, but it was the only thing that made sense. So I did it anyway. Even as a marketer I knew it was wrong, but it worked. And that was, "Helping you live a better life if times get tough or even if they don't." And that's what we're really trying to do. If you can't make yourself happy today, what hope do you have of making yourself happy in post-collapse society? And the answer is none.

**WOODS:** Well, Jack, I really appreciate this chat. I would say that by any definition of success, you can count yourself a success. I know that you would say that it's more important than all that. But being a success means helping other people. And you've done it in ways that you find out every day, and ways you'll never know about, so I want to give people—especially since I'm still new at the show—in the first programs, I want to acquaint people with people I respect and get the basic gist of what it is they do. So maybe they'll plug in with these other people as well. I'm so glad you were able to carve out some time with us today. We really appreciate it.