



SOUL SURVIVOR

My Journey Out Of The Ashes Of Trauma To Triumph

Linda P. Jones

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of The Ashes of
Trauma to Triumph*

BY LINDA P. JONES

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated first to the relentless God who pursued and nudged until I said yes to this work, and stayed with me throughout the writing, especially when it became very difficult to bare my soul on paper. You are indeed the Alpha and Omega of my life.

To my husband Oliver (Guy) and daughter, Joy; you gave me the reason to go on, loving and praying me through the worst of times.

To all Soul Survivors; you held on and did not give up and lived to tell the story. Yes, you are survivors!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dedication	iii
Preface	v
Introduction.....	vii
Chapters	
1 CHILDHOOD TRAUMA.....	1
2 MOTHER AND DAUGHTER	5
3 DADDY’S GIRL	9
4 LIFE AT MY GRANDFATHER.....	15
5 MIGRATED TO CANADA	20
6 FROM THE FRYING PAN INTO THE FIRE!	23
7 LIFE AFTER DIVORCE	30
8 IN SEARCH OF A NEW BEGINNING.....	33
9 THE ADVENTURE CONTINUES	37
10 CINDERELLA MEETS PRINCE CHARMING.....	41
11 THE PRINCE VISITS	46
12 LIFE IN BARBADOS	50
13 ONE BABY, TWO BABY, THREE BABY... ..	58
14 BABY FOUR, BABY FIVE	64
15 THE BIRTHING OF MINISTRY	71
16 WALKING ON WATER - WOW!	75
17 MUST HAVE DONE SOMETHING WRONG.....	80
18 ARE WE THERE YET?.....	86
19 THE END BUT NOT FINISHED - PART 1.....	93
20 THE END BUT NOT FINISHED - PART 2.....	100
21 MY SURVIVAL STRATEGIES.....	106
22 CONCLUSION	110
Afterword	113
Acknowledgements	114
About the Author	116

PREFACE

I had no intention of writing a book about my life's journey. I did not care to rehash my past, and when I thought about it I asked, what really is there to tell anyway? I have heard and read other women's stories, which make mine seem like no big thing in comparison. In my mind the past is the past and it was best to leave it there, but my husband of more than thirty years had been prompting me for many of those years to document my story, and my response was always the same, "I don't think so." Then one day in one of our ministry meetings, after I had made reference to my life in a testimony, a friend, Sandra Clarke, handed me a note and this is what it said:

"You need to write another book. This book will minister deep into the lives of the broken women...a book not on My Word this time my daughter, but one about you, one about your story...no matter how long it takes to write. You briefly mention to everyone that you know their kind of hurt, because you have been there, but sometimes you barely skim the surface. You need to get real, get deep and proclaim your testimony on paper."

Since then, God has sent other people to talk to me about this book; some had dreams, while others simply said, "Have you ever thought of putting your story on paper?" After awhile I had to give in; I was still reluctant to do it but I knew I had to be obedient.

Some years later Sandra said to me again, "You have to write this book, it's going to be the hardest thing you have ever done but you are going to have to write it." She was right; it has been the hardest writing I have ever done and it has taken me seven years to complete.

SOUL SURVIVOR

Soul Survivor is written from a place of forgiveness and from the progressive healing that the Lord has been doing and continues to do in my life. However, names have been changed to protect individuals' identities so that in no way will they feel exposed.

Linda P. Jones

INTRODUCTION

A few years ago I attended a meeting where the speaker asked us to hold the hand of the person next to us. He said, “I want you to know what it feels like holding the hand of a miracle.” He went on to explain why the person whose hand we were holding is a miracle. He said for the amount of hell they went through, it was a miracle they were there. For a moment my mind went to the woman whose hand I was holding, whom I had never met before and I tried to imagine what she might have gone through in her own life. I wondered what dragons and serpents she fought and overcame to be still standing there. Then my mind went to my own life and I smiled inwardly as I mused at the many personal struggles, battles and wars I had fought on every level. From my earliest recollection it has always been a fight just to survive.

A minister once prayed for me and he said, “You are a survivor!” He was right, I am a survivor. A line in one of my favorite hymns, *Amazing Grace* sums it best:

*“Through many dangers toils and snares
I have already come,
Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far
And grace will lead me home.”*

Soul Survivor is my story of how God brought me out of the ashes of despair, degradation, shame and rejection and into new life, a bright future and now to bring hope and deliverance to others. I am confident this book will minister deep into the lives of broken women (and men) just as God promised.

- *chapter one* -

CHILDHOOD TRAUMA

I WAS BORN in the heart of the city of Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, in the Caribbean. The area where I was born and grew up was noted for fights, riots, drugs, violence, prostitution and gangs, etc., and it is even worse today. To this day, I still hesitate in telling those who know the country of Trinidad where I was born, because inevitably they react with raised eyebrows. The biblical saying "*Can anything good come out of Nazareth?*" could also be attributed to my case. Could anything good come out of that area where I was born? Most people I knew, along with the devil, expected me to become a failure. My life's journey has been a very long and difficult one; however, I am a living testimony of God's love and power to save, deliver from sin and death, bringing beauty from a life of cinders and fragmentation while establishing His purpose in me throughout the earth.

My mother was young and inexperienced when she met my father. She told me he was her first boyfriend and with their first sexual encounter at the age of 19 she became pregnant with me. As a result of this experience, my mother endured tremendous pressure and abuse from her grandmother, who was the one who raised her. She told me that her grandmother made her life miserable. A pregnant unwed teenager was a source of shame and disgrace to a family.

A year and some months after I was born, my mother gave birth again, this time to twin boys, but Daddy never married her. I had another brother, Errol, who was from a different mother, and he was just a year or so older than I.

SOUL SURVIVOR

He often spent some of his summer vacations with us and we all got along well together. I also discovered that I had a sister who was from yet another mother. Daddy was “busy”.

* * *

My most vivid childhood memory dates back to approximately age three and it is of my dear, gentle maternal grandmother, who lived with my mother, my father and my two brothers. Gramma, as we called her, was a devout woman who loved God in her own way. She taught me the Lord’s Prayer and another simple prayer, which I had to say every night before going to bed:

*“Now I lay me down to sleep,
I give the Lord my soul to keep;
If I should die before I wake,
I pray the Lord my soul to take.”*

She also taught me the song *Jesus Wants Me For a Sunbeam*. This may sound funny, but before I knew how to pray I said that simple childlike prayer way into my young adult life almost every night before going to sleep.

I loved Gramma dearly. She was only 42 years old at the time, but to a three-year old, she seemed old. My grandmother was a lovely, stately six-foot tall, kind woman, who exhibited an air of confidence and grace despite her battle with epilepsy. During one of her epileptic fits she spilled boiling water on herself and suffered severe burns on one arm and leg. My mother recalls having to accompany her everywhere since one never knew when an episode would occur. Despite all this, Gramma never complained; she bore her suffering with dignity. Gramma was my safe haven in the midst of an often turbulent childhood. Curling up in her lap and cuddling her badly scarred arm was the safest and most comforting place in the world for me.

In my little mind I knew things were not at all happy at home; I was experiencing trauma and didn’t quite understand it then. There was a lot of quarreling, squabbles and skirmishes between my mother and father. I am convinced that it was my grandmother’s presence that helped to keep my father’s abusive behavior somewhat at bay. However, when we moved to the new housing area, my grandmother did not want to come live with us and that’s when the abuse escalated.

Childhood Trauma

It was not long after, when I was about age seven, that Gramma died, and I was devastated. I remember her funeral well and how I cried inconsolably. That safe place no longer existed after her death. A child needs some place and someone in whom he can feel safe and secure, and I had lost mine.

Life without Gramma

Without that restraining presence of my grandmother, my father showed his real colors, so to speak. Eventually the fighting between my parents escalated to weekly battles. Fridays (Daddy's payday) signaled the beginning of the violent encounters. He would come home drunk and somehow arguments would start over petty things, and then the verbal was quickly followed by the physical fights. I did not say beatings because my mother fought back; they fought like two men. One day my father went after my mother with the claw of a hammer raised to her back as she was trying to escape, but just as he was about to strike her, his mother, who was visiting with us that day, jumped in between them and the hammer punctured her upper lip. He was in such a drunken stupor that not even his mother's presence deterred him.

During the fights I would become hysterical, screaming and begging him to stop; the whole neighborhood heard me. I would run to the next door neighbors pleading and begging them to intervene, but they were too scared to do anything and tried to console me the best they could.

It was a horrific experience for us. I can't remember much about my brothers' reaction. I was the one who tried to make peace by begging daddy to stop the fighting; I pleaded with him to not beat my mother. I tried to protect her, to stop him from doing her harm. There were a few times he would heed but for the most part my hysterical screams and pleadings fell on deaf ears. Actually, after the fights, he would chastise me for behaving like that, scolding me for intervening. I had nowhere to go and no one to talk to. Who wanted to listen to a seven year-old anyway? My life was one dark, dreadful experience.

I felt too ashamed to go outside after an episode of beatings because I knew all the neighbors heard the uproar. I would often go into an imaginary world to escape the pain, and dreamt of leaving the island and flying away to another country where nobody knew us. One of the songs I often sang to myself was Barbara Streisand's *Somewhere (There's a Place For Us)*. I hoped somewhere, someday, life would be better for me – for us.

Those experiences had so affected me that it wasn't until I reached my early twenties that I recognized something was wrong. I realized that the

SOUL SURVIVOR

emotional turmoil of anxiety and hysteria I consistently experienced as the weekends approached were panic attacks related to my childhood experiences. I did not know what to do about them. It never occurred to me I could see a counselor or psychologist or someone, so I suffered in silence.

WE ALL HAVE SOMETHING IN OUR PAST...

Something we want to keep hidden. Especially if the unpleasant memory is still very fresh, if our wounds have not entirely healed, and if the tears that lay on our cheeks are not quite dry. Yet here you are in the present, a survivor. We are reluctant to share our past because of the fear of how people may look at us, knowing full well that people are often prone to judge. However, our past and the fact that we have survived it, is the very thing that others need to hear so they too can survive, because for many, your history is really the reality of their present. I have survived my past and God has brought me to a place where I can now unashamedly share my story.

Relentless is the word I would use to describe how God dealt with me. He was unrelenting and intense in His pursuit of me, but persistently hostile to every single, opposing foe and every negative word that sentenced me to spiritual death. He was relentless against many adversaries that wanted to relegate me to a life of defeat, failure and premature, physical death. If I can declare I am a *Soul Survivor*, then so can you!

SOUL SURVIVOR

.....is a look at one woman's journey from brokenness to that of wholeness. Though it speaks of great pain, the beauty in this book is of God's ability to make something beautiful out of the writer's life. It imparts hope to the reader that their life will become beautiful in God's hands. If this is what you are seeking, then *Soul Survivor* has been written just for you!



Linda P. Jones is an ordained minister and founding pastor of Walking on Water Teaching and Equipping Centre also founder director of Women of Worth Ministries. She hosts a bi-monthly radio Program - "Words of Wisdom," she is also known for her gifting of teaching of the Word. Linda is a speaker at conferences and seminars... and a published author of several books, including "What Aileth Thee" and "Out of the Ashes." Linda and her husband Oliver have one daughter and live in Barbados, West Indies.

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