

“With grace and humility, Jenn reaches out to tell other abuse survivors that there is hope and a future beyond their pain. Giving advice grounded in Scripture, Jenn walks through her personal process of healing with lived-it advice for others on the same path. If you have been abused or are supporting a loved one who has experienced abuse, you will find solace and wisdom here.”

KARLA JACOBS, Member, Georgia Commission on Women,
Georgia Human Trafficking Task Force

“Gripping, grievous, gracious, glorious, and gut-wrenching. Greenberg sets straight the path.”

LORI ANNE THOMPSON, Survivor and Storyteller

“In *Not Forsaken*, if you have experienced abuse, you will feel understood. If you have not, you will understand better the impact that abuse has. Statistics show abuse is rampant in our world and Christian communities. This is a reminder of how much we must do to protect the innocent, and of how there is hope in Jesus for those who suffer.”

DR. TIMOTHY S. LANE, President, Institute for Pastoral Care;
Author, *How People Change* and *Unstuck*

“Starting a domestic-abuse ministry has been a long road with a steep learning curve. This is the book I wish we would have had at the beginning.”

JASON MEYER, Pastor for Preaching and Vision,
Bethlehem Baptist Church, Minneapolis

“A powerful and needed book, as the prevalence of abuse increasingly comes to light in our world and churches. This book will not only be a healing balm for the deepest wounds but will leave you worshipping the God of hope, healing, and redemption.”

SARAH WALTON, Author, *Hope When It Hurts*

“Jennifer is exactly the kind of expert that nobody wants to be: she has firsthand experience of the destructive nature of abuse. In spite of this she gives a firsthand account of the power of love. This book combines the compassion of #metoo experience with the wisdom of a seasoned theologian.”

BOB HAMP, Marriage and Family Therapist; Author,
Think Differently series

“A brave and authentic exploration of the complex and often conflicting feelings and actions that accompany abuse. The shared human condition of pain shines through this book, but in a way that brings you hope, healing, and a future beyond that pain.”

NICOLE F. FISHER, President, Health & Human Rights Strategies

“For those who want a faith-based process of healing, this lays the foundation to take the first step to wholeness.”

TODD HILDEBRANDT, Survivor; RAINN Speakers Bureau

“Jennifer’s book offers God’s powerful truths through the aching realities of her own testimony. She gives you permission to feel, heal, and discover who you are through the murky waters of the abuse that has tried to drown you. I am grateful for Jennifer’s voice and her bravery: everyone will benefit from reading *Not Forsaken!*”

POLLY HAMP, Survivor; Author, *Cherished*

“If you want to see how the gospel meets those who have been hurt and abused, pick up this powerful book. And if you lead in any capacity in the church, have several copies on hand to help give hope to those who feel hopeless.”

DANIEL DARLING, VP for Communications, The Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission; Author, *The Dignity Revolution*

“Few books truly have the power to change a person’s life, but I believe this is one of them. *Not Forsaken* is one of the most powerful, chilling, heartbreaking, redemptive, and inspiring stories I’ve ever read. Jenn invites the reader to join her on a journey from heartbreak to healing; and along the way, you’ll experience the full range of human emotion and see the goodness of God in new ways.”

DAVE WILLIS, Author, *Raising Boys Who Respect Girls*

“Deeply moving. As a survivor, each chapter spoke to my personal experiences and felt validating and fulfilling. Jenn brings her spirituality and compassion to her work and to those who benefit from her kindness and her story. I count myself as one of them.”

CHAD FELIX GREENE, Survivor, Advocate and Author

“Jenn doesn’t shy away from the awful and ugly experiences she has endured; but she also paints a beautiful picture of redemption. As an abuse survivor, Jenn’s words resonated with me. For spouses, family members, or friends seeking to understand abuse in a loved one, this book is perfect. For pastors, teachers, and leaders, this book will be a resource you will find yourself pulling off your bookshelf again and again as you walk beside survivors in your church, ministry, or school.”

MEGAN LIVELY, Survivor; Founder, Relevant Reach

“If you’ve never experienced abuse, take a moment to thank God. Then read this book to enter the scary world populated, perhaps, by your friends, family, church members, and neighbors. The church needs this message.”

WILLIAM BOEKESTEIN, Pastor, Immanuel Fellowship Church,
Kalamazoo, Michigan; Author, *The Future of Everything*

“This is the riveting story of a young woman finding redemption from abuse by family and church. While not easy reading, it will help the church learn anew how to defend the weak and mistreated. Pastors and church leaders are urged to read *Not Forsaken*.”

BARRY YORK, President and Professor of Pastoral Theology,
Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary

“What is one of the most beneficial forms of care we can provide for those who have been abused? Listening. Does that make you uncomfortable? It’s better to admit it and grow than ignore the awkwardness. Jenn Michelle Greenberg has given us an opportunity to listen, which will help us do better when someone we know shares their story with us. Allow her vulnerability and courage to equip you for when someone entrusts you to pastor or befriend them as they navigate the aftershocks of abuse.”

J.D. GREEAR, President, The Southern Baptist Convention

“I recommend this work to everyone, as a glorious reminder that we are not forsaken. In a culture saturated with victimhood and self-reflection, Jennifer takes us to the transcendent God who alone gives hope in the struggle of life through Jesus Christ.”

PROF. DUSTIN BENGE, The Andrew Fuller Center
for Baptist Studies

“The church has been crying out for a book like this, and the right person has now written it in the right way. Yes, it’s raw, honest, transparent, and painful. That’s why it will resonate with so many. But, unlike so many secular abuse memoirs, this one is also full of grace, truth, gospel, and hope. That’s why it will be redemptive for so many.”

DR. DAVID MURRAY, Professor of Old Testament and Practical
Theology, Puritan Reformed Seminary

“*Not Forsaken* offers a glimpse into the heart and mind of an abuse survivor, both during and after the abuse. With skillful compassion, Jenn offers hope from the story of the gospel. A helpful and hope-giving guide for abuse survivors and caregivers alike.”

ERIC SCHUMACHER, Co-author,
Worthy: Celebrating the Value of Women

JENNIFER MICHELLE
GREENBERG

N O T

F O R S A K E N

A STORY OF LIFE
AFTER ABUSE

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This book recounts events in the life of the author according to the author's recollection and from the author's perspective. Dialogue, names, dates, places, events, and details may be altered for privacy purposes or literary effect.

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FOREWORD

by Russell Moore

“I have found, in short, from reading my own writing, that my subject in fiction is the action of grace in territory held largely by the devil,” novelist Flannery O’Connor once wrote. I reflect on that insight often, because I think it applies much more broadly than to the realm of literature. What is most real in the cosmos is just that: the action of grace in territory held largely by the devil.

As Christians, we see both the horror of evil and, against that, the triumphant beauty of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We don’t see the world, or history, or our own life plotlines as sentimental morality tales, nor do we see them as gothic horror stories. As we follow Jesus, we see the world around us through the prism of the cross. And at the cross we see the nauseating brokenness of this devil-haunted universe, and, even more than that, the grace of one who poured out his own blood to save us.

Christians, then, should be, above all people, those who understand the reality of trauma. And we should be, above all people, those who know that trauma is not invincible to the workings of grace. We see human lives, including our own, in terms of the Place of the Skull—a sight that causes

broken hearts to turn away in grief and a sight that causes broken hearts to shout for joy at the truth that while the valley of the shadow of death is real indeed, there is a Shepherd there alongside us.

This book is a word of testimony from one who has lived through trauma, and is able, as the Bible tells us, to groan at the wreckage of a satanized world and to cry out, by the Spirit, “Abba, Father” (Romans 8 v 12-17). As you read these moving reflections, you may find that you are being helped to deal with events in your own past or present, by seeing them in the light of the gospel of hope. And if, like me, you have not faced such evil yourself, you might stop to wonder what awful realities are around you right now from which you might be turning your head in apathy.

My prayer is that all of us might wonder what are the ways—ways very different from one life to the next—in which the grace of God has moved people, or can move them, from “victim” to “survivor.” Those questions might prompt us to stand up for justice for those who are being harmed. And they might propel us to remember what many of us learned to sing, before we really understood just how painful it can be to live:

*Grace has brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.*

Russell Moore
President, The Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission

*“Never will I leave you;
never will I forsake you.”*

Hebrews 13 v 5b

She patted the dirt firmly into the pot. This would be a perfect addition to her caterpillar farm. The brick patio was littered with spare pots and bags of soil. Not quite in kindergarten, she loved spending her days outside, digging through earth, planting weeds, and collecting bugs.

“I can’t read very good,” she explained to God as she tilled soil with her fingers. “The Bible is too long and praying with my eyes closed is boring. How about, when I talk in my head, I’ll be talking to you?”

She remembered her mother reading the Bible and telling her about the wisdom of King Solomon. He had asked for wisdom from God, and God had lavished it upon him. More than anything she wanted to be smart like her daddy: the spiritually aware man of science, the researcher, reader, and authority on doctrine and evolution. She prayed that God would make her wise like Solomon. Most of all, she prayed that God would allow her to see demons, just like Jesus had, so she could know good people from evil.

“Be quiet,” he said. “I am reading.”

Her father once again addressed himself to the thick theology book with its elegant hardcover and advanced Biblical theorem. The little girl nodded agreement and went back to playing, this time keeping her voice down. Suddenly, a strong hand grabbed her from behind. He clenched her arm tightly, shook her violently, and began to beat her.

She cried out that she was sorry. She promised to be quiet. She screamed for help. He would not stop hitting. In an instant, her father had gone from studying apologetics to beating his daughter.

At the sounds of her screams, her mother ran into the room.

“What are you doing?” she demanded.

Her father dropped her, and she fled into her room. There, huddled on the floor, she examined the hand-shaped welts. She lined her small fingers up with each bruise: five purple contusions for each place his fingers had gripped her.

“This is how big my dad’s hands are,” she thought.

In the living room, her father went back to reading his theology book.

She jolted awake to her heart racing, her skin crawling in a cold sweat, and her stomach writhing with anxiety.

She looked at the clock.

2:00 am.

It was that same horrible dream. As so many times before, the demon had thrown open her bedroom door, leapt onto her bed, and ripped off the covers. Somehow, she knew, the demon represented her dad.

“It’s only a dream,” she told herself. “Only a dream.”

But she was terrified.

She had seen his porn. It seemed that almost every night he planted more of it on her computer, and every day she found grotesque new images. There were rape scenes, torture scenes, scenes of multiple men raping a teen girl. Sometimes she’d catch him watching her as she logged into her desktop, staring at her with that cold brightness in his eyes.

Day after day brought more shame and fear. Night after night brought recurring nightmares.

She began to lock her bedroom door.

She tied bells around the doorknob and left obstacles, like shoes, toys, and a box of knick-knacks, on the path to her bed. *If he comes in while I’m sleeping, she thought, he’ll trip and the noise will wake me up.*

“God,” she prayed one night, weeping alone in the dark, “this man I live with is not my dad. He’s a stranger. I don’t know if I can grow up like this. I need You to be my Daddy.

Please God, fill that role in my life. I know you can't be here physically, and I need someone who is here, but don't leave me alone as an orphan.”

And God answered.

It was as if love were an ocean, and she had been plunged into the very heart of it. Her fear was washed away, and her sorrow dispersed like fog on a summer morning. Without a shadow and without exception, she knew she was God's daughter, and she laughed through her tears at that swift relief.