

“Thank you for the opportunity to meet Leslie; little Leslie, Big Leslie, Candy, and the Leslie who has made the journey to find herself. The Leslie that God always loved and who wept with her through the running and the darkness to become the Leslie that she was meant to be. . . . This book is not about the darkness, but about the way Leslie found the light and the grace-filled God who walked with her every step of the way.”

—Jo Lembo, Director of Faith Initiatives and National Outreach at Shared Hope International

“Leslie King’s harrowing experience as a young woman surviving on the streets while facing sexual exploitation, substance use disorder, and shocking violence, is tragically not rare. But her transformation from victim to champion truly inspires. She has returned to those same shadowy corners to help others fight their way out and has committed her life to saving theirs. She offers love and hope to all who are suffering and instructs others who have the power to help. A must-read for all medical professionals.”

—Leslie Pelkey, MD, FACP, Leslie King’s long-standing primary care physician

“The in-depth world of sex trafficking is dark and filled with things you think only happen on television. Leslie helps you to understand that sex trafficking can hit close to home and any family can be impacted by it. Our community is blessed to have her using her testimony for the greater good.”

—Senita Lenear, Third Ward Commissioner,
City of Grand Rapids, Michigan

“This book is a powerful read! Leslie takes you on a journey into her life. Each chapter has you hanging on, anticipating the ending. Everyone needs to own a copy of the book.”

—Tashawna “Political Princess” Gill, Political Advisor to Michigan’s Governor Gretchen Whitmer

“Leslie is a fierce advocate for women. I am amazed and in awe of her story. She tells a story that needs to be heard and shared with the world. This is a ‘must-read’ for everyone. It is honest and based on facts. I salute Leslie and her work.”

—Tyrone Carter, Michigan State Representative, District 6

“*When Angels Fight* is a brave memoir of God’s passionate love to save his children. Leslie King shares her vulnerable story of redemption and, in so doing, teaches all of us how to love and minister to those we often judge and dismiss. Christians are called by Jesus to love the downtrodden; I am grateful Leslie has stepped up to be our guide.”

—Noah Filipiak, founding pastor of Mosaic Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and author of *Beyond the Battle: A Man’s Guide to His Identity in Christ in an Oversexualized World*

WHEN
ANGELS
FIGHT

WHEN ANGELS FIGHT

My Story of Escaping
Sex Trafficking and Leading a
Revolt Against the Darkness

Leslie F. King



KREGEL
PUBLICATIONS

*When Angels Fight: My Story of Escaping Sex Trafficking and Leading a Revolt
Against the Darkness*

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Cataloging-in-Publication Data is available from the Library of Congress.

ISBN 978-0-8254-4689-4, print

ISBN 978-0-8254-7734-8, epub

ISBN 978-0-8254-6839-1, Kindle

Printed in the United States of America
22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 / 5 4 3 2 1

To my family

CONTENTS

<i>Foreword by Rebecca Bender</i>	11
<i>Introduction</i>	15
1. What's Love?	17
2. The Process	31
3. The Stroll	44
4. Staying	57
5. Hitting the Bottom	70
6. Freedom	84
7. Life Renewed	98
8. Moving Forward	115
9. Rebirth	128
10. Life Lessons	145
<i>Conclusion</i>	160
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	163
<i>Suggested Resources</i>	165
<i>About the Author</i>	169

FOREWORD

Leslie King is a modern-day Hosea, inviting us into a world many have never seen and showing us the relentless pursuit of God. Poured out onto each page is her heart and soul, in order to open your eyes and put tangible stories and context to the issues of human trafficking and sexual exploitation. But this book is more than that. These pages are steeped with passion that will inspire you, equip you, and empower you to go help the lost and vulnerable in your very own community.

When you hear the words *sex trafficking*, what comes to mind? Generally, certain images, scenes, and scenarios play out as a moving picture in our minds. But these two simple yet complex words carry a myriad of layers and nuances. Leslie pulls the curtain back on that stereotypical picture and walks us onto the streets, revealing how prostitution in America operates and thrives. The demand for sex, the vulnerabilities of young girls modeling what they were shown in childhood, desensitization to abuse, the innate human need to love and be loved, and the vicious cycle we find ourselves spiraling in—that is the true picture of trafficking.

When you fully understand these complexities, sex trafficking will play a different scene in your mind: a scene like Leslie's and like mine and like the many women who have been trapped

in this dangerous underground world. It will break stereotypes of kidnapped, blonde-haired toddlers and open your heart to compassion for the women who are caught in cycles of prostitution, childhood abuse, and trafficking—intersectionalities that are rarely isolated experiences.

Decades ago, our country changed the way Americans saw smoking. Prior to the campaign against this community health risk, one could witness a doctor lighting up in a hospital room or a flight attendant offering Marlboros on an airplane with a smile. It took years and dozens of people standing up to do their parts. It took lawyers who thought outside the box and sued the tobacco industry for health expenses incurred by cancer patients who smoked. It took whistleblowers like Jeffrey Wigand who risked everything—death threats, joblessness, divorce, and lack of money—all to come forward in hopes of making a difference. It took advocates and the media joining together to sound the alarm.

As a teenager, I vividly remember watching anti-smoking commercials on MTV. Hundreds of people spread out on the streets and sidewalks in front of big-tobacco headquarters, representing the number of people who had died of lung cancer. As I got older, I learned of the policymakers and lobbyists who fought to ensure that the public was made more aware of the health risks of smoking that had long been hidden. I learned about all the research on addiction, nicotine, and cancer. Because of all of these moving pieces over time, if you are old enough to remember, you had a front-row seat for watching American culture shift. Smoking is no longer the “safe” habit it was once thought to be, with warnings about the dangers of smoking front and center.

Similarly, the anti-trafficking movement has been around for many years. We have been honored to watch incredible progress in so many areas, and yet there is still an enormous amount of work to be done. It will take all of us coming together and playing our parts

to shift the tacit acceptance of sexual exploitation: researchers, advocates, activists, campaigners, concerned citizens, professionals dedicating their skill sets, and those with inside information braving great risk to sound the alarm.

Leslie is one of those women who stood up when it was not popular, who risked it all to come forward. Like many survivors, she has been through hardship that most people will never understand. Her stepping out to share that truth is an immense sacrifice. She also has the strength and resiliency to lean in and push through for the greater good of change, knowing firsthand that redemption and greatness are possible.

With unwavering strength and vulnerability, Leslie puts all her cards on the table to help each of us become better activists, advocates, and change makers. To shift a nation, it will take all of us, and Leslie is a leader who will help take us there.

REBECCA BENDER

Survivor leader, author, speaker,
and CEO and founder of Elevate Academy

INTRODUCTION

I was a runner. Not the one-hundred-yard-dash kind of runner, but the run-away-from-home kind. I ran away from the violence in my childhood home. I ran away from sexual abuse at the hands of a cousin. I ran away from school and juvenile detention. As I began to heal from years of trauma, I realized that I really ran away from fear, loneliness, and defeat.

I didn't know where I was running to, just that I needed to run. It was like I wanted to get out of my skin, to get out of me, and I thought running would help. But everywhere I ran, I was still there. I felt like I was going to explode. I had all these emotions I didn't know what to do with, and that threatened to wreck me. Feelings of anger, feelings about not fitting in with other children. And I was holding in a secret that was literally tearing me apart. I was afraid of everything and angry because of what was happening to me.

I would watch *The Brady Bunch* and *The Partridge Family* on television and imagine that their families were how all families should be. But my family was nothing like those TV families. I went to church and heard that God made us and loves us and takes care of the little children. I didn't feel taken care of at all, wondering how the God I heard about in church could allow all this pain. The only

love I saw was violent, with lots of blood, screaming, and begging to please stop.

When my mother had to go to work and my father didn't come home to care for us, my mother took us around the corner to a day care. I remember sitting in that day care bathroom with my hands over my ears because I could still hear her screams from the beating the night before. I wanted my mother's desperate voice to go away, but it never did. The visuals and shrieks never stopped. So I ran.

Little did I know I ran right into the darkness, into the arms of the man whom I thought would love me—only to sell me for years. Who fathered one of my sons, and who put me in charge of other young women he lured and trapped into a life of prostitution.

I ran like the terrified child I was and didn't stop running for over twenty years.

Now, in my midfifties, I can look back and see how God took me out of that life and into one that involves helping women who have similar pasts, who experience mental and physical health issues, and who feel barreelfuls of guilt for events that were beyond their control. I can help others stop their running because God helped me stop mine.

Make no mistake, God and his angels are out there fighting. Will you join them in the revolt against the darkness?

Chapter 1

WHAT'S LOVE?

I was only five. I remember the dull thwacks and sharp cracks of my dad's fists and palms connecting with my mom's body.

"Where the f--- you been?" as he hit her arms. "Where's my food?" as he shoved her into the counter.

Sometimes the hits came without words. Those times were the worst, when the hitting went on and on and my mom's whimpering turned into screaming and pleading. She went to work bruised and bloody many times.

We heard a lot, despite my brother and sister and I crouching in the closet or taking off outside if the weather was decent. My dad was a drinker, an angry alcoholic, and took out his anger on my mom two or three times every week. Often he beat her senseless in his drunken rages, not caring that his children were watching and listening.

"Please stop, please stop, please stop," we heard my mom scream.

When peace returned to the house, we heard my dad say "I love you" to my mom. He seemed to enjoy her company when he wasn't drinking. It didn't last, though; it never did. It wasn't long before he'd disappear to a friend's house or the front porch or the neighborhood bar to start the ugly process all over again. He didn't work, claiming disability after getting hurt on the job. He used crutches

to help him walk, and I never saw him without those crutches. Perhaps this contributed to the drinking, or perhaps not. Maybe he was just a mean drunk for no good reason. My mom, on the other hand, was a workaholic, sometimes working three jobs at a time. That's how "love" looked in my house.

I'm the oldest and therefore the protector. My mother had me when she was fifteen and my siblings a couple of years later, all of us the biological children of the man who beat my precious mother. My little brother and sister would get in bed with me when my dad was on a rampage because they were scared. I snuggled with them under the covers and hid them.

Our house then was on Oakland Avenue, across the street from Franklin School, where we would eventually all attend. That house had stairs where I would sit and look through the rails, crying and asking God to stop my daddy from hitting my mommy. The beatings never stopped. My dad would come in the door drunk and start right in. Sometimes he brought friends over and beat my mom in front of them just to show off. He called her all kinds of names as he hit her, "bitch, bitch, bitch" being the least of it. When he was done, he'd pass out on the couch and sleep for hours.

I sat there on the stairs and wished him dead. I knew my mom was trying to shield us from what he was doing, but I saw it. All of it. She tried to stay strong during all that my dad was doing. It might have been easier if he forgot, but he remembered what he did. I knew because I heard him trying to apologize. I used to wonder why my mom didn't leave. As I grew a little older, I figured with my childhood logic that that's what love meant: hitting and apologizing, staying and accepting that apology.

Even when he wasn't home, I had a sense of dread because I didn't know when he was going to come back. But I knew what he was going to do to my mom when he got there. I lived on pins and

needles and my mom did too, both of us trying to stay strong and protect each other.

Determination

My mother worked at factory jobs with three tiny children. Sometimes her mother watched us, sometimes we were in day care, and sometimes my dad watched us. My mom took a bus to work even though my dad had a car. To this day, I don't know why. That is the determination of a black mother.

I remember going to work with her sometimes; I'd sit on the dock while she worked her shift. Her last job was at Amway in the cosmetics department. My mom's work ethic is something to admire. Once I got out of the life and started working, I discovered I had inherited that work ethic. Nobody gave us anything; we worked for everything we got.

I was a tiny child, maybe four or five years old, when I remember seeing my mom lying on the couch. I'm not sure whether she was sick or my dad had beaten her so badly that she was in danger physically. He seemed to ignore her suffering, stretching the cord of our tan rotary phone as he talked to some friend. I pulled a chair over to the stove and turned it on, got out a pan, and filled it with milk. I heated the milk and brought it over to her to make her feel better. She'd done the same for me many times. She tried so hard to drink that foamy, warm milk.

My grandparents came through the door—I'm not sure why they stopped over—and took one look at her. They made my dad hang up and called an ambulance immediately. Mom was gone for several days for reasons she never explained to me.

Watching those beatings did something to me. I would sit in my bedroom holding my head in my hands because all I could hear was my mother's screams. How could she take those beatings and yet work as hard as she did every day? When she was at

work, my dad had other women over to the house and beat them too!

One time I was upstairs in the attic, playing with my dolls while my brother and sister napped. I heard screams, ran down from the attic, and sat on the stairs. He had another woman in the house, beating her and holding her up against a wall.

Not long before my dad was arrested, I remember the one time my mom beat the crap out of him. He had hit her one too many times, and she whupped the dog snot out of him. When that happened, I felt a sigh of relief. He never hit her again, if you can believe that. My mother is a fighter. I didn't know she had hands like that.

I didn't realize how the dichotomy that was my father would affect so much of my life. I couldn't figure out how he could hit my mom and love her at the same time. How did love and violence live in the same house? Why didn't he hit us? And why did she stay with him when he hurt her? I know I loved and hated him at the same time. Perhaps she was afraid of him, or maybe she really did love him, this man who came from the South and settled in Grand Rapids, where she was born and raised.

Those questions about love and violence haunted me for years.

The violence stopped when my dad went to prison for killing a man in a dispute over another woman. He likely beat her too, based on what I'd seen him do. In any case, my mom divorced him while he was in prison, remarrying in the late 1970s when I was ten or eleven years old.

Love in Action, Not Words

My mom loved me and my younger brother and sister. She didn't say the words "I love you," but she showed us in lots of ways. She played flag football with us and some of the neighborhood kids in the Franklin School yard across the street from our house. She took us to the drive-in movies. She taught me how to sew; many a time

I watched her hunched over the sewing machine, Dippity-Do and big rollers in her hair, creating dresses and other clothing for us to wear. She made the majority of our clothes. Whatever we needed she made for us, because we didn't have money to buy clothes. My dad drank her money and his money, but she refused to go on food stamps. She worked hard to support us and did the best she could with what she had, and she kept us together.

She also taught me to cook; she'd be dead tired from working a couple of jobs one after the other, her feet hurting and her body aching, but she always let me watch her make a meal and gave me lessons along the way. She taught me how to cook from scratch, from cakes to meat loaf, from corn bread to fried chicken. Those smells comforted me, until my dad came home, anyway. Today I make similar food for my family, and those Southern soul-food smells still comfort me and make me remember the quality time with my mom.

We didn't receive hugs or words of love, but my mom made sure we had a home and clothing and food. That was her way of showing love. I found out years later that my mother couldn't give us the *I love yous* we craved. She couldn't give what she had never received. But I didn't realize then she couldn't say the words, and I missed it deep inside me. How could I miss what I didn't have? I couldn't put words to what I needed, but I knew I needed something.

My mom was tough when she had to be, especially after my dad went to prison. I was happy he was gone because I knew he couldn't hurt my mother anymore. I didn't miss him at all. Still, she took us to Jackson State Prison several times to visit him. I remember pulling up to that big old prison; I was afraid because it was so big. I looked to one side, and there was a cemetery for prisoners who had died and whose family never claimed their bodies. Those lines of white crosses were scary for a child to see.

We went in and had to give our names and be patted down before we saw my dad. He was sober and happy to see us, and we

were happy to see him because I'd never seen him so loving and caring. He got out eventually but didn't live with us because by then my mom had divorced him and remarried.

One day, years later—I was in my early twenties—I was walking down Buckley Street toward Division, getting ready to work the Stroll. A brown Lincoln pulled past me, and all of a sudden I heard someone say, “Big Red!” Only one person called me that. I turned around and looked back. This man gets out of the Lincoln with a suit on, black shades, and a great big afro. He was standing there holding the car door so I didn't see the crutches.

I took off running toward him. It was my dad! I threw myself into his arms and he hugged me, then I got in the car with this man I had hated and loved. He knew I was on the streets, but he didn't say anything. We went riding around and talking about stuff with Uncle Sam, my dad's brother, who was with him.

“Popeye!” Uncle Sam said when he saw me, using the nickname he'd always called me. I hadn't seen him since I was little. He used to come and get me and take me to his house in Detroit. My dad would let me go with him without telling my mom. She'd get home and ask where I was at, and he'd say Detroit with Uncle Sam. He had a woman there with him, and she bought me all kinds of stuff, including a bike. She bought me whatever I wanted. Then my mother found out that the woman my uncle was with was not a woman. She had a fit, of course. But I remember that Uncle Sam loved me dearly.

After my mom remarried, she got into a fight with my stepfather's sister, for some reason. I mean a fight! The woman had come over to our house and got into it with Mom, but my little mama was throwing fists and really whupped her. The woman left but came back later with her family and busted out all of our windows. At that point my mom's parents, Nanny and PawPaw, got involved. Out came Granny's big ole pistol. Pretty soon all was

calm on our street again. It was just another example of how my family came together when we had to.

Safe Places

When I was five years old, we moved to Oakland Avenue. My safe place during the violent times at home or when I'd had a rough day at school was the attic. It was a big space high above the drama. The attic was my sacred ground, my own little world, and no one could infiltrate my world.

I made the attic into my dollhouse, where I talked to my dolls about anything and everything. I could be quiet, think, process, or just forget what was going on in my life as I made up stories for my dolls. My favorite was Mrs. Beasley with her granny glasses and blue polka-dot dress; she was the favorite toy of the little girl Buffy on the television show *Family Affair*, which I loved to watch. When I pulled her string, she said the most calming things, things every child wanted to hear. I still remember what she said:

“Speak a little louder, dear, so Mrs. Beasley can hear you.”

“If you were a little smaller, I could rock you to sleep.”

“I do think you're the nicest little friend I ever had.”

“If you could have three wishes, what would you wish for?”

“You may call me Mrs. Beasley. Would you like to play?”

I would respond to her, telling her how my day had gone, everything that happened to me, people who were mean to me. I told Mrs. Beasley about how I hated my father and how I thought the world should be. I created for her the perfect world through a child's eyes.

I loved that doll. Mrs. Beasley had an apron, so I would make myself aprons to match hers. I don't know what happened to my Mrs. Beasley from the attic, but years later after I was clean, my son stopped by my house one day with a package.

“This is from Grandma,” he said.

I tore open the package and discovered an original Mrs. Beasley. My mom had bought me the doll I had loved so much. I burst into tears right then and there. I still have that beloved gift from my mom.

I also loved reading as a child, immersing myself in stories mostly involving princesses or heroines who found a prince or a best friend or a family. I loved stories with happy endings the very best; it's not hard to figure out why when I look back. I became Cinderella or Sleeping Beauty in my mind as I lived those fantasies, because they took me away from what was going on in my home.

We rarely played outside alone. When my mother went to work, I had to watch my little sister and brother, so having a childhood is something I know nothing about. We had bikes and toys, but it was hard to play like a child when I was taking care of and protecting my siblings. I had to become an adult real fast to help my mom. Yet I had the attic and my dolls and books.

Abuse in the Attic

In those days, my dad called me Big Red. I was a little girl living in a violent home, but I felt like my dad loved me in his own way. He was generous in some ways, like when he invited my much older cousin to live with us. "W" was probably in his late teens or early twenties when he moved in.

W took my siblings and me to the neighborhood store and bought us candy, played on the playground with us, and acted like he was trying to protect us when my dad beat my mom and went on his tirades. My cousin seemed to like me, spending time in the attic and playing dollhouse and Mrs. Beasley with me. He seemed so caring and kind. It was cool to have somebody to talk to, some form of human contact since my mom was always working and my dad was drunk.

One day I was in the attic talking to my dolls, telling them how I was feeling. They were my little therapists! My cousin came to

play with me, which he'd done many times before, but this time something was different. He was watching me real strange. Then he slid into a little crawl space and pretended to be stuck, calling me to help him.

I went over to help, but he pulled me in there with him and started to touch me and talk about how special I was, saying how our time in the attic was our special time and not to tell anyone. He took my clothes off piece by piece, talking all the time and touching me. He raped me for the first time in that dusty attic.

As he penetrated me, I stared at a tiny hole in the corner of the roof. In my mind, that tiny hole got bigger and bigger until a rabbit came out and waved his little hand at me. He said, "Come here, Leslie. Run, run, run." In my head, I ran right into that little hole. Inside were children just like me. There was no blood; my father wasn't in there beating on my mother; no children were calling me names. There were children playing, lots of candy, and a feeling of happiness. It was the perfect world I had described for Mrs. Beasley. It was just me and children who were always there. There was no pain. We all looked alike; we all played together. Even Mrs. Beasley was there.

I was eight years old, a child surrounded by dolls and toys, lying on a dusty floor with a grown man on top of me.

"Don't tell, Leslie," he said. "If you say anything to anybody, your daddy will kill your mama. And that's the truth."

I nodded silently, tears streaming into my hair and my body aching with pain.

"You're not going to tell, are you?"

"No," I cried.

He crawled out of the small space, adjusted his clothing, and disappeared down the stairs.

I was scared and silent. I was afraid my parents would be angry with me if they found out what was going on. But I also knew that

what he was doing was horribly wrong. He would let me know in subtle ways that he wanted to meet me in the attic. He would throw me signals with his eyes, jerk his head toward the stairs. I knew what he wanted and was too afraid to ignore him because I didn't want my mom to die.

I hid my siblings in a closet, not wanting them to experience the pain I was going through, and told them that when I got back, I'd buy them candy. Then I began the long journey up the stairs toward yet another rape by the cousin I called the bogeyman. Each time it happened, I stared at that tiny hole and went with my rabbit friend to a place of friendship and happiness.

The abuse went on for six or seven months, several times a week. I couldn't let anything happen to my siblings, and I didn't want my mom to die. I knew it was possible. The way my dad beat her, it sounded like he was killing her. I was terrified, yet I hid it well. But I couldn't hide everything.

The only time I saw my dad throw away his crutches was the day he opened the door to the bathroom and found me cleaning up the blood running down my legs with towels I would later hide or throw away. He hadn't realized I was in there. My eyes were big as saucers as he stared down at me.

"Big Red," he said. His only words.

I was terrified he'd be mad at me, but I saw his mind begin working. My actions in the bathroom alarmed him, so I tried to cover up. His face slowly turned to rage. I knew for sure he was going to kill my mother.

Crash went the crutches. He ran into his bedroom and rustled around. Then he pounded up the stairs three or four at a time, yelling at the top of his lungs. I heard my father arguing and screaming, my cousin pleading. I don't know what they said exactly, but I sure heard the gunshot. I was terrified; I didn't know what was going on. Had W killed my dad?

What happened was my dad had grabbed one of the many guns around our home and aimed it at my cousin, intent on killing him. He missed; W took off, running for his life down the street.

Not one word was ever said about the shooting or the abuse. My mom had been at work when my dad discovered me in the bathroom, so she didn't know a thing. My siblings never said a word about Daddy shooting at W, and I never said anything about the molestation. I finally told my mom decades later, after I got clean. It was just another thing we didn't talk about at my house.

I didn't see W again until my dad's funeral when I was in my twenties. I found out later he had abused a number of my cousins as well. As deep as I thought I'd buried the abuse, when I saw him at the funeral all those years later, I went livid with rage. My rape at the hands of a trusted adult came rushing back to the surface, and I was again that terrified, terrorized child. I felt the fear, the pain, the shame all over again. It took me months to recover from seeing him.

My cousin died a couple of years ago. I did not mourn his passing even for a second.

When his sister texted me and told he had died, all I could say was "Good." I later apologized to my cousin; it was her brother and she still loved him, and I should have had a little empathy for her, though I had none for him.

School Days

School was tough for me, but not because I couldn't do the work. In fact, I did very well in school. I was highly intelligent, read all the time, and completed all my schoolwork. There was nothing more they could teach me at my grade level, so the teachers wanted to move me up a grade. My mother said no, so they transferred me to Blandford School, a sixth-grade school for gifted children.

This was a nature-based school that had mostly white city kids learning to do things like make butter and tap maple trees.

I enjoyed my year there, but the focus on the natural world didn't prevent my restlessness. I often immersed myself in books, reading book after book to help anesthetize myself in the midst of the drama that was my home. I did homework the minute I got it, finishing it quickly and often early so I could return to my books.

I couldn't hide from myself, though. In hindsight, I realize now I could have had ADHD. In those days in inner-city schools with little funding and inadequate services, learning disabilities often remained undiagnosed. I understood the work easily, but it took a lot of concentration to get it done. I focused on schooling because if I didn't, the pain, voices, blood, and screams took over my mind and hit me all at once. I didn't know what to do with them.

I felt like I was a pressure cooker waiting to explode. Every beating I saw my dad give to my mom, every time I was raped, every time I felt the cruelty of other children added to the load of trauma I carried. Every day, I brought that trauma to school. Is it any surprise I retreated into books and homework, no matter how hard it was to concentrate? Those things grounded me amid the chaos of life.

Once I got to middle school, trauma and PTSD got the better of me. I started on a long journey to pregnancy, prostitution, and addiction.

As I look back, I sometimes wonder what God had in mind. My childhood wasn't peaceful, safe, or calm as I experienced trauma after trauma. Yet I also see God's hand. My mother loved me, showing it through actions and daily care. We went to church often; Gospel Temple Baptist Church was right next door. It felt like I could hear the choir practicing or performing old Negro hymns through the open church windows every time something bad happened. Almost by osmosis, I soaked in the words and messages of those songs and sermons that drifted through the windows. Little did I know I would later come to rely on those long-held memories

as I came back to the God who held me in his tender, loving hands as I entered a dark, dark world.

Dear Reader,

A person's past trauma—childhood sexual abuse, violence, addictions, unplanned pregnancies, accidents, deaths, and much more—informs their present life and can't be ignored. Understanding and assisting them in learning how to heal from those traumas must happen before a new life really begins.

Whether you are a licensed professional or a layperson, understanding the impact of trauma is absolutely necessary. Laypeople can get training in the rudiments, but leave the hard work of trauma therapy to professionals.

Please know that every person is more than their past. One of the most important things to grasp is that while the past may inform the present, it doesn't have to control it. God will redeem any person's past for their good and, as he did with mine, for the good of others.

Each of us is a precious treasure to God. Each of us can find freedom. God wants freedom for all of us! He wants it for you.

Love, Leslie

Join the Revolt

1. Find a book, website, or blog to begin learning about trauma and its impact. There are many resources available that can start you on the path to knowledge about this important aspect of so many lives.
2. Look at the impact of trauma in your own life. What have you experienced? What experiences have you buried for

so long that might now be considered trauma? How has trauma in other people's lives, such as a parent or spouse, impacted your life?

3. Begin praying for women who have experienced trauma, for prostituted women in particular, and for God to mold your attitude and assumptions appropriately regarding these women.
4. Connect with a ministry such as Sacred Beginnings in Grand Rapids, Michigan, that works with prostituted women by first visiting its website (www.sbtp.org) and learning more about the ministry. Look for a ministry in your area as a place to start.
5. If you work in health care or education, consider how trauma may impact your patients and students. If you work in a church or parachurch ministry, how might knowledge of trauma impact your sermons, teaching opportunities, and counseling?