

## **CHAPTER 1:**

### **THE SACRED FOUNDATION THAT CRACKED**

***"Faith wasn't foreign to me, it was woven into my earliest memories, church pews, and Sunday school lessons forming the backdrop of my childhood."***

#### **The Baptism That Started It All**

The water was cold against my six-year-old skin as my grandfather lowered me beneath the surface of the baptismal pool. Even at that young age, my decision to follow Christ wasn't based on family pressure or childhood innocence, it came from a genuine understanding of who Jesus was and what life with Him offered.

I remember the moment vividly: emerging from that water with a heart full of faith, tears in my eyes, surrounded by my church family, feeling completely loved, safe and filled with the Holy Spirit. The sacred foundation was solid, built on genuine faith and divine love. My paternal grandparents, both ministers, had created an environment where God's presence felt as natural as breathing.

What I couldn't have known that day was how that foundation would be tested, cracked, and seemingly shattered in the years to come. What I also couldn't have known was that even cracked foundations can be rebuilt and reinforced stronger than before.

The irony isn't lost on me now: I was baptized into life while simultaneously being prepared for a kind of death that no child should have to endure. But even in that paradox, God was orchestrating something I wouldn't understand for decades.

## **When Protectors Become Predators**

The man my mother married when I was seven became the architect of my childhood trauma. What started as inappropriate comments and “accidental” touches escalated into sexual, physical, and emotional abuse that carved deep wounds and an everlasting imprint into my young soul. The very person who should have protected me became the source of my greatest pain.

In those moments of violation, fundamental beliefs about safety, love, and trust were being rewired in my developing brain. I learned that adults couldn't be trusted, that my body wasn't my own, and that speaking up brought more danger than staying silent. These weren't conscious lessons, they were neural pathways being embedded deeper into my young psyche with each incident.

What I discovered years later is that scientists call this neuroplasticity, our brain's ability to rewire itself based on our experiences. The devastating truth is that trauma literally changes our brain structure, particularly in children. But the hopeful truth I would later discover is that the same neuroplasticity that allowed trauma to reshape my brain could also be harnessed for healing.

The psychological term for what I experienced is called "betrayal trauma," when the person who should protect you is the one who harms you. It's particularly devastating because it doesn't just wound you; it corrupts your ability to trust your own instincts about safety and danger. When your protector is your predator, your nervous system learns to be hypervigilant while simultaneously learning to dissociate from your body's warning signals.

### **The Cruel Irony of Saving a Life**

Two years before his violations began, a scene unfolded in our tiny apartment living room that still takes my breath away. I watched my mother, eight months pregnant, point a 9mm pistol at my stepfather after he had physically struck her in the face. In that moment, something rose up in me, something I now recognize as divine intervention.

"No mommy, please don't," I pleaded, stepping between them.

In that moment, I became the vessel through which God's grace flowed to save the very life that would later shatter my innocence. The cruel irony is staggering: God used me to save the life of the man who would traumatize me for years to come.

For decades, I wrestled with this irony. How could a loving God orchestrate me saving someone who would hurt me so deeply? It felt like divine betrayal, as if God had set me up for a world filled with chaos and destruction.

Now I understand it differently. God didn't cause the trauma, human free will and generational dysfunction did. But, He did use even that traumatic intervention to demonstrate something I wouldn't grasp until much later: I was chosen to be a vessel of grace, even in impossible circumstances. That same grace that flowed through me to save a life would eventually flow through me to save many others, starting with my own.

This understanding didn't come easily. It required years of wrestling with questions like those found in Psalm 13:1-2: "How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart?"

But eventually, I discovered the truth of Isaiah 61:3, that God gives "beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness."

## **Understanding Generational Trauma Patterns**

My mother's response to discovering his crimes against me revealed the depth of generational toxicity that had been festering in our family line for decades. Instead of protecting me, she conceived another child with him just two months later—a discovery I didn't make until I was 42 years old, while I was reviewing the legal documentation of the CPS investigation and was able to put together full timelines as I was compiling research for this very book. This was a new reckoning I had to process and unpack alone because she'd passed away eight years earlier. Instead of breaking the cycle, she chose silence over healing and secrecy over protection.

This wasn't because she didn't love me, it was because she was operating from her own unhealed childhood trauma. She could only parent at the capacity of which her own suppressed wounds allowed. Her mother had likely made similar choices—although that's pure speculation—perpetuating patterns that stretched back generations.

I was conditioned to accept, to move forward, to never speak of "private family matters." What I didn't understand then was that this wasn't wisdom; it was a carefully constructed cage designed to repeat the very patterns that had imprisoned the Hendricks women in my family for generations—a curse I vowed to end with my daughter and me.

During my own healing journey, I discovered that what researchers call "intergenerational trauma" isn't just about what happened to previous generations, it's about the coping mechanisms, belief systems, and survival strategies that get passed down like DNA. Children don't just inherit their parents' eye color; they inherit their nervous system patterns, their relationship templates, their definitions of normal.

Epigenetic research has shown that trauma can literally alter gene expression, meaning the effects of trauma can be passed down biologically. But here's the hopeful truth I learned: just as trauma patterns can be inherited, healing patterns can be too. When one person in a family system heals, it creates ripple effects that can transform an entire lineage.

## **A Story of Silent Screams: When Love Feels Like Chaos**

During my years of walking alongside some incredible women on their own healing journeys, I met a woman whose story perfectly illustrates how generational patterns recycle themselves. Shelly, at 35, was a successful marketing executive who couldn't understand why she kept attracting men who diminished her worth.

"I swore I'd never be like my mother," she told me through tears during one of our many conversations. "I watched my father beat her throughout my childhood. The sound of breaking glass and muffled sobs became my lullaby. But here I am, making excuses for another man who treats me like I'm worthless."

Her story illustrates the invisible blueprint trauma creates. We don't consciously choose dysfunction, we merely unconsciously recreate what feels familiar. Her nervous system had been programmed to associate chaos with passion, control with love, and unpredictability with excitement, something I could empathize with and relate to on a soul level.

As we worked together, she began to understand that her attraction to emotionally unavailable men wasn't a character flaw, it was a trauma response. Her childhood had taught her that love comes with pain, that safety is temporary, and that she had to earn affection through perfect behavior.

One of the most profound discoveries we made together was understanding what researchers call "trauma bonding, "the intense biochemical attachment that forms between an abuser and victim through cycles of abuse followed by intermittent kindness. This creates an addiction-like response in the brain, making it incredibly difficult to leave unhealthy relationships.

The breakthrough came when she learned to distinguish between chemistry (often trauma-based) and compatibility (character-based). She discovered that the intense feeling she had mistaken for "deep love" was actually her nervous system's response to familiar chaos.

Today, she's in a relationship with a man who cherishes and values her consistently, not just when it's convenient. She learned that healthy love feels peaceful, not chaotic. More importantly, she learned that she deserved a love that felt safe, not formidable.

## **The Survival Blueprint Assessment**

Early trauma doesn't just wound us, it rewires us. Our developing brains create survival mechanisms that keep us alive in dangerous situations but become prisons in healthy ones. Understanding your survival blueprint is the first step in Soul Restoration.

### **Primary Survival Mechanisms:**

***People-Pleasing:*** Constantly managing others' emotions to avoid conflict or abandonment.

- ***Childhood Logic:*** "If I make everyone happy, I'll be safe."
- ***Adult Reality:*** Exhaustion, resentment, and loss of authentic self.
- ***Neural Pattern:*** Hypervigilance to others' emotional states while disconnecting from your own.

**Perfectionism:** Using flawless performance to earn love and avoid criticism.

- **Childhood Logic:** "If I'm perfect, I won't be hurt or rejected."
- **Adult Reality:** Anxiety, imposter syndrome, and fear of taking risks.
- **Neural Pattern:** Chronic stress response triggered by any perceived mistake.

**Hypervigilance:** Constantly scanning for danger, even in safe environments.

- **Childhood Logic:** "If I watch carefully, I can prevent bad things from happening."
- **Adult Reality:** Chronic anxiety, difficulty relaxing, and exhaustion.
- **Neural Pattern:** Overactive amygdala (brain's alarm system) that sees threats everywhere.

**Emotional Numbing:** Disconnecting from feelings to avoid overwhelming pain.

- **Childhood Logic:** "If I don't feel it, it can't hurt me."
- **Adult Reality:** Depression, difficulty with intimacy, and loss of joy.
- **Neural Pattern:** Dissociation from bodily sensations and emotional awareness.



**Caretaking:** Taking responsibility for others' needs while neglecting your own.

- **Childhood Logic:** "If I take care of everyone, I'll be valuable and won't be abandoned."
- **Adult Reality:** Burnout, one-sided relationships, and loss of identity.
- **Neural Pattern:** Codependent attachment style that confuses love with usefulness.

**Achievement Addiction:** Using external success to prove worthiness.

- **Childhood Logic:** "If I achieve enough, I'll finally be good enough."
- **Adult Reality:** Workaholism, emptiness despite success, and fear of failure.
- **Neural Pattern:** Dopamine addiction to external validation rather than internal worth.

### **Assessment Questions:**

1. Which survival mechanisms do you recognize in yourself?
2. How do these mechanisms show up in your relationships?
3. What beliefs about safety, love, and worthiness were programmed into your early experiences?
4. How has generational trauma been passed down in your family line?
5. What patterns do you see repeating across generations?

## **Soul Restoration Principle #1: Recognizing Your Original Design**

Before trauma taught you to be someone else, you had an original design, a divine blueprint of who God created you to be. Soul Restoration begins with recognizing that your survival mechanisms, while necessary for protection, may now be obscuring your authentic self.

Psalms 139:13-14 reminds us: "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well."

### ***Your original design includes:***

- Your natural gifts and talents.
- Your innate personality before trauma adaptations.
- Your core values and beliefs.
- Your capacity for joy, creativity, and connection.
- Your divine calling and purpose.

The first principle of Soul Restoration is learning to distinguish between who you became to survive and who you were created to be. This isn't about discarding everything about yourself, many survival mechanisms contain seeds of genuine strengths. But it is about choosing consciously rather than reacting unconsciously.

## **Practical Steps for Recognizing Your Original Design:**

1. **Childhood Interest Inventory:** What did you love to do before trauma taught you to focus on survival? What brought you pure joy as a child?
2. **Gift Identification:** What do people consistently tell you you're good at? What comes naturally to you?
3. **Value Clarification:** When you strip away what others expect of you, what do you actually value and believe?
4. **Energy Assessment:** What activities energize you versus drain you? Your authentic self will feel energized by authentic expression.
5. **Dream Archaeology:** What dreams did you bury under the weight of survival? What would you attempt if you knew you couldn't fail?

## **Reflection Questions for Chapter 1:**

1. What was your earliest understanding of God or spirituality? How did trauma impact your faith journey?
2. Who were the significant adults in your childhood? Which ones provided safety, and which ones created danger?
3. What survival mechanisms did you develop to cope with early trauma or instability?

4. How do you see generational patterns playing out in your family line? What patterns do you want to break?
5. What aspects of your "original design" do you sense have been buried under survival mechanisms?
6. How has your understanding of love and relationships been shaped by early experiences?
7. What would it mean for you to begin distinguishing between who you became to survive and who you were created to be?

## **Chapter 1 Implementation Strategy: The Sacred Foundation Inventory**

**Week 1:** Complete the Survival Blueprint Assessment. Identify your top 3 survival mechanisms and write about how they served you as a child.

**Week 2:** Explore generational patterns. Create a family tree that includes not just names and dates, but patterns of trauma, addiction, dysfunction, and resilience.

**Week 3:** Begin the Original Design Excavation. List gifts, talents, and interests you had as a child before trauma adaptations took over.

**Week 4:** Practice distinguishing between trauma responses and authentic responses in daily situations. Keep a journal noting when you're reacting from survival mode versus responding from your true self.

The goal isn't to judge your survival mechanisms harshly, they kept you alive. The goal is to honor them while consciously choosing which patterns serve your adult life and which ones need to be transformed.

As we close this chapter, I'm reminded of 2 Corinthians 5:17: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" Your healing journey is about discovering and reclaiming the new creation you've always been beneath the survival strategies you learned to adopt.

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