

JERICHO UNMASKED

An Entrapped Lesbian's
Journey to Freedom

CARI GINTZ

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Endorsements

Cari Gintz divulges the abuse and trauma she experienced as a child. I admire her honesty and openness. She also shows how children can be set up to fall into a trap created by the Enemy of our souls. I believe this book will bring liberation to others who have felt they needed to remain silent about what they endured as a child and the outcome of the sins committed against them.

—Denise Shick
Author of *My Daddy's Secret* and founder of Help 4 Families

Cari's story greatly increased my understanding of a struggle that many face, and *Jericho Unmasked* will enlighten those looking for real hope and deep understanding. Her faith-building, transforming journey displays God's power and great love, which will encourage and bring hope and joy to the reader.

—Dale Piscura
Pastor of Men's Discipleship, Cuyahoga Valley Church,
Broadview Heights, Ohio

We walked alongside of Cari Gintz during the 2014 Gay Games in Cleveland. I could see she has a great heart for people, though to be honest, I didn't quite "get" her. Having tackled this must-read autobiography, we now praise God for her love for Jesus, her determination to walk bravely, the prayers of her mother, and the deep respect and burden for all the ones her life's path has touched. Be challenged, be encouraged, and be blessed by God's story in and through her.

—Pastor Joe and Debbie Abraham
Scranton Road Bible Church, Cleveland, Ohio

Acknowledgments

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To Dori, the Editorial Manager of Redemption Press: It requires a unique talent to retain an author's voice, edit the language to maintain intent, and guide a new author in a collaborative way. You, my dear friend, mastered all of it. The guidance, deliberation, and most of all the prayerful consideration of every word was a blessing delivered directly from the Father. I am grateful this is not the end of the story. You are my friend for life!

This book is dedicated to my dear daughter. We have come a long way in our journey. So blessed and honored that God gave me you!

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Foreword

Jericho Unmasked is a tribute to the kindness of God to capture a beautiful, one-of-a-kind passionate soul, Cari Gintz, for the glory of God! The Church cannot have enough stories of the incredible grace of God reaching down and transforming a soul. Her book is about the redeeming power of grace and the kindness of God in Jesus Christ our Lord to reach down and unravel many years of pain, trauma, and distorted thinking as a lesbian. God has touched Cari's soul and revealed she has always been the "apple of His eye" and that Cari is His gem who has always belonged to Him, even when she strayed.

This is a story about how God wooed Cari back to Himself in all the twists and turns of her painful life in homosexuality. It's about restoration and redemption! Cari continues her courageous process of being transparent before the Lord and people! She demonstrates a path of continued yielding and allowing God to use her life, and thus bring hope in the power of prayer. She is an example of releasing the reins of her life, trusting and waiting upon Him. Cari inspires the reader to believe God in making a difference in loved ones. Be inspired by Cari to believe and to have hope in God to change your loved ones, even if it takes years! Cari's story shows us that God is always near to those who seek Him, as He is the One who began this relationship with us, and He is the One who finishes it!

Stephen H. Black, Executive Director, First Stone Ministries
Author of *Freedom Realized and Freedom Realized—The Complete First Stone Ministries Effectiveness Survey Report*
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
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Introduction

I lived the majority of my life inside the walls of the bustling city of Los Angeles, California. Within those walls, the sun shone bright most of the time. However, my own self-contained, walled-in fortress of brokenness stood high and was the greatest blockage to realizing God's purpose for my life. For a number of years, I lived in the shadows, those places shaded most of the day because the "wall" blocked the sun. Occasionally I would welcome the light, but I hid in the dark, seemingly free from conviction, and lived life on my terms.

I was physically and psychologically entrapped and spiritually depraved. The walls were so high and strong that no human could get in or out.

One day a miracle of sudden freedom occurred for this undeserving woman whom God saw before the foundation of the world. I suspect that many, given the opportunity, would have eagerly composed the next chapters of my life, and I doubt that they would have been positive and uplifting chronicles. Instead they might have reflected the continued downward trajectory into the pit of hell, which, based on my state, would have been the logical conclusion. Yet God saw me before I was even a formed substance in my mother's womb. I'm grateful that the chapters He penned for my life are filled with redemption, hope, transformation, and eternity with Him.

I have often pondered why I am not cynical, hard, or simply disgusted with God. We are all fearfully and wonderfully made, and I firmly believe the Lord wired me in such a manner that vulnerability and childlike wonder will always take precedence even in the midst of tragedy, pain, and deep hurts. I do not consider this

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attitude my own doing or casually chalk it up to well-developed survival techniques. I give all the credit to God and am deeply thankful. In His amazing grace, He also constructed me as relational, outgoing, and flexible to the degree that living peaceably without regrets, forgiving above being right, and resolving to preserve relationships are tenets I hold dear to my heart. My hope is that these relational imperatives ring loudly throughout my story. I refuse to expose or demean anyone or capitalize on injury and pain. Instead, I choose to display God's relentless work of redemption and continued transformation.

Nothing in my life is random or arbitrary. A divine scarlet cord is woven throughout my story as a constant reminder of the exquisite hand of God in the context of the whole. Would I alter a single day in my life? No. Would I want to relive all the chapters? No, especially the dark and painful ones. Yet to live in regret is failure to embrace the present. He has equipped me to share all that has been written on my heart—an epistle to be read and known by all. If a single day had changed, every subsequent day would have been altered. If I truly embrace the biblical truth in Psalm 139:16—“Thine eyes have seen my unformed substance and, in Thy book, they were all written, the days that were ordained for me, when as yet there was not one of them”—then regret cannot be a part of my present and future hope.

As I tell my story, I've inserted poems that underscore my experience, but the actual date of composition was not necessarily commensurate with the exact life stage.

In 2003, years before the Lord seized my heart and set me free from a life that cut me to pieces, I woke up in the middle of the night. I had written a few poems over the years, but this one was different, as it was far from my life's truth at the time. I believe the Lord scribed “Purpose” through my hands with a view to the reality I would one day embrace. Since the day I penned it, many of its lines have been brought to my mind in certain circumstances, and I have had to pause and listen to the Lord's reminder. This

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composition is just a simple example of a God who saw the whole landscape of my life and all He destined for me.

Purpose

Where did all the years go as life comes to a close?
Are the snapshots plain to see, or are they unexposed?
Did I grip the bitter moments as trophies all my own?
Or melt their grandeur down and distribute polished stones?
Did I take the harsh, cold winters and with spring remain inside?
Or appreciate each season and choose there to abide?
Did I stand so tall that others could not see within my eyes?
Or kneel level with their hearts and hear the inner cries?
Did I fan the flames of fiery rage over justifying the truth?
Or let morning dew reduce to ash knowing character needs no proof?
Did I comfort in my prisons, hanging pictures on the walls?
Or allow Him to unlock and walk down freedom's halls?
Did I crumble under rocks of pride with injuries prolonged?
Or let those wiser dig me out, admitting I wasn't strong?
Did I shake my fists at heaven, demanding answers why?
Or recognize more wisdom represents the best reply?
Did I take each chapter written, seal it for my selfish prize?
Or generate an epilogue to share with younger lives?
Did moments pass in emptiness with conflicts in the soul?
Or were the last words on my lips, "I truly do feel whole"?

Considering this poem, my heart is to be transparent with exposed snapshots but cautious so that intrigue does not overshadow God's mighty hand. "Gay" and "homosexuality" are enticing subjects these days. So if you find yourself craving more details, I apologize in advance and hope the Lord will simply reveal His

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main purpose of the book and His thoughts toward you while you are progressing through the pages.

The closing Bible passage before launching into my story is Jeremiah 15:18–19. The Lord gave me these verses after a large loss in my life, but I did not know at the time how He would use them in my future:

Why has my pain been perpetual
And my wound incurable, refusing to be healed?
Will You indeed be to me a deceptive stream
With water that is unreliable?
Therefore, thus says the Lord,
“If you return, then I will restore you—
Before Me you will stand;
And if you extract the precious from the worthless,
You will become My spokesman.”

Lord, let it be so as I press on to write.

Chapter 1

Family Dynamics and Shattering

I WAS the firstborn and “cute as a button,” according to my mom and my grandma, when I popped into this world on May 29, 1957, in the heart of Southern California, but my core was fallen because of sin. I will pose the age-old question right off the bat—born gay? I find this to be curious and want to clarify that for me, the point is moot. The package was God’s perfect design. The insides contained a soul that, left to its own devices, would willingly and deliberately defy God. “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me” (Psalm 51:5). So when I am asked about being born gay, I cannot answer for certain. What I do know is that born gay or not born gay does not give license to live a life that is in complete rebellion to God’s relational design and purpose for our lives as prescribed in the Bible. Even if a stand against the contrary cultural tide results in persecution, rejections, or loss of relationships, I must first honor God.

From the time I was born, Satan and all of the powers of hell had a keen eye on me. The mouths of hell are hungry for humans, to either stop their births entirely or make sure they live their lives separated from God. When I came into this world, I had a multitude of chinks in my fleshly armor. Satan, being the father of lies and the embodiment of darkness, knew exactly how to capitalize on those chinks and how to structure environmental circumstances that would ultimately lead to choices, *my* choices. All these wrong choices would result in spiritual, psychological, and physical damage at the deepest level. Satan is not bigger than God. I also know that God is sovereign and sees the entire landscape and nothing

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will thwart His hand. However, our choices matter. My life provides a little glimpse into the bigness of God. He had a tether on me from a young age and was fully in charge every step of the way. My God never had to revert to a plan B.

My grandmother on my father's side was an enigma. Ninety pounds and nicknamed "Cricket," she laughed about things that others would consider disturbing. Her loss of babies in the womb due to an abusive husband was conveyed in the same manner as a discussion about the weather forecast. She never showed facial expressions exhibiting pain, anger, or hurt in spite of horrors in her past.

A grandmother might have a favorite grandchild, though she would maintain some level of protocol so as not to hurt her favorite's siblings. But mine was the opposite. She was open and matter of fact that my younger sister was less than second best. In my grandmother's eyes, the sun rose and set on my head, and I was "the light of her life." My strong resemblance to her contributed to this—a petite frame, long dark hair, and greenish-brown eyes.

Going to Grandma's house was a treat, especially after the arrival of my sister three and a half years after my birth. Grandma's place was an environment without borders. The house appeared significantly larger than my home, with high ceilings, and I loved the expanse. Also, I did not have to compete for affection.

My mother always said I was an easy baby and lovable. I enjoyed cuddling and being in close proximity to my mom. But when the foreign intruder entered (my sister, Katie), I pulled away. The shift in my behavior from clingy to distant compelled my mother to seek advice from her pediatrician. The doctor convinced her that I would "come back." Unfortunately, psychology had not matured to the degree it has today. That advice did not pan out, and I never really "returned." In fact, I shut down and traveled inward to a safe little bubble where I did not feel rejected. Vocalization of wants turned to silent cries.

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At the young age of five, I pondered meaning as I glanced at the immense blue sky and embraced my smallness. I simply watched life and recorded it, yet I had no capacity to appropriately interpret or even express my pain. So trips to Grandma's house represented full-time attention. I did not have to speak. Grandma did all the talking and ministered to my every need, as perceived through the heart of a young child.

A typical day as a five-year-old at Grandma's was coffee in the morning, followed by peanut butter and white-sugar sandwiches while watching afternoon soap operas. *As the World Turns* especially captured my interest.

My grandma told me stories of the abuse my father received under the hands of her ex-husband, my biological grandfather. She laughed hysterically when recounting how my dad had been tied to a tree for twenty-four hours, almost freezing to death.

My dad was a track star in high school, and he gained his best training while running from his own father. Fortunately, my father was one of the babies who survived the trauma in her womb, or I would not be alive today. Unfortunately, she had desired a daughter and clothed my dad in dresses until he entered school. I received my own private slide show of the young boy in lace. These stories unfolded in a continuous mantra until I was nine, as if I might forget some pertinent detail.

The dentist was later able to correct the nine cavities that resulted from trips to Grandma's house. But no human physician could cure the visual, verbal, and physical imprints on my mind, heart, body, and soul.

I never met my biological grandfather. Instead, Uncle Max, the renter who lived at my grandmother's house after World War II, became my surrogate grandfather. They were not married, and it was purely friendship. Evenings were spent on Uncle Max's lap in a large overstuffed chair with my very own pint-size flannel shirt, a geeky pocket pencil holder, and a miniature corncob pipe. My grandmother usually sat on the couch, quite far away.

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I wanted to be just like Uncle Max, yet I did not realize until years later that he'd awakened what God designed to be pure and fresh within marriage. As we watched *Laurel and Hardy* and *The Three Stooges*, I was anesthetized by belly laughter and the warm embrace. What I could not process was the differentiation of hands that subtly moved like delicate surgical instruments away from appropriate places of safety to cuddle unauthorized areas of my underdeveloped body.

I am not certain if my grandmother ever knew about the sexual abuse. I returned to that house as an adult, and the distance in the living room between the overstuffed chair and the couch my grandmother occupied was shockingly small, even though the furniture still resided in the same spots. I sometimes wonder if subconsciously I gave her an excuse for failing to protect me, by imagining a much-longer room with expansive distance, as if my grandmother was too far away to rescue me.

Uncle Max was used greatly by the Enemy to shatter the mind of a young girl, warp all sense of identity, and encase me in a lonely world filled with shame. This violation had an undeniable impact in the many years to come.



My father was a man of many words for many people, but he had few words for his own family. By all rights my father should have been cynical and hard because of his upbringing. Ironically, he was the opposite. He had a simplistic vulnerability. He recognized the beauty in things that many would just perceive as being in the way. If a child screamed in a store, he smiled with the empathy of watching an adorable kid. When traversing a stream, he didn't simply stumble over rocks to get from one place to the next—he noticed the beauty of the rocks as a necessary and integral part of his journey.

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He never looked back, discussed his childhood, or revealed his quiet pain and heartache. On the contrary, he embraced and savored each morsel of life. He had an interest in and love of all kinds of people, and he had an amazing ability to “read” an individual. Within a few short minutes, he could probe a person, leave the scene, and know their whole life. He displayed little of himself, as he never wanted to burden anyone. Through wisdom and insight, he knew that life was too short to dwell on anything less than magic, wonder, and most of all, hope.

A voracious reader, he would describe places in the world, and one would think he had been there. His imagination and boyish curiosity allowed him to travel to places in his mind time and time again, and in those travels he had many safe places—different from his formative years. My father had no problem crying, and he never apologized for it. A memorable Christmas day was when he described the movie *Life Is Beautiful*. He could barely get the words out, but his eyes revealed passion and the tears that flowed as he relived that father’s protection over his son. That day I saw a compelling depth in my father and an unmatched sensitivity.

Fabulous at cards, my father played contract bridge—a highly skilled level of cards involving tactics, communication, memory, and probability. Although quite serious about the game among his buddies for many years, he knew what was important in life. Soon after his mother had passed, we played a family poker game that turned heated. My dad was the best at the table, and everyone else had lost sight of the plot. It was not about winning. For my father, the important piece was the relational aspect of playing together. So when the harsh superlatives flew, he folded his cards, put his head on the table, cried, and said, “I just lost my mother, and you all do not know how fortunate you are to have each other as brothers, and you fight.”

That was another moment when time stopped and I paused to ponder.

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My father often took me deep-sea fishing, and once when the waves were high, I was horribly woozy. My dad just kept on fishing with joy. Rock cod was the catch of the day, and his line bent with six of them at a time. My utter seasickness diminished my amazement. I finally lay on the deck, inhaling the fumes of the burgers cooking in the galley, and just wanted to know, *When are we going home?* That long sea trip taught me how to be rugged. Those waves could have been twenty feet, and my dad would not have left those fish!

My dad never judged. He had a sense of humor that one might perceive as judgmental, but it was not. He simply watched people and sometimes made private comments that others wished they could get away with. He'd laugh, and no one was worse for the wear. People gave him the grace to be himself because he extended the same.

He didn't have long, in-depth conversations about life, no heavy discussions about the state of the world, and definitely no sharing of hurts and pains. But the treasures in life are not always the obvious ones. Sometimes, and more importantly, it's the connection of the heart combined with the security in knowing that love, resolve, forgiveness, vulnerability, fearless abandonment to live life to its fullest, and hope are what lasts. My father imparted these silent legacies to me, and they still remain to this day.

As a child, I did not know he struggled with homosexuality. It was a shock years later to find this out through a long-held secret shared by my sister. Although my father had served in World War II, his mission was "casual engagement" with others to secure information rather than actual battle. The love of his life was a young man serving on the front lines, who was tragically killed. I cannot fathom what my father went through in the 1940s to retain such a deep secret and incredible loss. I imagine he buried it in the same coffin his lover occupied.

I did not approach my father and ask questions or dig deep when this discovery came to light. Sometimes survival mechanisms

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are not meant to be arbitrarily tampered with by ignorant humans attempting to crack the lid to get information or deep answers. God will reveal it in His gentle time. If He doesn't, then it remains as part of the mystery of His sovereignty. If this fact of my father's had been probed prematurely, all the stamina and vigor he had left could have been killed, and even his heart, which had beaten strong for eighty years, could have been stopped. The added knowledge explained a tremendous amount in relation to the family dynamics and the strained relationship of my parents. My father did the best he could with the capacity he had.

I know wholeheartedly I will see my father in heaven. His relationship with Christ was not readily visible, but if the eyes are the window to the soul, there is where the relationship could be seen. I believe he cried many quiet tears, and I will ask him when I see him again if I can take a tour of *his* bottles of tears too. God personally labels them all, and amazing grace is the epilogue of bottled moments.



My mother had dealt with her own identity issues during her youth. She was predominantly raised by her father, and he had wanted a boy, so he cut my mom's hair short. Up until the time of puberty, she'd wondered if she was in fact a boy.

My grandmother was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis when my mom was five. Her dad decided he would get his daughter a new-and-improved mommy, and he abandoned his wife. The new-and-improved mommy, concerned about her image as a stepmother, later insisted upon charm school for her stepdaughter.

My mother was brilliant and years ahead of her classmates. She graduated with the highest honors from Rice University at nineteen, obtaining an accounting degree. But because of this acceleration, the social aspects of growing up did not have an opportunity to develop. The majority of her classmates were three years older

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and had interests far different from my mother's. Unable to relate to them on any emotional or psychological level, she was excluded from social engagements simply for being too young. However, her ability with numbers was unmatched, and her sharp mind was the only way she was equal to her older classmates.

In her early twenties, Mom fell madly in love with a World War II fighter pilot. He was shot down and went undiscovered for five long years. My mother had moved to the West Coast to be closer to the port of his return. His death shattered her when she finally heard the news.

In the early 1950s, single women approaching thirty were under considerable pressure to marry. My father was extremely handsome and much better at dating than being a husband. After six months of weekend dating, Mom agreed to marry him.

Shortly after I was born, my mother had a deep encounter with Christ. She recognized she was capable of any sin under the sun but by the grace of God was redeemed from a destiny of rebellion. She submitted herself to the transforming work of Christ from the day she received Him, but it was not without struggle and hardship.

Women need to be loved, and my father did not have the ability to embrace and experience intimacy with a wife. Although Dad exhibited amazing qualities, he had dissociative disorder—a disconnection between thoughts, identity, and consciousness—likely due to his childhood abuse, and he was incapable of deep connection with those closest to him. His unaddressed struggle with homosexuality also had undeniable consequences in their relationship, and tension and bitterness filled our home. To add to the distress and anxiety was my dad's knowledge that his wife had deeply loved another man, although his angst was never directly addressed.

But my mom persevered in her marriage based on her strong commitment to the Lord and her children's welfare. She made sure her children knew they were loved.

Mom believed in vitamins and a daily helping of Gerber's liver baby food to keep the body strong. Every morning for breakfast,

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I ate healthy cereal followed by the half jar of the baby food and a handful of supplements. I grew to like it, and as a result, I never missed a day of school from kindergarten to sixth grade with the exception of normal childhood maladies, such as the chicken pox.

My mother led a disciplined and organized life. A bookkeeper by trade, she could readily convey how much she had spent on groceries the first week of June 1989. When I was ten, she offered me a sizable monthly allowance of forty dollars. This was 1967, so forty dollars went a long way. But there was a catch. With this allowance, I had to buy everything, including school clothes, beyond the necessities. If I wanted to buy a school lunch, it came out of my money.

When go-go boots were the fad, I sat in the shoe store for a full hour pondering whether these boots were worth it. Finally, I looked up at the shoe salesman and said, "I am really sorry. I cannot afford them."

The man looked at my mother in astonishment. To this day, there are no clothes in my closet that sit idle, and no purchase is void of a thought process.

Most importantly, she instilled in me the principle of tithing. Each month I took four dollars off the top and put it in my tithe envelope. Occasionally, I mowed lawns for the neighbors or babysat their young children. If I earned a dollar, ten cents went into the envelope for church. This habit of tithing has never departed, even during my depth of darkness, and I thank my mother for instilling this at such a young age. My mother taught me discipline and to never put off the hard stuff. Do it first and get it over with. She was the opposite of procrastinator, and I value these lessons to this day.

None of us is given a little handbook for mothers, so when I came on the scene, my mom had no real example. A mother who was sick, followed by a stepmother only interested in outward development, were not solid foundations. In spite of the hardships and family struggles, I know my mother loved me with her whole heart and always held me with open hands. She wholeheartedly

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recognized from the time I was born that I ultimately belonged to the Lord. I was not her possession but simply a gift delivered to her care. She knew her main job as a parent was to point me to Christ.