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**Don't Let  
Your Past  
Stand in  
the Way**

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**Jacqueline Francis**

# Don't Let Your Past Stand in the Way

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# My Daily Prayer

Dear Lord,

I just want to thank you for another day. Thank you for the lovely people you have sent in my life. Some have inspired me, stretched me, loved me and encouraged me. I love them so much. God bless them with all that they need in life.

Every day is a gift from God, so I just want to say thank you Lord. As I walk the road today, may each moment be blessed with the brightness of God's glory, the goodness of His love, the beauty of His peace, and the presence of His hope. May His life shine forth in me from day to day.

What I've learned throughout my walk with you, Lord is that the past cannot be changed. Everyone's journey is different. Life gets better when you are happy, and positive thoughts bring positive things into your life. Don't overthink. It will lead to sadness. Happiness is found within.

~ Amen.

# Introduction

***Dear Reader:***

*My Name is Jacqueline.*

I would love for you to read a little about my life. You might wonder if I had issues throughout my life. Yes, I did. Life has been challenging for me. There have been some days when I did not know if I was going or coming. But I still persevered, and today, I try to live an exemplary life. But here is how it all began.

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*“Don’t make promises when you are in joy.  
Don’t reply when you are sad. Don’t make  
decisions when you are angry. Think  
twice, act once, for you may regret  
decisions for a long time.”*

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# Chapter 1:

## My Parents

My parents met each other in Kingston, Jamaica. Later on, they married and had five children together. When my parents were living together, my family life was very stable.

When we came home from school, we had a routine. My mom taught us from an early age to wash our socks and shorts. She gave each of us a basin for washing clothing. After we washed our clothing, we had to bathe. After we bathed, we had to sit to eat dinner. Then mom asked us about our day in school. We also had to read for her. At bedtime, mom would always pray with us. That was our routine after school. But Sundays were the best.

On Sundays, we had special breakfast. Cocoa or chocolate tea, duck bread (or hard dough bread), ackee and salt fish, steamed cabbage, callaloo, and nice things like that were prepared for us on Sunday mornings. Sunday was also the day that Mom baked cake and my dad bought ice cream. We all tried not to

misbehave because if we did, we could not get the treat. These were nice times in my life that I can remember with fondness to this day. These happy times ended when my parents' marriage started to erode.

My dad had extra-marital relationships. This strained my mother's tolerance. When she decided to leave him, he became angry, which made it hard for her to leave. She did leave him but, despite her leaving, he would always come by and interfere with the way my mother was raising my siblings and myself.

She could not bear the toxic relationship anymore, so she left my siblings and myself in the custody of my father. This is how we ended up living with our father. I remember when my dad took me in. It was so devastating. I was so angry, but I didn't know how to express myself. I wanted to tell him that he should not take us away from our mother. I wanted to tell him that we needed our mother, but I was young and didn't know how to express my feelings to him. As a child, it was very confusing for me, having to leave my mother to live with my father and stepmother.

When we first started living with our father and stepmother, our mom would visit us when our dad was not there. She would bring groceries and other necessities for us, and I would long for her visits because I missed her. However, someone had informed our father that our mother was visiting us. As a result, my dad started asking us questions about my mother. When we told our mom that our dad was asking questions, she became fearful and she stopped visiting us.

It was not the best experience growing up with my father and my stepmother. I knew my father loved me, but his love was displayed in providing food, clothing, and shelter. The father's loving hug, the father's walk with his daughter, and the father's gentle talk with his daughter were not there. And his love, although I understood it, was no substitute for a mother's love. I don't think he knew how to express his love in any other way but providing for our needs. As parents, we might work so hard to provide material things for our family that we miss out on expressing our love to our children. Buying them things does not always meet their needs. They need your quality time, and to hear from your lips that you love them. When we keep saying that

we are busy, then we'll never be free to spend more time with them. If we keep saying that we will do it tomorrow, then our tomorrow will never come.

Even though my father primarily showed his love in providing for our needs, sometimes, he also did special things that showed how much he cared for his children. When we all lived together, I remember my dad bringing ice cream and goodies home for us because he knew we liked it. If we were sleeping, he would wake us up and tell us, "Come and get your snack." He was fun.

I admired my dad. He was neat and carried a beautiful dimple with his smile. His smile was one in a million, with an open space between his top front teeth. But although he could charm the ladies, he could be, at times, very aggressive. One thing I must say about my dad is that if anyone tried to hurt any of his children, they would be in serious trouble.

What's more is that I did not appreciate some of my father's friends. When they came by our home, they would make remarks. One would say to my dad, "This one does not look like you. She looks like her mother", as if they knew my mother. In the back of my mind, I would think they had something against my mom, so I would speak to them with an attitude. I would give them dirty looks, roll my eyes and suck my teeth. It offended me that anyone would think badly of my mother.

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*"We make people cry who care for us. Those who never care for us, we cry after them. This is the truth. Once you realize this, it will never be too late to change."*

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To this day, I still respect my mother. She is a very kind and funny person. She is the type of mother that would play with her children. She is clean and neat. She is also an Adventist Christian. When my siblings and I were staying with her before my parents separated, she would take us to church.

I would always find myself outside of church playing marbles, flying kites or participating in whatever the boys were doing. Out of both of my parents, my mother was the punisher and she would scold me for playing when I should be in church. But after she punished, my mother would still show love, whether through playing with us, being affectionate or combing our hair. She was very fun-loving. She feared confrontation and did not like arguments, which made it easier for her to leave us.

I knew she left us with our dad because she was afraid of him, but I still wanted to be with her. Her absence really affected my life. Without a mother's guidance, being self-motivated and having high self-esteem did not come easy to me. Everything I would have learned from her as a woman traditionally, I learned later in life, which was a disadvantage for me. A mother would guide you into understanding puberty and personal hygiene. I did not know the value of childhood living, but I did learn the value of rain.

When I was a child, I used to love the rain. Why? It gave me the opportunity to let out my tears. I would feel so good while dancing in the rain and no one would know that I was crying, or

see my tears fall down my face. It would make me feel weak to reveal my tears to anyone. I never liked when people questioned me because I did not like others knowing my personal business.

As I became older and mature, I understood that it is okay to let out my tears. I have also learned that crying is a form of therapy, and I can express myself through tears. When I see young people crying, I try not to ask too many questions. Sometimes it takes me back to my childhood. No one can truly understand another's tears. Mine is the pain I carried through my childhood.

When someone writes about their life or experiences, people want to know all the details about their life. Why? For many reasons. They want to know if it is a true story, or it might sound like their own personal story, and the list goes on and on. However, I feel very defensive when I am asked too many questions. "Why?" "How?" "What?" Sometimes, I just need a listening ear. So I ask that you grant me a listening ear.

But who was there to listen to me when I was a child? Whom could I trust?" For me, it

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**I**n this book, the author shares real life encounters of her years from youth to adulthood. This is the story of her journey through a life of physical and emotional swings. Even though she was surrounded by family and friends, she had to learn how to be independent and to manage herself in life's sometimes unpredictable situations. During this rocky journey, she has been self-bombarded with questions having to do with life itself. Even though past memories may be indelible, Jacqueline has acknowledged and accepted the divine power of God to help carry her through. Even in the darkest times, through it all, she did not let the past stand in her way.

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Jacqueline Francis Burns was born and raised in Kingston, Jamaica. Her childhood struggles with abandonment have left their lasting impression on her, even into adulthood. But through the power of Christ, she is now able to live a happier and more fulfilling life. It has always been a life-long dream of hers to write her story and to have it read. This dream has been accomplished in the book you hold in your hand. She currently lives in Brooklyn, New York with her husband of over 20 years. She has two daughters and a grand-daughter.



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