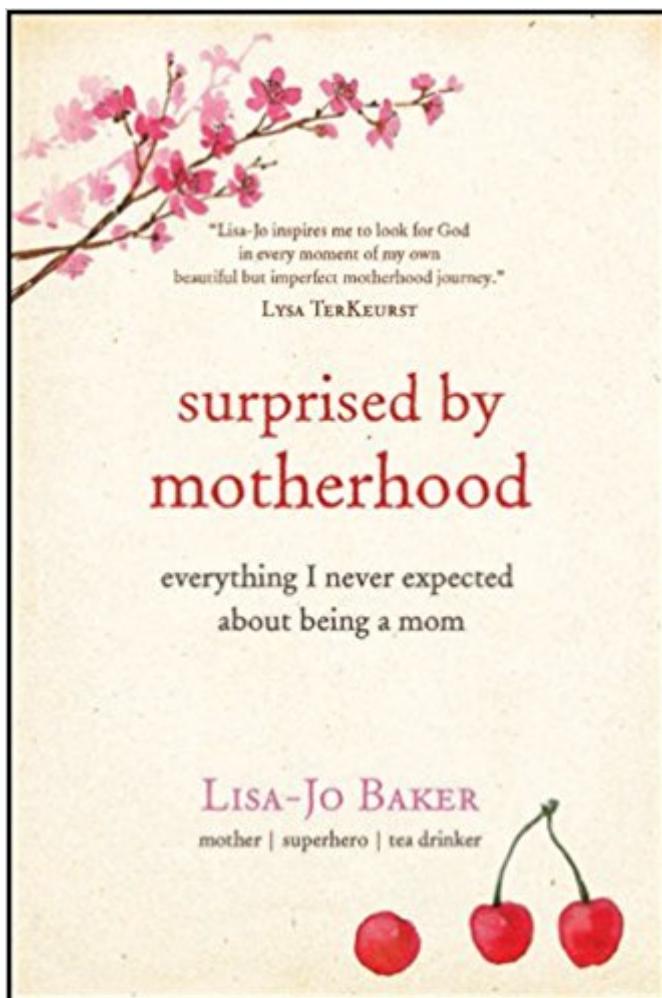


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Surprised By Motherhood: Everything I Never Expected About Being A Mom



Synopsis

A lawyer with a well-stamped passport and a passion for human rights, Lisa-Jo Baker never wanted to be a mom. And then she had kids. Having lost her own mother to cancer as a teenager, Lisa-Jo felt lost on her journey to womanhood and wholly unprepared to raise children. Surprised by Motherhood is Lisa-Jo's story of becoming and being a mom, and in the process, discovering that all the "what to expect" and "how to" books in the world can never truly prepare you for the sheer exhilaration, joy, and terrifying love that accompanies motherhood. Set partly in South Africa and partly in the US (with a slight detour to Ukraine along the way), Surprised by Motherhood is a poignant memoir of one woman's dawning realization that being a mom isn't about being perfect—it's about being present.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Lisa-Jo Baker is the social media manager for DaySpring and the community manager of the company's website, www.inencourage.me, an online home for millions of women the world over. She shares her everyday life lived in between kids and chaos at LisaJoBaker.com and is a contributor to HuffPost Parents, and her writings on motherhood are syndicated from New Zealand to New York. Born and raised in South Africa, Lisa-Jo currently lives outside Washington, DC, with her husband and their three very loud kids. --This text refers to the Audio CD edition.

As a young child, I much preferred playing with stuffed animals to playing house with dolls. As I grew older, I had far more dreams related to careers than motherhood. It took my husband several years to convince me that parenthood was something God might be calling us to. It wasn't until after we miscarried that I knew for sure I wanted to be a mom. Because my story stands in such stark contrast to those of people who always wanted to be a mom, I sometimes have a hard time relating to gushy mommy memoirs or blogs. For this reason, I was intrigued by Lisa-Jo Baker's book, *Surprised by Motherhood*. After all, its back-cover copy begins with, "Most people who talk about motherhood start out by telling you how much they always wanted to be a mom. Not Lisa-Jo Baker." Upon reading this, I decided this might be a book on motherhood I could relate to. Indeed, it was. In *Surprised by Motherhood*, Lisa-Jo chronicles her journey into motherhood, beginning with her own mother's death when she was 18. She talks of her focus on her career and the initial agreement she made with her husband NOT to have kids. She then shares how she ended up becoming a mom and how surprised she's been by motherhood "something I can relate to after just 28 days into my own journey as a mom. Throughout *Surprised by Motherhood*, Lisa-Jo's writing is poignant and relatable. At various points, I laughed and I cried. I found her observation that "pregnancy, like marriage, is an act of courage and faith" to be especially accurate after suffering a miscarriage. As she talked about how there is no roadmap for motherhood, sharing how "We had all the equipment for raising a child but no clue what to do with either" I looked around my house at all the baby gear we've assembled over the last several months and at my daughter, less than a month old. "I also appreciated the astute observations Lisa-Jo makes about faith throughout *Surprised by Motherhood*, drawn from her own experience with motherhood. Among other things, she concludes, "I had confused faith in God with faith in what God could do for me." Beyond that, what I loved about *Surprised by Motherhood* is how it left me encouraged. Lisa-Jo reminds us that "God doesn't ask us to trade who we are for the label of 'Mom'. Rather, He builds all the courage and calling of a lifetime into a story line big enough and rich enough to encompass kids, passion, work, creativity, and dreams that don't end in the labor and delivery ward." In these early days of motherhood, Lisa's words have served as a lifeline to me. I'm sure they also will for others.

If you are a mom who feels you won't survive one more dirty diaper, one more

frivolous sibling squabble, one more "Mom? Mom! Mo-oomm!!" then Lisa-Jo Baker's new book, *Surprised by Motherhood: Everything I Never Expected About Being a Mom*, was written just for you. It's for women who, like Lisa-Jo, spent much of their single years, as she describes, "strapped between an invisible sandwich board that declared in silent, capital letters to the men around MY BRAIN IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN HAVING YOUR BABIES. A defiant sign to be wearing at a Christian college where marriage was practically a major." It's for women who adore their children and would have it no other way, but would still agree in a heartbeat, "who doesn't want to escape for an afternoon into a realm where women go to the bathroom by themselves and don't need to narrate what they're doing while they're in there?" Lisa-Jo understands and is able to articulate so well the fact that: "Motherhood starts with such a bang" — so many visitors, all that roar of adrenaline — that what comes next can be disorienting. Because after the high of childbirth comes a sleepless cycle of days that all run into one long, messy, nondescript blur. If there's one thing that can defeat a mother, it's the monotony. Get up, feed the baby, wash the laundry, change the diapers, do the dishes, make the car pool run, wrestle the math homework, figure out a new way to make chicken, change the sheets — times 365 days in a row. It's hard to see the significance when you're so weighed down by the mundane. *Surprised By Motherhood* is not a how-to parenting book. It is one woman's story, told in profound, raw beauty. The journey of a woman who pushed against the notion of motherhood, then slowly, gradually, not only grew into motherhood with the familiarity of a favorite pair of jeans, but now sees those spit-up-stained jeans as standing on holy ground. Lisa-Jo writes: "In the dark and tired and the everydayness of those moments, I started to feel it — the weight of glory, the glorious ordinary that is a gift to us who are knee deep in a world where it can sometimes feel like we have lost all the parts of ourselves we used to know." Slowly, being a mother became more than a series of moments connected only by dirty diapers, empty baby wipe bins, toy cars strewn all over the bathroom floor, and bum cream. There was a harmony rising from the eclectic collection of tasks every mother cycles through in a day — this sacred marriage of the mundane and the eternal. The small directly related to the massive; kids walking around like so much eternity with skin on. If you are a mom, this story will likely resonate deep within. Lisa-Jo writes with such relatable experience, she will leave you saying, "Me, too!" Her brave honesty and candid

glimpse into the reality of her life thus far had me choked up with sentiment and laughing out loud almost in the same breath. Lisa-Jo's incredible depth of insight will generate waves of grateful introspection and ultimately, glory to God above. Take this book and let it seep like a bag of Five Roses tea into the hot water of your soul. Then pull a whiny, hungry, overtired toddler onto your knee, pull out a chair at your Play-Doh infused table, and pour a cup of this goodness for your sleep-deprived friend.

I admit, I wasn't sure I wanted to read "Surprised by Motherhood" right away. I have two young boys of my own; I'm up to my eyeballs in day-to-day parenting; I figured I didn't need to read about motherhood while I'm living it, right? Wrong! "Surprised by Motherhood" isn't just "another parenting book." It's so, so much more. It's the story of a mother and a daughter - a story of love, grief, healing, forgiveness and acceptance. It's the story of a marriage - of a partnership that isn't perfect and isn't always roses-and-chocolates romantic, but is real, and true and so very relateable. It's the story of boys -- wild, rough, stubborn, loving boys -- and their mom, and how she learns to parent each of her boys differently, because God made them different and unique. It's the story of a little girl who breaks her mom's heart open wide and brings healing and reconciliation and understanding that spans decades and even bridges death. It's the story of the power of community - friendships and family connections that can thrive and blossom despite thousands of miles and vast cultural differences. Lisa-Jo is one of the most gifted, remarkable, real storytellers I have ever read. I set out to read a chapter or two of this book and I read the ENTIRE thing in a single day (much to the chagrin of my husband, who perhaps felt slightly neglected that day!). It's THAT good, I kid you not. And as a voracious and fairly discerning reader, I don't say that lightly!

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