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SINK OR SWIM

LIFE AFTER CRASH LANDING IN THE HUDSON

KARIN ROONEY

with Jessie Santala

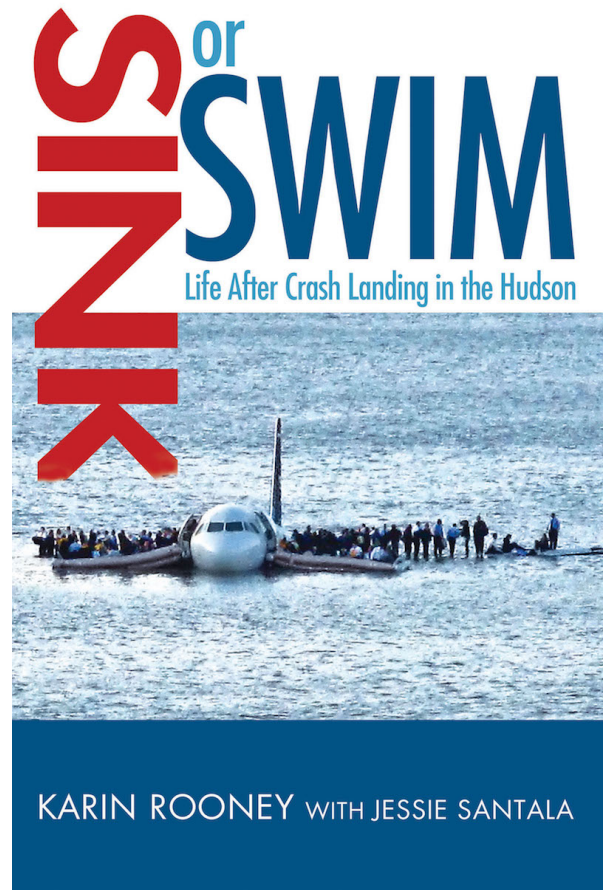
Karin Rooney had always been a bit of a nervous flyer.

In January 2009, she was at a crossroads in her most significant relationship. She was about to start school at Metro State College to study social work after taking three years off. It seemed that she was on the brink of something important and life-changing.

At the end of her vacation to New York City with her boyfriend, Chris, they boarded Flight 1549, looking forward to going home. Shortly after the takeoff, Karin heard *The Noise* and felt the plane shake. Chris tried to calm Karin's fears, but he knew that something had gone horribly wrong. As the plane began a 180-turn, Karin prayed, "God, protect our plane. Gently lay our plane down. Put your angels above, below, in front, and behind our plane."

Sink or Swim is Karin's riveting story of the day that Flight 1549 crashed into the Hudson River with Captain Sully Sullenberger at the helm, and of the miraculous survival of 155 people. Karin describes how the plane crash left her with PTSD. However, through God's grace and trauma counseling, along with the passage of time, Karin learned to face the day that changed her forever.

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About the Authors



Karin Rooney survived one of most historic plane crashes. She studied social work at Metropolitan State University in Colorado. She has spent her post education working in foster care and adoption, which created space for her to grow in her understanding and passion for trauma-healing. Karin and her husband, Chris, have three children, Elaina, Clark, and Henry. The family recently moved from Colorado to Texas. Karin enjoys reading Victor Frankl, Paul David Tripp, John Steinbeck, and historical fiction.

Jessie Santala is a Colorado native, a firstborn, a wife, a mom, and a big fan of coffee. She has her undergraduate degree in History/Secondary Education from the University of Northern Colorado and her master's degree in Creative Writing from the University of Denver. Her parents instilled a love of the written word in her at a young age, and to this day she is passionate about reading, libraries, and writing thank-you notes. She works as a personal assistant and she and her husband, Mike, volunteer as youth leaders when they aren't at home trying to keep up with their two babies, Charlotte and Felix.



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What Others Are Saying About **Sink or Swim**

I truly couldn't put this down this book of the amazing true story of Karin Rooney. Her transparency with the challenges she endured and the victories over them is truly inspiring as she shares with her readers about her and her husband's flight as passengers on Captain Sully's plane that he crash-landed into the freezing Hudson River.

*I highly recommend this book for teenagers, single young adults, married adults, and grandparents. It will increase your faith and strengthen your resolve that **we can face any hardship that comes our way through God's Grace** and his ability to stay near us and help us in times of trouble.*

As a trauma specialist, I recommend all workers in our field to read this book and gain raw, real, and relevant insight into a person who has endured a rare incident of trauma, and searched for healing and wholeness after surviving the unthinkable.

—Victor Marx, Founder and President, All Things Possible (ATP) Ministries

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Suggested Interview Questions

For **Karin Rooney**, coauthor of

Sink or Swim

Life After Crash Landing in the Hudson

Q: How do you view life difficulties today?

A: Today I pray a lot about the future adversities I may face. I recall to my mind that I have chosen to trust God, no matter what comes my way. I cannot prepare for my future and what it holds, but I can prepare my heart and mind to make choices, if and when those times come. I recall who God is, who I am in him, and what I know and have seen him do in and through me during hard times. I still struggle with overwhelming feelings and my first instinct is not to run to God or be filled with peace. It takes work and time to get my emotions to line up with what I know is true.

Q: How did you and Jessie meet?

A: Jessie and I were in attendance at a mutual friend's wedding. Jessie was the photographer and we started talking. I shared with her about the plane crash. I knew she was a photographer but I asked her "what else" she did besides photography. I have had many friends who are photographers and they also have side jobs or are pursuing other ventures. She shared that she was a writer and we began to talk about meeting up to see if there was potential to work together.

Q: How did the plane crash affect your relationship with God?

A: I never wondered if God was good or if he was there in the crash. What I do recall asking and wondering was "how are you going to bring good from this?" So much of my life was ruled by fear of pain and trauma that I felt a sense of distance from God. I felt like I needed to have my issues figured out and I also didn't want to get close because I was worried God would ask me to do really hard things. Things I was not prepared to do. As a whole I would say my relationship with God has gone deeper and more based on Truth instead of emotions. I was a very

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emotional person before the crash. I wanted to experience God and his power and I wanted to feel the Spirit. Today, I know that what the Bible says is Truth. I am more grounded in the facts and truth of there being a creator and in God's plan of salvation through Jesus's death. All things I believed before the crash but I have internalized and not because I feel them to be true.

Q: What would you tell people in regards to supporting a loved one in a difficult place or experiencing a traumatic life experience?

A: First, pray. Pray for a sincere heart, and if God has you in their life, pray and seek how you can best love and serve them. Trauma is a long road and can be difficult for those who are walking with a loved one on that journey. Patience. Patience to trust God's plan for healing. I recall times of friends giving me Bible answers and the "Christian way" of responding, and it actually hurt me so much. Someone once said, "just pray more." Most people are uncomfortable with pain and the unknown so they try and fix. No one needs to be fixed. They need to heal, and that will take time. Ask them to share how you can best support them. I remember calling my sister five or six times about an event we were going to or plans we had made just to make sure it was still happening. She was always so kind, but one day she said, "You don't need to keep calling me, we have made the plan and I'll be there." I told her that it was just something I needed, as whacky as it was. She noticed my anxiety and remained compassionate because she knew I was really struggling. Ask how you can support. Listen and seek to understand.

Q: What was your initial goal for this book?

A: The initial goal of the book was to have my story for myself and my family. I was not journaling like I had wanted, and so it was really therapeutic to talk the journey through. We began writing during the thick of things, and as we wrote over the course of months, my life was feeling healthier. We finished writing but still so much more growth came. We did make changes, added new insights and experiences. The great thing about healing is, you can keep healing! I could write a sequel to this book because again, I keep seeing areas healed in regards to the trauma from the plane crash.

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Q: What would the Karin today tell the Karin of 2009?

A: I would tell the Karin of 2009 to journal and read God’s Word daily. I was walking with the Lord, growing still, but I know I could have been more devoted and committed in my reading of God’s Truth. I would also have given myself the analogy “today, the plane crash is a huge mountain in front of you that you’re facing, but as time goes on, as you heal, there will come a point when it is just a rearview mirror image.” I would also have journaled more. I would have written more often.

Q: Besides counseling, what other coping techniques helped you?

A: I saw a EMDR counselor twice a week for a while and tapered off. I also exercised on a daily basis. I watched my diet and made sure to eat healthy, whole foods. I did use some herbal anxiety remedies when I was feeling particularly anxious. I never took anxiety or depression medications, but I feel strongly they have their place in healing and recovery. Chris and I talked extensively about medication, and although things were hard, I was still able to get up every day, work effectively, and maintain a relatively normal life. I took a lot of naps and lowered my commitments to nothing but Chris, part-time work, counseling, and exercise. All other activities were extra and I always gave myself permission to step back or say no.

Suggested Interview Questions

For Jessie Santala, coauthor of

Sink or Swim

Life After Crash Landing in the Hudson

Q: How did you and Karin meet?

A: I knew about Karin before I actually met her because I had seen a write-up on her and her husband, Chris, in *People* magazine and recognized Chris from my dad’s church. Like a good romantic comedy story, Karin and I officially met at a wedding. I was moonlighting as a photographer and she was a guest and during a lull in the action, we started talking. She asked me what I did besides photography,

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which was odd since most people assumed photography was my full-time job. I don't know what came over me, maybe the fact I had just gotten my degree in creative writing, but I told her that I was a writer. It was the only time I had ever told someone that I was a writer. She got excited and told me that she had been looking for a writer to tell her story. I hadn't had anything published yet, and told her so, but she was willing to take a chance on me. We exchanged contact information, promised to be in touch, and six years later, here we are.

Q: What was the process of writing someone else's story like?

A: It was humbling and intimidating. I wanted to do Karin's story justice. She was talking a chance on me and trusting me to handle her experiences with care and compassion, and I didn't want to let her down. There were times where I felt overwhelmed and I had a very real fear of failure.

Q: What was the biggest challenge you faced during the writing process?

A: Karin is bubbly and funny and so honest and I wanted to not only do her story justice, but to capture her voice. I didn't want people to hear me when they read the book, I wanted them to hear her—her spirit, her hope, her faith. I spent a lot of time listening to recordings I had made during our interviews, trying to memorize her speech patterns and making sure that I didn't interject my own emotions into her story.

Q: Would you collaborate with someone again?

A: I would absolutely do it again. I had a wonderful experience. However, I would make sure that I was working with someone as great as Karin, someone I am compatible with. She was patient with me and she was so encouraging and appreciative of my time and effort. I didn't feel rushed to get this finished and any pressure I felt was from me, not her. Plus, she is just fun to be around. I would be honored if someone else asked me to help them tell their story.

Q: What would you like the lasting impact of this book to be?

A: I admire Karin for being willing to tell her story of survival. She doesn't just talk about the happy, good stuff. She delves into the dark stuff too—her struggles, her

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fears, etc. I hope that this book gives people permission to talk about their trauma and also helps them to understand that they are not alone. I hope we are able to start a conversation and, ultimately, offer people hope.

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