

Finally Free

*Embracing a Life of
Abundance & Rest*

JAZMIN N. FRANK



Beautifully Devoted

RESOURCES

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*To the tired, worn out, worn down, and weary.
May you hear Jesus calling you to come lay down
your burdens and rest in His abundant love.
May you find space here to finally live free.*

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Introduction

There are a handful of times in my life when I have clearly heard God's voice. It wasn't an audible experience. It felt more like God downloaded words into my heart and mind. And of those experiences, there were two where God said the same six words.

"I want you to be free."

The first time I heard those words, I was in my car. Talking out loud to God is a frequent habit of mine while I'm driving, and on this particular day I was verbally running through all the reasons I should and should not accept a friend's invitation to join her at a writing conference in Nashville. I had recently left my teaching job to pursue writing full-time and this conference seemed like a logical next step down that path. I wanted to go, but there was one big thing holding me back—pursuing a writing career didn't leave me with much wiggle room in my budget.

My gut said I should go to the conference, but my head said I needed to keep a tight rein on my finances. In a huff, I told God, "I just want to be responsible," to which He responded, "I just want you to be free."

The second time I heard those words I was at a church retreat. My heart was pretty raw as I journaled about how messed up I felt, and how confined I was by a long list of expectations I felt from others, myself, and even God. I felt like a failure and that maybe I wasn't as far along in my Christian journey as I thought. After wringing the contents of my heart out onto the page, I paused and felt God speak those same words again.

"I want you to be free."

I've spent so much of my life trying to do the right thing, trying to please God, and love others, sometimes even at the expense of loving myself. I've heard sermons,

read books, and listened to teachers who have assured me that Christ came to set us free, but I always had this assumption that freedom was something that was coming and that it was something I had to work hard to achieve. Part of that assumption is true. When Jesus returns, we will experience freedom and abundance like we never have before.

But freedom isn't just a later thing. It's a now thing. And it's not something I have to strive to earn. Freedom is a gift that is meant to be received.

This freedom God gives us goes beyond freeing us from sin and death so. That's a huge piece of it, but it's not the full story of freedom. As we'll explore throughout this study, we are set free to *live* free right here and right now.

We are freed *from* so that we are free *to*.

Over the next six weeks we're going to take a deep dive into the book of Exodus to learn what this great gift of freedom looks like and how we can begin living into it.

Exodus chronicles Israel's release from slavery and their journey into the wilderness where they learn what it means to live freely as God's chosen people. For four hundred years, Israel lived in Egypt as slaves to Pharaoh. During that time, the only thing these generations knew was the sharp end of a whip, the commanding presence of their overseers, and the fact that their lives were not their own. Israel was at the mercy of Egypt's ruler, a man who was driven by fear and a desire for great power. But even in their captivity, Israel cried out to God for release, holding onto the desperate hope that there was more to life than slavery.

Exodus will be our framework for this journey. From God's miraculous rescue in leading Israel out of Egypt to the year spent at the base of Mount Sinai receiving instructions about how their new nation should function, we're going to gain a new understanding of the freedom God gives us. We'll do this by studying Scripture, but also by practicing a few spiritual disciplines, or as I like to call them, devoted practices.

One of the key themes woven throughout the book of Exodus—and one of the keys to living free—is the idea of Sabbath rest. At the end of each week of study, I'm going to invite you to enter into the rhythm of Sabbath. If this concept of a day of rest is new to you, don't worry. In the next section, I'll give you an overview of Sabbath, and each week you'll find a different way to meet with God as you build a regular rhythm of rest into your life.

We're also going to spend a lot of time meditating on Scripture. After each day of study you'll find a day set aside to meditate on God's Word. I'll provide more guidance for how to press into these practices of Sabbath and Scripture meditation in the next section, but I want to encourage you now not to rush these next six weeks.

This study is set up to be handled slowly. We're in no rush here. We're meeting God, we're pressing into freedom, and that, dear heart, takes time. We're not racing to any finish lines. We're here to learn about freedom, rest, and abundance so that we can finally live into the freedom Christ as already given us.

>>jazmin

Devoted Practices

If we're not mindful, intentional, and approaching our faith with a heart focused on relationship, it can quickly become all about checking off boxes and getting things done. We can focus more on performance than being present with God. That's why at the beginning of every study, I like to give you a few tools and rhythms to help you treat this time of study less like an assignment to be completed and more like an opportunity to encounter God and grow your relationship with Him. I want these next six weeks to be about connecting with God and your heart on a deeper level. To do that, we're going to focus on three practices that will help us love God, love His story, and live devoted.

PRACTICE #1: STUDY SCRIPTURE WITH INTENTION

Anytime you crack open the Bible, you have the opportunity to get to know God and experience Him through His Word. The Bible is not some antiquated text that has no bearing on our lives today. Every chapter, every verse is relevant because it reveals God's heart, as we'll see in our study of Exodus. Scripture helps us get to know God's character and His story. But more than that, these are His words. When we read the Bible, we enter into conversation with God, and if we enter into this practice intentionally, we'll learn to hear and recognize His voice through Scripture.

For the duration of this study, we're going to focus the majority of our time on the book of Exodus. Each day you will find a passage to read, space to record notes, a brief teaching, and some questions to help you dig deeper into God's Word.

As we spend time in God's Word, here are three simple ways to study Scripture with intention:

1. *Start with prayer.* Since the Bible is God's Word, no one knows what it says better than Him. Invite the Holy Spirit to give you ears to hear and a heart to

understand. Ask Him to teach you about Himself and what this freedom of abundance and rest is that He has for you.

2. *Read with a pen in hand.* I always find it easier to read my Bible with intention when I have a pen in hand to underline verses that stick out to me or to write notes in the margins. I find that when you read with a pen in hand, it becomes less about reading and more about entering into conversation with the Lord.
3. *Take notes.* I've provided a blank space at the beginning of each day of study for you to record your own notes, insights, questions, and connections as you read. Make use of that space. I will provide teaching and my own insights as we move through Exodus, but this study will mean more, and you will glean a lot more, if you are willing to study with the intention of encountering God through His Word for yourself.

PRACTICE #2: MEDITATE ON THE WORD

Another aspect of studying the Bible intentionally is to take time to meditate on a passage. This is something we will practice often throughout the next six weeks.

That word “meditate” can make us feel a little uncomfortable. That’s because we often connect it with more Eastern practices of sitting with crossed legs and our thumb and forefinger forming O’s as someone chants. That isn’t the type of meditation we’re talking about here, so you can breathe easy.

To meditate simply means to sit long or think deeply about a particular thought, idea, or passage. It is the same word the Psalmist uses in Psalm 1:2 to describe a righteous person: “his delight is in the Lord’s instruction, and he meditates on it day and night.”

A note on this verse in the ESV Study Bible describes that word meditate as “an active pondering, perhaps even muttering to oneself in pursuit of insight.”¹

After each day of study, you will have a day to meditate on Scripture. We’ll use a Scripture meditation practice called *Lectio Divina* to guide us.

In a *Lectio Divina* there are five different movements of the meditation practice. I’ve adapted the practice found in Ruth Haley Barton’s book *Sacred Rhythms*.² (Side note: This is a great resource to keep handy if you want to dig even deeper into the

practice Lectio Divina and other spiritual disciplines.) Each of these movements will be provided for you on our meditation days, but here is an overview of the flow:

1. Read the Word
2. Meditate on the Word
3. Respond to the Word
4. Rest in the Word
5. Live the Word

If you are interested in leading a Scripture meditation with your small group, you will find a guide in the back of this book that will walk you through that process and help you to prepare.

PRACTICE #3: SABBATH

The practice of Sabbath is a cornerstone of the Jewish faith. It was first introduced in the book of Exodus and is a defining piece of Israel's newfound freedom after leaving Egypt. Sabbath was meant to set Israel apart from the other nations and remind them of God's care and provision, as well as their own humanity and limitations. Under Pharaoh, Israel lived a life of constant work, but in God's kingdom, He calls His people into rest.

If you are unfamiliar with Sabbath, it is one twenty-four hour period where God's people stop their work, take a break, rest, and enjoy being in God's presence. It is a revitalizing practice that invites us to rest in the abundance of God and trust that He will take care of us even when we are not working. Sabbath invites us to give up this constant need to perform, accumulate, and conquer our to-do lists. It is a day of worship, community, connection, and creativity.

My friend Stephanie has been studying and practicing Sabbath intentionally for the last few years and has come to see Sabbath as a series of five movements: Prepare, Surrender, Connect, Enjoy, and Overflow. We'll be exploring these movements more in-depth in the coming weeks and learn how to use them in our own Sabbath practice. You can also find a quick reference guide to these movements in the back of this book, with Scripture passages and ideas about how to engage in each of these five areas.

Don't let this idea of Sabbath overwhelm you. Maybe you're already thinking that

you can't do this, that you don't have time to take a day off. You need that paycheck. You need to get the kids to their activities. You need to get those chores done because there is no other time during the week.

I know. I'll be the first to admit that Sabbath isn't easy. It takes work to rest well. It takes preparation and requires us to shift our focus from striving to be more productive to enter into the rhythms of rest God established. It's time for us to stop treating rest as a reward we can indulge in when the work is done. Rather, we should be making rest a priority.

I don't expect you to perfect Sabbath or any of these practices. In fact, perfection shouldn't even be the goal. The point here is to allow God to shape us and grow us through these practices. The only thing I ask is that you show up. Try. Allow these practices to be messy, uncomfortable, and imperfect. Even the seeming imperfections can be places to get to know God and our own hearts.

Blessings on the journey, dear heart. And if you haven't already, think about finding a buddy or gathering a group to work through this study together. It's always easier to study and practice spiritual disciplines in a community, where you have others to whom you are accountable and who are taking this journey with you.

Now, as we begin, let's pray:

Father, we're about to embark on a journey. We're going to dig into Your Word and we're going to read the story of how You rescued Israel and brought them into freedom. Give us understanding. Help us see and know and experience this freedom that you have given us, and teach us to live into that freedom. You have set us free so that we can live free, and we are hungry for soul-level freedom. We acknowledge that freedom is what You want for us, so help us press into Your abundance and rest and learn to live free.

Week One



Day 1: A Call for Freedom

STUDY EXODUS 1-2

It's always difficult beginning a new study. Even if you've read a particular passage or book of Scripture previously—even if you've read it several times—there is a kind of settling in that needs to happen when we approach it.

Bible studies are intentional. We're digging in for a particular purpose, with a goal in mind, and we're reading through a specific lens.

The book of Exodus is a pretty familiar book. It's one a lot of Sunday school lessons are pulled from, and for good reason. Exodus houses one of the most influential experiences in the Jewish faith, and since Christianity finds its roots in Judaism, the words of Exodus feed our faith too.

The first half of the book of Exodus is really exciting and powerful. The plagues, the miracles, the Red Sea—it all makes for a very theatrical and engaging read. But once Israel has crossed the sea and is free, their time camping out at Mount Sinai can al-

most feel like we're reading an entirely different book.

I don't want us entering into this study half-heartedly, feeling like the stories of Exodus are too familiar, or that the passages about the Law are irrelevant. As with any study, we are reading and studying with a purpose, and that purpose is to encounter the God of freedom in every chapter. That purpose is to learn how to embrace a life of abundance and rest.

No matter how familiar you are with the book of Exodus, I want you to set aside what you know. Let your knowledge and familiarity take a back seat. Approach these chapters with a fresh set of eyes and read through the lens of freedom.

So, as we dive into these opening chapters of Exodus, take a deep breath and let it out slowly. Release any expectations or assumptions you're entering this study with. Ask God to prepare your heart to receive whatever it is He has for you here.

Ready to begin? Great!

The book of Exodus picks up from where Genesis left off. In order to understand the significance of what lies ahead in today's passage and the entirety of Exodus, we need to jump backward in time a bit and take a brief survey of the book of Genesis.

Genesis is the very first book of the Bible. Over the first eleven chapters of Genesis, we find accounts of the stories of Creation, the Fall, the Flood, and the Tower of Babel. Then in Genesis 12, things take a turn. The narrative zooms in on one family through whom God promises to bless every nation. The patriarch of this family is a guy named Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3). When God calls Abraham out of the land of Ur, Abraham is childless, but God promises to bring an entire nation from this one man.

When God makes this covenant with Abraham, the Lord reveals some rather surprising information:

Then the LORD said to Abram, "Know this for certain: Your offspring will be resident aliens for four hundred years in a land that does not belong to them and will be en-

slaved and oppressed. However, I will judge the nation they serve, and afterward they will go out with many possessions” (Genesis 15:13-14).

What information does God reveal about Abraham’s descendants?

A few generations after God spoke those words to Abraham, Joseph, Abraham’s great-grandson, is sold into slavery in Egypt because of his brothers’ jealousy. Even in slavery, and later when he is wrongfully imprisoned, Joseph remains faithful to God and experiences God’s blessing. Through a series of events (which you can read all about in Genesis 37-41), Joseph is given a position of power and saves Egypt, the surrounding nations, and even his own family from a famine. After realizing that Joseph is alive and well in Egypt, his family makes the move from Canaan to Egypt, and all the past tensions between the brothers and Joseph are forgiven.

At the very end of Genesis we see another bit of foreshadowing of what God is going to accomplish with this family.

Read Genesis 50:24-25. What is revealed here about the future of Israel?

Before Israel even existed, God told Abraham that his descendants would be held in bondage by another nation, but He promised to free them. He even spoke of Abraham’s future family leaving the land where they were oppressed with an abundance of wealth. That promise was reaffirmed on Joseph’s deathbed, when he assured his brothers and children that they would one day return to the land they left.

It’s important to know Israel’s history as we turn the page to Exodus 1 and 2. Israel’s time in Egypt was something God knew about long before they got there, and He had a plan to lead them out again. Knowing this makes Exodus that much more interesting to me. It isn’t just a book about powerful acts of God or His signs and wonders. It

is God's plan of salvation for Israel.

Look back at your reading from the first two chapters of Exodus. What do we learn about Israel's situation now?

Before we go any further, we need to feel the weight of Israel's position.

Israel had lived happily in their new home, until their growing family was seen as a threat. As a way to subdue their people, Pharaoh placed Israel under the firm hand of forced labor. Enslaving the Hebrews was an act of fear, control, and self-preservation on Pharaoh's part. He needed to be the one with all the power, the one in control. He needed to be god of his nation and his life.

Unfortunately, Israel was the unhappy recipient of Pharaoh's jealous and fearful wrath. They were enslaved. Their children were taken and thrown into the Nile. And it's likely that the God of their fathers—the God who brought Joseph to Egypt in the first place to save his family—felt silent. Under the burden of slavery, the people surrendered to their new identity as slaves and they lived that way for generations.

Can you feel the hopelessness, the oppression, the numbness, anger, resentment, and longing Israel must have felt? Do you connect with their story in any way?

There is no need for freedom unless one is not free, and Israel was not free. They were held captive by a powerful hand, but eventually, the souls of these slaves woke up enough to remember that they were made for more than this. Israel was not meant to be a family of brick builders, housemaids, and tradesmen bound to their masters.

Israel was made to be free, to flourish, and to fill the land God had promised them.

We share the same identity. We are made to be free.

As I reflect on Israel's position, I can't help but think back to the Garden of Eden and that moment when sin entered the world. Humans thrived in the Garden and in relationship with God until Satan made his move, whispered a little lie into Eve's ear, and humanity fell into the bondage of sin. Everything was broken and God was distant. Like Israel, we were no longer free.

We may not have a task master standing over us, whip at the ready if we fail to complete our assigned quota of bricks, but we do face different bondages that hold us captive and keep us from living the abundant life God created us for.

We live in the bondage of fear and anxiety.

We are bound by unhealthy mindsets about work and accomplishment.

We enslave ourselves to the bondage of comparison.

We experience the bondage of spiritual oppression.

We give in to the bondage of the idea of self-sufficiency.

There are things in this world that keep us from living free. There is a very real enemy that, like Pharaoh, would do anything to hold us captive under his tyrannical thumb and keep us from thriving.

But that is not the goodness God created us for. That is not the abundant life He intended us to have. Ever since that bite of fruit was taken, God has been working to get us back and set us free.

Israel's story is another leg of His mission. It is a very real history of a real group of people God sets free, but it is also an image of God's work in our lives. These first two chapters of Exodus help us see that freedom is already on its way—for Israel, and for us.

My favorite portion of today's Scripture reading is Exodus 2:23-25. Up to this point, these first two chapters of Exodus have detailed Israel's horrific situation, but in these few verses, we feel the winds change. Their situation hasn't changed yet, but hope enters in because God hears the cries of His people. He remembers His covenant. He sees the situation Israel is in, and He knows.

He hears.

He remembers.

He sees.

He knows.

Those are the words that describe a God who is about to make a move, and it's going to be even more amazing than Israel could ever imagine. They were crying out for freedom from their bondage, but God was preparing to give them so much more.

In what ways do you feel bound up in your life right now?

Are you ready for God to set you free? Ask Him now to continue His freeing work in your life. Cry out to the God who sees, knows, hears, and remembers.

Day 2: Seen and Known

MEDITATE ON PSALM 139:7-12

In between days of study, we're going to take a day to pause and meditate on a short passage of Scripture. These passages will be related to the Exodus passage we just studied. The goal here is to make space for God to speak and for us to listen.

Today we're going to spend time dwelling on some words from the Psalms that reveal God's intimate knowledge of us and His constant presence. The prompts below will lead you through today's Scripture meditation. Go slow. Take your time. Allow yourself ample space to reflect on and respond to God's Word.

Prepare: Be still before the Lord. Ask Him to prepare your heart to read and engage with this Scripture today. Lay your heart open before Him and ask Him to speak.

Read the Word: Read the passage slowly. What words or phrases stand out to you?

Meditate on the Word: Read the passage again. How does this word or phrase connect to your life?

Respond to the Word: Read the passage again. Be honest with God about your response to this word and passage. How do you feel about it? What are you thinking? How are you responding to God? How is God inviting you to respond?

Rest in the Word: Read the passage one more time. Simply rest in God's Word. Submit yourself to His presence and just be present with Him.

Live the Word: How will you live into what you read and heard today?

Day 3: Meanwhile in Midian

STUDY EXODUS 3-4

“Meanwhile.”

I love that this is the word that begins our reading today. It indicates that, while the events in front of us are taking up all of our attention, off to the side and over yonder, something else is happening—something that could affect the current situation.

If you’ll remember, Exodus 2 ended with a whisper of hope. Israel, though living as slaves, cried out for relief and freedom. And while their situation hasn’t changed, we as readers know that God heard them, and He is about to do something. I don’t know about you, but I’m on the edge of my seat with anticipation.

What is God going to do?!

To answer that question, our biblical author redirects our attention to the plains of Midian and a man named Moses. Moses was introduced in Exodus 2. Though we

haven't addressed his part in the story yet, he is definitely our focus for today.

Flip back through Exodus 2. What do we know about Moses so far?

When we encounter him in today's reading, Moses has been in the wilderness for forty years, since he fled Egypt after killing an Egyptian taskmaster. Though he had been raised in Pharaoh's palace under the care of Pharaoh's daughter, Moses seems fully content with his new life and his new family in the land of Midian.

He's content, at least until his eye notices a burning bush while going about his shepherding routine. Intrigued by the phenomenon, Moses steps closer and quickly learns that God is present.

What does God ask Moses to do that signifies that this moment is a holy one (verse 5)?

When Moses gets close enough and God begins to speak, the first words He says—after Moses' sandals are removed—establish God's identity.

Who does God identify Himself as (Exodus 3:6)?

By listing off Israel's patriarchs, God establishes Himself as the God of covenant.

A covenant was a binding contract between two people that usually had dire consequences if one party broke contract. God made a covenant with Abraham to bless and multiply his descendants and give his family land. Nothing was required of

Abraham except that he remain faithful to God (Genesis 17:1-2). That covenant was transferred to Abraham's son Isaac (Genesis 26:2-5) and from Isaac to his son Jacob (Genesis 28:13-15).

That covenant was rooted in God's promise to take care of Abraham's family and to bless all the nations through him. Generations later, this covenant saw its complete fulfillment when Jesus, a descendent of Abraham, came to save His people—and the whole world—from their sins (Matthew 1:20-21). Jesus' death on the cross and His resurrection was the ultimate rescue mission. But I'm getting way ahead of myself.

Let's come back to the book of Exodus where we left Moses standing barefoot before the burning bush on the mountain.

The God of the covenant—the God of blessing and care and compassion—called Moses aside from his shepherding job for a very important reason.

Look back at Exodus 3:7-10. What is God's purpose for calling Moses to the bush?

This interaction at the bush reiterates what was already told to us as readers at the end of Exodus 2. God is not unaware of Israel's plight in Egypt. He has a plan to usher them out of slavery and into abundant freedom, and Moses is the one God has chosen to help Him carry out His plan.

How does Moses respond to God's plan?

While the plan sounds amazing, the moment God informs Moses that he is God's front man to lead this campaign, Moses is full of arguments. The rest of today's passage details Moses' desire to reject the call along with his long list of reasons why he isn't the right person. His excuses range from his inability to speak, to his fear that the people won't believe that God sent him. But God meets every one of Moses'

arguments with a promise of presence and victory. Moses won't be doing this alone, and the result will be freedom for the people. God also gives Moses physical signs to perform for Pharaoh and Israel if they don't believe that God was the one who sent Moses. God also gives Moses a partner, his Hebrew brother Aaron, who will speak the words God gives Moses.

The promise of Israel's freedom is exciting, but the road ahead isn't going to be easy. In fact, it's about to get messy, but freedom itself is messy. There are obstacles to overcome, oppressors to overthrow, and mindsets of the oppressed that need overridden. While Moses may be hesitant about the job ahead, God is not. He is about to bring freedom to His people, and He has called Moses to be an agent to help make that happen.

The funny thing about Moses is that he is bound up in his own kind of bondage. While he made it out of Egypt years before, fear, regret, and shame all plague him. Now he's headed back into the land he escaped with instructions to lead Israel out. But this journey isn't just for Israel's sake. I believe God calls Moses because He knows this experience will be freeing for Moses too. As confirmation that God's words will come about, He promises to bring Moses back to this very mountain, except when he returns, his people will be free. We'll also find Moses a changed man living in freedom too.

In order to experience that, though, Moses needs to act on faith and return to Egypt. Once he is reunited with his brother, Moses and Aaron approach the Hebrews and share the words God spoke to them about their coming freedom, and it brings the people to worship: "The people believed, and when they heard that the LORD had paid attention to them and that He had seen their misery, they knelt low and worshiped" (Exodus 4:31).

We're not the only ones holding onto hope. The people's hope has been awakened too. Freedom is coming. God is going to do whatever it takes to set His people free.

What is your response to God introducing Himself as the God of covenant promise? How does that encourage or challenge you?

Do you believe God sees and hears you? Do you believe that He has a plan for your life? Do you believe He wants you to be free from the things holding you captive? Reflect on those questions and your belief about God.

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A Note from Jazmin

Dear Heart,

You did it! You've reached the end of our journey through Exodus. I hope that you have experienced God in new ways and have learned how to better live into the freedom Christ has given you. I hope that the Bible has come to life for you in a new way and that this study has given you a new excitement for God's Word. I also hope that these devoted practices of reading Scripture intentionally, the weekly rhythm of Sabbath, and pausing to slowly meditate on Scripture have helped you learn how to live more devoted to God.

If this study has impacted you in any way, I would love to hear from you. You can connect with me on Facebook or Instagram @jazminnfrank or send me an email through the contact form on my website at jazminnfrank.com. My website is also a great place to learn more about how to love God, love His story, and live devoted. And if you're looking for your next Bible study to do yourself or with a group, don't forget to check out my other studies!

Live in His love!

Jazmin

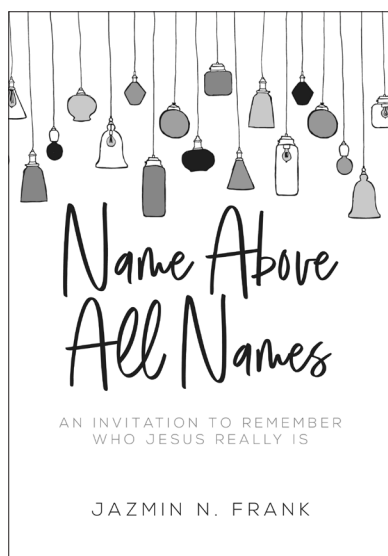
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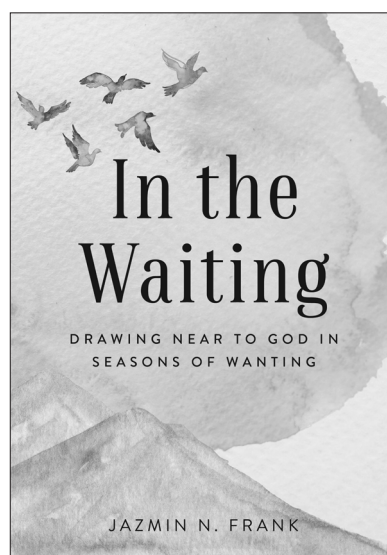
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About the Author



Jazmin N. Frank is an author, teacher, and speaker on all things Bible. With a focus on building relationship with God, Jazmin equips and encourages ordinary people to love God, love His story, and live devoted. She is the author of *In the Waiting* and *Name Above All Names*. Jazmin loves creating Bible studies that help people dive deep into Scripture, while also teaching Bible study skills. Learn more and connect with Jazmin online @jazminnfrank or on her website jazminnfrank.com.

Notes

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