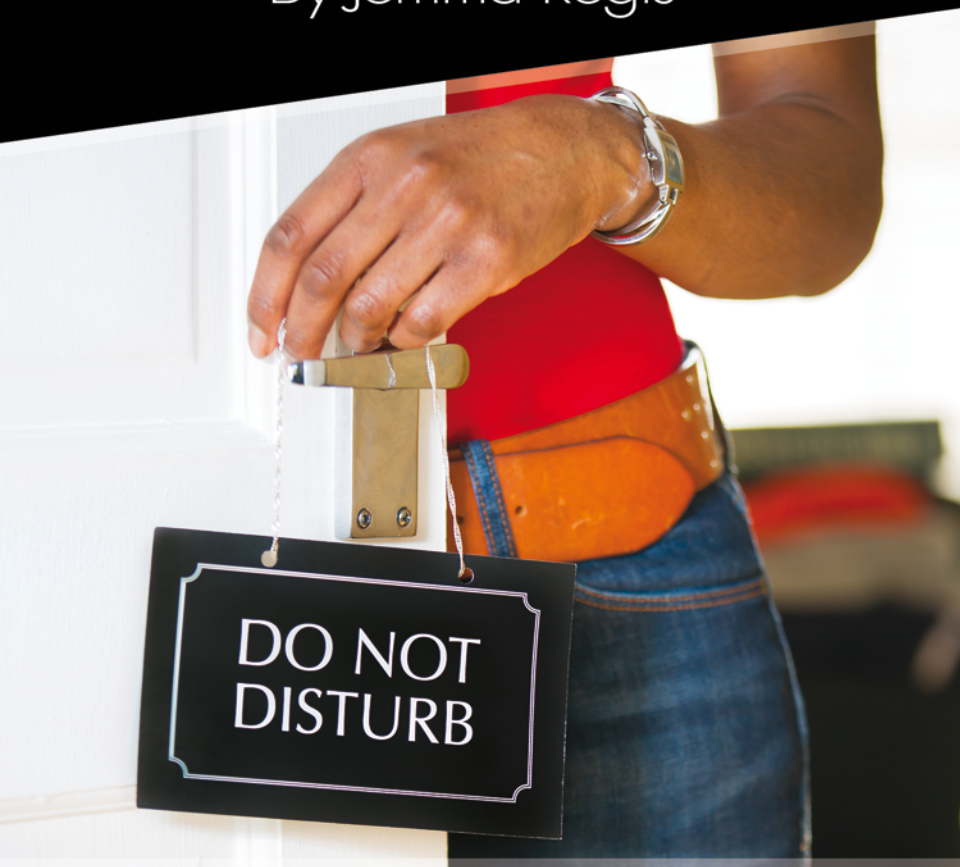


# GOD'S ROMANTIC GETAWAY

By Jemma Regis



Foreword by Pastor David Daniel

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MINISTRY IN ART **MEDIA**

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Lastly, but by no means least, to my mother, you will forever be in my heart. I am more like you than I



realised, which means you taught me well. I just wish you could be here to see this

Love Jemz, x

# Foreword

I pastor a church in Tottenham, North London, England. It is a vibrant family oriented church, situated in the heart of one of London's most popular boroughs. Our church relies heavily on the gifting and service of its members and I am so encouraged because God has blessed us with extremely talented and willing people who have served to elevate the profile of our fellowship, and allowed us to impact people's lives all over the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

To be given the honour of writing this foreword for Jemma's first book fills me with immense pleasure because she is an honest and sincere woman of God, and I have seen, first hand, how God has literally transformed her life.

Prior to Jemma taking up membership in our fellowship, I knew her as a believer through my association with the church she attended. However, I also recognised her as a successful businesswoman who ran a highly regarded catering business called 'Jems Caterers'. Whenever 'Jems caterers' were attending to the food at a wedding

or special function, you knew the food would look and taste exquisite. You could be confident that the service would be professional and of the highest standard. However, at this point I need to be excused for just one moment. HER FOOD TASTES SOOOOO GOOD. Yes, I must admit, I am guilty on occasions of forgetting one's etiquette and upbringing. On numerous occasions I have had to mentally restrain myself in public, from tearing into the food like I am at my mum's house on a Sunday afternoon. Jemma is without doubt an accomplished and gifted chef, and I have been blessed, I really have been blessed.

Jemma seemed to be someone who had it all going for her - she had purchased her own home, had a nice car, always dressed well, and so outwardly she appeared to be confident and strong. She also has a kind heart, and was someone people would turn to for advice. This was the side of Jemma that the world could see. When she started to attend our fellowship, she came to see me for pastoral care. I had several sessions with her and was allowed to see the real person hidden behind the mask. This young lady had numerous challenging issues which she struggled with and was in need of help. She was dealing with disappointment, depression, hopelessness

and regret and I sensed that she was desperate for a breakthrough but she couldn't see how she would achieve it.

Over the years and amidst her challenges I saw growth, but Jemma sometimes struggled to see it in herself. It was evident she loved the Lord but couldn't allow herself to love herself. In my opinion Jemma is a fighter and I watched her fight through her obstacles. She started setting her alarm clock to wake up early every morning because she had a most important meeting, a meeting with God. She became excited and enthusiastic about her times with the Lord, He was delivering her from the darkness of depression and she was experiencing His joyous victory on a daily basis.

I liked what I was seeing and because I knew her experience would be a great help to other believers, I gave her opportunities to share and inspire others to develop their relationship with Him also. What she was experiencing, I knew most Christians needed. For a while things were going well, and then gradually I began to see another change. Jemma was at war within. She had set high standards for her walk with Christ and desired to live up to those standards, but her failures

left her devastated and with devastation came taunts of her past.

In 2011 she informed me she was going away for 2 months. She was desperate to find her lost joy in the Lord. Only this time she didn't want it to be a cycle like before, she wanted a permanent breakthrough from the chains around her feet that every so often tripped her up. I've never seen her as broken and depressed as she was and you could tell that this was a woman on a mission. A woman after God's own heart.

Upon her return she met with me and I saw a completely different person. Jemma had changed, there was a reason to live and there was a smile on her face. The dynamics of our meetings shifted, it was incredible. The transformation which took place in her was nothing short of a miracle. The Lord had expelled the darkness, this was a new day. What happened was more than the commencement of a new chapter; it was an entire new book.

The means for Jemma's change was quite simple and has always been accessible to every born again believer. Her perspective on life changed, she started listening

out for and to the Lord intensively and through this is developing a very close relationship with Him and is captivated by His revelations. She also reads the bible in a new light and is developing a mature appreciation for its application and becoming passionate in her discovery.

Now she has come to the point where she has documented a more recent part of her story and she is calling it 'God's Romantic Getaway'. I would suggest that this part of her life, which you are about to read, is a development of her journey and is most beneficial to the body of Christ. It is an honest inspirational testimony. She would admit - I know - to many challenges along the way, some ups and downs, some victories and some failures, but Christianity for her has become real and meaningful because her priority is to please the Lord. Jemma is an ordinary believer who struggles with the same things most believers struggle with, but she has found something that has given her faith super new meaning. This book will inspire you. I admit it could leave you feeling that something is missing in your life, but if Jemma can find it and receive her breakthrough so can you.

I am highly recommending this inspiring book. Still there are two areas that I would like to comment on. One challenge for me was the use of Jemma's language. It is no secret I like football, I like action movies, I like westerns and in my dreams, I am a Bear Grylls action man - hero type - survival bloke. My wife loves the romantic movies and I watch them with her because of my deep love for her. However, given the choice, I would find some pleasure running bare foot over a very large termite's mound, shouting at the top of my voice: "I love myself, I love myself, I love myself." So in saying that, as I read this book there were sentences that Jemma used which made me shift in my chair a little. When I spoke to Jemma about this it amused her. Still I guess it is not too dissimilar in language as that found in the bible in the 'Song of Solomon.' This is her personal, genuine account as to how her relationship with the Lord has developed, and it is one to be desired.

One other thing to note is this, Jemma found her meeting place - a place of retreat which she was comfortable with. It doesn't mean that everyone has to leave the country to hear from the Lord, what is being promoted is the wonderful ideal of taking time out exclusively to be in the presence of the Lord and I hope that every reader

senses the Lord's call to make this practice their habit.

My final two words are these “Inspirational” and “hopeful.” This book will inspire you to pursue a closer and deeper personal relationship with Jesus. Jemma is an ordinary young lady who has experienced something most wonderful. She extends the hope that everyone can get there too. When you read this book, you should read it with this in mind. It is like Brother Lawrence's little book called “The practice of the presence of God” which leaves you feeling that the principles and practices presented are accessible. Its so simple, just talk to the Lord and be sure of this, He is right there wanting to speak with you.

Pastor David Daniel





# Introduction

You're probably still uncertain as to why you've settled down to read this book. Perhaps you glimpsed it's chapters, scanned the contents and thought, "this could be an easy read." Maybe it was the title that caught your attention, or was it a gift? Maybe it was recommended or you happened to stumble across it. Whatever the reason I expect you are anticipating what you will gain from its contents.

Will it fulfil your desire for knowledge, help or support?  
Is it going to meet the needs you have and offer the answers you're in search of or at least point you in the right direction?

Is it going to challenge you, educate you, or inspire you?  
If any such thoughts are running through your mind, don't worry. I often feel the same way when I start reading a book, and as bold as it may sound, I believe this book will do many of the above and possibly more.

The purpose for my writings began as personal inserts in my journal, until one day whilst making an entry my thoughts changed from me to us – we – and you.

Often people only get to know you personally through one on one encounters as we share with those closest to us personal areas of our lives. I'd had many one to one encounters with my journal. It was the place I released my joys, fears and thoughts. It was the place I poured out my heart to God in praise, anger and even frustration.

Until now, it was my place.

The reason why you're reading this book is because you're about to encounter 'my place.' I'd like to take you on a journey, a real life journey filled with everyday occurrences that effect the way we think, behave and interact with others. This is a journey that opened the eyes of my heart and altered the patterns of my life. Whether you realise it or not you are already on a journey but I'd like you to take some time out to accompany me on mine, in the hope that it will assist you on yours.

I am a Christian; a young lady who loves God and more than anything I desire to please Him.

My relationship with God is real and living and is not built on a foundation of just attending church. I read my bible regularly and I believe I've had enough encounters with God to know that He is real. But with all the best

intentions and spiritual insight my happiness in Him was always short lived. Having encountered Him in such powerful ways I should have been up there walking strong like Paul, but instead I was living more like Elijah whilst he hid out in the cave (1 Kings 19)

I was a child of God that was desperate, depressed, and weary. I often felt hopeless, emotionally drained, invisible and somewhat at a loss. I knew what I wanted but struggled to connect with it.

Maybe you've been there yourself at some point.

I grew up in church and was baptised at the age of thirteen. My friends and family would probably describe me as a committed Christian and though that all sounds rosy, being a Christian has had its struggles causing me at times to doubt God's very existence, which is probably because for a long while I didn't really know what being a Christian truly entailed.

I tried to live as the bible taught and was always helping others, so why was I still searching and why did I feel desperate, invisible, lost, depressed, but most of all a disappointment to God?

If like me you're a Christian who has a heart for God and have or periodically experience any or more of

the above, then I invite you to accompany me on this getaway. If you're just desperate, hurting, exhausted and in need of help with no idea where to turn or who to turn to, I urge you to join me. On the other hand, maybe you're ok, but you desire to take your relationship with God to another level, but you're not quite sure how to go about it. Then come join me and I'll show you what I had to do to break through the ceiling.

Before we leave I must point out that I'm the type of person who likes to keep things real and if I'm going to read a book it has to be real and I have to be able to identify with it. So just in case you're thinking, this may not be the book for you, or you're tired of reading and want something tangible, I hear you and it doesn't get more tangible than this. I invite you to drop your load and join me and don't worry about bringing anything because where we're going everything you'll need is already there and when it's time to leave, you may not even want to leave!

I'm going to take you behind the scenes of my life, spanning a period of approximately twelve years, during which time I was privileged to embark on two spiritual sabbaticals that turned my life inside out. Though the trips had similarities they were also incredibly different.

However, the outcome of both left me exposed to the person God had created me to be. The question was, was I ready to be that person?

The six years between the two trips were by far the loneliest years of my life, and it's not surprising given their nature. The bible is full of documented evidence of prophets being whisked away on visions and men being saved from fiery furnaces and the mouths of lions. All through the Scriptures God is interacting with His chosen vessels in real and practical ways and we wonder why we're not seeing or experiencing similar things today. After all God has not changed.

Well, on my trips, that's precisely how it was with me and God. God had called me away and was exposing Himself to me in ways that were very much on par with men and women in the bible, and what Christian doesn't want to be in that position?

Although I was baptised at the age of thirteen, if I'm honest my real walk with God began when I was seventeen after the death of my mother. Loosing mummy left me at a cross road, where my choices were either God or whatever else was out there. I chose God but with no real solid foundation, whatever else was out

there argued a strong case and thus my struggle as a young Christian began.

As a vulnerable young lady, “the world” as older Christians called it, offered me counterfeit comforts that I didn’t find in the Church, and by counterfeit I mean unsatisfactory contentment. Church on the other hand, captivated me, stirring up a desire to know God, want God and have Him close by, but each service I attended left me thinking there had to be more to God than just church. The problem was, I’d grown up thinking that being a Christian meant going to church and I was already doing that.

Over the years my search for more than just “church” left me saddened and hungry as I constantly hit dead ends. I sang in the choir, taught Sunday school and offered my services where required but inside I was still yearning for more.

I made lots of mistakes, took many wrong turns, ignored signs, drove through red lights and halted at green ones before I realised being a Christian didn’t just mean going to church. Being a Christian was a lifestyle that involved having a relationship with God. God wanted to be part of my life, He wanted to have conversations with me, hang out with me, laugh and cry with me. He

wanted to be my everything. He wanted to be my big brother, my father, friend, confidant, lover, helper, carer, provider and everything else a relationship brings. He didn't just want to be a being that I worshipped with no intimacy. The older generation were always saying God had not changed; He is the same yesterday, today and forever. That being the case why wasn't His input in my life the same as those I read about in the bible?

Well, it was my desire to know as much as was humanly possible about the God who had not changed. I too wanted to experience Him like the patriarchs, prophets, disciples and everyday people in the bible. I wanted to speak and have Him respond. I wanted to sense His presence and be stilled by it. I wanted to be hushed by Him and have Him change the format of my day just because He chose to. I wanted a relationship with God and not just to be acquainted with Him, and the best part was He had placed those desires in my heart because He wanted the same for me.

Just for the record there is nothing significantly special about me. Like you I'm an ordinary person with a desire for intimacy with God. So now you know a little about me, I think it's time we got going.



We begin our journey in 2004, ten months prior to my first sabbatical and two years after my return from Orlando, Florida where I'd worked for eighteen months. This was a time in my life when all was well and I thought I had all the answers.

So often we think we have control of our lives but our lives are in reality in God's hands. It is His purposes and not our plans that will be accomplished in our lives. *"Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails."* (Pro 19:21)

*Why am I discouraged?  
Why is my heart so sad?  
I will put my hope in God!  
I will praise him again - my Saviour and my God!*

*Psalms 42:5 NLT*



# The Beginning

My 5am prayer time was a strict regime I'd set myself that installed discipline. "Just five more minutes, no now!" The daily pep talk I gave myself as the alarm went off.

In the quiet stillness of the morning before the hustle of the day began, I had an appointment with God and He was going to show up even if I didn't. Of course, I was tempted to hit the snooze button and sometimes I did, but the thought of God anticipating my arrival or feeling disappointed that I hadn't shown up, was enough to get me out of bed. It was nothing complicated, just a simple time of prayer and bible reading with no distractions before I set off for work. During that time I was learning how to communicate with God, recognise His voice and the importance of obedience. Life wasn't perfect but my Christian walk was progressing and I was growing stronger in my faith and it was my faith that held me secure.

My confidence in God had excelled, given the fact He had granted one of my long-time desires – marriage. Marriage was never my number one priority but it was something I dreamt of and I was weeks away from becoming engaged to be married. It was a surreal time and I recall frequently pinching myself to make sure it was real.

I was getting married.

A dream that seemed so distant was coming to pass and I owed it all to God. But not only was I getting married I was also moving to America. God had granted me two desires in one and I was humbly in awe of Him. Plans were in motion and I was excited. Sometimes as I walked along the street I often looked up to the sky and smiled, and my smile uttered a million thank you's that only God and I understood.

I awoke one Sunday morning in April 2004 to the most beautiful day – a cloudless blue sky and radiant sunshine. Whilst getting ready for church I reminisced on God's goodness to me as I anticipated the arrival of my fiancé-to-be the following month for our planned engagement. The sun was shining so bright it appeared to be smiling and I loved days like these because they reminded me

of my time in Orlando, all that was missing was the intense heat.

I checked my watch, great; I had time for a quick call to the States before I left for church. It was the perfect time for a good morning call to the man I loved.

The phone rang for a short while and as always when he answered my heart skipped a beat. His voice sounded hollow, distant and shaky. Something was wrong. I no longer noticed the cloudless sky and the radiant sunlight that shone into my room, suddenly everything became overcast. And then it came, the thing you think will never happen to you, if for no other reason than the expectation of God's protection. In one sentence the engagement, plans for marriage, relationship and conversation was over!

First the shock, then the questions, followed by more shock and finally pain.

It was a cruel joke, let's give her what she wants then just before she has a chance to hold it, whisk it away so quickly she scarcely has time to catch her breath.

That's precisely how it felt.

I was in a daze but surprisingly still made it to church. I have no idea how I got there, but told myself I would find peace in God's house. I don't recall what the message was about, but I know it brought no peace or healing.

Now what? I felt lost and numb. I was living in a balloon of disbelief! When I climbed into bed later that afternoon, I stayed there for three days with no food or drink, just an endless flow of tears. My stomach was in knots, I had lost my appetite and I couldn't stop the pain.

After hitting a dead end at church I was surprised to find that my only source of comfort came from God. I use the word 'surprise' because I never thought God could heal a heart that was as broken as mine. He was supposed to grant and protect my desires from being smashed to smithereens. I didn't get answers to the million and one questions, because I didn't have a million and one questions, I only had one "where did I go wrong?" I wanted to ask God to fix my situation. I wanted to beg Him to turn things around and allow my heart the privilege of embracing the joy it had once experienced. I wanted to get angry and ask God why, but I couldn't find the words. I wanted it to be a dream but it was real.

My days were painful and my sleep was too short. And when I awoke in the mornings for the first few seconds I was free, but then came the whirlwind of emotions, pain and accusations, bowling me over before I could open my eyes wide enough to see the new day

They say what doesn't kill will make you stronger and I wasn't dead so I had to find a way to live, breath and smile through the brokenness. The last time I hurt that much was when my mum died. My inside hurt and my heart felt like it had been ripped out and shattered into millions of pieces. All communication with the man I loved, the man I had planned to spend the rest of my life with had been cut off. I tried to hold back from calling, but maybe, just maybe, he'd answer the phone. An explanation, an argument! I needed anything but the deafening silence.

"Hi, this is Mark. Please leave a message after the tone and I will get back to you."

It was his voice, but not the response I was looking for.

Sleep became my place of escape, when I was sleeping I wasn't thinking so I drank alcohol to help me sleep, but that left me feeling guilty, raising questions of my faith in God. What I wanted God to do and what I asked Him



to do were two different things. I wanted Him to make it all better so Mark and I could live happily ever after. But instead I asked Him to rescue me from the negative thoughts that ran through my mind and shelter me from the pain that was too much for my body to contain.

The course He took was one I will never forget and I learnt a very important lesson. I had to forgive! I had to forgive someone that broke my heart and refused to speak to me. I had to forgive when all I wanted to do was lash out and let Mark know how much he'd hurt me. I had to forgive, but I wanted him to feel as much pain as I was feeling. I had to forgive, but I was the wronged party! Deep down I knew Mark was not a bad person; his reasons for not contacting me weren't because He didn't care. He had stuff he was dealing with but that didn't make it any easier.

My 5am prayer time turned into 24 hour prayer. I wanted to be whole again. My mind, body and spirit needed healing and nothing anyone said brought me solace. Like a victim running for their life from their predator, I ran into the arms of God for comfort and in His arms is where I found the true meaning of Phil 4:7 NIV *And the peace of God, which surpass all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*

Not only did God's peace surpass my understanding, it kept my mind free from the bombardment of emotional attacks by channelling all my thoughts and energy through His peace.

Forgiving meant letting go of my hurt and I began to understand the negative attachments behind not letting go. It didn't matter what Mark did or didn't do, if I didn't forgive him I would remain bound and I needed to be free. All my life I'd made forgiving harder than it needed to be, after all why should anyone hurt me and get away with it? Forgiving them would mean it was ok and it wasn't ok. Using my present situation God taught me that forgiving released me from the attachments that sought to corrode my inner peace so I could live and release the other person to Him.

If I didn't forgive the only person I would be hurting was myself.

A good friend told me to take one minute at a time, and that's what I did. Thinking five minutes ahead was too much and when the waves of emotions came knocking, I ran for my life to God and His Word. God became my rock. His Word became my foundation and I refused to let either of them out of my grip. The minutes turned to hours, the hours to days, the days to weeks and the

weeks to months. I had never encountered the depth of security I felt during those months and I wasn't about to let go. God was my friend and in time I felt no anger or revenge towards Mark. Some would say I chose to blot out my pain, but I know different. Blotting out could not produce the degree of love, joy and peace that I found during my dark hour.

In the midst of my pain I became a rock and source of comfort to others, but no one other than my oldest sister and a very small circle of friends knew of my situation.

Part of me was ashamed. I had nothing to be ashamed of but I couldn't bring myself to share my news until now. As the months rolled on I became stronger in the Lord and refused to entertain the devil's chatter, like his taunts that Mark didn't care and had moved on. The situation placed a longing in my heart when I saw couples holding hands and the many wedding I attended. This included a friend who walked down the aisle to the same music I had chosen for my special day. It was hard but every time I felt challenged I ran to God pleading His Word over my mind. Repeating scriptures like *"You will keep in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You because he trusts in You"* (Isa 26:3 NKJV) I'd squint my eyes and repeat it a million times if needed until the

tormenting thoughts in my mind were gone and God's peace resided in my heart.

I endured eight months of character building as God repositioned me. Eight months of growing, stretching and developing. Eight months of peace and joy in the midst of sadness.