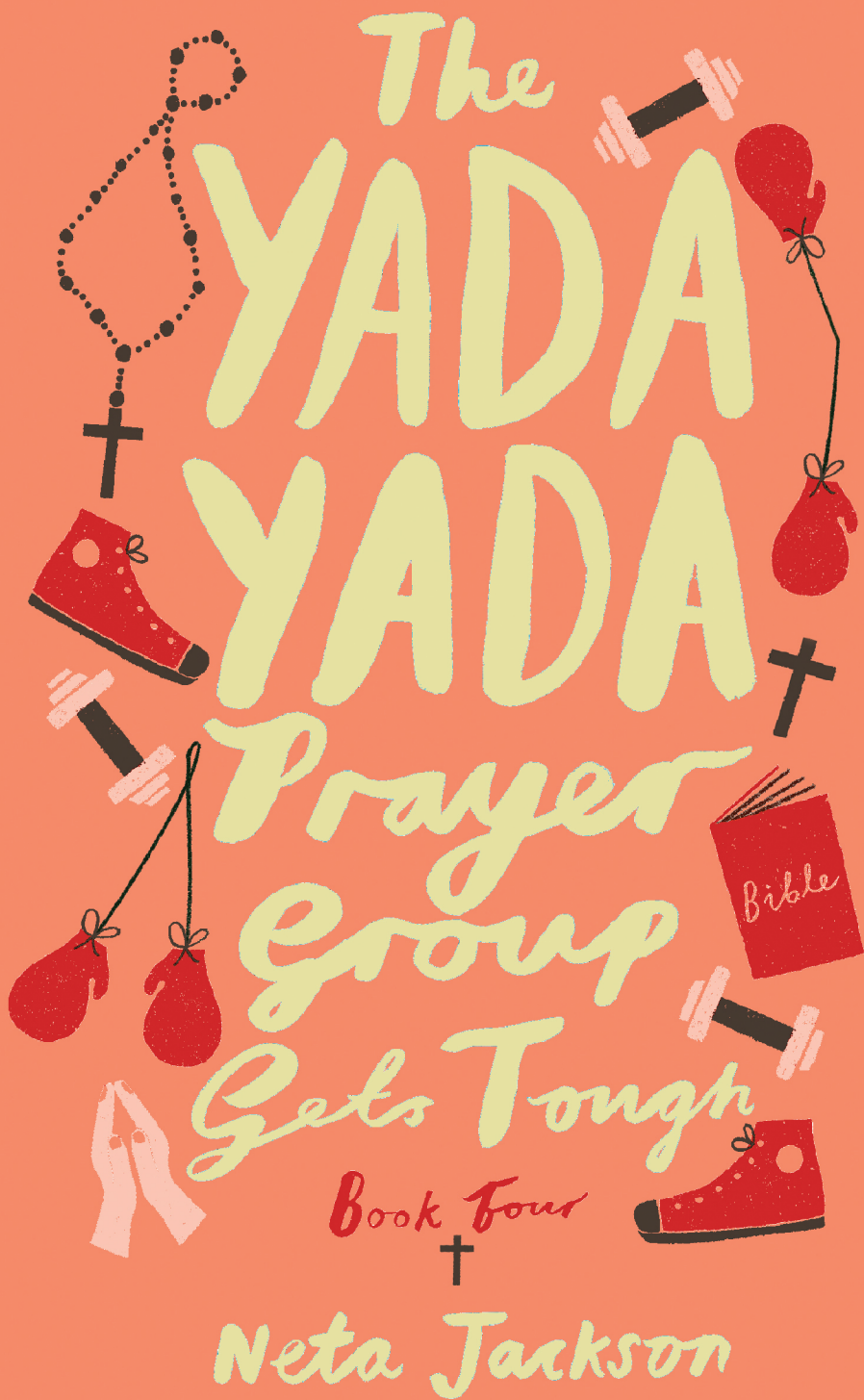




A PDF COMPANION TO THE AUDIOBOOK

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This novel is a work of fiction. Any references to real events, businesses, organizations, and locales are intended only to give the fiction a sense of reality and authenticity. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental. However, some of the events in this novel were inspired by a rash of “hate incidents” on the campus of Northwestern University from 2000 to 2003.

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Let's Celebrate!

Ever since Jodi Baxter discovered the meaning of her name (“God is gracious”) at a time when she needed a touch of God’s grace (see Book 2, *The Yada Yada Prayer Group Gets Down*, chapter 15), she’s been digging up the meanings for people’s names and finding ways to *bless* that person, just as she did for Mark Smith at the hospital in this novel. To tell you the truth, she’s on to something.

Naming and Blessing

Naming and blessing are two important concepts in Scripture. For one thing, God has many names, each one revealing an important aspect of His character. For another thing, our names are important to God! At times, God gave a new name to a man or woman when their spiritual life direction changed—e.g., *Abram* (“exalted father”) to *Abraham* (“father of many nations”); *Simon* (“he who hears”) to *Peter* (“rock”); *Saul* (a Hebrew name) to *Paul* (a Roman name).

Why are names so important? To know and use a person’s

name, that which identifies each of us as a unique individual, is to take the first step toward a personal relationship. And the opposite is true. One way to hold a person at arm's length is to think of them as "that girl" or "those kids" rather than bother to know them by name.

The amazing thing is that *God knows each one of us by name*. And He longs to bless us! Not just generically, but specifically, by name! You. Me.

Biblical Background

Use the following Scriptures as a foundation for some of the celebrations and activities below, for a Bible study with *your* "Yada Yada Prayer Group," or simply as fodder for your own reflection.

God knows us by name! See Isaiah 49:1 (He knew our names before we were born!) and Isaiah 49:14–16. In verse 16, the New Living Translation uses the phrase, "written your name on my hand," which is also implied in all the other translations when they say, "engraved you on the palms of my hands" (NIV), "inscribed you on the palms of My hands" (NKJV), and "graven thee on the palms of my hands" (KJV). Think about it. If our *names* are *engraved* on the hands of God, Christ took our names with Him to the cross when He willingly spread out His hands ... and died for our sins.

God calls us by name! See Isaiah 43:1. His redemption is not just generically for "the whole world," but for us individually *by name*.

Isaac blessed his two sons. See Genesis 27:1–40. Isaac blessed even the youngest who fooled his father into thinking he was the eldest and even the eldest who so carelessly gave away his birthright.

Jacob wrestled with an angel (or God Himself) until he got a blessing (and a new name!). See Genesis 32:22–32. And for the rest of his life he had a limp to prove it!

Moses blessed each of the tribes of Israel by name. See Deuteronomy 33. Note how *specific* the prophetic blessing is for each tribe!

John the Baptist was prophetically named before his birth and prophetically blessed at his naming ceremony. See Luke 1:5–25; 57–80.

Jesus was prophetically named before He was born. See Luke 1:26–38.

The infant Jesus was prophetically blessed by Simeon and Anna in the temple. See Luke 2:21–40.

Jesus laid hands on and blessed the children. See Mark 10:13–16. It's easy to imagine Jesus not only touching each head tenderly, but calling the children by name as each child was blessed.

A Blessing Shower

So why not give a Blessing Shower for the next baby-to-be-born among your family or friends, instead of the usual baby-gifts-and-shower-games party? Nothing wrong with the latter, but a Blessing Shower can be very meaningful.

With ultrasound and sonograms so common, many couples know the sex of their baby before it's born and have already picked out the name. (If not, why not throw the Blessing Shower *after* the baby is born when sex and name are known—and then the guest of honor can be present!)

When you invite the shower guests, provide an 8½ x 11-inch sheet of paper (there are so many pretty papers available today at stores that sell office or paper supplies!) and ask them to write out a *blessing* for the child. (*Option:* This could be done as an activity when guests arrive, with you providing paper and fine-tipped colored markers for them to write blessings.)

At the shower, have each guest read their blessing one by one and present it to the parent. One of the blessings might include the *meanings* of the child's first and middle names.

Collect all the blessings into a presentation folder or notebook to give to the parents after the shower.

Optional: Include blessings for the parents too!

Oh, go ahead and let guests bring baby gifts too—but keep the emphasis on *blessing* the new child, a gift that will be remembered long after the rattles are lost and the cute outfits outgrown.

Make Name Meaning Bookmarks

Readers of the Yada Yada novels have written to say that Jodi's name meanings have inspired them to make bookmarks as gifts for the sisters in their prayer groups, with the name of each sister on a bookmark, along with the meaning of her name. What a wonderful idea! (Thank you, readers, who have shared this idea!) Here are a few ideas for making bookmarks:

Laminated Paper Bookmarks

Using fun fonts on your computer, write out each person's name with the name meaning underneath, centering the type and using different colors for the name and its meaning.

The size of the fonts should be approximately 36-point type for the name and 26-point type for the meaning of the name (depending on the font).

Leave adequate space between names so that when cut apart horizontally (and then turned lengthwise), this part of each bookmark is approximately $1\frac{3}{4}$ inches wide. Print on scrap paper until you get what you want. Then . . .

Print out names on a color printer, using heavy white paper or cardstock, if possible.

Cut this part of the bookmark so it measures approximately $6\frac{1}{4} \times 1\frac{3}{4}$ inches.

Now cut a piece of heavy colored paper $6\frac{1}{2} \times 2\frac{1}{4}$ inches. Glue the name piece to the larger colored piece.

For the back side, once again using fun fonts and colors, type out a portion of Isaiah 43:1: *"I have called you by name, you are Mine."* Font size should be around 16–20-point type. Print out on heavy white paper or cardstock using a color printer. Cut out Scripture using the same dimensions as the front side of the bookmark (e.g., $6\frac{1}{4} \times 1\frac{3}{4}$ inches). Glue to the back side of the bookmark.

Add cute stickers (hearts, swirls, flowers, stars, whatever) if you wish.

Laminate the whole bookmark, front and back. Punch a hole near the top and thread a thin ribbon through it, tying a knot so the ribbon ends hang 3 to 4 inches long.

Embroidered Bookmark

If you like to embroider or cross-stitch, cut a piece of sturdy (but not too heavy) material approximately 7 x 5 inches. (This allows the bookmark material to be folded once lengthwise and the edges turned under $\frac{1}{4}$ inch and hemmed). You might want to iron the fold

and the to-be-hemmed edges before you embroider, so you know where to center your design on one side.

Using a light pencil, draw the name you wish to embroider and the meaning underneath.

Embroider or cross-stitch along the pencil markings, using a complimentary color for the embroidery thread. Add any designs you'd like.

Now fold the length of material in half (to hide the back of the embroidery—usually a mess!). Hand stitch or machine stitch the top, long side edge, and bottom together (turned under at least $\frac{1}{4}$ inch). A zigzag machine stitch can make a pretty edge all the way around.

Leave as is, or add a ribbon or thin cord at one end before stitching the two sides together.

Other Ways to Use Names and Their Meanings

Family Reunions

As a way to bless the members of your family, look up the meanings of their names. Create a page for each family member on your computer with his or her name and its meaning, using fun fonts on your computer (or fonts that capture a person's personality). Print each person's name page on paper with a pretty border (can be purchased in packs at any office or stationery store), roll it up like a scroll, tie with ribbon, and present each name and its meaning at one of your family gatherings.

Use the meaning of each person's name to bless or encourage him or her as you give the scrolls, e.g: "David, your name means

‘beloved’—and you are definitely ‘beloved’ by me and the rest of this family” . . . “Connie, your name means ‘constancy, firmness.’ We already know that when this little girl makes up her mind, it’s set in cement! Might drive us crazy, but it can be a good thing . . .” etc.

Birthday or Encouragement Cards

If you’re good at making handmade or computer-generated cards, consider using the person’s name and its meaning as a way to bless and encourage the recipient, e.g.: “Maggie ~ ‘Pearl’ . . . Maggie, even when the grit of life gets into the gears, you always seem to be able to turn little problems into pearls of wisdom and beauty.”

A Quilt Square for a Friendship, Wedding, or Baby Quilt
See instructions for making a Friendship Quilt in the Party Edition of *The Yada Yada Prayer Group Gets Real* (Book 3).

Embroider the middle quilt square with the names of the wedding couple or the name of the newborn and the *meanings* of the name(s) as well.

Child’s Pillow

A Name Pillow makes a great baby gift for a newborn, or even a birthday gift for an older child. Such a pillow often becomes a favorite friend to a child, good for trips or nights away from home.

Sew a simple pillowcase to cover a child-size pillow (or make a small pillow with a finished size approximately 12 x 9 inches that can be stuffed with foam or other stuffing material and sewn closed on all sides). But before sewing or stuffing, embroider the child’s name, birth date, and meaning of the child’s name on the

pillowcase. Possibilities are endless for colorful material, lacey edgings, and size of the pillow.

Resources for Names

Helpful Web Sites

There are baby name books galore to help parents pick out a name for their new baby. But there are helpful web sites too—especially when you already know the name and want to find out its meaning. The Internet is especially helpful when searching for names from various cultures that might not be included in a specific book.

Baby Name Network (www.babynamenetwork.com) not only tells you the most popular names in the U.S. by decade, but also has links to names from countries all over the world.

Behind the Name (www.behindthename.com) provides “an etymology and history of first names,” and is another excellent site to explore names from all over the world.

Andy the Name Bender (www.andythenamebender.com) not only can help you find a name and its meaning, but he makes personalized “name” jewelry too!

Resources for Life (www.resourcesforlife.com/library/names) provides a Directory of Hebrew and Bible Name Meanings.

And a few more:

www.yeahbaby.com and www.daystogo.com/baby-names

Exploring the Names of God

In the Old Testament, and often in the New, the *meaning* of a name had everything to do with why a child was given a certain name. The name sometimes reflected the life circumstances of

the parent (e.g., the name Jabez means “pain”—see 1 Chronicles 4:9), a physical feature or character trait (e.g., Esau means “red”; Jacob means “grabber”—see Genesis 25:19–26), or a promise from God (e.g., the name Ishmael means “God hears”—see Genesis 16:11).

But as you read the Scriptures, you will realize that our God has many names, each one revealing a new aspect of God’s character. If you have never before explored the names of God and their meanings, run—don’t walk—to your favorite bookstore or get online and order the following:

Praying the Names of God by Ann Spangler (Zondervan Publishers, Grand Rapids, MI) © 2004. This book is a daily guide to exploring and praying *according to the meaning* of God’s names. A wonderful book for personal or group study.

Names of God by Mary Foxwell Loeks (Thomas Nelson, Nashville, TN) © 2007. This book includes many more names than the book above. Both books are wonderful to have in your library—and to use for your personal study.

Recipes

The months featured in this episode of the Yada Yada Prayer Group—May and June—don't have a lot of holiday celebrations with traditional foods. (Well, there's Pentecost Sunday and Memorial Day, also Mother's Day and Father's Day. Maybe you have favorite recipes for these celebrations!)

But between holidays, we still have to eat, right? So here are some of Jodi Baxter's Five-Star Recipes—and to rate Five Stars at the Baxter household, the food has to be *easy* to make *and* really tasty.

Seven-Layer Make-Ahead Salad

Or Six-Layer or Eight-Layer—it kind of depends what you have on hand! Have at it, be sure to let it chill to marinate, and serve it at your next gathering of hungry folks. You probably won't have any leftovers, which will disappoint the dog unless you let it lick the dish clean. (What? Your dog doesn't like salad? Willie Wonka does. Of course, Willie Wonka will eat anything in a people dish.)

- 1 head iceberg lettuce, chopped or torn into bite-size pieces
- 1 cup celery, diced
- 6 hardboiled eggs, sliced
- 1 (10-oz.) package frozen peas (do not thaw)
- ½ red onion, diced
- 8 slices bacon, crispy-fried and crumbled into bits
- 2 cups mayonnaise with 2 Tbsp. sugar mixed in
- 1 cup grated cheddar cheese

* metric conversion chart at end

Layer vegetables, eggs, and bacon in the order listed into a large, flat dish, such as a 9 x 13 cake pan, salt and peppering to taste. You can also sprinkle each layer with a little sugar.

Spread the dressing over the salad and sprinkle with cheese. If desired, garnish with sliced green onions and paprika. Cover and refrigerate 8–12 hours. Then go put your feet up and whisk it out of the refrigerator when it comes time to head out the door to the next church potluck or Yada Yada meeting.

Jodi's Secret Spaghetti Sauce

Denny swears this is the best spaghetti sauce he's ever eaten. Okay, he could be a bit prejudiced. Or loyal. (Or just plain savvy!) But the recipe was tested and re-tested, and we think he may be right!

- 1 lb. lean ground beef
- 2 medium (or 1 large) onions, chopped
- ½ lb. mushrooms, sliced
- 1 (28-oz.) can tomatoes
- 1 (6-oz.) can tomato paste plus 1 can water
- 2–3 tsp. basil
- 2–3 tsp. oregano
- 1–2 tsp. salt (to taste)
- 1 Tbsp. sugar or honey
- 4 garlic cloves, crushed or minced

Brown the ground beef in the bottom of the pot you will be using to make the sauce. Turn down the heat and add the onions and mushrooms. While they are cooking, blend the tomatoes, tomato paste, and water. When onions and mushrooms are soft, pour off any extra grease from the meat, and add the blended tomatoes and remaining spices. Simmer 15–20 minutes.

Meanwhile, cook 1 lb. spaghetti or pasta according to package directions, drain, load each plate with pasta, and pass the sauce and grated Parmesan cheese. (Tossed green salad and hot garlic bread are *de rigor*, of course.)

*Jodi's cooking tip for chopping onions: Peel the onion ('natch). Then slice the bulb in half lengthwise (top to bottom) and lay one half flat-side down on your cutting board and make four or five more lengthwise slices angled to the center from one side to the next. Holding the slices together with the flat side still down on your cutting board, rotate the onion 90 degrees. Then slice the onion sideways across the lengthwise cuts. Jodi says this method helps her to "chop" onions twice as fast, into evenly sized pieces, and with half the eye irritation.

Hamburger Vegetable Soup

Really. Try it. This is a truly satisfying soup, robust enough for a main dish, and if you make a LOT, you've got a few extra lunches and mid-night snacks covered. And oh, yes, it's healthy, too, with all those veggies.

- 1 (6-oz.) can tomato paste
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 medium (or 1 large) onions, chopped
- 4 stalks celery, chopped
- 4 unpeeled carrots, thinly sliced
- 4 medium potatoes, diced
- 4 Tbsp. beef bouillon (dry)
- 1 bay leaf, crushed
- 1 pinch of marjoram, thyme, or savory (or all three)
- 1/2 tsp. freshly ground peppercorns
- 2 1/2 qts. vegetable cooking water (plain water can be substituted)
- 1 lb. lean ground beef

Combine all the above ingredients (except the ground beef) in a large kettle and bring to a boil. Simmer, covered, until the vegetables are almost tender (about 10–15 minutes). Add the ground beef by crumbling it into small pieces and stir just until it loses its pinkness. Bring the soup to a simmer again and serve.

Dressy Bow-Tie Pasta Salad

Whoa! Based on requests for this recipe, Jodi Baxter may have to up her scale to Ten Stars. Be sure to double this recipe for a crowd, adjust the ingredients to “more or less,” and just be sure to leave enough time for all that chopping and slicing. Can be made ahead of time and chilled—just add the dressing at the last minute so the spinach doesn’t wilt.

Serves 6.

8 oz. bow-tie pasta

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup fresh lemon juice

1 Tbsp. lemon zest (grated lemon peel)

4 cloves garlic, minced

$\frac{1}{3}$ cup extra virgin olive oil

2 large boneless chicken breasts, cooked and cubed
(or 3 cups cooked chicken)

2–3 cups chopped spinach

$1\frac{1}{2}$ cups cucumber (peel, halve lengthwise, and then slice)

$1\frac{1}{2}$ cups red seedless grapes, halved

2 celery sticks, thinly sliced

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup green onions, sliced

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup pecans, chopped

While cooking the pasta according to the instructions on the package, thoroughly blend (in a blender or with a wire whisk) the lemon juice, zest, and garlic. When the pasta is done, drain and rinse with cold water to cool. Then in a large pasta bowl combine the pasta,

chicken, spinach, cucumber, grapes, celery, and onions. Pour the dressing over the salad, and toss gently. Sprinkle with pecans.

Consider serving with toasted garlic bread, corn on the cob, and iced tea on a hot summer day.

US TO METRIC CONVERSION TABLE

CAPACITY

$\frac{1}{5}$ teaspoon = 1 milliliter

1 teaspoon = 5 milliliters

1 tablespoon = 15 milliliters

1 fluid ounce = 30 milliliters

$\frac{1}{5}$ cup = 50 milliliters

1 cup = 240 milliliters

2 cups (1 pint) = 470 milliliters

4 cups (1 quart) = .95 liter

4 quarts (1 gallon) = 3.8 liters

WEIGHT

1 ounce = 28 grams

1 pound = 454 grams