



Out of the Dark: My Journey through the Shadows to Find God's Joy

Mandisa

Suzanne Gosselin, Contributor

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Out of the Dark is a musician's hope-filled memoir about how she found strength and healing through her faith.

In her powerful, moving memoir *Out of the Dark*, Mandisa reflects on how faith anchored her throughout her music career and her battle with depression.

Mandisa was born in Citrus Heights, California. In her sophomore year of high school, her interest in God began to grow. But then, at sixteen, she was sexually assaulted by her neighbor's best friend. The devastating experience reinforced her eating disorder.

The memoir covers how Mandisa's faith helped her to cope and heal through such struggles. Together with the support of loving friends, it also helped her through difficult seasons in her music career, and when she dealt with depression following the death of her close friend. Mandisa is candid and empathetic in exploring the sensitive topics that impacted her, including religious doubt, singlehood, suicidal ideation, and body image struggles.

This focused book gathers experiences that exemplify its themes of faithful healing. Mandisa recalls being bullied in school; she notes that, after she fell in with the wrong crowd, her teenage years were turbulent. She wanted to be accepted in her community, and to be in touch with her Black heritage. Her desires led her to study at Fisk University, but they also had a significant influence on her career in music. Uplifting lyrics from songs in her catalog head each chapter, reinforcing these notions: their lines encourage people to move on from their pasts, to celebrate the hope of new days, and to reflect on God's love.

The book also exemplifies a keen sense of history. It places Mandisa's story and struggles into particular context by including relevant information, as with that about Fisk University's acappella ensemble The Jubilee Singers, who helped to improve racial relations in the 1800s. It also addresses more recent events, including Covid-19 and the murders of Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, and Ahmaud Arbery, in its discussions of Black heritage, self-isolation and loneliness, and racial injustice and reconciliation.

Further, Mandisa reflects on biblical teachings in her topical discussions, as of the church being a community comprised of different members who play different roles; about the value of letting go of bitterness; and about how worshiping God and believing in the promises covered in the Bible helps when it comes to overcoming personal struggles. It moves such lessons outward, too, providing self-reflection questions at the end of each chapter so that the audience can examine their own coping mechanisms; learn about the factors that led them to spiritual growth; and think about God's methods of preparing them for what they would face.

Out of the Dark is a musician's hope-filled memoir about how she found strength and healing through her faith; it suggests that others can do the same.

EDITH WAIRIMU (June 30, 2022)

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