



Stand by Me

Neta Jackson

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Sometimes the person you most need is the one least like you.

Kathryn Davies is a bright young woman from a prominent Phoenix family. But after making a leap of faith at a Christian music fest, dropping out of med school, and moving to inner city Chicago, her family all but disowns her.

When Kat discovers SouledOut Community Church, she longs to become a part of the multicultural church family. But her tendency to immediately say whatever she's thinking steps on the toes of nearly everyone she meets—especially Avis Douglass.

Avis has a strong faith, is the principal of one of Chicago's highest performing elementary schools, and is a founding member of SouledOut. But the country's economic downturn has thrown both her and her husband's jobs in question. And Avis hasn't heard from her youngest daughter in months—an estrangement that gnaws at her every day. Where is God in this?

Kat's flamboyant zeal for living a "radical" Christian life is a stark contrast to Avis's more reserved faith. But in God's timing, the two women discover they need each other in ways neither of them expected.

Stand by Me Details

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From Reader Review Stand by Me for online ebook

Sarah Bailey says

I had the extreme pleasure of reading all the Yada Yada Prayer Group series and going through the ladies struggles and triumphs that would have broken others, they came through with their faith in the Lord and their friendships intact – so when I had the chance to read Stand By Me which is the newest series for Neta Jackson, that includes the ladies from Yada Yada and some new characters, I just had to get my hands on it! This book did not disappoint, nor did Neta's writing and well developed plot line and characters. I felt myself being wrapped into a family when I got to visit with the Yada Yada Sisters again and seeing life from young college-aged eyes was a wonderful time.

I did find myself getting annoyed at Kat, with all her earth crunchiness, not eating red meat, saving everyone and dumpster diving – but then I realized that was me at one time. I had stars in my eyes when I graduated college with a degree in social work – thought I would save all the poor children from their abusive parents – and then life hits, real life. While Kat doesn't lose her naive outlook she does some maturing as the book goes on and I look forward to reading more about her adventures and how things go on with her family as she follows the Lord. I also found myself getting a little miffed by the whole black and white issue – but I also had to admit to myself that this still occurs, some white people don't want to worship with blacks and vice versa. I have to say though that I loved how it was handled by the characters in the book, while they don't back down they also don't take it lying down – and even Avis does some 'growing up' even though she is a middle aged woman.

I found myself laughing out loud but also crying – crying from the pain that the characters experienced, some that I myself have gone through in real life. This book will have you facing your prejudices head on – whether it's young people today coming to church in ripped pants or your viewpoint on another race or culture – it'll make you think, even though it's fiction there is much this book will have you thinking over even as you enjoy a book that I am not afraid to recommend to a friend and say it's Christian.

**I was given an e-copy of this book through B and B media in exchange for my honest opinion, no other compensation was given.

Laura says

Kathryn (Kat) Davies comes from a prominent Phoenix family, whose father wants her to go to med school so she could practice with him. After attending a Christian music fest, Kat becomes a Christian and drops out of med school and goes into education, creating a deeper chasm within her family. Kat also starts attending SouledOut Community Church in Chicago, a mixed race community of believers.

Avis Douglass is the principal of one of Chicago's best performing elementary schools, an over-the-hill newlywed–second time around for her, a founding member of SouledOut Community Church, and one of its main worship leaders. Her faith and relationship with the Lord is strong. However, her estrangement from her daughter haunts her every day, though she prays diligently for her.

Kat's dramatic enthusiasm for living the "sold-out" Christian life clashes with Avis' more stable, reserved faith. Therein develops the 'grain of sand' irritation in Avis' shoe, so to speak. How can they develop a

relationship when they are so different? Kat appears so care-free and Avis has an estranged daughter.

Neta draws out Kat's outspoken mannerisms that wreak havoc in Avis' spiritual walk, wondering how she can become so unglued when this young student speaks out so brashly. Though Kat seems mostly oblivious to Avis' feelings, the tension is heightened when Kat and her friends rent the condo below the Douglass's, one of whom is a guy. A secret known only to Kat, Brygitta and Rochelle turns into a conundrum for Kat. New in her faith, Kat wonders how God will bring it all to pass.

Faith, praise and prayer, especially through the Yada Yada prayer group, permeate the story line, but Neta keeps you intrigued as to how God will answer those prayers. His ways are higher than ours!

I found the interactions between the different races at the church to be honest and sincere, as well as the characters. Avis' thought life becomes known to the reader, which adds depth to the story. Tensions do arise, particularly after Pastor Clark's death. The possibility of dissension and racism rear their ugly heads. How will it all be worked out? Will the church survive? The author does a wonderful job of working through all the circumstances that touch not only Avis, but her daughter and Kat in a way that melts your heart. The touch of humor helps to level out the stress and tension.

God brings difficult people into our lives. It's not to make our lives miserable, but to bring us to maturity. Stand by Me is a book that shows how God brings out that maturity, though we are sometimes kicking and screaming. The touch of humor levels out the stress and tension. I would summarize Stand by Me by this, "Iron sharpens iron; so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend." Proverbs 27:17

Special thanks to Rick Roberson The B&B Media Group, for sending me a review copy.

Margaret says

From the book:

Kathryn Davies is a bright young woman from a prominent Phoenix family. But after making a leap of faith at a Christian music fest, dropping out of med school, and moving to inner city Chicago, her family all but disowns her.

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Kat's flamboyant zeal for living a "radical" Christian life is a stark contrast to Avis's more reserved faith. But in God's timing, the two women discover they need each other in ways neither of them expected.

My review:

I wasn't sure what to think about this book at first. It takes place in Chicago at a diverse church called Souled Out Community Church. Avis is leading worship and four white college students are coming in. What is

book is not a sappy romance where everything is smooth sailing. What this book is, is a realistic picture of relationships including the one we as Christians have with Jesus. This is a truly Christian fiction book where the author was not afraid to proclaim the gospel or share bits of scripture throughout. I loved that she had the characters worshipping, praying, and ministering. A lot of times the author is so concerned about appealing to the crossover audiences, they forget to include Jesus.

As far as the characters, it was interesting to see the relationship between Avis and Kat develop. I feel like most of the story was about them even though the author did an excellent job of developing the other characters, especially Peter, Nick and Rochelle. Judging people is something that I think we all do. That type of attitude almost cost Avis her daughter and Kat a valuable friendship. It wasn't until they took a deeper look that they realized they needed each other.

What I took away the most is that having a relationship with Jesus is not just one thing. It's not just praying or worshiping or meeting for Bible Study. It's about living the life the Jesus lived. I think by the end of this book, each of the characters learned a lot more about their relationship with Jesus and some important ways to build on it. So did I.

I will look forward to future books in this series.

This book was provided to me by Thomas Nelson as part of the BookSneeze program. All opinions expressed are 100% my own.

Melissa says

Oh boy, what to say about Stand by Me. I was so excited to see this as a book to review for Booksneeze, because I LOVE Neta Jackson...I'm a big fan of the Yada Yada books and the House of Hope. I did not like Stand by Me.

The concept was really good...get to know some of the other characters. I just really struggled with this book. First with the characters: Kat was incredibly annoying. Her friends had no back-bone. And the Douglas's were very shallow and very hypocritical. I had hoped that by reading this book I'd like Avis a bit more...She was probably my least favorite character in the previous books...instead, I found that I really didn't like her.

The book flow was just off. There was a lot of "stuff" and at the end, I felt I was just left hanging.

Disclosure of Material Connection: I received this book free from the publisher through the Booksneeze.com book review bloggers program. I was not required to write a positive review. The opinions I have expressed are my own.

Mary M says

As a longtime fan of Neta Jackson and the Yada Yadas, how could I not read this book? I did find it a little predictable at this point but enjoyed meeting characters old and new. I think Nick was my favourite of the new characters.

I liked the way in which the new characters were integrated into existing story lines and updates from old favourites. I especially liked "hearing" from Nony, even for just a moment in a letter.

This book didn't bring me a lot of new insights into my own behaviour and patterns but I recognized some of my own youthfulness. I might have loved Kat, Bree and Olivia more 20 years ago. :)

I would recommend the book to all Yada Yada readers. But if someone were entirely new to Neta Jackson's Yada Yada family, I would encourage the to start with the first Yada Yada books or the Gabby Fairfield series. I think if this had been my first introduction to Avis, she would have been too bristly and Kat too tempestuous - I don't think it would have been love at first series ;).

Jennifer Wedemeyer says

I felt like a little kid in a candy store or a like it was Christmas morning when I saw this book up for review on BookSneeze. I don't know when I've been more excited to discover a book, I read all the Yada Yada series including the House of Hope and the Yada Yada Brothers series. Neta Jackson's book speak to me and I ALWAYS get something out of them spiritually as well as an enjoyable read. Neta didn't let me down this time either, I was so titillated to have all the Yada Yada ladies back in the book that I just couldn't put it down. This one was about Avis, we knew a little background about her from the previous books but it was great to get inside of her mind and see what she was thinking, feeling and going through in her new marriage.

This book resonated with me and spoke to me on so many different levels. At one point I was laughing so hard and then all of the sudden I was crying. The next minute I was asking God to forgive me for my selfishness in a similar situation with a young girl that I know God is calling me to mentor. WOW, this book was sent directly from God to me and I heard him! You are consistently reminded that other have struggles too and that we should pray in all circumstances. Such an easy concept but one that is often overlooked and forgotten.

I give this book 5 out of 5 stars and would even give it more if I could!

Heather says

I haven't before read any of Neta Jackson's books, although I've been meaning to read Yada Yada for quite some time now. I did not realize until I started reading that this is kind of a spin-off series. The good news is that it's written in such a way that I never felt lost. Although I'm guessing some of the events mentioned are shared in detail in one or another of the Yada Yada books. This has definitely piqued my interest and made me want to read it sooner, rather than later.

The characters were interesting, but often quite annoying. Kat – very annoying. Very naive and outspoken about things to the point of being rude. Avis I liked a bit more, except for her complaining about the privileged white kids coming to their multicultural church. It was an attitude I had not expected. Outside that, however, I really liked Avis (which is why I want to read Yada Yada). And Peter is fantastic, as is Nick. I

will definitely be looking to read coming books in this new SouledOut Sisters series.

I would recommend this to fans of Christian fiction. And I'm guessing that if you're a Yada Yada fan, you'll love this.

Marlene says

A familiar character from the Yada Yada Prayer Group novels, Avis is an elementary school principal who exemplifies poise, strength of character, and maturity in her professional and Christian walk. She doesn't just "do church," but worships passionately. Outwardly, it would appear that she really has it all together, but inwardly, she is suffering deeply, understanding fully the psalmist's account of tears being his food from morning to night. Finally opening up to her sisters in the prayer group does little to ease her stress. Why is it that we choose to hold on to worries and fret when what is needed is nothing short of a miracle? With her plate full, Avis finds her summer neighbors, especially Kat, nothing less than an intrusion. Surely the college kids cannot God's work in her life, but with God, could they be just coincidence?

Kat, a new Christian who is silently fighting her own personal battles, impetuously wants to save the world. She means well, but in her excitement and naiveté, fails to understand that solutions should meet needs, and that true gifts cost the giver. Dumpster diving does, however, put her in a position of standing in the gap for both Avis and her daughter, Rochelle.

Stand by Me, the first in the SouledOut Sisters series by Neta Jackson, is one of those rare fiction books that quietly sneaks up on you and leaves you forever changed. Jackson hits home without being preachy, sharing messages of offering up praise in the middle of heartache and uncertainty, obedience when it doesn't make sense, and embracing God's will. I was afraid that the book would be simplistic, but was instead engaged in a worship experience.

A GoodReads FirstReads gift in exchange for my honest review

Ramona says

Continuing with the Yada Yada theme, Neta Jackson starts a new series highlighting another primary character from the Yada Yada prayer group. This time, Avis Douglas takes center stage as we get to learn more about the personal life of the calm, cool and collected Yada Yada group leader and principal at Bethune Elementary School. As the story goes deeper into Avis' personal life, the author introduces new characters to the story - Kathryn Davies (Kat) and a few of Kat's college friends. From there, most of the story is about Kat and Avis. Some of the characters from previous Yada Yada series are included in the story line; others receive an honorable mention. (If you haven't read any of the series before this book, you shouldn't get lost in trying to figure out the characters.)

The author continues in fashion as before, discussing real life subjects (HIV, homeless, racial differences in the church), and showing how God's love and faithfulness is available to provide strength when dealing with seemingly tough matters.

Overall, I liked the book. I'm a fan of the Yada Yada Series (Prayer Group, House of Hope), so I was looking forward to this book when I learned the yada yada concept was going to continue. I thought the story moved

slow at times, but I still enjoyed it. I would have preferred to read more about the existing yada yada characters in this book instead of Kat and her friends, but I'm still looking forward to the next release from the series. Overall rating 3.5 stars.

Disclosure of Material Connection: I received this book free from the publisher through the BookSneeze®.com book review bloggers program. I was not required to write a positive review. The opinions I have expressed are my own. I am disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255 : "Guides Concerning the Use of Endorsements and Testimonials in Advertising."

Katrina Burchett says

The bad economy has caused problems for Avis and her husband, Peter. Avis is also having a problem with her youngest daughter (not Peter's biological child). Or maybe not a problem, but she's very concerned about Rochelle and her grandson, Conny. And then there's this new person who keeps showing up even though Avis really doesn't have time for her.

I haven't read Jackson's Yada Yada Prayer Group novels, so this is the first I've been introduced to Avis Douglass. I liked Avis more than any other character in this book. She's a strong black woman, a strong Christian woman, a devoted wife, and a loving mother and grandmother. Her story was most interesting. What was going on with her daughter? How were things going to turn out with her job? What decision would she and her husband make concerning their – or I should really say his – plans for their future? I kept turning the pages to find out the answers to these questions.

Kathryn 'Kat' Davies is a young college student and a Babe in Christ – a Christian who has just begun the spiritual life. Judging by the cover, I thought she and Avis were close friends, but that was not the case. Avis didn't know what to think of Kat and sometimes neither did I. She was kinda out there every now and then. She's a 'we are the world' character, which was good, but she had naively optimistic views. She was also flighty and so, so pushy and a bit irritating at times. And the whole dumpster thing? I didn't like it at all.

There are parts of this story that made me feel as if I was reading inspirational and encouraging Bible devotions and I loved that. I could have been bothered by the conversation in the ladies restroom, but I appreciated the author's honesty. I understood how Avis felt after what she'd overheard, but I hoped she'd do her best to get her mind back on Jesus. Jackson did not sugarcoat, but showed how some Christians feel about integration in the church and how two-faced some Christians can be. My thinking is this: Anyone who claims to be a Christian – a believer in Jesus Christ - has to know that GOD IS LOVE and LOVE is not rude, LOVE does not discriminate, and LOVE does not see a person as less than because of skin color.

Stand by Me was a pleasure to read. Jackson writes clever similes and her descriptive sentences helped me to get a good visual of the characters and the atmosphere - I felt as if I was right there. Jackson clearly shows that Christianity does not mean perfection; that although we Christians are saved by grace we're not always so quick to show grace to others. I plan to read the next SouledOut Sisters novel.

Kristilyn (Reading In Winter) says

FTC Disclaimer: I received this book complimentary from BookSneeze in exchange for a fair and honest review.

I've never been one to talk about religion. In fact, I sometimes wonder about it myself — am I religious? Could I be more religious? How do I go about inviting religion into my life? But I never go beyond the questions in my head. One thing that I'll openly admit is that I've always seemed wary of organized religion, after going to church a few times growing up and finding it very monotonous and boring.

Enter Stand by Me, a novel by author Neta Jackson. It's about Kathryn, a young girl who drastically changes her life plans, drops out of med school, moves away from her home in Phoenix, and enters a Christian university after letting Jesus into her life. In her new home, she finds a wonderful church that's housed inside of a mall and is a multi-culture, community church. The description made me think of one of those churches I'd only seen in movies — one which makes the churchgoers actually want to be there, one where you get involved and don't just go because you feel you have to.

Of course, the novel isn't just about Kathryn's life change, but also about Avis, a mother who is worried about her daughter who seemed to have dropped off the planet. She can't be reached by phone, her apartment seems to no longer exist and Avis doesn't know what to do. It's only when Kathryn and her three friends from school move into the apartment below Avis and her husband, and start to attend Avis's church, that the two women can't help but collide with one another, in more ways than one.

I have very mixed feelings about this book. I'll admit that I've really been enjoying the offerings of the Thomas Nelson Publishing Company, but this one seemed a little different from my previous reads. First off, I really dislike the cover. I'm not sure what it is about it that irks me, but when I was perusing the selection of reads on Booksneeze, I hesitated on this one because of the cover alone.

The second thing is that I didn't like either of the main characters. For someone who was as deeply religious as Avis, I wondered how she could have been so petty and judgemental towards Kathryn and her roommates — especially towards Kathryn. I felt that if Avis had such a problem with her that she would sit Kathryn down and talk to her, rather than be so judgemental. In the same sense, Kathryn bugged the crap out of me. I felt that she was too set in her ways and ignorant that she couldn't be bothered with understanding another person's point of view. Perhaps it was her age, but for someone who was in university and appeared so smart, I expected Kathryn to be a little smarter about her new neighbourhood and neighbours.

Of course, even though I really didn't like the main characters, the story was alright, if not a little farfetched. There were a lot of loose strings left over at the end that I wished had been tied up, questions left unanswered. I really did like the story and felt there were a few ways that I could relate to Kathryn, most specifically in the way that her father called her new interest in religion her latest "distraction" — I'm known to harbour a lot of distractions and could see where he was coming from. Though, sometimes a distraction will actually stick and turn into something you love.

I'm always torn when thinking about books that seem to really push on the buttons of race and discrimination, especially this book. Part of me felt that since the novel centered around the church and people who were discovering the depths of their own personal religion, that race wouldn't be an issue, but then another part of me realizes that discrimination is everywhere and even churchgoers suffer from it. It just shows that even if a person is devoutly religious, they too can slip up and it helps to deepen the bond

between them and their saviour.

In the end, Stand By Me was a decent novel, though not one of my favourites in the Christian fiction category. It is full of very strong characters, some great discussion topics, and is a quick, fast-paced read.

Madelle says

Neta Jackson's two other series sucked me right in and this new series is no exception. It is full of characters from her other books plus some new ones, but deals with difficult issues including, living with HIV, poverty, homelessness, racism in the church, family relationships and still manages to include humor and a great story line. I have the next one on reserve.

Jennifer says

Biggest lesson of the book I learned: do not assume. For instance, Avis has always been the "leader" of Yada Yada because of her personal relationship with God (in addition with being a principal and worship leader in church). In this book, she struggles mightily. I kept thinking she was pulling a Jodi (leaping before letting God handle things), but really she was just not seeing because she was so narrowly focused on her problems. The other characters in the book are full of assumptions as well, so interactions were tricky until they realized what was actually happening.

My biggest amazement: despite their girth (page length), how quick a read Mrs. Jackson's books are almost every time, mainly because I keep wanting to know what happens in the next part. :D

Cheryl Olson says

Have you ever had that situation where you were reading a book and you find yourself just plain irked with the characters? I mean they were really getting under my skin, their choices, what they say, how they are treating the people in their lives, etc. As I started reading Stand by Me by Neta Jackson I gotta say, I was feeling a little irked.

If you have read any of the other novels by Neta Jackson , then you will see yourself once again returning to Chicago and once again you will see some of her Yaya Yada prayer group characters in this novel, mainly Avis Douglass and her husband Peter as the novel opens with them celebrating their 6th anniversary. Sadly Avis' daughter Rochelle is in a tough spot as she tries to make things work in her life, a single mom, HIV positive, an abusive ex-husband, and now she has lost another job and shown up on her Mother and Step-Father's doorstep once again. Peter takes a stand and recommends using tough love with Rochelle in not letting her stay with them indefinitely. But the rub is that Rochelle has Conny- Avis' 6 year old Grandson in tow, so poor Avis is conflicted in what the right thing to do is. Rochelle leaves with Conny and no word and no contact.

Enter in Kat Davies, a college student who is new to the Souled Out Community church that Avis and Peter are long time members and leaders of as well. Kat saunters in one Sunday with many friends in tow and sort of plops herself among them rather like a bull in a china shop. She is so eager to make a difference in an

Urban experience program that she sometimes fails to see the people and their real needs. One of her counselors at her college urged her to “talk less and listen more” which she got a little bit better at as the book went on, but it was a real struggle for her. She is a relatively new Christian with lots of zeal but little discernment.

Kat and friends end up renting an apartment below the Douglass’ and Kat proceeds to rub Avis the wrong way again and again. This is where the irksome moments come into play as I kept getting mad at these characters for how they were treating each other, Avis’ constant irritation with Kat, Kat’s impulsiveness and tendency to run off at the mouth, Avis’ daughter continually shying away from getting help, etc. But as the story played out, as the character’s were honest with each other, etc. I realized that all this frustration with these characters was a good thing as it revealed to me that these characters read as real people. They all had their own inward motivations as to why they responded as they did and Neta Jackson does a great job with this storyline in making you really connect and care about these characters. I was irked because I really wanted the best for them. You see people are rarely what we take them as at face value, in that there is usually a lot going on and if we take the time to stop, care, listen and truly find out what their needs are, then amazing relationships are formed and especially with those people that we maybe didn’t like at first.

Great read! 4 stars

A free copy of this book was provided for me through the Booksneeze program through Thomas Nelson. I was not required to write a positive review and all opinions expressed are my own.

Jamie says

The narrator killed this for me. The story itself seemed okay and would have earned at least 3 stars I think, but I could not stand how this was read. Bland and monotone. With changing POVs I could not tell the difference. The pace was very slow. I actually fell asleep twice listening to this.

The characters both rubbed me wrong at first. Especially Kate. She and I would not get along in RL. But she had a good heart so I couldn’t completely dislike her.

I did like the growth of these two ladies. It is touching but it takes a long time to get into the thick of that. For the first third of the book, I wasn’t sure where this story was even going.
