

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING ABOUT ***LIFE AT 200 MILES AN HOUR***

"Frank Cheesman has written the kind of book that doesn't speak at people from a distance, it sits down beside them in the middle of the wreckage and reminds them they are still deeply loved. *Life at 200 Miles an Hour* is raw, honest, compassionate, and profoundly human. What moved me most is that beneath all the conversations about trauma, shame, marriage, exhaustion, and healing is a deeper truth so many people are starving to hear: you are not abandoned, disqualified, or alone. Frank writes with the tenderness of someone who has walked through the fire and discovered God was already there in it. One line especially stayed with me: "The invitation is not to try harder, perform better, or fix yourself before approaching. The invitation is simply to come. As you are. With all of it." That is the heartbeat of grace. That is the beginning of healing. And ultimately, that is the invitation of union itself."

Jason Clark—Author of *Leaving and Finding Jesus* and host of Rethinking God with Tacos
www.afamilystory.org

"Get Ready! *Life at 200 Miles an Hour: A Journey Through Trauma, Faith, and Redemption* is a story of translation, from pain to purpose, trauma to testimony, and brokenness to beauty. Frank Cheesman is a living testimony to the overwhelming goodness and redemption of God.

This book speaks in first person to trauma, lack, and death, turning them into hope, healing, and abundant life, according to Matthew 7:7-8."

Leann Leach, MSW, LCSW
Therapist and trauma survivor

"Life at 200 Miles an Hour is more than Frank Cheesman's story. It is an invitation to look honestly at our own. With remarkable vulnerability, Frank takes us into the places where pain, trauma, and survival patterns quietly shape our relationships, our choices, and our identity. But he refuses to leave us there. This is ultimately a book about hope, healing, and the grace of God meeting us in the places we thought were beyond redemption. Frank reminds us that our past may explain where we have been, but it does not have to determine where we are going. For anyone ready to stop merely surviving and begin living, this book is a powerful companion for that journey."

Martijn van Tilborgh, Speaker, Author
and Serial Entrepreneur.

LIFE AT 200 MILES AN HOUR

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LIFE AT 200 MILES AN HOUR

**A JOURNEY
THROUGH
TRAUMA,
FAITH, AND
REDEMPTION**

FRANK CHEESMAN

**FO
UR**

Dedication

This book is dedicated to every soul who has ever felt broken beyond repair. You are not alone. You are not forgotten. And your story is not over . . .

To my beloved wife, Leann:

There are no words adequate enough to capture what you mean to me, yet I will try.

For eight years, you have walked beside me, not behind me, not ahead of me—but beside me, exactly where I needed you to be. You have held my hand through the darkest corridors of my past, patiently waiting as I found the courage to open doors I had kept sealed for decades. With the wisdom of thirty-four years as a clinical social worker, you helped me find language for pain I never knew how to speak. You gave names to wounds I had carried in silence my entire life.

You sat with me in the hard moments. You never flinched when the trauma surfaced without warning—when the past would reach into our present and pull me under. You did not run. You did not judge. You simply loved me through it, and that love, Leann, has been the most transformative force of my life, second only to the grace of God.

You are the reason so much of what is written in these pages is possible. You helped me see that my story was not a source of shame, but a source of strength. You helped me understand that the broken places in a man's life are not the end of his story—they are often the very beginning of his greatest chapter.

This book exists because you believed in me before I believed in myself.

To the woman who has been my safe place, my greatest encourager, my partner, and my greatest earthly blessing—

This is for you, Leann. Every word. Every page. Every breath of healing between the lines.

*With all my heart, forever and always,
Frank*

CONTENTS

Foreword	xi
Preface	xiii
Introduction	19
CHAPTER 1. Is This You?	27
CHAPTER 2. How Did I Get Here?	35
CHAPTER 3. The Weight You've Been Carrying	45
CHAPTER 4. Breaking the Cycle	53
CHAPTER 5. The Power of Choice	63
CHAPTER 6. The marriage Battlefield	73
CHAPTER 7. Raising Children Through the Storm	81
CHAPTER 8. Financial Chaos and the Wounds Behind It	89
CHAPTER 9. Relationships and the Boundaries We Were Never Taught	99
CHAPTER 10. Identity Crisis: Who Am I Really?	109
CHAPTER 11. The Spiritual Anchor	117
CHAPTER 12. Life at a New Speed	127
A Final Word from the Author	137



FOREWORD

Trauma is not just a 21st-century phenomenon, only happening to the younger generation. It's something that has always been here, but has simply come to the surface as we have entered the information age and learned more about it. Everyone has dealt with something, regardless of how good or crazy a family you may have come from. In his book *Life at 200 MPH*, Frank Cheesman reveals with beautiful transparency his own trauma and pain and how he has come out on the other side of it a better individual. There is purpose that comes out of our pain, and our mess can become our message if we choose to deal with it rather than ignore or run from it. Frank does a great job of making his story simple to understand as well as relatable for all and gives solutions that are Christ-centered because it is Jesus who is the wonderful Counselor. I want to encourage all to read this book, ponder, and then heal, so that this world can experience the best of who you are, regardless of what you have been through.

Jamie Englehart
Author/Overseer C.I.M. Network



PREFACE

I almost didn't write this book.

Not because I didn't have anything to say; I had a life-time—packed into every scar, every sleepless night, every moment I smiled at the right time and fell apart when no one was looking. The reason I almost didn't write it is that, for most of my life, I believed a lie. The lie that said my story didn't matter. The lie that said I was too broken to be useful. The lie that said the things that happened to me disqualified me from offering anything worthwhile to anyone else.

Maybe you know that lie. Maybe you've been living inside of it for so long it feels like the truth.

I want to speak directly to the person who picked up this book and isn't quite sure why. Something drew you to it—maybe a title that felt uncomfortably familiar, maybe a quiet nudging you couldn't explain, maybe someone handed it to you and said, "I think you need to read this." Whatever brought you here, I don't believe it was an accident. I believe that God is far too intentional to waste a moment like this one.

If you are someone who feels stuck—genuinely, deeply, exhaustingly stuck—I want you to know that I understand that feeling in a way that goes beyond words on a page. I have been stuck in ways that most people will never fully understand. Stuck in pain I didn't choose. Stuck in patterns I couldn't seem to break, no matter how hard I tried. Stuck in a version of myself that was built for survival but never designed for living.

There was a season of my life when everything I had built my identity upon came apart. My body failed me. My ability to provide for my family the way a husband and father is supposed to slipped through my fingers. The man I had always believed myself to be—the provider, the protector, the one who handles things—was gone. And in his place was someone I didn't recognize and couldn't respect.

I reached a place of darkness I did not think I would survive. I'll tell you the whole of it in the pages ahead. For now, it is enough to say this: I know what it is to come to the very end of yourself and wonder if there is any reason left to go on.

And I know—because I lived it—what it is to have something break through that darkness when you least expect it or believe you deserve it.

I did not write this book from a place of having it all together. I wrote it from the other side of the floor. From

the other side of the darkness, the addiction, the shame, the childhood wounds that took decades to even name, let alone heal. I wrote it as someone who was told from the time I was old enough to understand words that I had no value, that I would never amount to anything, that the world would not miss me if I were gone.

I wrote it to tell you that every single one of those voices was wrong.

And if similar voices have been speaking to you—whether they came from a parent, a partner, a past failure, or the one inside your own head that never seems to stop—I wrote this book to tell you that they are wrong about you too.

This is not a book about having the right answers. Lord knows I spent enough years pretending I had those. This is a book about asking better questions. About slowing down long enough to look honestly at where you are, how you got there, and what is actually possible from here. It is a book about the kind of healing that does not come from a program or a formula, but from the radical, relentless grace of a God who meets you exactly where you are—on the floor, in the dark, at the end of yourself—and refuses to let that be where your story ends.

You still have time.

You still have purpose.

You still have a story that is not finished being written.

I know what it is to feel like nothing works anymore. I know what it is to try everything and still feel like you're losing. I know what it is to love your family and still feel completely alone inside of it. I know what it is to sit in a church pew every Sunday and walk out just as empty as you walked in. I know what it is to pray and feel like the ceiling is made of concrete.

And I know—because I lived it—what it feels like when something finally breaks through.

That breakthrough is what this book is about.

Not a perfect life. Not a life without struggle or pain or hard days that still knock the wind out of you. But a life where the speed is no longer running you. A life where the past no longer has the wheel. A life where you know, in the deepest part of who you are, that you were made for more than surviving.

Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV) says, "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

I used to read that verse and feel nothing. It felt like a greeting card—nice words for people whose lives actually worked. It took years of unraveling, years of healing, and

years of my wife Leann sitting with me in the wreckage of my story and helping me find language for what I had never been able to name before I could read that verse and feel it land somewhere real.

It lands now.

And my prayer—my deep, sincere, from-the-marrow-of-my-bones prayer—is that somewhere in these pages, it will begin to land for you too.

You are not too far gone.

You are not too broken to heal.

You are not too old, too tired, too complicated, or too far behind.

You are exactly where you need to be to begin.

So take a breath.

Turn the page.

And let's find our way through this together.

*With every ounce of love and
hard-won hope I have to offer,*
Frank Cheesman



INTRODUCTION

BEFORE WE BEGIN

There is something I need you to know before you read a single word of this book.

For the longest time, I had no idea what kept me captive and unable to write.

Not because I didn't have anything to say—I had twenty years' worth of things to say. Not because the story wasn't ready—the story had been ready long before I was. I almost didn't write it because writing it meant going back. It meant picking up memories I had carefully set down in corners I had learned not to walk past. It meant being honest—not just with you, but with myself—in ways that felt dangerous and exposed and uncomfortably necessary.

But here is what I kept coming back to, every time I thought about setting this project down for good:

Someone is waiting for this book.

Someone who doesn't know my name yet. Someone who woke up this morning already exhausted by a life that never seems to slow down. Someone who has tried everything they know to try and still finds themselves in the same place, circling the same wounds, running the same patterns, wondering if change is something that happens to other people but not to them.

That person kept me writing.

And if you are holding this book right now, I believe with everything in me that you just might be that person.

WHAT THIS BOOK IS AND WHAT IT ISN'T

I want to be clear with you from the very beginning, because you deserve that honesty.

This is not a book written from a podium. I am not a man who figured everything out early and is now looking back at the rest of you from a comfortable distance. I am a man who has stood in the darkest places a human being can stand—and I mean that literally—and somehow, by the grace of a God who refused to give up on me even when I had given up on myself, found his way to the other side.

This is not a self-help book in the traditional sense, though I pray it helps you. This is not a theology textbook, though Scripture runs through every chapter like a river through stone. This is not a memoir, though pieces of my story are

scattered throughout these pages like breadcrumbs—enough to let you know that I understand, that I have been where you are, that I am not speaking to you from theory but from the trenches.

What this book is, is a conversation. An honest, sometimes uncomfortable, always hopeful conversation between two people who have both been broken by life and are still standing.

I wrote it the way I would want someone to talk to me on the worst night of my life—with no pretense, no performance, and absolutely no judgment.

MY STORY, BRIEFLY

I grew up in environments that were not designed to produce healthy human beings. I carried wounds into adulthood that I didn't have names for yet. I built a life on top of a foundation that hadn't been properly examined, and like any structure built on unstable ground, things eventually shifted.

By the time I reached my breaking point, my body had already given out on me. I had worked myself into a spinal fusion. A car accident followed shortly after, before I had even fully healed, and took what little physical stability I had left. I was disabled. I was on more pain medication than any human being should carry. I could not work. I could not provide. I could not be the husband or the

father I had promised myself I would be, and the gap between who I wanted to be and who I had become was simply too much to span.

And so there came a night when I found myself on the floor of my own home, in the dark, on my knees, holding a Glock 9mm pistol to my head—mid-squeeze on the trigger—having reached the absolute end of what I believed I could endure.

I am not sharing that to shock you. I am sharing it because I know—with absolute certainty—that someone reading these words right now understands exactly what that kind of darkness feels like. The kind where you have stopped asking whether things will get better and started asking whether anything matters at all. The kind where you love the people around you but have convinced yourself they would be better off without you. The kind where hope isn't just dim—it has gone completely dark.

In that moment, on that floor, for the first time in my life, I heard the audible voice of God.

Not in my imagination. Not as a feeling or a nudge or a gentle impression. An audible voice. Clear as anything I have ever heard in my life.

"It's not your time."

Four words. That is all it took. Four words from a God who, by every reasonable measure, I had given very little reason to stay interested in me.

And everything changed.

I am here today because of those four words. And this book exists because of what happened in the years that followed.

WHAT TO EXPECT AS YOU READ

This book is organized around the most common areas where I have seen people get stuck—and where I personally got stuck myself. Each chapter builds on the one before it, though you are welcome to go directly to the chapter that speaks most urgently to your situation today.

You will find questions at the end of each chapter designed not to give you more information, but to help you examine what is already inside you. Take your time with them. There are no right answers. There is only your truth, and your truth is worth the time it takes to uncover it.

You will also find Scripture woven throughout. Not as decoration, and not as a shortcut, but because I genuinely believe that the Word of God is alive and that it has something specific and personal to say to every person who encounters it. If faith is not part of your current framework, I ask only that you stay open. Some of the most profound

shifts in my life came in moments when I was willing to consider the possibility that I was not the highest authority on my own story.

A WORD BEFORE YOU TURN THE PAGE

If you are reading this in a moment of genuine crisis—if the weight you are carrying tonight feels unsurvivable—I want to speak directly to you for just a moment.

You are not too far gone.

I know that is easy to say and hard to believe. I know because I sat exactly where you are sitting. I know because I held a weapon in my hand and genuinely could not imagine a reason to set it down. I know because the darkness that tells you it will never get better is one of the most convincing liars you will ever encounter.

But it is a liar.

Your story is not finished. The chapter you are in right now—no matter how painful, no matter how long it has lasted, no matter how many times you have tried and stumbled—is not the last one. God does not write stories that end in the middle of the struggle. He writes stories that end in the morning, after the long night, when the light comes back, and you finally understand why you had to walk through the dark to get there.