

Claim Your Crown

Walking in

CONFIDENCE AND WORTH

as a Daughter of the King

TARAH-LYNN SAINT-ELIEN



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To God, who adorned me with my crown first.

*Mommy—the queen of my heart,
Pops and Mitch—the kings of my world,
Medgina and Shermine—my forever sister queens:
I'm honored to live, laugh, and rule by your sides.*

*And to you, my beautiful readers:
Let's claim our crowns together.*

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Foreword

When I walked into the party, everybody just stopped.

I wrote these lyrics as the first line to my song “Party Like a Princess,” but truthfully it was much more than a song. It was the recap of my entrance to my high school spring formal, prom, and every college dance I attended.

*Even the DJ wasn't ready to see me without
A boy who isn't ready to be a king—
So tell me, why would I be chasing him to be his queen?*

The lyrics told the story of every red carpet from the Grammys to the Dove Awards and even my Instagram feed and snaps on Snapchat. From my teen years to my midtwenties, I was somewhat known for never showing up to events with or sharing social media posts of a boyfriend or a boy friend, and this song was essentially the reason why.

*Don't you know who my Daddy is?
Don't you know what my Daddy did?*

Foreword

*Don't you know who my Daddy is?
He paid it all—I'm the belle of this ball.*

I was frustrated that my singlehood seemed to be synonymous with sadness or loneliness. There were definitely moments of frustration and wanting to be in love when I wasn't, but ultimately, I found my hope in a relationship much greater than what any guy could ever give me. Though I went on a few dates here and there throughout college and my early twenties, and truly desired to be a wife, I never wanted my worth or value to be defined by a relationship status. I never wanted to give in to the pressure to have a guy on my arm or in a photo with me—as if that was the key to finding joy and defining who I was. I prayed diligently for my future husband, knowing that he would be worth waiting for, while also choosing to celebrate the season of being single.

I don't need a prince to party like a princess.

In the spring of 2018, I married the love of my life. Aaron is my best friend, my road trip partner, my forever date, and the father of our incredible daughter, Isabella. He makes me laugh more than anyone I've ever met and always knows what I want to eat when I can't make up my mind. Even so, he is *not* the source of my worth or value.

I find my worth in God and God alone. I find my value in knowing that I was created by Him and for Him. He made the skies, seas, and all things beautiful—including each one of us. *Including you.* When He looks at us, He sees His daughters—and as He is the King of all kings, that makes us princesses.

Foreword

The title *princess* can often seem like it's reserved for movie characters and international royalty, but it's available to us too. By breathing in, breathing out, and acknowledging life, we are accepting the gift of being a daughter of the King. And *that* is a reason to celebrate.

Tarah-Lynn knows and lives this message well. She is not only confident in who she is as a daughter of the King, she literally rocks a crown in real life too! But whether you believe you deserve a crown or not, whether you're single, married, young, or old, you *are* royalty. You deserve to know that you have a seat at a table set for the King, and this book will take you on that journey so you can claim your crown.

Jamie Grace, actress, podcaster,
and award-winning singer-songwriter

Introduction

So, there's this guy. . . . The best love stories begin with this, don't they?

Anyway.

Okay, girl, so He's definitely your type. Whenever He walks into the room, He owns it. He's always in control . . . but not in a controlling way. He pays attention to the slightest details and is fiercely protective—not overbearing or anything. He's gentle with all and has a reassuring peace about Him. And oh, how He loves? Swoon.

This One's different. He's been waiting on the day you'd give Him a proper chance.

He writes you love letters that are signed with His name at the bottom, but you sometimes return to sender. He looks out for you, but you'll often call it luck. He has a whole love story written out for you, but you've been known to call it a fairy tale.

I'm going to be real with you. Maybe the world has told you otherwise, but He has put it on my heart to reverse your thinking, to erase how you perceive yourself.

You are a queen. Or princess—whatever suits your fancy. God wants you to experience His love, and He wants you to know that as His daughter, you are indeed royalty.

As little girls, we may have been infatuated with princesses, but I find we've become disillusioned in a way that's detrimental to our self-awareness. Not many of us women are conscious of our own crowns.

We go through life seeking validation from our peers, our family, the media, men—it's a never-ending cycle. We see other women as competition. We stand awestruck at celebrities, picking out the physical traits we wish we could replace on our own bodies. We speak lowly of ourselves, dashing outright opportunities that could propel us forward. We say we don't want to be alone, and so we look for love in the wrong places. We go from heartbreak to heartbreak, blaming ourselves when the issue has never been us.

It has always been the distorted mirror.

When the crown was placed on my head and I was titled Miss Black New Jersey 2018, my perspective of being a queen changed. Having more opportunities to travel and talk to young women and girls in my home state and overseas made me experience what being a queen entailed. Seeing their lingering gaze on my crown made me desperately want to show all women the crowns they already have.

I've been doing so through my blog, *Adorned in Armor*—a place where I encourage women to conquer life through faith and fashion. I truly believe it is imperative for every woman to realize her worth in order to flourish in life, and I illustrate this through style posts and personal stories. However, I knew the most effective way to share lessons of queendom was through a book. *This* book.

And so, here I am.

Claim Your Crown is for you. It's an inspirational guide for young women who are deeply dissatisfied with society's standards and desire more for themselves. In learning to view God as a loving Father and King of all kings, you will discover your immeasurable worth as well as the power you have simply by being who you are. You will come to understand that your crown has *always* existed—without a prince—and you'll discover how to properly dismiss distractions in order to confidently reign.

As you journey through this book, you'll also grow spiritually—swapping society's teachings for biblical principles and establishing a strong foundation in positive self-worth. You will begin to see yourself the way God sees you: as an heir-ess of the kingdom. You will learn to claim your inheritance and independence. You'll find a desire churning within you to mirror positive examples of women in the Bible, discover the righteous response to dealing with your battles, and walk in the light of authority.

Claim Your Crown thwarts the media's misconceptions about beauty and womanhood while teaching God's original intent. It delves into the recurrent insecurities, fears, doubts, and guilt young women face daily. Most are things that I've dealt with myself.

You'll find me keeping it real with you as if I'm one of your girls (because I am) by sharing my own personal anecdotes, popular culture (I mean, I *am* a millennial), and fairy tales as organizing principles (because let's face it, a girl still dreams). You'll explore God's reign and the power we all have as His daughters. Not only will we relate to one another, we'll also find real connections to the women in the Bible.

Every chapter will refresh you with biblically based encouragement, empowering you not only to claim the promises of God but also to walk purposefully in them.

I'm ecstatic to bring you along on this voyage of yanking back the authority from outside forces and redirecting that power to falling in love with your true self. I can't wait to hear of the new ways in which you experience the love of God and embrace your God-given crown!

I'm telling you, He adores you. That Guy I was telling you about earlier, I mean. He knew you before you were even conceived. He positioned the stars in the vast skies, and still, He knows you by your name. He even knows your heart. He came to earth, got lash after lash—physically, verbally—He took it all just for you. He willingly gave Himself up to die for you. That's how beautiful He thinks you are. That's how worth it He knows you are. He thought you were to die for.

This "Guy"—this Jesus—wants you to come to know your worth too. As you venture through *Claim Your Crown*, you'll feel the love of God ricocheting off the pages and knocking at your heart. It is my prayer that you glean this insight, zealous to pay it forward by helping guide other princesses and queens in your life.

I see it now: you, standing taller—your crown glistening and shining in every passing reflection. I feel that fire burning within you as you thumb through the pages in anticipation, plotting your reign. I see you owning life the way a real queen should—boldly navigating life as the royal you are.

One

A ROYAL REALITY

The best princess movie of all time is *Cinderella*—the Brandy and Whitney Houston version, of course. If you disagree, let’s talk this out. And if you don’t know it (*gasp*), this is your cue to move your little cursor right over, open a tab for YouTube, and watch right now. No, think of it as a treat after you finish this book.

As kids, my siblings and I would pop the tape into our VCR (it was the early 2000s, y’all) and prance around our basement, stepping on one another’s toes as if we were at the ball. We’d reenact the hilarious scenes of the evil stepsisters trying to stuff themselves into their two-sizes-too-small dresses. And to this day, my siblings and I randomly belt out “Impossible!” in our best Brandy and Whitney Houston voices.

Aside from the beautiful wardrobe and catchy songs, there was something about the film that made it appealing and relatable. I mean, who else sang “In My Own Little Corner” while doing chores?

Prior to movies like Brandy's *Cinderella*, the world primarily saw royalty depicted in England's Queen Elizabeth, picture books, and animated cartoons. Being a royal wasn't intended for us commoners. So I suppose seeing Cinderella come to life made princesses more relatable for me.

We can all see why the modern fairy tale of Meghan Markle and Prince Harry captivated everyone around the world. And on the day of the royal wedding, the world watched along either in awe, indifference, or disgust due to her race.

I, of course, was in full support of Meghan's major come up. I was equally fascinated with the hilarious memes about her impending rule and, on a serious note, the "implications" of including a woman of color into the royal family.

Meghan faced tons of backlash simply for being Black; she was judged for her familial background and for being a divorcée. She will continue to experience even more scrutiny as a royal. Though some saw her as unsuitable for the throne, it was simply meant to be.

Understandably, there was even a focus on her title when the big fairy-tale wedding was approaching. The conversation made clear that if Prince Harry should marry Meghan, she wouldn't officially have the princess title along her own name. She doesn't have that right. "Princess Meghan" couldn't even be a thing; she would be called Her Royal Highness Princess *Harry* of Wales. Harry—not Meghan.

Not only that, it is tradition that the queen bestows the honors, so should Queen Elizabeth II decide to make her grandson a duke the day of the wedding, Meghan would become either Her Royal Highness Princess Harry of Wales *or* Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Sussex. We now know she's the lat-

ter! (Fun fact: She is actually the first woman to be known as such.)

The Duke and Duchess of Sussex drove the belief that dreams do come true and that fairy-tale endings could happen for *anybody*. It reminded me of childhood.

Growing up, our lives as royals weren't for pretend in my home. My parents made it a reality for my siblings and me. We were brought up knowing we must carry ourselves with dignity and respect. We were taught to know our worth. We were raised as princes and princesses. In fact, my nickname was (and maybe kinda still is) "Princess."

Yes, the title came about as a form of endearment. However, I didn't just receive the crown for being a girl . . . or for being the firstborn. Being called Princess is packed with meaning primarily because my heavenly Father's a King. And as one of God's own, you are a royal too.

Yes, you.

We tiptoe through life as if we are Cinderella past midnight. Our carriages? Mere pumpkins. Our glass slippers? An illusion to disguise our bare feet. With shards of glass stuck on our past, we're cut so deeply and can't see hope for the future.

But what would your life look like if you truly believed—you *are* royalty?

I recently came across an article relating a new discovery about Disney princesses. Cinderella, Tiana, and Belle—the ones who married into royalty—wore opera gloves. Those born royal, however, didn't. Think Snow White, Aurora, and Ariel. They are elegantly adorned by their bare hands.¹

Okay. Now, bear with me; I'm putting on my English minor cap for this one. It seems that the princesses who wore gloves

represent an untouchable aristocracy and society's view of their unworthiness to be accepted as they are. Here's my message to you: the world may be reluctant to see your crown, but God is ever so accepting of you.

You, queen, are automatically deemed royalty as a child of God. You were born with royal blood. You are crowned with glory and honor; you have dominion over all (Ps. 8:5).

What you are called doesn't depend on the names others bestow upon you. You don't have to marry into a royal family to be royal. You don't have to worry about how you are perceived in the public eye. People will try to disqualify you, but there has always been a crown with your name on it.

There is no official title needed other than child of the Creator of the universe.

Your right to the throne isn't just happenstance. You are *chosen*. The Passion Translation of 1 Peter 2:9 tells us, "But you are God's chosen treasure—priests who are kings, a spiritual 'nation' set apart as God's devoted ones. He called you out of darkness to experience his marvelous light, and now he claims you as his very own. He did this so that you would broadcast his glorious wonders throughout the world."

You are *His very own*. How can we wrap our minds around the fact that our Father is our King? It's hard to grasp, but it is a reality. *Our* royal reality. Now, own it.

Kingdom Keys

- What you are called isn't dependent on the names others decide to bestow upon you. You don't have to

marry into a royal family to be royal. You don't have to worry about how you are perceived in the public eye. People will try to disqualify you, but there has always been a crown with your name on it. There is no official title needed other than child of the Creator of the universe.

- Your Father is the King of all kings. He chose you; you are God's very own.

Reflection: We've discussed the proof of your royal status but what about your emotions? Do you feel you belong in the royal family of God? If not, who or what caused you to feel you don't?