

BELIEVE IN THE STORY



An Interview with
Randy Frazee



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Even at a young age, pastor and bestselling author Randy Frazee knew there was something important inside the black, fake-leather KJV zipper Bible his grandmother gave him. He knew it needed to be revered - he just didn't know why.

Born and raised in Cleveland, OH, Randy grew up in an un-churched home. A self-described "obscure little boy," he knew nothing of being a Christian until the age of 14, and even then he still did not truly grasp what the Bible was trying to tell him about his life. Though he was a believer by age 15, church was a place Randy went so he could sit next to his high school sweetheart and hold hands. "That was going out back then," recalls Randy.

Randy got the girl and later married her, but it wasn't until he attended Dallas Theological Seminary that he truly understood what it meant to be biblically literate. It was there he developed a passion for Bible teaching and spiritual community built around understanding how God's Word is truly a story.

Now living in San Antonio with his wife of 32 years, Rozanne, the Frazees are proud parents of four and grandparents of one. Randy serves as the Senior Minister of Oak Hills Church, where he teaches and leads in partnership with fellow pastor and New York Times bestselling author, Max Lucado. As a long-time friend and author with Zondervan, Randy has worked on multiple campaigns with the publishing house to start a major biblical movement, most notably The Story. He knew that if entire churches could fully commit to the Scriptures, no matter their study level, their lives would be forever changed. Now with the book approaching two million copies sold, Randy continues to teach The Story through a nationwide tour that includes performances by Casting Crowns, Steven Curtis Chapman, Natalie Grant, Matthew West, and more in order to awaken hearts and create an understanding of Scripture.

This year, Randy will take the inspiration behind The Story to a whole new level with his new project, Believe. Randy sat down for an interview with HouseWork to explain his passion for The Story and his vision for Believe.

How did you originally become involved with The Story? What was it about this concept and project that attracted you?

"In 2005, I was the senior pastor of Pantego Bible Church in Fort Worth, Texas, when I got a call from Zondervan's then VP of Marketing, Doug Lockhart. He had some Bible projects he wanted me to look at and asked if I could come by the office. I agreed to come by, really out of courtesy, because Doug knew my passion for biblical literacy. He showed me three projects, one being the first edition of The Story. When he told me its concept, a lightbulb went off in my head. This product could actually help people truly read the entire Bible! Many people don't realize that the Bible, in its original form, is not laid out chronologically. But, out of obedience to their study, they read it in order—Genesis to Revelation—and often times they become confused. But with The Story offering an abridged chronological version, people could actually read it front to back and it would make sense to them! I knew that if this was possible, I could build a community around it.

"I went back to Zondervan and expressed my vision of an entire suite of products to immerse the entire church at once, including a family study and children's piece. And so, Zondervan delivered. In 2007, two years after accepting the teaching pastor position at Willow Creek Community Church, I received the "thumbs up" to start The Story study at our New Community—a mid-week service dedicated to more in-depth Bible teaching and worship. The first night, our attendance jumped 50 percent. I knew that this would be a deepening experience for our church, but I had no idea what an outreach it would be as well.

"In 2008, I accepted an invitation from Max Lucado to join him at Oak Hill in San Antonio as senior minister. Over a game of golf I mentioned that as the new senior minister I wanted my first year at the church to be something different—I wanted the entire church to go through *The Story*. I could see the wheels in Max's head start spinning at the concept of going through the entire Scripture. As he began to focus on this idea, the wheels of his golf game began to come off. Max thought it was great! We leveraged everything against it—31 weeks and 100% involvement from the entire church. That year, the church grew 23 percent! This growth had everything to do with the vibrant concept of *The Story* and people's longing to read through the entire Bible. We had created a community built around an effective tool."

What do you feel is the most appealing part of the *Story* experience?

"It has to be that *The Story* experience finally gives people the opportunity to check 'reading through the Bible' off of their bucket list. And it is through the context of community that this is possible. The concept is like exercise or anything else that takes healthy discipline. It is much easier to accomplish when you have a supporting community going through the motions with you and providing that extra boost of energy. There's no one better than your family, your church, and your pastor to say, 'Let's do this together,' so when you run out of steam you have someone to carry you on."

What has been your favorite part of the journey that *The Story* has taken?

"Personally, it has to do with talking to local pastors and hearing how *The Story* has impacted them and the church. I have thoroughly enjoyed watching a pastor cast a vision for the church and staff, and for that whole year the pastor becomes a hero for their local community. It is amazing to watch the growth in 31 weeks. The pastors aren't using Scripture to back up their teaching or ideas. In fact, it's the opposite. They are backing up Scripture with their teaching."

What is your hope for the people and the churches that read and engage *The Story*?

"My main thing is for them to understand the extent to which God has gone to be in a relationship with them. He is pursuing them individually. His story is not finished yet, and each of us has an important role to play in its unfolding. Chapter 31 of *The Story* hasn't happened yet, and God is inviting us to be one of His characters. Our life matters to him."

What inspired you to work on the next project *Believe*?

"I've been working on this concept for a very long time. In seminary, we start off by learning the narrative of Scripture, and then the next step is systematic theology—getting a basic understanding of the major themes of the Bible. If reading through the Bible seems like a distant goal, understanding its themes can be even more inaccessible. But, by using the same approach as *The Story* in *Believe*, we will make these big ideas accessible. If people saturate themselves around these ideas, not only will people understand the story, they will see how it is applicable to their lives."

How is *Believe* different?

"It is the application of Scripture to your life. *The Story* enables you to understand the Bible. But *Believe* will help you understand the big ideas that drove the characters in the Bible and expose you to the themes that show who God is and what He wants to get started in your life. *Believe* will help you to know what kind of person God wants you to be."

Is *Believe* a continuation of *The Story* or a new project entirely?

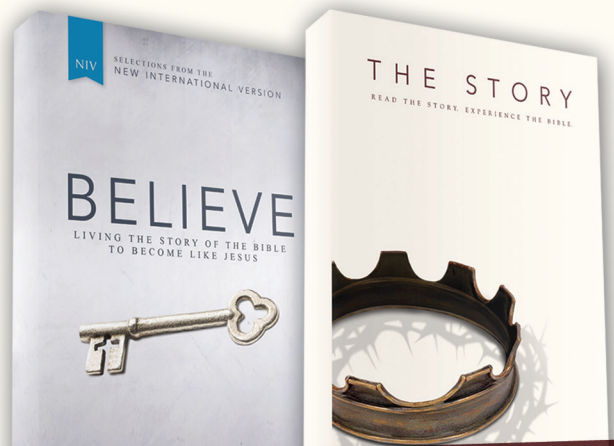
"It is optimal to go through *The Story* first but it isn't essential. You can go either way."

How do you encourage ministries to become involved in the *Believe* campaign?

"We are starting by reaching out to churches, ministries, and other organizations who previously engaged with *The Story*. We want to give them the first opportunity to see *Believe*. Apart from our launch strategy, I would personally encourage our nation's pastors to help our people understand what they believe. The fact is, the majority of people aren't 100% certain as to the 'what' and 'why' of our belief system. But if we engage the Scriptures with our hearts, we can begin a revolution. If we want to have a major impact on a city, state, country, or even the world, we need our people to be firm in their foundational knowledge and beliefs so they can move their hands and feet to reach the uncertain. Looking back on my life, as an un-churched kid who just wanted to understand the Bible and to know God, I now find myself in a crazy position," says Randy. "Like many characters in the Bible, it makes no sense that God chose someone like me. I don't think of myself as an ingenious person. But like people in *The Story*, I listened to God's whisper that told me to just take one more step. And so I did." ❖




Bestselling Author
Randy Frazee



The Story continues to be one of Zondervan's bestselling resources and has been already used in more than 3,500 churches. The first *Believe* experiences are scheduled to launch in the winter of 2015 with a nationwide campaign in fall 2015. For more information on *The Story*, please visit www.thestory.com.