

Engage360 Episode 141 | Tracing the Breadcrumbs of Life; Jami Nato

[00:00:16] **Dr. Don Payne:** Hey friends, welcome to Engage360. This is Denver Seminary's podcast, and we are very glad that you've chosen to spend some time with us. I'm Don Payne, your host for this episode, and we are delighted today to have a conversation with Jami Nato. Jami is an author, a speaker, a blogger, a serial entrepreneur, a coffee shop owner, a pickle farmer, and a black belt in cornhole.

[00:00:46] **Jami Nato:** There's nothing else to say after that.

[00:00:51] **Dr. Don Payne:** That's all there is that's worth knowing about you.

[00:00:53] **Jami Nato:** All that's worth knowing.

[00:00:54] **Dr. Don Payne:** Though I have yet to see any empirical evidence of those last two claims, the pickle farmer, and the black belt in cornhole, but those are the claims and so I'll let them stand.

[00:01:07] **Jami Nato:** Well, I get to see you in a couple of weeks, and I hope to destroy you in cornhole.

[00:01:16] **Dr. Don Payne:** Well, as long as you bring pickles, then that might be, that might be allowed. But we'll see. We'll see. So, in 2023, Jami released her book, *This Must Be the Place: Following the Breadcrumbs of Your Past to Discover Your Purpose Today*. This was put out by Bethany House. So, as we start talking about this, Jami, give us your elevator speech of what the book is about. Then I want to know why you wrote it and who you wrote it for. But, what's the elevator speech?

[00:01:48] **Jami Nato:** Well, I think I noticed that I got a little bit lost along the way in my own identity as, I'm a mom and I'm a wife and that's who I am. Of course I'm a believer, but I really got stuck in that as my identity. And I didn't have much else, like even hobbies. I kind of went all in on mothering and wifing. And I think because the faith space that I was in said, this is where you go all-in, and you are nothing else but these things. And so I really believed that and I got lost. I got lost along the way because, you know, heartache comes into your life when it wants to. And so, there's a piece of my story that involves infidelity and I thought, okay, I'm getting a, I'm getting a divorce. I must not be a good wife. I'm so embarrassed. So, if I'm not a good wife and probably not a good mom because I'm so sad right now, then who am I? I mean, it really flipped my world upside down. So, you're like, give us an elevator pitch. I'm like, should we talk about infidelity? But that was the point in my faith and in my relationship with God, where I realized I'm not just a mom and a wife, like I need to go back and see what's going on. Who God made me to be.

And so I think my hope in this book is that women get a giant permission slip, and even you, Don, you get a giant permission slip, to really look at your story, look back at your story, evaluate, ruminate on these stories that make up your life and say, hey, I don't think this stuff is an accident. And I don't think this part of my story is a waste. And I think God is a great reframer. And that's what I think the Bible is, that he takes these things that are weird and awful and crazy and miraculous or funny, and he reframes them in his grand story. And so, this is just a permission slip for women to, I tell a story, I go first, and then I ask them to reflect on their life. And I think if you really do look back and you reflect and you reframe and kind of see that things are interconnected and not coincidental, that it gives you a big, big permission slip to live intentionally. And I don't think

a lot of us are living intentionally. I think we're, it's like things happen to us and we're reacting and we're spending like eight hours on our phone, scrolling. And I think there's a better way. Yeah.

[00:04:46] **Dr. Don Payne:** Really well said, and you kind of answered the question about who you wrote it for. Because what I hear, Jami, is that lots of people are in the same space. Caught in the randomness of life, as it, to use your words, as it just happens to us, and we get in this habitual reactionary mode without seeing that there's any kind of pattern there.

[00:05:15] **Jami Nato:** We're looking at, I think we know a lot about other people's lives as, as women, especially, we know a lot about our kids' lives. We know a lot about our spouse's life. We know a lot about our friends. We care for and nurture other people's lives and stories. But when it comes to our own, I have noticed women do not, they are not looking back and making sense of their stories and really nurturing some of those things that need attention. And even some of those things that you would say, that was just bad, and I've moved on, like that was just bad. And now I've moved forward, and I think I want to help you kind of dig around and say like, maybe what I buried there has some treasure. So, I buried that and said it was dead, but I wonder if there's something there that could give you life.

[00:06:14] **Dr. Don Payne:** You mentioned women, and I know it's not exclusive to women, but I think you do have mostly women in view here. Why does it seem that women may struggle with that so much? Are there just too many things coming at them from too many angles, and they just get caught up in these demands and needs of others?

[00:06:34] **Jami Nato:** I think so. I think it's really, really easy to be distracted. And that doesn't mean just by your phone. I mean, I think the daily mundane, whatever it is, but there is something also there about women not feeling like they can dream about something that isn't family oriented. So maybe you're single and you've been told like, just get married and have kids. And that just isn't everybody's story. And that cannot be the pinnacle, that cannot be the climax of your life. 'Cause, and Don, you know this too, like inside of marriage and being a parent, it will let you down, right? And it's great too, but it's not where we put our hope. So, I think there's something there. There's a block that women don't think that they can dream about something else. And then I think life is just distracting. I also think it's hard work. Like if you're going to look back, you're going to encounter some things that you've already moved on from. It's hard work to pay attention to your story.

[00:07:55] **Dr. Don Payne:** One thing I appreciated about your book is that you do it in a way that seems to give a model of how to hone that skill of looking at your story. Because I don't know if that's a natural or easy thing for many people to do.

[00:08:19] **Jami Nato:** I've grown up just reframing. Like I don't know if your people do Enneagram. I'm a 7. And so, I'm going to be constantly reframing things too, and I have severe ADHD, as you know, as you well know. As a student, as a squirrel student. But there's those things that just make you, you. And so, I've grown up reframing constantly, like, how do I make sense of that? And once I realized I love stories, I like telling stories. As you know, you gave me a B on my first paper and, I didn't know if you wanted to repent for that publicly, or...

[00:09:02] **Dr. Don Payne:** I wasn't going to bring that up. I didn't know it was still a sore spot, but go ahead.

[00:09:11] **Jami Nato:** Since we're talking about the past.

[00:09:14] **Dr. Don Payne:** Yeah, that's a breadcrumb.

[00:09:19] **Jami Nato:** You're like, "Real entertaining. You also did not follow instructions." But lesson learned. You know, I've been reframing and when I look at the Bible and I look at what the Bible is, it is a bunch of stories. And the stories are told over and over and over again. And I think because stories are so powerful, I think, and I talk about this in the book, but when you start telling a story, your brain, whoever's listening, it lights up in different ways. And we are, we want to listen to a story. So, I think the Bible is a bunch of stories that are constantly being reframed in light of what Jesus did for us.

And, and I think if we go back and look at our stories, I mean, there are funny things that have happened to me. I work in a space of comedy, which your listeners right now are thinking, she's actually kind of intense and has some sad stories, but I work in a funny space. And I think even that when I look back on why I love humor and why I love laughing and how that came to be, it makes sense. Like with my childhood and growing up poor, and you don't have a lot of resources, so you're making entertainment. I think all of those things come together and make sense. And the point is that you reframe them in light of who God is.

[00:10:59] **Dr. Don Payne:** Even for those who may not be intuitive reframers like you are, the way you do that I think gives people a vision for that as a possibility. That my life and all these, to use your metaphor, the breadcrumbs, these random breadcrumbs, they can be reframed. Even if it's not a natural or intuitive thing for people as it may be for you. I find that to be one of the most hopeful things about the book. And I love the way you tell your stories. Now, I did notice your disaffection for capitalization, which reminds me of Cormac McCarthy's writing style. But that aside, the stories really are wonderful.

And before I get to that, let me just say that as cliché as it is these days to say that with God, nothing gets wasted, I think your story overall and your stories are a really vivid version of that truth that with God, nothing gets wasted. I was reminded of that over and over as I read the book. And what I wanted to say about your stories is that they really are a quite creative example, for me anyway, of how to make our stories available to others and beneficial to others. Because stories, I mean stories can be interesting, they can be entertaining, but you do have a really interesting way of making your stories beneficial to others.

[00:12:39] **Jami Nato:** Yeah. I think stories are I think the most important thing about us. 'Cause God put these stories in us, right? And you're living them out. You're living out these breadcrumb moments and you don't even know it. And of course, God does, but when you're living it out, it's like, oh, am I going the right way? Am I doing this the right way? Who knows if I'm going the right direction. I rely on old faith sometimes. So, I look back on stories where I see God showed up for me there. He really did show up for me there. And that was on purpose. I couldn't see it. So that now when I'm going through something that feels dark, I remember that God restored my marriage.

Like it was miraculous. And so now I'm facing something hard in this area and I say, no, we're not going to lose hope, because remember what God did for you over here. And so those stories, we bear witness to them, right? When you tell a story, I get to bear witness to that, which is almost as powerful, maybe more powerful, than someone telling the story. Because now I feel like that's like deep calling to deep. And so, I think it's important. I think it really matters that we stop hiding our stories and shame, being embarrassed about the way things went. Just telling the truth. And you'd be surprised at how many people say, me too. That happened to me too.

[00:14:09] **Dr. Don Payne:** Yeah, yeah. Well, for those who haven't read your book, and I do want people to read your book, give maybe just an example of, or two of the stories and how those breadcrumbs work together into something really significant for you. Just give people an example of what you're talking about.

[00:14:29] **Jami Nato:** Well, one of my favorite stories is, I grew up next door to a severely disabled kiddo and her name was Hannah. And this was a normal part of our life. We would take Hannah. This is Texas. It's the wild, wild west, you know, and it was the eighties, but we would take Hannah out of her wheelchair and we would put her in what we called the bucket, which was a bucket with wheels and we would wheel her around the neighborhood just going on adventures with Hannah, we would put her in a horse trough with us and, I don't know if you know that you run in one direction, a bunch of you, and then it creates this whirlpool and then you kind of sit and get carried in a rusty horse trough and, I have an incredible immune system.

[00:15:20] **Dr. Don Payne:** You must by now.

[00:15:21] **Jami Nato:** By now I'm just shining. And so, you know, we grew up, it was just normal for us to be around Hannah. And then, when my dad went to law school, he decided he's going to go to law school in his late thirties with six kids, and he tells people he was in the Texas prison system, but he worked in the Texas prison system, as a counselor, is what they call them. So, there's like a justice system inside of the prison. But you don't have to be a real attorney to be a counselor. You're kind of a mediator. And my dad was like, I keep winning all my cases in prison. And so, he decided he is going to be an attorney. Well, he goes to law school, and he sits in the front row with Clay, and Clay is blind. He can hardly hear. So, he has these big hearing aids in, and he has glass eyeballs. And ask me how I know, because my dad would bring Clay over for dinner, and Clay was like Rain Man. And so, this is before we had Google, but I had reports to do. And so, I would say Clay, he had this memory, Clay, what happened? What happened on August 13th, 1981? And he used to shake back and forth, and he'd be like, August 13th, 1981. That was when he would tell me what president it was, what was going on, like everything that was happening. And so, we just loved Clay. We grew up, and we did teach him to drive once.

And in hindsight, that is not safe, but it was just a John Deere buggy. So, he changed our lives in the sense that it was just very common for me to be around people who are differently-abled. So fast forward to my own life and my own motherhood story. And I have a differently-abled child, severely developmentally delayed. And when I looked back at my story because I kept saying like, God, I'm not the right mom for this. Like, I don't have the skills for this. I don't know what to do. And frankly, I'm a little disappointed in the dreams that I had for her. And those aren't going to come true. And then I feel bad about that. So, I think when I was talking to God about that, the memories that popped up with Hannah and Clay and God saying, you know how to do this. Look at your breadcrumbs. Not that it's not going to be difficult, but you know how to do this. And I think it just gave me confidence. Like, you know what? God put these people in my life to not only make my life better, but for my future. Like, I feel really equipped. And I feel really blessed. That sounds kind of cheesy, but that Lila is in our life, and she makes our life better. And the dreams that I had pale in comparison to the joy that she brings us. So, I mean, that's just one example. And that was kind of long.

[00:18:43] **Dr. Don Payne:** Yeah, but that does show how these dots connect, even if they connect over long spaces. They really do connect.

[00:18:51] **Jami Nato:** Yeah, I believe it. I really believe it. I think you, everybody can find those dots, find those breadcrumbs. And if you do that, I think you will find a lot of purpose and a lot of confidence that God has equipped you, you have what you need.

[00:19:08] **Dr. Don Payne:** Well, that's one thing I loved about the way you tell those stories, Jami, is that underneath what is a collage of quirky, hilarious, extemporaneous experiences, underneath all that, there really is a thickness, a gravity that runs pretty deep underneath your journey. And it sounds like that really anchors your journey. What was the process of writing this book like for you? Of recalling, recapturing all these stories, pulling these dots together, and then showing readers what God has brought and is bringing out of all that? What's that process like for you?

[00:19:53] **Jami Nato:** Well, I tried to write a different book before I had publishers, since I was blogging, and I was talking about infidelity and a lot of people weren't. Publishers were like, hey, you should write a book about infidelity. And so, I wrote, maybe like eight chapters of it. And I hated it. I hated writing that book, but I had heard writers say, writing a book is hard, and it's torturous. And so, I'm like, I guess this is how it's supposed to be. And I think it was because it was the wrong book, but I just felt like I kept hitting a wall every time. And then I would be mad at my husband and he's like, oh, you were writing today, you know, and I'm just digging up all this old stuff. I'm like, maybe stay out of the house for two days. But I let it go. I didn't look at it in the middle of it. I wasn't like, oh, this is a breadcrumb. This is not the book you're supposed to write. This is one chapter, like my life, I am not the lady who forgave her husband and now their marriage is restored. Like that's a part of my story, but my life is complicated and layered and there's good things too, and funny things, and so I thought if I could just write a book of essays that someone could pick up, you don't even have to read it all the way through. Like you can, it needs to be an easy read, and not in a sense that it's not going to make you think, but I want it to be enjoyable. Enjoyable for the reader and unlike some of our academic things that we have to read, Don. But anyways, this, I wanted it to be just...

[00:21:33] **Dr. Don Payne:** I'm going to let that go. But go ahead. Go ahead.

[00:21:36] **Jami Nato:** I mean, yours were all good.

[00:21:38] **Dr. Don Payne:** Well, clearly. Clearly. But.

[00:21:40] **Jami Nato:** But yeah, I think, so when I started writing this book, I loved it. I loved it. I wrote it so fast. I would write half a chapter in a day, the next chapter, the next day, then send it to my editor. She would tidy it up. Not that I needed a lot. Yes, I did. But you know what? Breadcrumb moment, Don. All those red lines on that paper. I mean, my editor, you know, they tear it up. At first you look at it and you think, I'm the worst writer in the universe. And then you think, oh, they're just making me better. And so, when it comes to writing academic papers, you learn to appreciate the critiques so that you're better the next time.

[00:22:31] **Dr. Don Payne:** Okay. Okay.

[00:22:34] **Jami Nato:** But you know what, all that to say, I loved writing this book. And I think if I could, if your listeners are trying to, maybe they have a dream of writing a book, sit your butt in the chair, sit down and write and just write as long as you can. So, I mean, it's, maybe that's not going to work for everyone, but for a squirrel like me, that worked.

[00:22:59] **Dr. Don Payne:** Well, you know, sometimes in a writing project, even if we know, or we think we know what we're going to write before we sit down to start writing, or we wouldn't sit down to write, the writing process itself, discloses things we did not know that we knew. In other words, we learn more about our own story. We learn more about what it is we think by having to write it down. And we didn't know that before we started. Did that happen to you at all?

[00:23:30] **Jami Nato:** It happens every time. I think I'm going to write about this and then it's something completely different. And I say, I didn't even know that was in there, but it needed to come out. But writing is simply, I think writing is reflecting. If you are going to sit down and write something academic or not, you are reflecting on a piece of whatever. And I think even if you're not a good writer, like, writing your story is important, and women in particular need to take up more space with their stories. So if you really do answer the questions, that my secret hope that I didn't tell my publishers was that you would have your own little memoir and it doesn't need to be well written, but if you answer those questions, you're going to have some meat that it's really important to bear witness to.

[00:24:21] **Dr. Don Payne:** Well, I think that bears witness to the case you're making in the book. That is part of the breadcrumb trail that comes together. You know, Jami, I, even though you did not intend this to be a theologically academic book, I was, and I can't help doing this, I was paying attention to the theological underpinnings of what you were doing. And I picked up on some really good theology that was driving this from underneath. Can I tell you what I appreciated theologically about your book?

[00:24:56] **Jami Nato:** I will take any compliments about theology. Yeah

[00:25:01] **Dr. Don Payne:** What I picked up on from your book, that even if God is not mechanically orchestrating all the moves and the pieces of our lives, God is present to us and God is present to those pieces in ways that make patterns and meaning out of them. I think that's what I heard you saying. I think also you're helping people see the more-factor in their lives. Helping us not buy into these reductionistic myths of our culture, that there's more involved behind and in the seemingly benign or pedestrian pieces of our lives because God is always creating.

[00:25:47] **Jami Nato:** Right.

[00:25:47] **Dr. Don Payne:** God did not simply create us, create things, and set them in motion and let them go. God is always creating. And we, in our own small, finite way, we get to participate in his ongoing creative process by picking up on the more-factor.

[00:26:07] **Jami Nato:** And he's, it's like, you're saying more, even when you think he's done, like, even when I think I'm healed, like say in my marriage, I think, oh, I've really done the work to heal. And God's done this miracle. Every year, God finds something that I've tucked away in my heart. And he says, and now we're going to heal this little, tiny thing. And I'm like, what are you like that you care about that detail that I just was like, oh, that doesn't matter.

[00:26:35] **Dr. Don Payne:** Hmm. I picked out a number of statements you made from your book, and I'd love to just read them back to you and have you reflect on them if you care to. On page 10, and I love the way you said this, when you pair a unique empathy with a unique gifting, you find your calling.

[00:26:56] **Jami Nato:** Yeah. I 100% believe that.

[00:27:01] **Dr. Don Payne:** Well, you could because you said it. That sounds like you, doesn't it?

[00:27:08] **Jami Nato:** That is brilliant. No, I really, it's one of my favorite sentences in the book. It matters so much. So when you take, I think empathy has come a lot out of like heartache. I think your heart aches for something either because you've experienced this in some way, or maybe God has just given you the gift of like unique empathy for a certain something, but man, pairing that with your gifts is a rocket ship. And I wish that we would pay attention to our empathies a little bit more because of that.

[00:27:47] **Dr. Don Payne:** I love that. Here's the second quote that I picked out that I want to read back to you, though I'll preface it by saying that in my theology classes, I have often said to students, and I need to say to listeners, I say this tongue in cheek, okay, so nobody's heresy bells go off. I do believe in the omnipotence of God, but I do think there's one, tongue in cheek, there's one thing God cannot do, and that's draw a straight line. Thank you. And you pick up on that. Yeah, I thought I was pretty witty in that, but then I've realized, oh, you said this too. A straight line would not allow us to see our need for God's mercy and his tender guidance as we brave our tenuous journey. Say more about that.

[00:28:32] **Jami Nato:** And it's also really, really boring to have a straight line.

[00:28:36] **Dr. Don Payne:** Yeah.

[00:28:37] **Jami Nato:** You know, I talk about if there's a movie and it was like, look, she was born and then she crushed it. That is the worst movie of all time. You know, no one would want to listen to that. There's something in us that I really think it calls back to eternity, which says like, you can overcome this. It seems dead and then we're going to get life. It seems like there's no way out of this. And then God breaks through. I think we're always looking for the underdog. I think that's just eternally in us in that very not-straight line.

[00:29:15] **Dr. Don Payne:** Yeah. You have a great line when you're talking about your daughter. You called her a doctor who fixes my broken perspective and a teacher who teaches me a better way to love and accept and dream.

[00:29:27] **Jami Nato:** That kind of makes me teary, but, and you know, I like to cry in every class. This child, I'm going to teach this child how to survive in this weird world and I'm going to protect her. And I'm just going to make her life, you know, as good as it can be. I was just so wrong. I'm so blown away by how she joyfully teaches me that there's a different way and it doesn't look like my way. She's like, right now she's outside with these huge headphones on, yodeling. She has discovered yodeling. And so she goes in our front yard and scream-yodels and she's 15 and she's dancing while she's doing it too. Wild.

[00:30:23] **Dr. Don Payne:** Good for her.

[00:30:24] **Jami Nato:** She just doesn't care. And I'm looking at her, like I could use a little bit of that.

[00:30:30] **Dr. Don Payne:** Yeah.

[00:30:31] **Jami Nato:** Not yodeling.

[00:30:33] **Dr. Don Payne:** But the abandoned.

[00:30:34] **Jami Nato:** Wild abandonment. Without the yodeling.

[00:30:38] **Dr. Don Payne:** Okay, last quote. Now this one's just a little bit longer, but it's from toward the end of your book. You say, "It doesn't matter how much personal development I do, how much I mature and age, how much I think I'm relying on Christ. I'm on this side of heaven, I will continually have opportunities to find my way back to him. I will desperately need to find my identity in Christ over and over."

Now, Jami, I found that curiously liberating, personally. Especially that last part, that we have to keep finding our identity in Christ over and over. Tell me why I find that so liberating. If you can.

[00:31:21] **Jami Nato:** Well, it's, does it not just give humans a permission slip to just not have it all together all the time? And I certainly don't, as we all know, but that God put something in us that we would need, that we would keep needing him, that otherwise, if everything goes the way that I want it to go. And I find this in, I find this often, things are good, and I don't need God as much. And what I'm missing out in that, in not, you know, suffering or in hardship, what I'm missing out is his nearness, in a sense of God is near to the brokenhearted. And I am often jealous of myself in those times, like when my marriage was falling apart, where I really felt like God's breath was on my neck, and I call it spooning with Jesus. But my sister says, I can't say that anymore. So that's the last time I'm going to say it. But I was, I felt so close, like Jesus was there and you cannot, that feeling, and that nearness and his presence is better than getting what I want, getting my marriage back or having my life perfect or having a kiddo who's just like everybody else or whatever. It's his presence and his nearness that was the reward, not the thing I thought I wanted.

[00:32:49] **Dr. Don Payne:** Well, I have to tell you, Jami, I think your book is one of the more hopeful things I have read in quite some time.

[00:33:00] **Jami Nato:** Well, that makes me happy. And I think your listeners should know that this is a pink book.

[00:33:07] **Dr. Don Payne:** It is, and if they're watching the video version of this, here it is.

[00:33:15] **Jami Nato:** And it makes me so happy to think about this sitting on your desk with all your academic books and your bright little light pink book.

[00:33:23] **Dr. Don Payne:** But I did it. You have alluded a few times to grades and the reading that you may not have enjoyed as much. You're part of a women's leader cohort here at Denver Seminary. How did that show up on your breadcrumb trail?

[00:33:45] **Jami Nato:** I wrote this, I'd finished this book and then you launch it. And. I was looking around like, what do I, this has never happened to me. I usually always have a lot of plates spinning and I know what I'm going to do. And I'm a dreamer and I had nothing. And I kept praying like, this is such a weird feeling. What do I do? And then my friend said, hey, we should go to seminary together. And without even looking at any documents or, you know, saying like, how long is the

program? And what even is the degree? I said, yes, and got wrangled into this cohort. But it has been one of the best things I've ever done. I wish I would have done it earlier, but you know, you can't go back. And it has been one of the most formative activities that I've ever done. And I think I didn't expect, I wanted to learn. I love to be like very, I like information and I like to be mentally stimulated, but I don't think I expected that I would love God so much more than when we started.

[00:35:01] **Dr. Don Payne:** What role has your cohort played in that? Doing this as a cohort with other women.

[00:35:09] **Jami Nato:** Well, I've tried to quit four times. So you, when you have a cohort though, you move kind of as one. So, you of course are writing your own papers and taking your own tests, but you're kind of doing it together. So, you have questions. What does this mean? I have, I am a clay to my classmates, Amy, you know Amy, and Rebecca, but they kind of sherpa me in a way because I don't understand instructions, or like Don so egregiously gives instructions that are about three pages long.

[00:35:52] **Dr. Don Payne:** Again, I'm just going to let that go, but go ahead. Go ahead.

[00:35:56] **Jami Nato:** I'm not used to several pages of instructions, but you get, you start kind of remembering, okay, we're in the school and we're doing it this way. And so, the cohort keeps you going and the relationships that you build inside of your cohort. Cause it's small. I mean, it is small enough that you get to know everybody, and they keep you going. And so, you think, oh, I'm going to quit. But then you think, no, because all my classmates said they want to quit and you're like, over my dead body. Not today. No. So I can't recommend it enough. I, it's not that you can't do it without a cohort, but this experience of a cohort makes it so much more rich.

[00:36:44] **Dr. Don Payne:** You mentioned loving God more. How so?

[00:36:49] **Jami Nato:** I think I distilled the stories in the Bible down to an uncomplicated, unlayered, just, it was flat. I think, not flat in a sense, my relationship with God is real and vibrant. And it was before this, but I think I distilled these stories into really simplistic things about God. And now with the context, and even like, we're doing New Testament right now. And I used to be like, Paul, you are something else. Like you're not my favorite and like, tone it down. Let's take it down. And now I'm reading more and getting the context in learning about his background in history. And I'm thinking, I think I want to be his best friend. And so, it's just changing the way that I view God and view the Bible. And remember like, oh, all these stories are so connected. All these stories are telling us something about God's character. And I just, I didn't have such a robust understanding or reading of the Bible.

[00:38:09] **Dr. Don Payne:** That's so well said. You must be right. You ought to write a book.

[00:38:13] **Jami Nato:** I did it. And now I only have the brain space to read. You know, I was thinking when we went into the cohort, I was thinking Denver Seminary would be like, hey, you guys are doing some stuff. You're reading, you're writing, you're like, preaching, maybe you're, whatever, you're doing a lot of things. And so, we're going to kind of go easy on you. And we are going to not make you cite things with the correct Turabian. And I was not right. I was not right. It's a rigorous program. And you academic people care about your citations.

[00:38:56] **Dr. Don Payne:** Well, well, we do. Yes, yes, we do. Why? Because we have no life. But on that note, Jami, thanks. Thanks for spending time with us and thanks for the work that you put in, and not just the work that you put in, but for putting yourself and your journey into this book. *This Must Be the Place: Following the Breadcrumbs of Your Past to Discover Your Purpose Today*. So, if you don't have a copy, get yourself a copy of this thing wherever you get books. Jami, thanks.

[00:39:42] **Jami Nato:** Thank you for having me. This was fun.

[00:39:45] **Dr. Don Payne:** Friends, we're grateful to you as well for spending time with us. And if you get the chance, please leave us a rating or a review wherever you happen to listen to podcasts. And if you have any questions or comments, you can send those to us at podcast@denverseminary.edu. You can also visit our website, denverseminary.edu, for more information, resources about Denver Seminary, advanced degree programs, and all the other episodes of Engage360, including full transcripts, if you would like those. We're grateful for your interest, for your support, for your prayers, and we hope you'll check back with us again very soon. So, until then, may the Lord bless you and keep you. Take care.