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FamilyFiction

CHRISTIAN **ROMANCE** SPECIAL

35

Essential Christian
Romance Authors:
FamilyFiction readers
tell us their picks

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Featured Authors



CAROLYN MILLER

From her home in New South Wales, Australia, Carolyn compares her two Regency-era series, shares which historical detail she fudged for ***Winning Miss Winthrop***, and reveals how she uses her characters to wrestle with her own faith.



LISA T. BERGREN

Lisa shares the inspiration for the unique historical setting of her ***Sugar Baron's Daughters*** series, the essential qualities of a heroine and leading man, and how God gives us the strength to keep going even in hard times.



MOLLY JEBBER

Molly shares the historical research behind her latest Amish Charm Bakery novel, ***Liza's Second Chance***, how she approaches writing about the Amish, and what readers can expect from the series.

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Featured Authors



JOCELYN GREEN

Jocelyn talks to us about ***A Refuge Assured***, why she chose to write about people traumatized by different revolutions, her favorite part of writing historical novels, and what she hopes readers get out of the book.



DANA MENTINK

Dana shares the inspiration for ***Treacherous Trails***, the challenges of writing romances as a Christian author, and her goals writing the novel.



APRIL SMITH

April shares the benefits of writing romances as a Christian author, her real-life inspiration for ***Loving Grace***, and the challenges of writing for YA readers.

Romance Features

35 ESSENTIAL CHRISTIAN ROMANCE AUTHORS

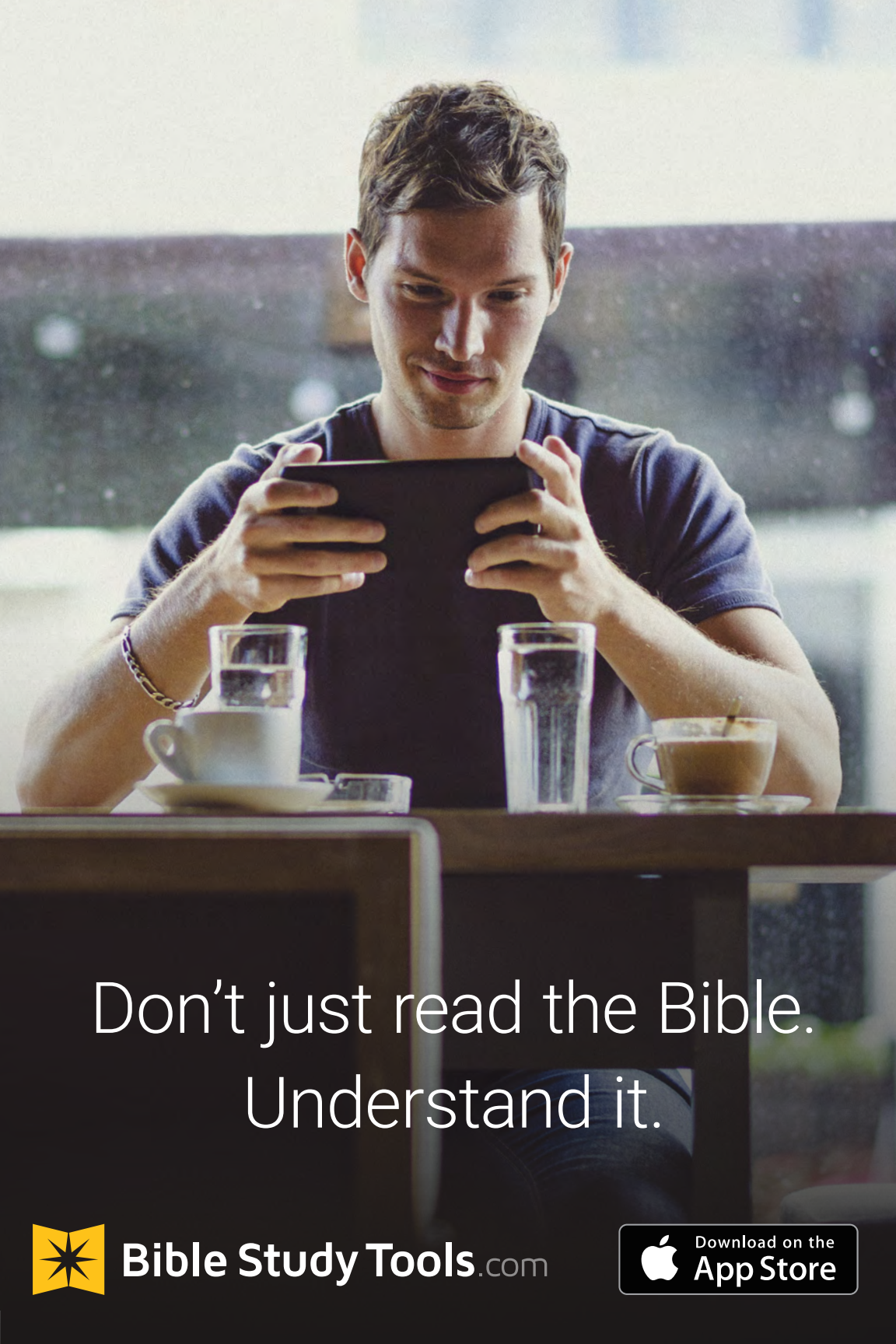
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HISTORIAL ROMANCE: Carolyn Miller

Working Out Her Faith Through Fiction

Carolyn Miller launches a new Regency era series with a story about second chances.

*Historical romance novelist Carolyn Miller made waves with her first Regency series, **Regency Brides: A Legacy of Grace**. She kicks off a brand-new series with **Winning Miss Winthrop** (Kregel Publications), set in the sumptuous salons of Bath, Regency England's royal breeding ground for gossip.*

Fans of the wholesome and richly drawn first series won't want to miss this new set of characters. From her home in New South Wales, Australia, Carolyn compares her two Regency-era series, shares which historical detail she fudged for her new novel, and reveals how she uses her characters to wrestle with her own faith.

Carolyn, you recently wrapped up one Regency romance trilogy (*Regency Brides: A Legacy of Grace*) and are now starting a brand-new Regency romance trilogy (*Regency Brides: The Promise of Hope*). What are the similarities/differences between the previous set and the new novels?

The first series focused around those connected with Lavinia Ellison (*The Elusive Miss Ellison*), such as her cousin (the title character of *The Captivating Lady Charlotte*) and her rival (*The Dishonorable Miss DeLancey*), with each story showing an aspect of understanding grace.

This new series concentrates more on Lavinia's friend, Catherine Winthrop, around whom the first novel (*Winning Miss Winthrop*) is based, with her sister and sister-in-law the focus of the subsequent stories, all of which explore elements of hope.

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While most of the characters are different, in the second series there will be some revisiting of some characters from the first book, which is always fun to see how their lives work out.

Readers can also continue to expect to see interesting locations (like Bath & Derbyshire) and Regency-era language, as well as a strong spiritual thread as various characters learn about faith and its practical outworking in their lives. And there will also be more of the wit and romance readers have enjoyed in previous stories!

What can readers expect from *Winning Miss Winthrop*?

Winning Miss Winthrop is a story about misunderstandings and second chances, with settings that vary from rural Gloucestershire to Bath and London. It's a little like Jane Austen's *Persuasion* (my fave book), with its portrayal of class differences and tender, slow-burn romance, while it also shows the effects of the reversal of family fortunes—and an Assembly Rooms Masquerade.

What can you tell us about your protagonists?

Catherine Winthrop is almost at her last prayers, rejected years ago by the man who stole her heart. The elder daughter of a baron whose unscrupulous dealings have sent the family into turmoil, she struggles with social expectations and helping her family through their pain whilst dealing with the torment of lost love.

Jonathan Carlew might be handsome and wealthy, but the mystery surrounding his birth has shadowed him throughout his life. His business dealings mark him as something of a “Cit” [contemptuous term for a member of the merchant class].

But his kindhearted upright nature and wry humor mark him as rather more honorable—something he needs to remember when faced with the gossip and speculation of Bath society.

Which character surprised you writing this novel?

I enjoyed getting to know Jon's friend Lord Carmichael more. The viscount's blend of witty charm and smooth sophistication hides a keenly observant eye and insightful nature, which was great fun to write about. Especially in the exchanges he has with his friends—so much so he needed his own novel (*Miss Serena's Secret*, which releases mid-2018).

What is it about the Regency era that keeps you coming back?

The Regency era (1811-1820, when the Prince Regent ruled England in place of his father, King George III, who was considered mad) is a fascinating period of time. The social order was strictly maintained, sometimes resulting in a polite façade of behavior that hid true feelings.

I like the tension this causes, that people had to “keep face” and guard their hearts and words in a way that seems very opposite to today, when it seems almost anything can be said publicly without shame.

This was also a time just before industrialisation which changed the fabric of English society,—a time of inventions, exploration, and war, all of which play a role in the stories I write.

Plus, it's a time when men were gentlemen, and women were ladies. (At least it is in the stories I write!) So, there is a lovely, almost fairy-tale element about this era.

After all, Jane Austen first introduced the wonderful Mr. Darcy in the Regency era—need I say more?

Does living in Australia give you a different perspective on the Regency period than if you lived somewhere else?

I don't know if it has, although being part of the British Commonwealth means Australia shares a number of similarities with England, such as certain aspects of language (spelling and certain phrases), dry humor, and an appreciation for how widespread the British influence was in the world. I do try and incorporate an Australian reference in each of my novels!

What kind of research do you do for these novels?

Different novels require different forms of research. For *Winning Miss Winthrop* I was fortunate enough to travel to the United Kingdom and visit Bath and walk around the streets mentioned in the novel—even taste the waters at the Pump Room!

Of course, Bath today is very different from 200 years ago, so further research was needed for historical accuracy. This involved poring over research books and reading online publications, such as letters and diary entries written by contemporaries of the time. This led to my changing descriptions of Bath Abbey to reflect what was actually there in 1816 (alas, the gorgeous stained glass windows you can see today had to go).

What were your goals writing *Winning Miss Winthrop*?

I love books by Jane Austen and Georgette Heyer which were set in the Regency period. I always aim to write something along those lines, but which contains an element of faith, in addition to the witty wordplay and historical detail associated with Regency England.

In *Winning Miss Winthrop*, I wanted to explore the challenges of some of these social differences, such as romance across class lines. There were not too many cases where an Elizabeth Bennet could marry a Mr. Darcy!

I also wanted to write this using the perspective of a more meek heroine. Someone who wasn't pushy, who was trying to honor God in how she treated others, but still struggled along the way. (Catherine's inner snark means she's definitely no Mary Sue-type character!)

I also wanted to examine the effect of gossip, and how this often-underrated vice had the potential to destroy individuals and families at a time when reputation meant everything.

Fact vs. Fiction: What liberties did you take with historical facts to make *Winning Miss Winthrop* work?

In 1816, England experienced what's known as "the Year Without a Summer," when the 1815 eruption of Mt. Tambora in the Dutch East Indies sent millions of dust particles into the atmosphere. (This was alluded to in my third novel, *The Dishonorable Miss DeLancey*.) This affected the Northern Hemisphere climate for the next few years.

I didn't want to make Catherine and Jon spend the entire time inside due to the cold and rain. I had to adjust things to ensure a few days of sunshine for their horse-riding and other activities.

As a Christian author, how does your faith impact how you plot and write your historical romances?

In Regency England, church attendance was the norm.

People were used to a strict moral code and to hearing—and reading—sermons. This cultural context is helpful as it means I can encourage my characters to wrestle with their faith and make it personal.

This can take them from being “Christian” (i.e., a good person) to being “a Christian” (a follower of Jesus Christ). This allows for me to give my characters issues that I’ve wrestled with, things like dealing with unforgiveness, or learning patience (still working on that one!), or trusting—and even praising—God when all seems lost.

These fictional people become a vehicle for my own outworking of faith, and what God has shown me about His character and my walk with Him. It’s not to say every issue you see is a personal reflection of me. I’d be sent to Bedlam (Bethlem’s Insane Asylum) if that was the case.

But I try to write honestly about my faith and how it has changed me. I aim to give each main character a spiritual struggle in addition to all the other things they have to endure. (I’m so mean!)

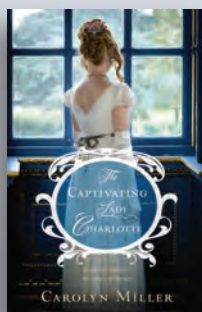
On a practical writing level, I will always pray and commit my stories to God, and ask Him for wisdom. I’m a mum to four children under 16, and my husband works away from home a fair bit of the year. Writing can be a challenge at times, but God continually proves Himself faithful, and the stories get written and those deadlines met. (Thank you, God!)

REGENCY READERS FELL IN LOVE WITH *The Elusive Miss Ellison*



“Fans of Georgette Heyer and Julie Klassen will love this romance!”

—*Library Journal*, starred review



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Amid the romance and the humor, I really want my stories to offer the hope and grace that is found in Jesus Christ. I'm so encouraged to receive emails from people who have said they've been touched by such things—and the fact that despite an unapologetic God message, non-Christians still enjoy my stories. God is good! **FF**

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Winning Miss Winthrop

Regency Brides:

The Promise of Hope

Carolyn Miller

Kregel Publications

Catherine Winthrop has cried out to God too many times to count. Years ago, the man who stole her heart rejected her—and she's never recovered. Now tragedy has brought him back into her life. This time it isn't her heart he's taking, it's her home and her family's good name—and she has no one to share her grief.

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Jonathan Carlew's life may look enviable from the outside—wealthy, handsome, landed—but the mystery surrounding his birth has shadowed his entire life. Now as he ascends to the barony, fresh challenges await, including a scheming mama who wants him to embrace power, even at the cost of losing love. How can he remain the kind, honorable man he strives to be and still meet the demands of his new society responsibilities?

These two broken hearts must decide whether their painful past and bitter present will be all they can share, or if forgiveness can provide a path to freedom for the future.

Set in the sumptuous salons of Bath, Regency England's royal breeding ground for gossip, *Winning Miss Winthrop* is the first volume in Carolyn Miller's new series. Fans of the wholesome and richly drawn first series won't want to miss this new set of characters. **FF**



HISTORICAL ROMANCE: Lisa T. Bergren

Staying (Mostly) True to History

In the latest novel from **Lisa T. Bergren**, an heiress travels to the West Indies and finds she has a lot to learn.

*In Lisa T. Bergren's latest historical novel, **Keturah** (Bethany House), a group of sisters leave their home in England for the West Indies to save what's left of their heritage. Set on keeping her family together and saving her father's plantation, can Keturah ever surrender her stubbornness and find the healing and love awaiting her?*

In this interview, Lisa shares with us what inspired her to set her new series in this historical period, the essential qualities of a heroine and a leading man, and how God gives us the strength to keep going even in hard times.

Lisa, your brand-new series is the *Sugar Baron's Daughters*. What can readers expect from this new series?

From what I can recollect of the market, a fresh setting—the West Indies/Caribbean—which provides a new locale to wrestle with an age-old problem: declining family fortunes. And then you add in my trademark—strong female heroines doing things they really ought not be doing—and you have an interesting recipe for a novel.

What is it about this time and setting—the 1770s on a sugar plantation in the West Indies—that made you want to set a series there?

I love historical periods of transition. I've written medievals that were pre-Renaissance, pre-Reformation—before what most people think of as “medieval.” I wrote the Grand Tour series of Europe set just after the Titanic sank and before

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World War I. To me, those times of transition for a region are symbolic of change for everyone who lived there.

And in the West Indies, it's a similar time. The sugar boom has apexed and fortunes across the Caribbean are in decline; the Revolutionary War is brewing to their north; Britain is having a hard time keeping control across the Empire.

And the British-held islands in the West Indies—like Nevis, where my novel is set—are caught between their English foundations/protectors and the North American colonies who feed/supply them.

What can you tell us about Lady Keturah Banning Tomlinson?

She's dealing with the loss of her father, and now she's traveled to this strange place to deal with family business and fend off questionable suitors...

She's really in no mood to entertain any suitor, because her first, arranged marriage was to an awful man who looked like a prince on the outside, but was horrible inside. She's returned home to her sisters when word reaches of them of her father's death as well as the very dire circumstances of their English estate ... and the Nevisian plantation, Table Top.

She's weary of being the victim of men's actions, so she takes action of her own, electing to travel to the West Indies to save the plantation. Not that she's perfect. She figures since she's gifted at gardening, she can run a plantation. There's a steep learning curve ahead for her. Happily for her, a childhood friend, Gray Covington, is also embarking on the same journey.

What do you consider the essential qualities of a heroine?

My favorite heroines embody characteristics I want to emulate—courage, compassion, humility (sometimes it takes a while to forge), faith, inner strength, willingness to learn from mistakes, passion for life and love.

What about the essential qualities of a leading man?

That's interesting to answer that on the heels of the last... because they're many of the same characteristics. But I would also add a fierce, protective love of his woman. Because, c'mon—that gets me every time.

What kind of research did it take to capture the world of Caribbean sugar plantations in the 1700s?

I actually started thinking about sugar plantations when I was on vacation in Kauai and read a local book on the history of the plantations there. My family had traveled to Nevis eight years before, so it was a natural jump in my imagination.

So then we had to go back to Nevis for me to get more targeted research done. The things I do for my readers...

A visit to the slavery museum in Liverpool, England, was the darker part of my research. When I began, I was thinking purely crystal-clear waters, sandy beaches, swaying palms ... but as I delved into a stack of research books on the era and the region, I realized it was going to be the most challenging aspect of all. Because slavery was ugly everywhere, but it was ugliest in the West Indies.

Fact vs. Fiction: How important is historical accuracy to you? Did you have to fudge any historical details to fit the story?

I try to stay as true as I can to history, noting in the back of the book when I know that I diverged. For instance, in *Keturah*, there's a mudslide. I didn't find any reference for that on Nevis, but there was at least one horrific slide on the neighboring St. Kitts, so it's not hard to imagine the same happening there. The other place I probably fudge is how Georgian life might have been on-island.

There are good research books for life and customs in England, but it was difficult to discern how much of that transferred to the islands. Were they really wearing all those layers of clothing and powdered wigs in 90-degree heat and humidity? It appears from a few pictures at least some did, some of the time, but I imagine some did not.

Here and there I take fictional license, but I try not to on the big stuff.

What do you love the most about writing historical fiction?

Getting swept away into a fabulous setting and interesting time period automatically sets the stage for a good love story. As soon as I start thinking about it, it's like a movie score is playing over my iPod... I mean, characters practically pop onto the page as romantic heroes and heroines.

And nonfiction research often yields wonderful options for my fictional story, basically feeding me ideas for plot and action scenes.

Lisa, you've written in more than one genre. (And for more than one age group!) When it comes time to write another book, how do you decide which kind it's going to be?

Years ago, a publisher-friend said to me, "Lisa, if you had just stuck with romances, like you began with 20 years ago, you'd be a household name." Sticking with one genre helps an author build a brand, and makes her readers know what's coming next.

The problem with me is that I get bored easily and God constantly puts new challenges and ideas in my head. I have to follow where He leads me. Otherwise, the writing just doesn't flow. I just finished book two in this Sugar Baron's Daughters series and have the third to write, but I'm already thinking about the next series, and what's capturing my imagination is another time-slip series (like River of Time) or epic universe-slip sort of trilogy...

New and challenging is what sparks my creativity, not same ol', same ol'. And yet now I've been at this long enough that I'm starting to do more in genres I've already written before, but it still feels fresh to me because I've taken a break! So maybe I'll become a household name when I'm 80.

What do you hope readers will take away after reading *Keturah*?

Bad things happen. We suffer. We mourn. We struggle. But we get up and try again, because God gives us the strength to do so ... and if we let Him, He heals us and leads us to new blessings, making us a part of the best continuing love story ever. **FF**

Visit Lisa T. Bergren's author page here:

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Keturah

The Sugar Baron's Daughters #1

Lisa T. Bergren

Bethany House

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In 1772 England, Lady Keturah Banning Tomlinson and her sisters find themselves the heiresses of their father's estates and know they have one option: Go to the West Indies to save what is left of their heritage.

Although it flies against all the conventions for women of the time, they're determined to make their own way in the world. But once they arrive in the Caribbean, proper gender roles are the least of their concerns. On the infamous island of Nevis, the sisters discover the legacy of the legendary sugar barons has vastly declined—and that's just the start of what their eyes are opened to in this unfamiliar world.

Keturah never intends to put herself at the mercy of a man again, but every man on the island seems to be trying to win her hand and, with it, the ownership of her plantation. She could desperately use an ally, but even an unexpected reunion with a childhood friend leaves her questioning his motives.

Set on keeping her family together and saving her father's plantation, can Keturah ever surrender her stubbornness and guarded heart to God and find the healing and love awaiting her? **FF**

A Stunning New Historical Romance

*With an exotic setting, vivid characterization,
and a sisterly connection!*

In 1772 England, Lady Keturah Banning Tomlinson and her sisters inherit their father's estates. Defying society's expectations, they decide to travel to the West Indies to see what is left of their legacy. On the infamous island of Nevis, every man seems to be trying to win Keturah's hand, and with it the ownership of her plantation. Set on saving their family's heritage, can she trust God with her future—and her heart?

Keturah by Lisa T. Bergren
THE SUGAR BARON'S DAUGHTERS #1



“Bergren puts a fresh spin on popular colonial fiction in this series launch . . . Keturah is a strong female protagonist who will appeal to inspirational fiction fans who appreciate stories about women who forge their own path in life.”

—*Library Journal*



“The setting is lush, the political and cultural climate is as heated as the weather and the characters are authentic and believable.”—*RT Book Reviews*

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AMISH ROMANCE: Molly Jebber

Just Desserts

Visit the Amish Charm Bakery—
where romance is on the menu

Amish romance author Molly Jebber is a member of the Romance Writers of America's Honor Roll, and her award-winning books have been featured on Publishers Weekly's Best Ten Recommended Reads, in USA Today's Happy Ever After, and RT Book Reviews.

*Her latest Amish romance is **Liza's Second Chance** (Zebra Books), the first book in her new Amish Charm Bakery series. In 1912 Ohio, the Amish Charm Bakery is the heart of a close-knit, faith-nourished community, where people can find a refuge, a place to start again—and love that can make their lives new.*

In this exclusive interview, Molly shares the historical research behind the novel, how she approaches writing about the Amish, and what readers can expect from the Amish Charm Bakery series.

Molly, there's a lot of stuff going on here in *Liza's Second Chance*—it's an Amish historical romance set in a bakery. What inspired the story in *Liza's Second Chance*?

I love desserts, and I'm always checking the dessert menu before I read meal options in a restaurant. The Amish are fantastic bakers, and it was fun to write about the cookies, pies, tarts, aroma, and goodies. The bakery is a perfect place to bring in customers with all types of personalities to make the story interesting.

What can you tell us about Liza?

She's wise beyond her years. She puts others she loves before herself. Life has been hard for her in having to deal with diffi-

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cult decisions. She's determined to remain a widow, until Jacob enters her life. He's not without problems. She wants to help him, but she's afraid of getting too close.

What do you consider the essential qualities of a heroine?

I like to have my heroines show their frustration, opinions, and flaws. I like for my heroine to stand on her own at times and show compassion for another character who is being shunned or who has made bad decisions in his or her life exposing the heroine to criticism by others. My heroines have a strong faith in God, and because of this, they want to show compassion for others as God has shown compassion to them.

My strong heroine must be vulnerable at times to allow her hero to see she can let her guard down. To show him she trusts him in the end with her secrets and insecurities.

What were your goals writing *Liza's Second Chance*?

To show the human side of a faithful believer in God. Liza faces hard decisions in difficult times in her life. To show the compassion she has for others, and the lengths she'll go to protect those she loves. Women who have taken in children either through adoption or family members, or who work with children will relate to this book. And for all readers, my goal is that you will root for Liza and Jacob and find the book entertaining.

What kind of research did you do for the historical details?

The internet has a number of sites giving wonderful historical details. I've had the pleasure of interviewing senior adults who remember historical events as children or stories from their grandparents I've found very helpful.

Did setting the novel at a bakery require any kind of research or practice to get those details correct?

No. I visited Charm, Ohio, where I thought it would be fun to plant a fictional bakery. I love sweets, so that made it easy to write about the goodies offered at the bakery.

Given the simple Amish lifestyle, are there many differences between how the Amish were in 1912—and how they were treated by the culture around them—than how things are today?

In 1912, they suffered more prejudice from others due to not enlisting in the service and setting themselves apart from everyone else. They still experience prejudice for these same reasons, but not as much as in 1912.

What can readers expect from the Amish Charm Bakery series?

They will find historical facts for the time period woven into the story, a sweet child and pets, a very troublesome teenager, and a man she finds attractive descending on Liza's life. The bakery has all different types of cranky, rude, kind, and pleasant customers, delightful goodies, and turmoil to keep readers entertained.

How do you approach writing about the Plain people in a way that's accurate to their way of life?

I've researched their lifestyle by visiting their towns multiple times. I've interviewed a number of Amish women, and my husband has talked with Amish men. I've bought books written by the Amish, and visited museums and gone on tours giving an overview of the Amish's history.

What do you hope readers will take away after reading *Liza's Second Chance*?

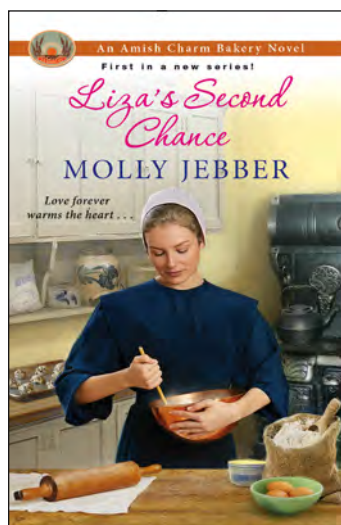
I hope they are entertained and consider their time well spent reading *Liza's Second Chance*, and they'll look forward to

Molly Jebber

reading the second book in the bakery series,
Ellie's Redemption, releasing in January 2019. **FF**

Visit Molly Jebber's author page here:

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Liza's Second Chance

The Amish Charm Bakery

Molly Jebber

Zebra Books

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The sweet welcome of straight-from-the-oven sugar cookies and hot cocoa. In 1912 Ohio, the Amish Charm Bakery is the heart of a close-knit, faith-nourished community, where people can find a refuge, a place to start again—and love that can make their lives new.

For Liza Schrock, the bakery her late husband bought was an unexpected haven from their unhappy arranged marriage. Now she's perfectly content to cook up mouth-watering delights for her hometown, give to those alone or in trouble—and remain happily unwed. And though she's willing to give handsome, newly-arrived widower Jacob Graber all the help he desperately needs, she is sure they can stay just friends...

But as Liza also tries to aid Jacob's troubled teenage daughter, she starts caring far too much for his gentle ways and steadfast hopes. And when a wrenching secret she must keep comes between them, can Liza find the faith to risk opening her heart again—and reach for one more chance at real love? **FF**

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The Amish Charm Bakery Series

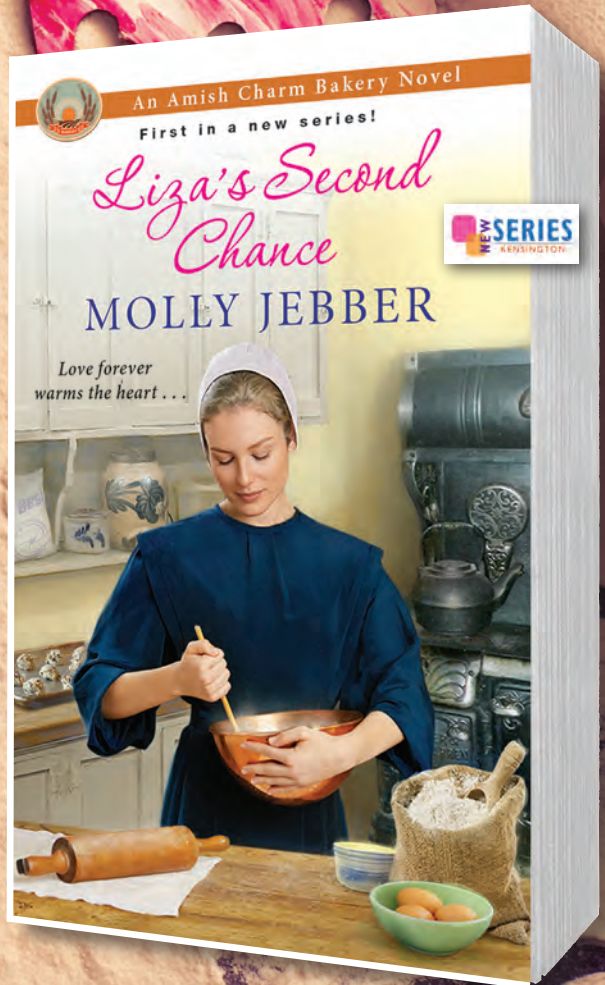
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Second
Chances*
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Valentine's Day...

Indulge your senses at the Amish Charm Bakery, the heart of a close-knit, faith-nourished community where people can find refuge, love, and a place to start again.



**"A tender romance
about getting
a second chance
at love."**

—RT Book Reviews, 4 Stars



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HISTORICAL ROMANCE: Jocelyn Green

*In **Jocelyn Green's** latest novel, **A Refuge Assured** (Bethany House), America's first years explode off the page—including founding father Alexander Hamilton. A lacemaker flees revolutionary France to America, while a veteran of the American Revolution is drawn into the escalating tension of the Whiskey Rebellion. The two are drawn together to fight for the peace and safety for which they long.*

In this interview, Jocelyn Green shares why she chose to write about people traumatized by different revolutions, her favorite part of writing historical romances, and what she hopes readers get out of the novel.

Jocelyn, your novel *A Refuge Assured* brings together Vivienne Rivard, a refugee from the French Revolution, and Liam Delaney, a disillusioned militiaman who fought in the American Revolution. What is it about these characters that made you want to tell their story?

I find both of their plights fascinating—Vivienne fleeing one revolution, and Liam struggling to find his place in the wake of another. They represent lesser-known perspectives and experiences from two highly celebrated revolutions. The ability to put these two characters together offered a great opportunity to explore not just the tension between a hero and heroine, but between liberty and order, as well.

What kind of research did you conduct to write about this historical period?

I devoured every book and digital resource I could find first, plus documentaries on the French Revolution, Marie Antoinette specifically, and the Whiskey Rebellion. I did not go see *Hamilton* on Broadway, but I did read Ron Chernow's

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amazing book about Alexander Hamilton since the Treasury Secretary plays a significant role in my novel.

I also took my family on a spring break/research trip out to Pennsylvania. My favorite research spot in Philadelphia was City Tavern, an 18-century-style restaurant that was a frequent haunt of our founding fathers. I created a fictional tavern in Philadelphia for my characters, so eating at City Tavern and getting a tour into every corner was a special treat.

From Philadelphia, we drove to the site of French Azilum, or Asylum. As always, on-site research is the most fun!

By bringing together these representatives from different revolutions, did you find yourself comparing the French Revolution and American Revolution—or are these just historical backgrounds for your characters?

Not only did I find myself comparing the two revolutions (just as contemporaries did), but I also detected echoes from our own political conversations today. These are really timeless ideologies, the struggle between personal freedoms and order, whether the end justifies the means, and how best to go about social and political change.

What is your favorite thing about writing historical romances?

Other than the research trips, right? There are many aspects I love about it.

One of them is finding two historical figures to bring to life and explore through the vehicle of story—such as a revolution-era lacemaker and a disillusioned militiaman. Showing these characters' hopes, fears, dreams, loves, and struggles is a really captivating way to shed light on the humanity in our history.

What do you hope readers will take away after reading *A Refuge Assured*?

The primary theme is that of finding refuge in the Lord, when no physical place of safety seems to exist. But a secondary theme popped up through a character I didn't plan on creating: Armand, the father from whom Vivienne had been estranged her entire life. The two flee France together, and through their relationship, a picture of reconciliation emerges.

At one point Armand says to Vivienne, "One is never too old for a father's love." None of us are ever too old—or "too far gone"—for our heavenly Father's love, either. And that is the greatest reconciliation story of all time. That's the real romance I hope readers carry away in their hearts once they turn the last page. **FF**

Visit Jocelyn Green's author page here:

<https://www.familyfiction.com/authors/jocelyn-green>



A Refuge Assured

Jocelyn Green

Bethany House

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ROMANTIC SUSPENSE: Dana Mentink

*In **Dana Mentink's** second Gold Country Cowboys story, **Treacherous Trails** (Love Inspired Suspense), farrier Ella Cahill is accused of murder—and only former marine Owen Thorn, her brother's best friend, can help clear her name. Can they work together to find the true killer before she becomes the next to die?*

In this interview, Dana shares the inspiration for the story, the challenges of writing romances as a Christian author, and her goals writing the novel.

What inspired the story in *Treacherous Trails*?

A trip to the California gold country left me with a hankering to write a story set in a region that prompted the biggest treasure hunt in the nation's history. As one of four siblings, I've got a heart to write family saga type stories. This particular installment was also inspired by the true life, unsolved murder of candy heiress Helen Brach.

Dana, what were your goals writing this novel?

I wanted to write a novel that would leave readers guessing until the end, an adventure with plenty of twists and turns and a deeply satisfying love story. That, and I can't resist a good cowboy hero!

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What do you want readers to take away after reading *Treacherous Trails*?

I hope they will come away with a reminder that they are loved by God, no matter what the circumstances of their lives. I also aim to have them end with the feeling that they've been taken on a thrilling adventure—all from the comfort of their cozy armchairs!

What are the challenges (or benefits) of writing “romances” as a Christian author?

It's especially challenging to write Christian romance in today's market as many of the top sellers are sexually explicit. It's satisfying to provide an alternative, a realistic love story about two people struggling with big issues, without including explicit material. Every great story has an element of love at the core, and it's an honor to be able to write romance that inspires as well as entertains.

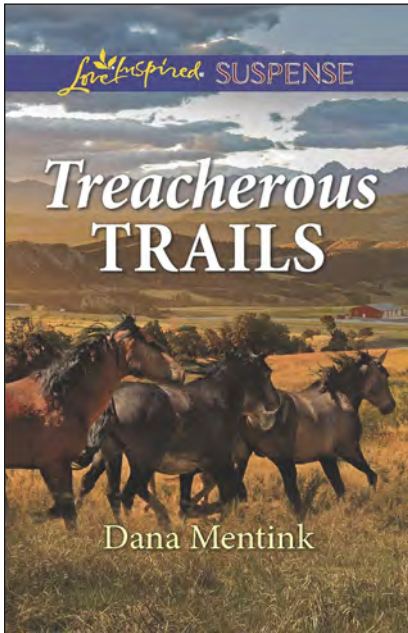
Dana Mentink

Your novel has elements of faith, romance, and suspense. Which of those elements was hardest for you to write? Which was the easiest?

Suspense is the easiest for me, by and large. Balancing the romance thread and the faith arc are more challenging. Some days require extra doses of coffee and chocolate! **FF**

Visit Dana Mentink's author page here:

<https://www.familyfiction.com/authors/dana-mentink>



Treacherous Trails

Gold Country Cowboys
Love Inspired Suspense



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YA ROMANCE: April Smith

*In **April Smith's** novel **Loving Grace** (Ambassador International), newly crowned watermelon queen Grace Summer is torn between the boy of her dreams and the boy almost next door. In this interview, April shares the inspiration for the novel, the benefits of writing romances as a Christian author, and the challenges of writing for YA readers.*

What inspired the story in *Loving Grace*?

I spent summers working on my best friend's family's watermelon farm, and had the opportunity to work for the watermelon industry as one of their watermelon queens. It was a year full of great fun and memories. When the time came to pick a setting, I knew I wanted Grace's story to take place in the watermelon world.

What were your goals writing this novel?

As far as goals for this novel go, I desired to create a main character that readers could identify with, all while giggling at the situations she manages to unwittingly land herself in. I also hoped Grace's story would remind us that God has a plan and purpose for why we're all here in this great big, beautiful world.

April, what do you want readers to take away after reading *Loving Grace*?

The main takeaway is that true happiness comes from resting in the grace of God. Things of this world may make us happy for a time, but they tarnish when compared to what God has to offer. There are other smaller lessons woven throughout the story, but ultimately, I want readers to remember to love themselves and rest in God's loving grace.

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What are the challenges (or benefits) of writing romances as a Christian author?

I find the benefits of writing Christian fiction far outweigh the challenges. Before I start writing I try to ask myself what do I want my characters to learn? And what problems are they going to face on their journey? I then try to find verses from the Bible that would be applicable to my characters along the way. I can then later use them in my writing, and it is always fun to see what Bible verses pop into my mind why I'm in the brainstorming portion of the process.

What are the challenges of writing for that age group?

I want to make sure I keep my characters as authentic and relatable as possible. Also, trying to softly weave in the message I'm trying to share without taking away from the story line can be challenging. But I've found the challenge is worth it and very rewarding in the end. **FF**

April Smith

Visit April Smith's author page here:

<https://www.familyfiction.com/authors/april-smith>



Loving Grace

April Smith

Ambassador International



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2018 CHRISTIAN ROMANCE POLL



35 ESSENTIAL CHRISTIAN ROMANCE AUTHORS AS CHOSEN BY FAMILYFICTION READERS

We asked our readers to name their five favorite Christian romance authors—and these are who they told us. The results are taken from the combined number of votes for each author.



1 - Beverly Lewis

Born in the heart of Pennsylvania Dutch country, Beverly Lewis has more than 17 million books in print. Her stories have been published in 12 languages, regularly appear on bestseller lists, and have even been adapted into movies.

"I'm ever grateful for how God has blessed me with the opportunity to share His love through my books. Only He could have orchestrated all I've experienced as a writer."

("Beverly Lewis on two decades of writing Amish fiction")

Read the article here: <https://www.familyfiction.com/beverly-lewis-two-decades-writing-amish-fiction>.

Visit Beverly Lewis' author page here:

<https://www.familyfiction.com/authors/beverly-lewis>

Latest Release:



The Road Home

Beverly Lewis

Bethany House

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2 - Julie Lessman

Julie Lessman has won all kinds of awards for her romance fiction, which she describes as “passion with a purpose.” She’s received accolades from the American Christian Fiction Writers and the HOLT Medallion Awards, Romance Writers of America, and she even topped the *FamilyFiction* Readers

Choice Awards more than once.

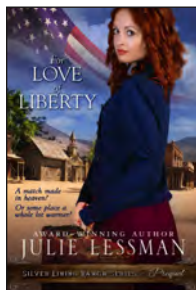
“I love romance, make no mistake, but I’m sorry—to me, romance is just not romantic unless God is in the middle! If the world can take something that God created and use it to sell its amoral agenda, then I ask you—why can’t Christians utilize this God-given passion to promote Him and His precepts?” (“Julie Lessman: Faith Revealed”)

Read the article here: <https://www.familyfiction.com/julie-lessman-faith-revealed>

Visit Julie Lessman’s author page here:

<https://www.familyfiction.com/authors/julie-lessman>

Latest Release:



For Love of Liberty

Silver Lining Ranch Prequel

Julie Lessman

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3 - Wanda E. Brunstetter

One of the top authors in Amish fiction, Wanda E. Brunstetter has written close to 90 books translated in four languages. With over 10 million copies sold, Wanda's stories consistently earn spots on bestseller lists and have received numerous awards. Her novels so accurately portray the Amish life that even Amish readers credit her for giving readers a deeper understanding of the people and their customs.

"It's a blessing when one of my readers tells me that something they read in one of my novels has inspired them to do something or helped them cope during a difficult time. When I meet readers at a book signing, speaking engagement, or via social media, I feel a connection, and friendships develop." ("Wanda E. Brunstetter: Six Unlikely Souls Connect Through an Amish Cooking Class") **Read the article here:**
<https://www.familyfiction.com/wanda-brunstetter-blessing>

Visit Wanda E. Brunstetter's author page here:

<https://www.familyfiction.com/authors/wanda-brunstetter>


Latest Release:



The Celebration

Amish Cooking Class #3

Shiloh Run Press

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4 - Karen Kingsbury

With more than 25 million copies of her award-winning books in print, Karen Kingsbury's novels have topped bestseller lists, and several have been adapted into movies. Her Baxter Family series is being developed for television.

Karen is also an adjunct professor of writing at Liberty University.

"We need the deeper walk and the deeper places. Stories that are life-changing cannot be condensed to a tweet or a Facebook post. We need more than that, and I feel like readers would agree." ("Karen Kingsbury: Pages of Life")

Read the article here: <https://www.familyfiction.com/karen-kingsbury-pages-of-life>

Visit Karen Kingsbury's author page here:

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Latest Release:



To the Moon and Back

Baxter Family #4

Howard Books

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5 - Tracie Peterson

Tracie Peterson is an award-winning, bestselling author of more than 100 books. Tracie was awarded the Romantic Times Career Achievement Award for 2007 Inspirational Fiction and the 2011 Lifetime Achievement Award from American Christian Fiction Writers.

“God is always in the mix, and sometimes things don’t look like we think they should. We need to learn to trust Him with each circumstance and seek to learn what it is He’s trying to teach us.” (“Historical author Q&A: Tracie Peterson *Cherished Mercy*”)

Read the article here: <https://www.familyfiction.com/historical-author-qa-tracie-peterson-cherished-mercy>

Visit Tracie Peterson’s author page here:

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Latest Release:



In Places Hidden

Golden Gate Secrets #1

Bethany House

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6 - Becky Wade

Becky Wade is a native of California who attended Baylor University, met and married a Texan, and now lives in Dallas. A favorite among readers of Christian contemporary romance, Becky has won a Christy Award, a Carol Award, an Inspirational Reader's Choice Award, and an INSPY Award.

"Because I write heartwarming and humorous romances, I always hope that readers will close the final page of my books with a happy sigh and a smile." ("Q&A: Becky Wade *True to You*") **Read the article here:** <https://www.familyfiction.com/qa-becky-wade-true>

Visit Becky Wade's author page here:

<https://www.familyfiction.com/authors/becky-wade>

Latest Release:



Falling for You

Bradford Sisters #2
Bethany House



7 - Karen Witemeyer

Winner of the HOLT Medallion and the Carol Award, and a finalist for the RITA and Christy Awards, bestselling author Karen Witemeyer writes historical romance to give the world more happily-ever-afters. Karen makes her home in Texas with her husband and three children.

"I admit it—I'm a sap. I love rugged heroes, charming heroes, dark heroes, wounded heroes, take-charge heroes. Oh—ahem—and the heroines, too." ("Karen Witemeyer: Characters Welcome") **Read the article here:** <https://www.familyfiction.com/karen-witemeyer-characters-welcome>

Visit Karen Witemeyer's author page here:

<https://www.familyfiction.com/authors/karen-witemeyer>

Latest Release:



More Than Meets the Eye

Bethany House



8 - Susan May Warren

Susan May Warren is the ECPA and CBA bestselling author of over 50 novels with more than one million books sold. Winner of a RITA Award and multiple Christy Awards and Carol Awards, as well as the HOLT and numerous Reader's Choice Awards, Susan has written contemporary and historical

romances, romantic suspense, thrillers, romantic comedy, and novellas.

"I believe I am called to be authentic and honest in my storytelling. As a Christian woman, I am not interested in cardboard characters with unrealistic struggles who receive pat answers. I just try and write stories about people learning to walk in faith, every day trusting God just a little bit more." ("Romance Q&A: Susan May Warren *Rescue Me*") **Read the article here:**

<https://www.familyfiction.com/romance-qa-susan-may-warren-rescue>

Visit Susan May Warren's author page here:

<https://www.familyfiction.com/authors/susan-may-warren>

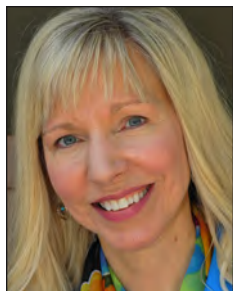
Latest Release :



Storm Front

Montana Rescue #5

Revell



9 - Julie Klassen

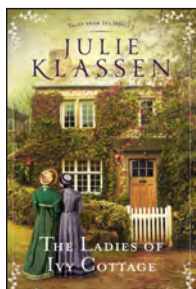
Julie Klassen loves all things Jane—Jane Eyre and Jane Austen. She has won numerous awards, including Christy Awards, the Midwest Book Award Christian Retailing's BEST Award. She has also been a finalist in the Romance Writers of America's RITA Awards and ACFW's Carol Awards.

"I often receive emails from readers asking for sequels, or saying they don't want a book to end. Sometimes I don't either! After setting up an entire village and populating it with a cast of characters, it's hard to say good-bye after one book."
("Julie Klassen: Welcome to Ivy Hill") **Read the article here:**
<https://www.familyfiction.com/julie-klassen-welcome-ivy-hill>

Visit Julie Klassen's author page here:

<https://www.familyfiction.com/authors/julie-klassen>

Latest Release :



The Ladies of Ivy Cottage

Tales from Ivy Hill

Bethany House

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10 - Laura Frantz

Laura Frantz is a Christy Award finalist and the ECPA bestselling author of several books, including *The Frontiersman's Daughter*, *Court-ing Morrow Little*, *The Colonel's Lady*, *The Mistress of Tall Acre*, *A Moonbow Night*, and *The Ballantyne Legacy* series. She lives and writes in a log cabin in the heart of Kentucky.

"History is truly God's story. During that tumultuous period when America fought for its independence, He was at work creating one of the greatest, God-honoring nations in the world through the flawed yet selfless heroism of our founding fathers, the American people, and courageous women like our heroine who supported the cause for liberty." ("Romance Q&A: Laura Frantz *The Lacemaker*") **Read the article here:**
<https://www.familyfiction.com/romance-qa-laura-frantz>

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The Lacemaker
Revell

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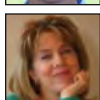
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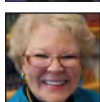
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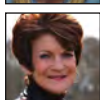
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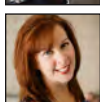
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35 - Rachel Hauck

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Favorite Type of Romance Story

We know that lots of *FamilyFiction* readers love a good tale of romance—but what kind of tale? We asked, and this is how our readers answered...

- 32% - Historical
- 23% - "I like them all"
- 20% - Amish
- 13% - Romantic Suspense
- 12% - Contemporary

Most Underrated Author

We asked *FamilyFiction* readers to name the romance authors they thought didn't get enough attention. They named the following authors...

Ann H. Gabhart
Pepper D. Basham
Sarah E. Kincaid
Carolyn Miller
Ruth Logan Herne

Best New Author

Since every author is new to somebody, we asked our readers to name their favorite authors they read for the first time last year...

Sarah E. Kincaid
Becky Wade
Bethany Turner
Carolyn Miller
Fayla Lindsey Ott

10 Christian Romance Movies

In the mood for love? Pop some corn, turn down the lights, and enjoy these 10 Christian love stories...



Amazing Love: The Story of Hosea (2012)

A youth pastor and his wife take five teens on a weekend camping trip. When a conflict between two of them creates tension in the camp, the youth pastor shares the story of the Old Testament prophet Hosea. Through the account of Hosea, the teens learn an example of unconditional love for marriages.

Starring: Sean Astin, Elijah Alexander



Finding Normal (2013)

In a town with no Wi-Fi, lattes, or credit cards, Dr. Lisa Leland begins to discover what a meaningful life is all about.

Starring: Candace Cameron Bure, Trevor St. John, Lou Beatty

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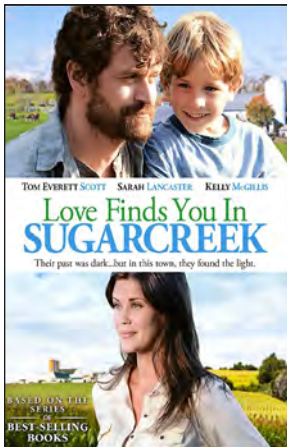
10 Christian Romance Movies



Fireproof (2008)

Fire captain Caleb Holt values dedication and service to others above all else. But the most important partnership in his life, his marriage, is about to go up in smoke. This gripping story follows one man's desire to transform his life and marriage through the healing power of faith.

Starring: Kirk Cameron, Erin Bethea, Ken Bevel



Love Finds You In Sugarcreek (2014)

Will a mysterious stranger's past wreak havoc on a quiet Amish community after they've opened their doors—and hearts—to him and his son? Based on the novel by Serena B. Miller.

Starring: Tom Everett Scott, Sarah Lancaster



The Love Letter (2015)

Parker and Aaron have always known everything about each other, which makes Aaron's sudden engagement a big surprise. Confused, Parker pens a secret letter to her own advice column, but the biggest shock of all is her realization of what she really wants.

Starring: Keshia Knight Pulliam, Marques Houston, Terrill Patterson

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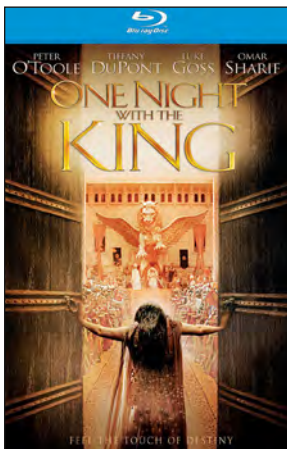
10 Christian Romance Movies



No Greater Love (2009)

Jeff and Heather Baker were lifelong sweethearts and happily married—for a time. But at her greatest moment of weakness, Heather abandons Jeff, forcing Jeff to raise their young son alone. Ten years later, through a God-ordained encounter, Jeff and Heather meet again.

Starring: Jay Underwood, Danielle Bisutti, Anthony Tyler Quinn



One Night With the King (2006)

This epic biblical drama adapts the account of Esther, who risked her life by approaching the King of Persia to request that he save the Jewish people. Based on the novel by Tommy Tenney and Mark Andrew Olsen.

Starring: Tiffany Dupont, Luke Goss, John Noble, Omar Sharif, John Rhys-Davies, Peter O'Toole

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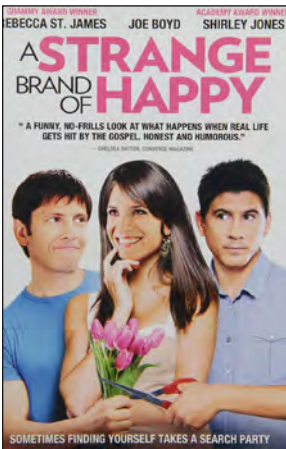
10 Christian Romance Movies



Beverly Lewis's The Reckoning (2016)

Shunned by the town where she was raised, a young Amish woman finds herself torn between her newfound modern life and the simplicity of her humble past—and the men that come with them. Based on the novel by Beverly Lewis.

Starring: Katie Leclerc, Jacob Blair, Chad Connell



A Strange Brand of Happy (2013)

After losing his job, David hires a life coach named Joyce. When she invites him to join the volunteer group she takes to a retirement home, David discovers his manipulative ex-boss is part of the group—and interested in Joyce as well.

Starring: Rebecca St. James, Shirley Jones, Joe Boyd



Karen Kingsbury's A Time to Dance (2016)

Seemingly perfect couple John and Abby are about to lose it all. But when their daughter announces her engagement, they secretly agree to put their divorce on hold until after her wedding, giving them one last chance to find their love again. Based on the novel by Karen Kingsbury.

Starring: Jennie Garth, Dan Payne, Corbin Bernsen.

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Romance New Releases 2018: Book Checklist



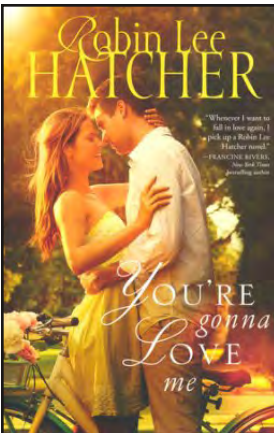
LOVING GRACE

April Smith

Ambassador International

Genre: Romance

Buy Now



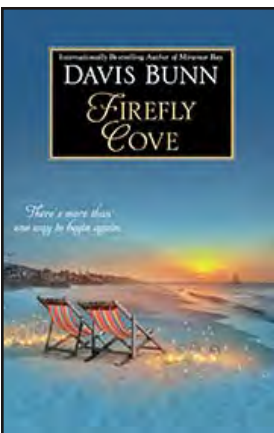
YOU'RE GONNA LOVE ME

Robin Lee Hatcher

Thomas Nelson

Genre: Romance

Buy Now



FIREFLY COVE

MIRAMAR BAY

Davis Bunn

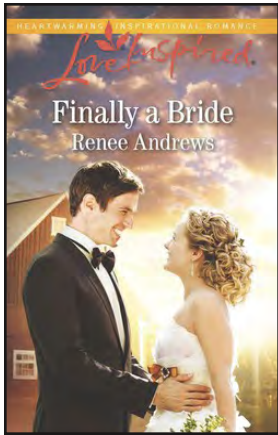
Kensington

Genre: Romance

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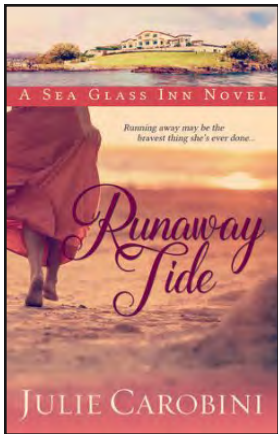


Romance New Releases 2018: Book Checklist



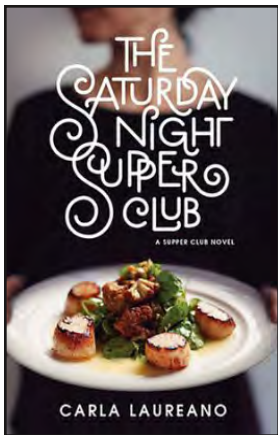
FINALLY A BRIDE
WILLOW'S HAVEN
Renee Andrews
Love Inspired
Genre: Romance

Buy Now 



RUNAWAY TIDE
SEA GLASS INN
Julie Carobini
Stonewater Books
Genre: Romance

Buy Now 



THE SATURDAY NIGHT SUPPER CLUB
Carla Laureano
Tyndale House
Genre: Romance

Buy Now 

Romance New Releases 2018: Book Checklist



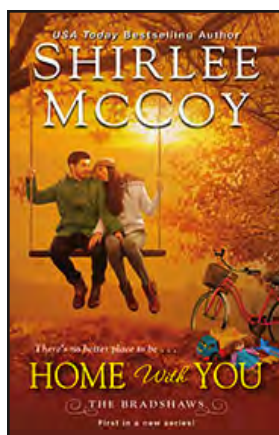
STEAL AWAY HOME

Billy Coffey

Thomas Nelson

Genre: Romance

Buy Now 



HOME WITH YOU

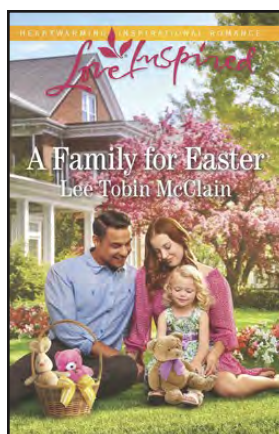
THE BRADSHAW'S

Shirlee McCoy

Zebra

Genre: Romance

Buy Now 



A FAMILY FOR EASTER

RESCUE RIVER

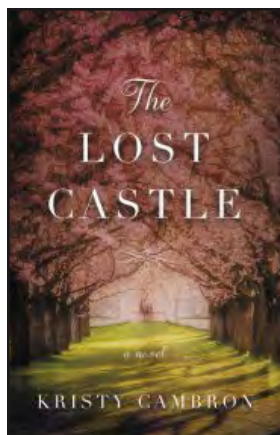
Lee Tobin McClain

Love Inspired

Genre: Romance

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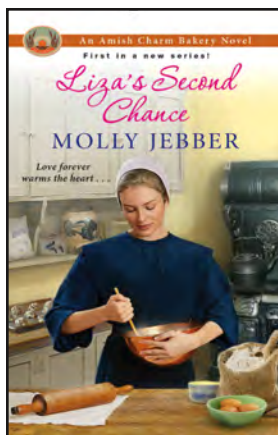
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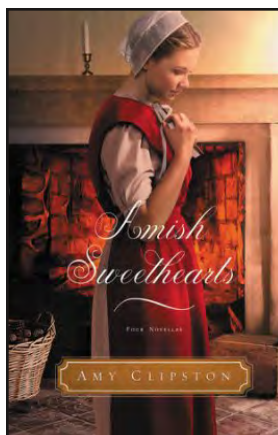
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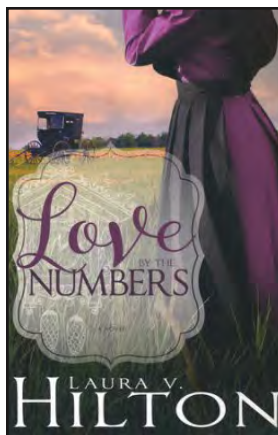
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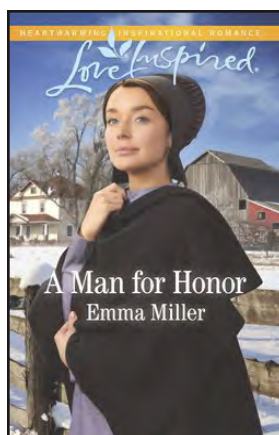
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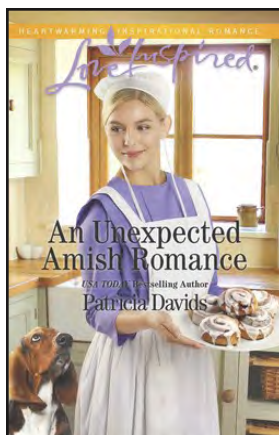
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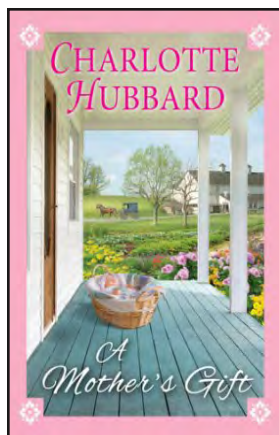
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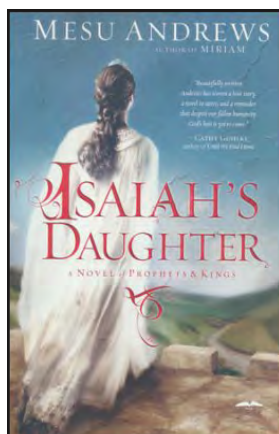
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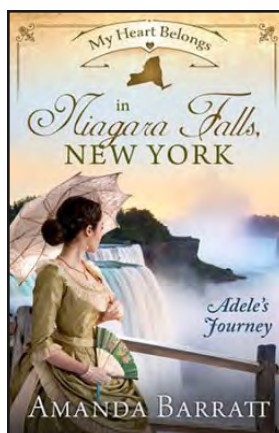
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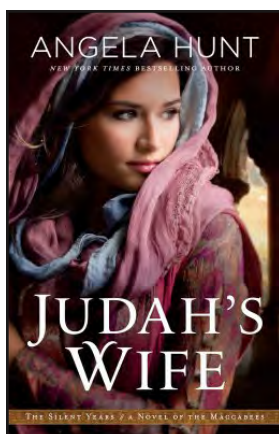
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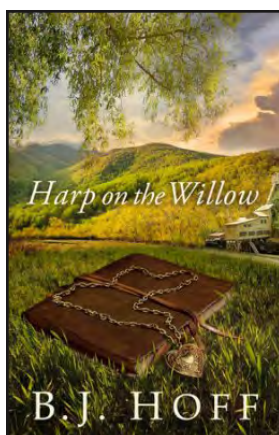
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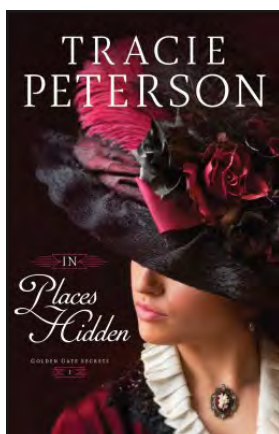
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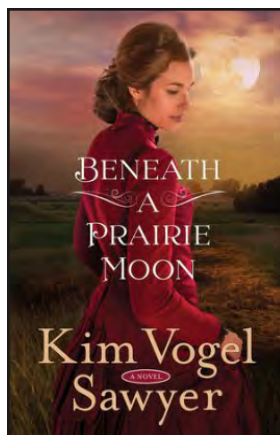
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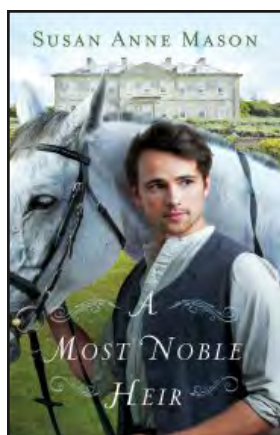
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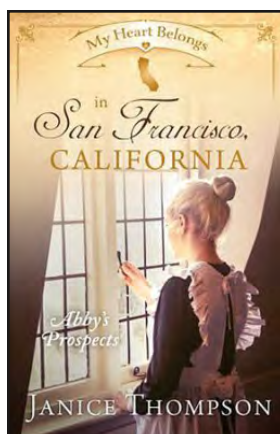
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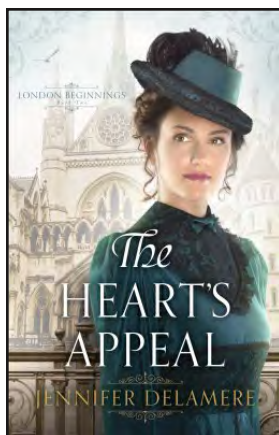
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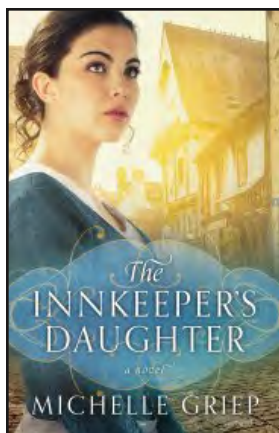
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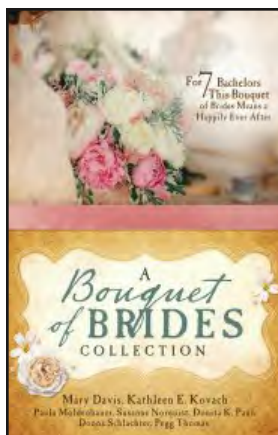
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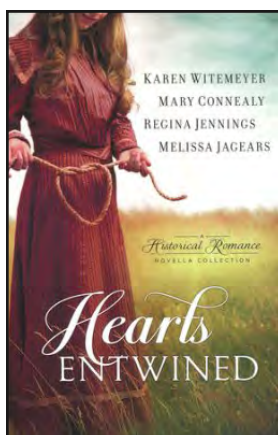
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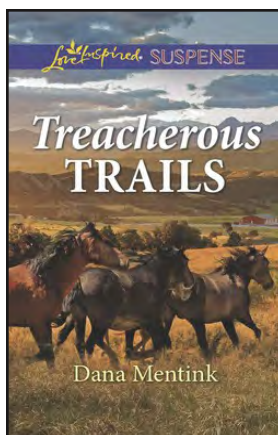
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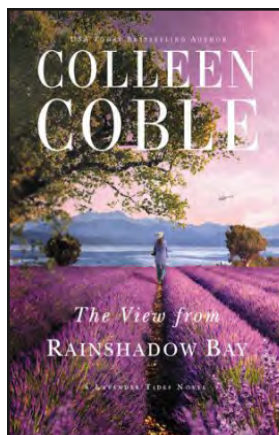
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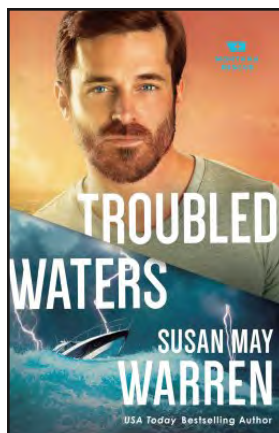
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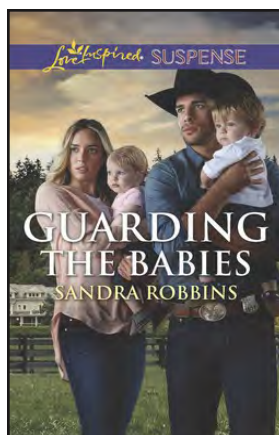
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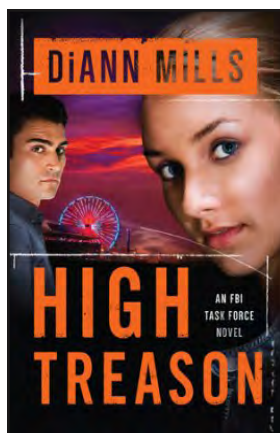
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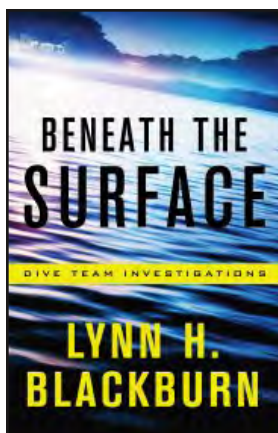
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