



READER GUIDE

Colors of Truth

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Before reading *Colors of Truth*, were you familiar with the discrimination of the Irish in nineteenth-century America? What was eye-opening for you about how Catriona and Nora were treated by certain townspeople or by the signs that, true to history, hung outside local businesses? Likewise, what did you know about the United States Secret Service and its history before reading Wade and Catriona's story?
2. Both Wade and Catriona suffered enormous losses. Sweet—and snarky—little Nora did too. The Word of God clearly states the truth that God is sovereign and that nothing touches our lives without first filtering through his loving hands. Why do you think God allows such pain and hardship to affect both believers and nonbelievers? (Read Romans 8:28; Genesis 50:20; Philippians 1:29; 2 Timothy 3:12.) Discuss the various trials faced by your favorite character in the story. How would you react if faced with a similar trial? How would you respond to Joni Eareckson Tada's statement, "God permits what he hates to achieve what he loves"?
3. The Bible teaches that the love of money is the root of all evil. Money plays a major part in this story—both the want of it and the lack. Discuss how Catriona's journey, in particular, is impacted by money. What struggles with money have you experienced? Could you relate to Catriona in this respect? If yes, how?

4. Catriona and Nora share a deep sisterly bond while also sharing a real love-hate relationship. Do you have a sister(s)? What relationships similar to this have you experienced? How did the widespread difference in the sisters' ages affect their relationship?
5. Wade and Catriona's love grows gradually throughout the story and takes several twists and turns along the way. It wasn't love at first sight. What are your favorite scenes in the novel pertaining to them as a couple? Do you prefer love stories where the characters slowly come to love each other—or "love at first sight" stories? And why?
6. Tempy, a beloved character in the Carnton novels, is based on the real woman who served as the McGavock family's cook for most of her life. Slavery is an abhorrent evil and strikes contrary to the truth that *all* people are image-bearers of the living God. African people who were bought and sold during the transatlantic slave trade were robbed not only of their dignity but of their lives and their families. Were you aware that owners of slaves often changed a slave's name to better suit their personal likes? And that a slave searching for a family member after the Civil War stood little to no chance of ever finding them? Discuss Tempy's character and the outcome of her journey in this story.
7. The theme of lying runs throughout this novel. Lying is wrong. We learn that at a very young age. Why do you think we lie to each other? To ourselves? And even to God (although, good luck with this last one)? What lies have you told yourself? Do you ever hear whispered accusations, lies, in your heart? Read 1 Peter 5:8 and 2 Corinthians 10:5 (along with other Scriptures group members may share) and discuss the temptation to lie versus the power a believer has to resist that temptation.
8. In the epilogue, we get a glimpse of the truths about God and the afterlife Catriona has learned in her journey. What are some of these truths? What do you believe about the afterlife? Read the various Scriptures Tempy read (from 2 Corinthians 5) and discuss what you believe the Bible teaches.

A Conversation with TAMERA ALEXANDER



photo credit Mandy Whitley Photography, Nashville

What compelled you to write Colors of Truth?

Ideas for my novels typically stem from a question I'm wrestling with, a spiritual struggle perhaps—and real history. Real history is always involved. All of that is true for *Colors of Truth*.

The theme of truth runs throughout this story. And also lies. Lies told to us. Lies we tell ourselves. Lies we tell others. We live in a time when integrity and truth seem hard to come by. God met me on the pages of *Colors of Truth* and drew me closer to him through the characters' struggles. I hope readers experience the same.

What was the most difficult part of writing this book? How did you overcome this difficulty?

I wrote this book during the last year of my father's life here on earth. Dad had a ten year journey with dementia and passed in August 2019. So much of what we experienced together, of what

Dad (and also my Heavenly Father) taught me during those last days, weeks, and months made it onto the pages of *Colors of Truth*. The never-failing love of both my earthly father and Heavenly Father got me through.

Who is your favorite character from the novel? What about them makes them your favorite?

I love them all yet feel a special closeness to Wade and Catriona because I wrote the story from their points of view. But I have to say that Tempy's character first captured my heart when I wrote *Christmas at Carnton* (the novella that launched the series) and *With This Pledge* (Carnton book 1). Tempy's character is based on the real African American woman who served as the cook at Carnton for the McGavock family for the majority of her life. Before the Civil War as a slave, after as a freedwoman. I also love Nora's character.

I've always wanted to write a story with sisters, and that Catriona and Nora are Irish made writing it especially enjoyable. I'm currently writing the third and final Carnton novel which will release Summer 2021, and the heroine? Nora, all grown up!

Do your characters ever seem to have a life of their own?

Oh gracious, yes. I'm often surprised when something happens in the story I'm writing. My husband always shakes his head (when I tell him this) and counters, "But you're the author. You *know* what's coming!" But as I tell him, these characters are "living, breathing people" who just happen to live inside me. They have minds and wills of their own.

As far as the message of the novel, I rarely know that until I'm well into writing the book. Sometimes not until the first draft is completely written. Then in rewrite, I go back and strengthen the story and character motivations in that regard.

How has writing this book impacted you personally?

God met me at so many turns in this story. But the ultimate truth that he engraved on my heart as I wrote *Colors of Truth* is to tell the truth. Always. No matter the cost. That means telling the truth to myself, to others, and to him. Because he IS truth.

How many books have you written to date with Colors of Truth's publication?

Seventeen. All historical fiction/romance. Seven are written against the backdrop of Colorado history, ten about real Southern history. The ten Southern novels are set against the authentic history of three antebellum mansions in Nashville — Carnton, Belle Meade Plantation, and Belmont Mansion—and the people who lived and worked there.

What is your favorite thing about writing? And also your least favorite?

Favorite thing? Readers. Hands down.

Second favorite? Having written.

Least favorite? Writing the first draft. I'm a writer who *lives* for rewrites!

What would you tell a beginning writer who wants to publish but doesn't believe he/she has enough talent?

Every "no" along the way is really part of God's final "Yes!" when his perfect timing is reached. It's true in writing and it's true in life. God will never lead you to something but what he will not also equip you to do it. His faithfulness never ends!

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Readers' Favorite Quotes from the Novel

"... as hard as it is to face the truth, it's even harder to live with a lie."

He only hoped the deep rifts in this country could soon be healed and that the chasms present for so many years would finally be bridged.

"How could someone who inflicted so deep a wound on your heart still manage to possess a piece of it?"

"Way I figure it, one way or the other, give it enough time, and the truth always has its say."

"I ain't one to question the Lord's goodness. But sometimes it sure feels like he can give a body too much to bear, don't it?"

Do you have a favorite quote? Tamera would love to know.
Email her at TameraAlexander@gmail.com



CARNTON IN FRANKLIN, TENNESSEE
THE SETTING OF ALL TAMERA'S CARNTON NOVELS
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