

Novel Specifics & FAQ for *Abide With Me*

By Shellie Arnold

SPECIFICS:

Title of Novel: *Abide With Me* (Book Three in The Barn Church series)

Genre: Contemporary inspirational fiction

Publisher: Lighthouse Publishing of the Carolinas

Release date: October 20, 2017

Other books in series: *The Spindle Chair* (October 2015) and *Sticks and Stones* (October 2016)

High concept: After returning from a friend's extravagant Las Vegas wedding, a wealthy wife whose marriage is emotionally bankrupt, finds her husband wrongly accused of fraud and must liquidate her assets to finance his defense.

Scriptural inspiration: Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. (2 Corinthians 9:6 NIV)

Theme: Spiritual fulfillment in our walk with God, as well as true intimacy in our marriages, doesn't just happen—both relationships grow as we actively pursue building them. And, to feel accepted and loved by God or our mate, we must let ourselves be known and loved.

Summation: *Abide with Me* is the story of Angelina and Nicholas Rousseau, a couple in their mid-thirties. Angelina is a painter who pours all her emotions into her work. Nicholas has a lucrative international consulting business. While attending a friend's wedding in Las Vegas, loneliness gets the best of Angelina, and she almost has an affair. Meanwhile, Nicholas—also an avid real estate investor—is arrested for fraud and calls Angie, demanding she return home. When the charges against Nick are temporarily dropped, he returns home and learns Angelina considers their marriage all but over. As they face bankruptcy and begin liquidating their assets to finance Nick's defense, both are faced with the state of their marriage. As they consider the decisions that did so much damage to their relationship, they reach for each other and God. Soon it appears Nick will be cleared of all suspicion of fraud, then unexpectedly, he is re-arrested. This time Nick is charged with murdering Gavin Hawk, his long-time financial consultant and business attorney. It seems Nick and Angelina will never be together again. With renewed determination, both Nick and Angelina surrender themselves and their future to God.

Back cover blurb:

After ten years of marriage to the only man she's ever loved, why is Angelina so unhappy?

As a wealthy yet lonely wife, Angelina Rousseau pours all her emotions into her paintings. Desperate for affection and attention, she finds herself willing to do almost anything to feel loved. Her husband Nick is determined to provide everything Angie could want, including finally giving her what she's asked for most—time with him. When what seems to be the perfect investment turns sour, he's arrested for real estate fraud, but soon learns being accused of multiple felonies is the least of his worries.

Once again, Nick's choices negatively affect Angelina. This time she's forced to part with cherished possessions to finance his defense and protect her future. When Angelina's carefully built walls begin to crumble, both husband and wife must examine their emotionally bankrupt marriage. Yet even if they discover what went wrong between them, Nick could still spend the rest of his life in prison.

Could "having it all" cost Nick and Angie more than they ever imagined?

FAQ:

1. Share about your journey to publication:

My journey to publication has been very long. I attended my first writers conference in January 1994, and dabbled at writing for many years. I worked toward writing non-fiction until 2002 when I became ill. On May 18, 2005, God healed my brain and turned my head to fiction. I said, "That's not what we were doing." God's response was, "That's what we're doing now." So, I started learning about fiction in 2006/2007 as a total newbie after being out of the industry for several years.

2. What do you feel is your calling as a writer?

There are two parts to my answer: With my fiction, I hope to offer a really good read in a captivating story. By doing so, I hope to cause readers to consider their own life and marriage. But mostly I want them to enjoy the story. Fiction gives me the means to touch a reader's emotions. To stir them.

Part two of my answer is, I really want to help marriages. I write about the "perfect storms" in marriage—what happens when our weaknesses hit head-on and we're both left wondering what can be salvaged. That's my fiction. Through my web site and (hopefully soon) non-fiction books, I hope to provide solid teaching which addresses the issues found in my novels. So, my fiction can be a really good read, and, if the Holy Spirit leads a reader to consider the same type of issues in their own life and marriage, I'll have resources available to address those issues.

3. What is The Barn Church series?

I call it The Barn Church series because all the couples in this series attend the same church, Rowe City Gospel Church in Rowe City, Alabama (a fictitious church in a fictitious place). The church is literally a huge converted barn. Very welcoming. Very rustic. Each book is about a different couple within the church, so each story stands alone. It's a series, but a reader wouldn't have to read them in order to enjoy the stories.

4. Is the wife in your books the only main character?

Not in this series. Both husband and wife are my main characters. I write from both points of view, so I can focus on the marriage as a whole.

5. What gave you the idea for *Abide With Me*?

Originally *Abide With Me* was the first book in the series, not the third. But as I worked on the series, it became apparent this story needed to be the third. It's really the book of my heart. It contains the central theme—if you will—of all my books about marriage. My belief that righteousness is the only rule in marriage. I wanted to show the negative things that can happen when a couple refuses to obey even the smallest promptings of God, and the positive things that can happen when they do obey those promptings. I truly believe God can heal, redeem, restore, even resurrect any holy thing we give Him, so I wanted to show that.

6. Tell us a little about your book:

Although some portions of *Abide With Me* take place elsewhere, like the other books in the series it does center in Rowe City, a town in southern Alabama. Readers of the second book, *Sticks and Stones*, met Angelina Rousseau—and probably formulated an opinion about her. This story is about what has happened and is happening in her marriage. Angelina is quite beautiful, but she's never been comfortable with her looks. So, she's self-conscious and a bit awkward. And like me, she's not great in the kitchen! LOL She and Nick (her husband) were not believers when they married. Then, through a series of events they met Daniel and Kay, and became believers. But they didn't follow through with that commitment, they stopped growing, and never sowed into their spiritual life or marriage. That's the premise behind the mess they're in.

7. At the beginning of this novel, we see Angelina seemingly giving in to temptation to have an affair, simply to feel relief from her loneliness. Tell us about that.

Seemingly is the key word, isn't it? I once heard a great sermon about Judas' thirty pieces of silver—the wages he received for betraying Jesus. The speaker challenged us that each of us has that price—that prize, if you will—that when it's placed before us, we'll give in and do what we know is wrong. That idea has stayed with me for over a dozen years, and many times God has used it to challenge me about my own “thirty pieces of silver.”

None of us marry planning to be lonely. But it's too true, even in marriages between believers. There are small and large caverns of loneliness. I believe if the spiritual aspect of marriage is void, other areas suffer as well. Rather than judging Angelina, I hope readers find a point of identification with her, and will analyze themselves and their own marriages to see where those caverns of loneliness and disconnect might be.

8. So, what's your background? Are you a counselor? A psychiatrist?

No, I'm just a kid from a broken home who was scared to death to marry. I figured either there was no way to marry and be happy, or God wasn't telling how to do it. When I knew God wanted me to marry, I did so only after telling God I needed Him to teach me how to do this. I started studying and paying attention to my marriage and what was happening inside me. As God addressed issues and hurts inside me, I saw the benefits manifested in my marriage. I simply want to share all I've learned the hard way.

9. Back to your novel, the book deals with the idea of sowing and reaping, both in our spiritual lives and in marriage. But isn't it really about obedience and disobedience?

Yes. I think many problems in marriage come from us not listening to God's promptings, not following through on good teaching we hear, even small and big things we know we should be doing to feed our relationship and our love. I find the same is true in many frustrated believers, in many who feel God has moved far away. Yes, sometimes God is silent for a while, and I believe He is always at work during those times. But aside from those instances, for the most part our feelings of loneliness with God are from our own behavior. We stopped praying. We stopped listening. We stopped worshipping. God's still where He has always been, but we're the ones who moved. We're also the ones who complain about God being far away, but that doesn't mean our complaints are valid.

10. What would you say to someone who feels distance with God and with their mate?

I'd say tackle your relationship with God first. He's there, He's reaching for you, and He's already provided everything you need to be in fellowship with Him. Get that part straightened out, and you'll have access to all you need to face the rest of your life.

With regard to the marriage, you're only responsible for your behavior AND you are completely responsible for your behavior. If you love like God—give first, give all, reach, love, offer, even when it hurts, or you believe you'll be rejected—you have a better chance of healing your marriage than if you don't love like God. The believer is never without an example of how to behave in marriage. Copy God. Copy Jesus. Listen to the Holy Spirit's direction and even if your mate walks away, you'll know you did every righteous thing to help it flourish. You can plant good things in your marriage, even if your mate is a non-participant.

12. Finally, tell us about your tagline “Live Happily Even After”:

I can't take credit for it, my best friend and I brainstormed together to come up with a tagline and I think she nailed it. Basically, I believe any marriage can be healed and thrive—no matter what baggage or bad habits we brought into it—if both parties obey God. God is all about redemption, restoration, and resurrection. He's all about making old things new. Making seemingly irreparable things better than new. No matter what's happened to you, what you've done, or what you brought to your marriage, if you'll walk with God you can *Live Happily Even After*.