

Interview Questions for Shellie Arnold regarding *Sticks and Stones*

Interview Questions:

Your passion is to help Christian marriages. Why write fiction?

How did helping marriages become your passion?

What is the Barn Church series?

How did the idea for this novel come to you?

Is the wife the only main character in the story? Tell us about the wife and the husband.

What is the couple's big problem in *Sticks and Stones*?

Have you dealt with this issue in your own marriage? If so, what kind of effects did it have?

In *Sticks and Stones*, the marriage seemed to be strong and on track until the birth of an unexpected baby with special needs. Why did you write it that way?

What's the spiritual takeaway for your reader?

What's your background? Are you a counselor? A therapist?

What would you say to someone who feels their marriage can't seem to recover from a stressful event or trauma?

What would you say to a spouse who can't seem to break a cycle of unhealthy habits?

What kind of ending can readers expect from your novels?

Your website offers ways to help Christian husbands and wives think strategically, work with God, and transform their marriages. Can you explain?

How does *Sticks and Stones* demonstrate this?

SPECIFICS:

Title of the Novel: *Sticks and Stones* (Book Two in The Barn Church series)

Genre: Contemporary inspirational fiction

Other books in series: *The Spindle Chair* and *Abide with Me*

High concept: Days before a long-awaited audition, Julie Matthews, an aspiring singer and frequent choir soloist, who unwittingly hurts her family with her toxic words, has a near-fatal accident and awakes in a hospital unable to speak.

Scriptural inspiration: If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless (James 1:26 NIV).

Theme: How we treat our spouses and/or family is our primary act of worship. And, marital peace is not found in the absence of conflict, but rather when both parties are living in obedience to God.

Synopsis: *Sticks and Stones* is the story of Julie and Rick Matthews, a couple whose near-twenty-year marriage has produced three children, a thriving horse stable business, and one very frustrated wife. Days before a live audition, a horseback riding accident leaves Julie unable to speak. During her recovery, Rick becomes her caregiver and their relationship undergoes a short hiatus. When Julie's voice returns, Rick pulls away from her, fearing she will return to her old ways. After their daughter's journal reveals painful truths about their family life, Julie discovers how much she has hurt her family and is faced with another woman's quiet pursuit of Rick. Julie must admit her mistakes and learn to depend on God to change her words by changing what is inside her heart. Rick longs to lead his family and struggles with his inclination to be a peacemaker at any cost, but doesn't buy into Julie's assessment of the other woman. As she and Rick cautiously rebuild their marriage, Julie is forced to choose between her dream of singing to multitudes or blessing her family with a worshipful life before God, even as Rick learns to listen to his wife.

Back cover blurb:

Sticks and stones may break bones, but words can crush the spirit.

Since childhood, Julie Matthews has felt closest to God when singing. Mere days away from realizing her lifelong dream of singing professionally, she awakens in a hospital room unable to speak. Suddenly her dreams and God seem distant.

Rick Matthews supports his ambitious wife, but has no solution for the constant tension between them. During Julie's recovery, Rick becomes Julie's caregiver and their marriage undergoes a wonderful change--they rediscover each other.

But as Julie's voice grows stronger, unseen wounds surface and years of unhealthy habits begin again to pull them apart. Faced with losing their newly rekindled love, Julie and Rick are forced to evaluate the state of their marriage and how their dysfunction has affected their children.