

Interview Questions—Redemption’s Song

- 1. What can you tell us about Redemption’s Song?** The book begins one year after the end of the Streams of Mercy. Jamie Steele is on her way to college and thinks her life is all mapped out. Abigail Blackwood has harbored a secret that will destroy everything she holds dear should it come to light. When tragedy strikes, both women find their troubles are only beginning.
- 2. What prompted you to turn Jenna’s Creek into a series?** When the first book, Streams of Mercy, was already halfway through the publishing process, I reread it, and realized there were more stories in there I wanted to pursue. I wrote Book 2 and sent it to my publisher. She said she had been thinking the same thing and imagined the series going on for a long time.
- 3. What are the challenges and differences between writing a series and a stand-alone book?** In a stand-alone book, I have to leave my characters behind. That is very hard for me. By the end of the book, they are like family. In a series, you get to find out what happens next. Of course, that can be a drawback. Personally, I’ve read series books that went on much too long. It’s like sitcoms that run well past their prime. It’s like “enough already.” You have to know when to let a series end. The biggest challenge in writing a series is allowing each book to stand on its own. Readers don’t always read the books in sequence. But each new title must also lend something to the previous books.
- 4. How many Jenna’s Creek novels do you anticipate in the series?** I can’t say. I like to think the characters write the books. I just finished Book 3, Evidence of Grace. It was very tricky to write as it had a lot of interweaving subplots, but I had a great time doing it. I’m tossing around ideas for Book 4. The length of the series depends on how the people of Jenna’s Creek react to me intruding into their lives at regular intervals.
- 5. How real do your characters become to you?** As real as you are. It’s almost like one of them will stand up and say, “Okay, it’s time for you to tell my story.” Sometimes they are minor characters hidden inside a series, and other times, I never knew of their existence until the moment they appear on a page. Those stories are often the most fun to work on.
- 6. What classifies your books as Christian fiction?** Christian fiction must address the same issues as secular fiction since Christians go through the same struggles and heartbreak as everyone else. The only difference is how Christians handle those struggles. My hope is that the reader will see how a character can grow in faith and integrity through the course of the story, regardless of what they’re going through.
- 7. What do you hope to accomplish through your stories?** It is my prayer that each book has some take-away value for the reader. I want them to relate to

something or someone in the story so they can see their own faults or strengths and perhaps grow from that.

8. **What is the take-away value in Redemption's Song?** One of the key characters, Abigail Blackwood committed a sin that has haunted her her entire adult life. That sin impacted so many lives that she believes God can't, or won't, forgive her. She believes the pain she caused others has made her beyond redemption. I want readers to realize we are never so far gone that we can't turn back to God. He is always here waiting for us to reach out to Him. His love is big enough to cover all our sins.
9. **Where do you get inspiration for your books?** From everywhere. I get inspired when I read a really good book...or a really rotten one. I've had dreams that I think would make good stories. I think a lot about characters and settings while I'm riding in the car. I listen a lot and observe life around me. Most inspiration comes from just being quiet and letting the ideas flow.
10. **If you weren't writing, what kind of job do you think you'd be good at?** Oh, I don't even want to consider that. I've always wanted to write, and I am so blessed that I am able to do it fulltime. I guess if I had to do something that didn't involve writing, I would want a job where I dealt with people. People are most interesting when they're not trying to be.
11. **You are obviously happy to be doing what you're doing? Are there any negatives about your job?** Plenty. When the ideas are flowing and the writing is going the way I want, it's great, I wouldn't want to do anything else. But 80% of the time, the words won't come, and I think, "Why am I doing this? There are plenty of great books out there already. What makes me think I need to add another one to the mix?" The isolation is terrible. Your family and close friends don't understand your frustrations. And it takes years to see the fruits of your labors. But having said all that, I still consider myself blessed to be involved in Christian publishing.