

Should Christian Women Read Romance?

After I sold my first romance novel, which released in 2009, my husband left me. Heartbroken, I quit writing romance and let my literary agent go. But then love changed my life, and now there's nothing else I'd rather write. So when the subject came up again on Facebook about whether Christians should read romance or not, I thought I'd explore the topic more.

Should Christians read/write romance? And why?

First of all, I can't answer this for everyone. All things are permissible to us, but not all things are beneficial. That means our relationship with God isn't about a formula. It's about what God lays on our hearts and what He knows is best for us. For example, author Deeanne Gist admits that at one point in her life, God asked her to stop reading romance. I would suggest that as a result of her obedience, God has been able to work through her to touch many lives with her award-winning historical romances.

Second, God is love. When the above question was posed to various social media groups, many respond with biblical examples of romance: Song of Solomon, Ruth, Jacob and Rebecca. Jesus' first miracle was performed at a wedding. God describes the church as the bride of Christ. Marriage is a biblical institution. This is important stuff.

Third, in a world where *Fifty Shades of Grey* has replaced The Bible in at least one hotel chain, it is our moral responsibility to give clean, healthy examples of real love. In the documentary *Love Between the Covers*, an author is quoted as saying that if a romance novel isn't inspirational, it has to have sex in it. Love is being confused for lust, codependency and even abuse. Real love lasts forever, and

books about it are going to be a light in the dark. I know at least one woman found the courage to close out a dead-end dating relationship after reading the Ashley Stockingdale series by Kristin Billerbeck.

As for my choice to read romance, the truth is that the good ones go much deeper than girl meets guy. There have been novels that have both empowered me or broken me down in a way I knew God was using them in my life. I've also had fun listening to romance audiobooks with my husband. They're not what he would normally read, so I get a kick out of his perspective on the storyline. Once, he was even inspired to take me on a date after listening to a Becky Wade novel. "Let's go ride the Harley to a pastry shop the way Ty does." OK.

If you want another man's perspective, listen to what literary agent Donald Maass says about the importance of adding a thread of romance to various genres. Love stories create "a heart delight that can warm any story." He adds, "They cause us to hope. There is a future beyond the final page."

Personally, I believe hope is what sets Christian fiction apart from secular literature. I even named our local writer's group IDAhope Writers. This fits nicely with my mission statement for life: To inspire, create, and encourage hope in myself and others.

Of course I'm going to write romance. I'm going to write it because I love it, but even more, I'm going to write it because I love the people reading it.

So should Christians read Christian romance? I want to say yes and give you a link for my website, but only you can answer that for yourself. Is reading Christian romance beneficial to your life? Does it draw you closer to God? Does it improve your relationships? And does it offer hope? If not, find something else that does. {eoa}

Angela Ruth Strong is a Christian romance writer who writes not only about a man and woman falling in love but more importantly about women finding out how loved they already are. She's won the Cascade Award for her novels and also had a couple optioned for film. To help other aspiring authors, she started IDAhope Writers in her home state of Idaho. When not writing, she's adventuring with her husband and teenagers, teaching group fitness classes and working her day job at an airline. She believes in the power of story and would love to hear yours. Feel free to visit or write her at and join her Facebook fan page for fantastic fun at-groups/1557213161269220/.