



Allison Pittman Author Q & A

All for a Song

1. What was your inspiration for this book, *All for a Song*?

There were so many different pieces that came together with this book; it's hard to name just one. First, I was introduced to, and then became fascinated with Aimee Semple McPherson, and while I wasn't ready to take on her story, I knew I wanted to create my own characters to somehow come into her sphere. She was a woman who embraced both ministry and fame, and I wanted to create a character who had that same opportunity. With that, I am so inspired by the decade of the 1920's—such sweeping social changes, shifts in moral centering, an explosion of choices and opportunities for women. It was a time to test one's faith—to go against the new norms in pursuit of righteousness. Such a challenge!

2. Tell me about your main character Dorothy Lynn. Was her character based upon anyone in particular?

The young Dorothy Lynn, no, not really—not beyond any other singer/songwriter out there. She's a young woman with a message and a voice, so maybe she's a mash-up of every musician I know. The older Dorothy Lynn, Miss Linnie, is somewhat based on the mother of a friend of mine. His mother went to be with the Lord while I was in the final stages of writing this novel, and at her funeral, I learned that she had a stroke years before her passing, during which she had a glimpse of Heaven, and had spent her intervening years longing to return. I remember going home from that celebration of her life and re-writing just about every **Breath of Angels** scene, incorporating that into Dorothy Lynn's story. It was exactly what the story needed, and brought about a depth I couldn't have imagined in the initial draft.

3. What lessons or truths will your readers find in the pages of this novel?

I hope that they learn that it's good to take a chance, to take hold of opportunities that come your way, even if it doesn't always make sense to do so. Yes, there are times that require periods of prayer and reflection and guidance-seeking, but then there are times when you have to hop on the next train and trust that God has the details well in hand. Along with that, I'd want them to know that while there is breath, there is opportunity for grace and forgiveness, but we might need to humble ourselves. There's a theme of a longing for home, no matter how enticing the alternative seems.

4. Although this novel is set in the 1920s, how does Dorothy Lynn's story still resonate today?

The world today wants nothing more than to entice young women to exploit themselves in some way, and the enemy wants nothing more than to make us think that we are beyond redemption. We all make stupid, thoughtless, reckless decisions; we all get ourselves into such unbelievably embarrassing messes; we all disappoint our loved ones. The world tells you to move on; God tells you to go back.

5. As a writer, what did you particularly enjoy about crafting this story?

Oh, my goodness. As a historical writer, I loved the time period—that sort of new, innocent fumbling with innovations of the time. One of my favorite scenes was when the 107-year-old Dorothy Lynn experiences her first iPad. (By the way, I had to make her that old in order to make all the history “fit.” I spent every day for a month watching the Willard Scott segment on the *Today* show making sure that her age would be believable. Wouldn't you know? Every week there's somebody that tops the 105th birthday!)

6. What is your hope for this story? How would you like it to impact readers?

I would love it if this book would prompt a reader to reach out to somebody they feel they have lost. Reconciliation is hard—whether you're the perpetrator or the victim of whatever “wrong” that happened. But life is short, even if you're going to get more than a century of living, at some time that final day will come. Close those gaps in your life. Offer and ask for forgiveness. Leave a legacy of grace.

7. How has this novel helped you to grow as a storyteller?

My tendency (a very purposeful one) is to leave my stories with a bit of an “unfinished” edge. I like my characters to leave the page on the cusp of fulfillment, so that my readers can have the pleasure of imagining those final, satisfying moments. A good friend (and, coincidentally a fan) of mine said, “I love your books. I hate your endings. I'm just going to have to accept that this is what an Allison Pittman story does.” So—how fun was this to write the most definitive ending, ever! To open a story on the last day of a character's life—so totally new for me.

8. What is the best advice or encouragement that you have received?

It goes back to a conversation I had with James Scott Bell back when I'd written approximately 7 chapters of what would become my first novel, *Ten Thousand Charms*. The whole conversation is chronicled in Chapter 16 of his fabulous book *The Art of War for Writers*. (I'm the “young woman” – which I was, at the time, sort of...) Anyway, I was frustrated and discouraged, and he explained to me that this writing thing was like a pyramid. At its base, you have everybody who ever thinks they maybe might want to try to start writing a book someday. At the top is Max Lucado. The rest of us are somewhere in-between. “Your job...is to keep moving up the pyramid. Each level presents its own challenges, so concentrate on the ones right in front of you.” I love and welcome every new challenge.