

Q & A with Maureen Lang

Author of *All in Good Time*

1) What inspired you to write *All in Good Time*?

I try to be aware of things around me that pique general interest or common emotion—in other words, things that should be included in a good story. I share this passion with most people, I suppose, not just with other writers. We're all somehow in tune to things that stir emotion because we were created as emotional beings, and we like to share those emotions. So when I was reading a nonfiction account of historical train and stagecoach robberies—already an interesting topic—it was easy to spot the more clever and sympathetic robbers who would make potential heroes in love stories. Henry Hawkins was the first character I conjured up, and he possesses an impatience matched only by Dessa Caldwell, the heroine. But Dessa is impatient to complete the mission God assigned to her, while Henry's impatience leads to something more self-serving. Developing the secrets and flaws in these two characters was so much fun, especially watching them realize it was precisely those secrets and flaws that made them perfect for one another.

2) Did writing *All in Good Time* teach you anything along the way?

I like to think that every book I write has a lesson in it, first for me and then (I hope) for my readers. Writing *All in Good Time* was like praying for patience—one of those prayers I'm a little bit afraid to pray, for fear of how God will stretch such a thing. But impatience is one of the flaws in both of my main characters, so I kept hoping God would keep the lessons on the page and not carry them over to my real life.

I don't claim to be cured of my own impatience, but I have to tell you how many times I smiled when one of my characters said something about impatience that seemed directed more at me than at themselves. For instance, when Dessa Caldwell said, "Sometimes I try to get ahead of God's plans, I admit, but we're nearly always going in the same direction," it made me realize that I've done the same thing. I've forged ahead with what I thought God wanted me to do—without really listening for His direction first.

3) What do you hope your readers will take away after reading *All in Good Time*?

We all make bad decisions at one point or another, so it was comforting to write about characters facing their mistakes and realizing God loves them anyway. I hope readers are reminded that even after we've gone the wrong direction, it's not too late to experience God's love, grace, and redirection.

4) Was there anything that surprised you as you crafted *All in Good Time*?

I'm not sure if this is a sign of good or bad storytelling, but I have to admit every story I've written has surprised me in one way or another. I always have a pretty good idea of the *kind* of story I want to write, and that it'll have a happy ending. But what happens between the first page and the last is often a journey I'm not familiar with until I actually set off. So *All in Good Time* was no different: a sort of foggy picture of the path ahead, revealed only a few steps at a time.

In this story, I first set out with the good guys and the bad guys on opposite sides, which makes sense, of course. But in this case, some of the challenges were the secrets inside my own characters, which meant I didn't need many characters in the enemy role. I did have one character in mind for that part, however: Turk Foster was to be the true villain, with shady ulterior motives and an honest dislike for my hero. Little did I know that the guy was merely misunderstood, and all he really wanted was respectability. As it turned out, my beta readers told me he ended up being one of their favorite characters.

5) How do you research the settings of your novels?

Research is one of my favorite aspects of being a writer. But I realize that since I write historicals, any setting I choose will include a certain amount of interpretation. The focus of my research, the resources I find most helpful, and my understanding of the era all impact what ends up on the page. I always wish I could spend more time researching the era, but deadlines never allow it. I think it's important, though, to have at least a feel for what was significant at the time, what people would have been aware of (if not talking about), what daily living might have looked like. There are a number of historical online sites that provide visuals, and sometimes an online hunt for one fact or another is the quickest way to check something. But I tend to prefer actual textbooks or traditional books over online sites since books go through more peer and editorial review. I also enjoy reading books that would have been popular during the era I'm writing about because they often reflect tastes and attitudes and everyday living.

I especially enjoy visiting the places where I set my novels, even though they won't look the way they would have looked to my historical characters. But I can get a feel for distances, and many of the buildings my characters would have walked by still exist. Although I've been to Denver many times, for *All in Good Time* I depended on historical maps that gave me an idea of where certain neighborhoods would have been, and having that image in my head helped immensely.

6) Can you share a little about your writing journey?

I've always loved books, ever since I was a child. I recall spending long summers on my porch, reading favorite stories, getting lost in other people's lives. I think that's why I'm a writer—because I like seeing other eras and places through the eyes of an interesting character and feeling what they feel. I've been writing since I was about ten, and my first story was a romance, which is what I've been writing ever since. I joined several writers' groups when I got older, networked with other writers, attended writers' conferences. Basically, I studied the craft by reading and through critique groups for feedback. I learned about the industry through networking and never gave up.

My first dive into professional publishing was in my early twenties, when I wrote historical romances for a secular publisher. But it wasn't long before I went through some personal challenges—a divorce and single parenthood, and returning to the working world. Because of these changes, I had the opportunity to reevaluate the faith that I'd been ignoring. I realized I no longer wanted to write books that left God out, but with so many new demands on my time it just wasn't the right season for me to continue writing. God was leading me in a new direction of personal growth.

I didn't start writing again for about fifteen years, when God reignited my passion in a major way. After reacquainting myself with the craft and networking again, it took several years of pursuing publication before signing my first contract with a Christian publisher. I've been writing consistently ever since, and *All in Good Time* is the tenth novel I've written where God has been my First Reader.

7) Could you tell us what an average day looks like for you? Do you write every day?

One of the things about working at home is that it's easy to be distracted, and friends and family might think I'm more available than I would be if I worked in an office. So I have to be pretty diligent about protecting my working time, which is between 8 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. Those are the hours my sons are at school. Both are in their high school years, but my oldest son is affected by Fragile X syndrome, a form of genetic mental retardation. Any attempt to achieve concentration while he's home is pretty much out of the question. He's very cheerful and easy to be around—but he's a two-year-old inside a 17-year-old's body, so you can imagine some of our challenges.

Thankfully, I can sit for long periods of time at my computer, so those six hours or so that I have the house to myself are my most productive. I try to write every day, at least during the week, since I've learned writing on Saturdays when everyone is home is an exercise in futility. I spend Saturdays catching up on things around the house: laundry, cleaning, errands. I like to spend part of every evening reading, either research books or fiction, since I'm a firm believer that becoming a better writer cannot happen if I insulate myself from the industry. I also take a Sabbath

rest from writing—sundown on Saturday until sundown on Sunday—when I enjoy spending time with family and reserve my reading almost exclusively for fiction.

8) Why have you chosen to write romance rather than any other genre?

Although I've always read a variety of genres, Christian romance is a favorite and I read quite a bit of it. Mysteries are better, to me, when they include a romance; so is an adventure story, women's fiction, even YA. Falling in love is exciting, and to see two people get past various obstacles toward love makes great drama. That said, I do pray for the genre—actually, for all of Christian fiction—that in the hope of coming up with new and different stories, we still create stories God wants to read!