

Author Q & A

Candace Calvert | *Step by Step*

- 1. This is the second installment in your latest trilogy, the Crisis Team series. What is the background on this series?**

The Crisis Team series, set in my native California, offers exciting medical scenarios within the fictional Hope medical system, and features the selfless and compassionate work of volunteer community chaplains—true heroes.

- 2. How do you expect this series to resonate with your audience? What are you most excited for your readers to experience through reading these novels?**

I have found, almost universally, that most of my readers weren't aware of the vital work done by crisis responders (chaplains). It's an honor to feature these dedicated volunteers and puts an intriguing new slant on my exciting and highly emotional medical fiction. I also think it adds to the element of hope for my readers, to know that these teams are "out there" in real life.

- 3. Crisis teams are becoming increasingly vital and active in the world today. How would you describe their role, and how can we learn more?**

Crisis responders are volunteers from all walks of life, trained to assist survivors of tragedy, whether it be from a major disaster (weather related catastrophes, fires, bombings, mass shootings, etc.) or of a more personal nature like the sudden death of a loved one from a heart attack, accident, suicide, homicide, sudden infant death, or other unexpected cause. These volunteers work alongside other rescue personnel (fire, police, rescue) offering support, a compassionate ear, and resources to folks trying to cope in the wake of an incident that will forever change their lives. Crisis responders have been referred to as "emotional paramedics," and I think that says it well.

In creating my stories, I'm grateful for the assistance of U.S. Crisis Care. Here is a link: [U.S. Crisis Care](#)

- 4. As a former ER nurse who has had crisis chaplain training, what has been your most rewarding or memorable experience in the field?**

In my role as a CISM (Critical Incident Stress Management) peer counselor, I was part of team that ministered to fellow medical team members affected by work-related tragedy. We responded to (and conducted debriefings for) hospital staff after situations involving infant and child death, mass casualties, personal assaults, and accidental death (or suicide) of fellow team members. As often seen in my stories, medical (rescue, fire, law enforcement, and chaplaincy) workers are not immune to the heartbreak of tragedy. The cliché of a self-protective, indifferent, “professionally distant” service provider couldn’t be further from the truth. We cry, too.

5. What was your inspiration for this particular book and the main characters, Taylor and Seth?

Nurse Taylor Cabot and Chaplain Seth Donovan were secondary characters, friends and volunteer team mates, in [By Your Side](#). In this new story readers have the opportunity to learn more about them and follow their heart tugging journey. The setting is beautiful San Diego, California where, in opening scene, a small plane crashes onto the beach. The continuing story offers exciting medical drama, an in depth look a crisis chaplaincy, warm humor, romance . . . and a few tears (Kleenex advised).

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

The unifying message in [Step by Step](#) is one of forgiveness and healing, by allowing God’s loving plan to guide the way instead of stubbornly insisting on personal control.

7. As an author, what did you particularly enjoy about crafting this story?

Readers have come to expect animals in my stories, and in [Step by Step](#) the relationship between Taylor and her aging Golden Retriever, Hooper, was particularly poignant for me. I also got a kick out of showing Taylor’s (controlling) tendency toward checklists, calorie counting, and tracking her exercise by logging every “step”—I have a Fitbit bracelet, too!

8. What are some of the unique challenges of writing contemporary romance in a medical setting?

I think the challenge of the medical aspect is to provide realistic (and accurate) medical detail without talking over the heads of readers, but not talking down to them either. Because of the popularity of medical TV drama and the opportunity for people to “Google” their way into medical jargon, symptomology, and treatment adjuncts, readers are far more savvy these days. I try my best to sort of parachute my readers into the medical scenes, allowing them feel as if they are part of the team.

As far as the romance aspect goes, while it's true that team mates working in life-and-death situations often develop strong (and sometimes romantic) bonds, I can guarantee there is no TV-type trysts going on in hospital storage rooms!

9. Have you received any feedback from your fans on the Crisis Team series? How are they responding?

The response (I'm grateful) has been very positive; readers love these compassionate crisis responders. And, of course, I'm so honored that Booklist chose this series' first story, [By Your Side](#), as a Top 10 Inspirational Book of 2015.

10. What is the best advice or encouragement you have received either personally or professionally?

I would have to say the best advice I've received both professionally and personally is also a tenet of crisis chaplaincy: to simply listen.

We all (especially service providers) have a great need to "do and fix."

And certainly talk, advise . . . sometimes lecture.

One of the biggest blessings, gifts, we can give another person is to listen, really hear them.

It also speaks, of course, to one of my favorite verses:

Psalm 46:10

“. . . Be still, and know that I am God . . . ”

11. What are you most proud of in your writing career?

I'm not sure "proud" is the word, but I think I'm most pleased (still pinching myself) that readers say my stories have touched their hearts, encouraged them at a time of despair--even changed their lives. It's powerful, humbling, amazing.

I'm definitely proud of my publishing team—Tyndale House is beyond awesome.

12. What are some future projects you're working on?

At this moment, I'm preparing for the redline edits on *Maybe It's You*, the third Crisis Team story, scheduled for release in early 2017.