

A Q&A with Liz Curtis Higgs

1. *Mine Is the Night* begins where *Here Burns My Candle* ended, leaving your readers eager for the rest of the story. Give us a brief description of the dire situation facing Marjory and Elisabeth Kerr as the novel opens.

With the bonny Prince Charlie and his Jacobite army newly defeated on the battlefield, Marjory and her daughter-in-law Elisabeth are marked as traitors to the Crown. Bereft of title, fortune, and property, they have no choice but to return to the Scottish Borderland, where Marjory once lived. Will they be welcomed home? Or banished as rebels? From the pounding hoofbeats in the opening line of *Mine Is the Night* we sense their uneasiness and wonder what sort of homecoming awaits them.

2. *Why transport the book of Ruth to another time and place in novel form, instead of simply writing a nonfiction book about Ruth?*

As it happens, I'm writing a nonfiction study of Ruth as we speak! Over the last few years it's been thrilling to explore this timeless biblical story verse by verse, then move the plot to 1745-46, a time of great turmoil in Scotland. The themes of loss and betrayal, restoration and redemption, speak to us through the centuries. And since I have both fiction *and* nonfiction readers, it's my joy to minister to each of them through story *and* study.

3. *What aspect of Marjory and Elisabeth's journey resonates with you personally, and with your readers?*

Marjory is our midlife, menopausal mother-in-law (I get all three!), who has been knocked off her high-and-mighty horse and must learn to adapt to a humbler situation. Watching Marjory Kerr grow spiritually makes us examine our own lives more closely. How would we behave if everything we owned and everyone we loved were taken from

us? In Elisabeth Kerr, her twenty-something daughter-in-law, we find a young woman with a young faith that is tested and tried, even as her broken heart slowly mends. Like Ruth, she is faithful above all things and a role model for women of any age.

4. *Since many readers may already be familiar with the love story of Boaz and Ruth, what surprises do have you in store to keep them reading?*

Without giving *too* much away, I'll simply say our secondary characters provide ample twists and turns in the plot to keep the pages turning! Even our hero is a bit elusive in the early chapters, making us long for his appearing. No novel is complete without a villain or two, and love finds a home in more than one willing heart.

5. *Historical fiction requires a great deal of research. How do you bring eighteenth-century Scotland to life for your readers?*

I am as passionate about research as I am about storytelling. Not only have I read dozens upon dozens of books about Scottish history, I've also visited the Scottish Borderland and walked the narrow streets and *closes* of Selkirk, interviewing the locals, taking copious photos and notes, and drinking in the glorious green scenery. From food to furnishings to fashions I try to get every detail right, so my readers and I will be swept away to the eighteenth century.

6. *Your books are read worldwide, and your speaking engagements have taken you to 12 foreign countries, yet Scotland has clearly captured your imagination. Why is that?*

I'll borrow a paragraph from my armchair travel guide, *My Heart's in the Lowlands*, to answer your good question, "Why Scotland?"

Perhaps because when I'm there, I have a sense of rightness, of completion, of belonging. The verdant, rolling hills remind me of places I've lived—eastern Pennsylvania and central Kentucky in particular—yet the angle of the sun falling across

the Lowland moors is uniquely Scottish. That slanted light works a kind of magic on me. The misty air softens my complexion. Sleep comes easily. Contentment seeps into my bones. I bite into a freshly baked oatcake, covered with a generous slice of sharp Galloway cheese, then sip milk-laced tea, hot enough to numb my lips, and I'm within walking distance of heaven.

7. *You are one of the few authors who write both nonfiction and fiction. What motivates you to continue writing for both audiences?*

Simply put, my readers keep me writing! For my sisters who love fiction, I hope to provide a reading experience that not only touches the heart, but also fills the mind and feeds the spirit as only Christian fiction can. For women who prefer reading nonfiction, I strive to offer books that teach biblical truths with humor and honesty and heart. I truly love *both* genres and am grateful to have faithful readers in each camp.

8. *Do you have a favorite verse from the book of Ruth that gets to the heart of this beloved redemption story?*

Mind if I pick two? Redemption begins when Ruth pledges to follow Naomi and, more to the point, to follow the God of Israel: "Your people will be my people and your God my God" (Ruth 1:16). Ruth's leap of faith leads to a new life in a new land with a new husband and a new experience: motherhood. When that baby boy is placed in Naomi's arms, the women of Bethlehem proclaim, "For your daughter-in-law, who loves you and who is better to you than seven sons, has given him birth" (Ruth 4:15). Redemption has come full circle, not only for Naomi and Ruth, but also for mankind, in the birth of Obed, whose grandson, King David, is in the lineage of Christ.

9. *What message do you hope readers will remember after they've turned the last page of Mine Is the Night?*

My prayer is they'll reach for their Bibles and read the book of Ruth with fresh eyes and open hearts. However handsome and brave our fictional hero may be (oh my, is he ever!), none can compare to our Redeemer and Savior, Jesus. Every book I've ever written has *grace* at the heart of it and *hope* at the end of it, and none more so than *Mine Is the Night*.

10. *Where can we learn more about you and your books?*

Kindly visit my website, <http://www.LizCurtisHiggs.com>, sign up for my free seasonal e-newsletters, join my Liz Curtis Higgs page on Facebook, and/or follow me on Twitter! Not very eighteenth-century, to be sure, but wonderful ways to stay in touch. And do support your favorite local bookstore, where *Mine Is the Night* and my other titles can be found on the shelves or easily ordered.