



Getting to Know
**DEEANNE
GIST**

Deeanne Gist—known to her family, friends, and fans as Dee—has rocketed up the bestseller lists and captured readers everywhere with her three very original, very fun historical romances. Add to this two consecutive Christy Awards, rave reviews, and a growing loyal fan base, and you’ve got one recipe for success.

But blockbuster numbers and instant success haven’t altered this down-to-earth Texas author. Just happy to be doing what the Lord’s called her to do, Dee finds joy in the letters from fans—most saying how her books have helped them make big changes in their lives.

We sat down with Dee recently to chat about God, writing, and her role as an author in CBA.

To start, who or what has influenced you to start writing?

My parents influenced me to write. Once I married, had kids, and retired from teaching, I was always trying to make us a little extra money. I would do the pyramid things like the Amways and the chain letters and the 900 numbers. It got to the point where my husband just said, "Please, honey, please don't make me any more money." Ha!

It was at this point that my parents suggested a writing career. They thought I would be able to excel in this area and do it at home while simultaneously tapping into that entrepreneurial spirit that I have.

It seems your parents were right. Did you ever see yourself as a writer?

Not in a million years. I struggled with dyslexia when I was a child. I can remember even in high school sitting on the couch with my dad as he would read my biology chapters to me while I followed along. By the time I got to college, I was able to read—slowly, but fluently. With that kind of background, any career that involved lots of reading was not something I ever expected to pursue. But my parents knew that despite my disabilities, I had some talent with a pen. And once I'd overcome the dyslexia, their gentle nudging in the direction of writing as a career didn't seem so far-fetched.

What is your reaction to the phenomenal success of *A Bride Most Begrudging* and *The Measure of a Lady*?

The Lord has truly been amazing throughout this entire process. Through Bethany House, He gave me awesome editorial support, cover art that was over the top, a marketing department that came out with both guns smoking, and a production department that runs like clockwork. He blessed me with enthusiastic sales reps and booksellers who have graciously placed my books face out and in key spots in their stores. I am humbled and overwhelmed and thankful.

Has your writing process or the way you approach writing changed since you've seen the sales numbers?

Not at all. My job is to write the best book I can no matter what. When I am doing something for the glory of God, I find that I want to place before Him the very best offering I can. In addition to that, I determined early on that I didn't want to be one of those writers where people said, "I really liked her earlier books the best." So it was my goal from the start to strive to make each book a little

better than the last. In order to accomplish that, I continue to attend writing seminars, to read how-to books on writing, and to seek out the opinions of writers and editors I respect. With each project, I find I am coming to the table with new skills that I hadn't had last go-round.

Will you share a favorite moment or memory that happened because of one of your books?

I receive emails from women all over the world who have made changes in their walk with Christ because of the changes my characters made in their walks with Christ. I had one woman who prayed the exact same prayer my character did, rededicated her life to Christ, and once again put God above all else. Those kinds of stories mean so much to me. I really have a heart for women and I want them to know that every single one of us can have victory through Christ.

With that desire in mind, what do you hope to convey through your writing?

I don't really have a specific agenda, per se. Each of my books has its own theme, but what message the reader takes away from them is between the reader and God. From my end, I am simply writing the books in an effort to use my gifts and talents to glorify God. It is an offering to Him. What He does with it is between Him and the readers.

So where do you see your writing fitting into CBA romance?

I consider myself an outreach author whose target audience doesn't yet grace the doors of Christian bookstores. It is my hope that when the general market reads my book, they will then go to a CBA store to find more inspirational fiction. Once they are there, perhaps they will not only buy more fiction, but also go to the Devotional section or the Non-Fiction section or even the Bible section. It is my heart's desire to drive more traffic from the general market into the CBA market.

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There has been some critique of Christian romance that it's not "real" enough. However, when *A Bride Most Begrudging* came out, people had the opposite reaction, calling it "edgy." How do you know where your line is in terms of content?

Basically, when my publisher says no. If I had it my way, my line would be beyond what I've been permitted to do, so far. I find, though, that I must be very conscious of the Spirit's prompting while I am writing. If my character is going to do something, or say something, that pushes the envelope, then I have to feel at peace about it. So I pray. I pray that the Lord will give me discernment and my editor discernment and all the influencers at Bethany House discernment.

Because I am imperfect, it helps to have someone else pray over it, too. The main thing is, ultimately, I want to be sure that what I have done glorifies God. And if He is okay with it, then I am okay with it.

It seems you are very conscious of where God is in your writing. On the flip side, how do your faith and your writing influence each other, if at all?

My faith influences everything I do. It effects my writing tremendously, though it is usually a behind-the-scenes sort of influence. In other words, I pray over each step in the writing process as I come upon it—whether it is the research, the plotting, the actual writing, or even the marketing.

I really, really want to be open to the Spirit's promptings so that I am merely a vessel that the Lord can use for His purposes. That usually makes for some surprises along the way, especially if the Lord wants me to do something with a character or with the plot that I'm not too keen on doing. That said, the journey is never boring! +

To find out more about Dee and her books, visit www.IWantHerBook.com.