



Readers Discussion Guide
With This Pledge
a Carnton novel, book 1
by Tamera Alexander

Spoiler Alert! As would be expected in a discussion guide, crucial plot points and events are revealed in the following questions. So if you haven't finished reading *With This Pledge* and don't wish to have these "surprises" spoiled, you might want to skip reading the group guide until you have.

Check out [the Carnton Novels page](#) on Tamera's website for images of the mansion and for details about the real people who lived at Carnton—and about how you can visit Carnton too!

Dear friends,

I'm thrilled you've chosen **With This Pledge** as your reading group selection, and I hope you enjoyed Roland and Lizzie's story. Christ drew me closer to Him as I wrote this novel, and my prayer is that somewhere along the way as you read, you took a step closer to Him too.

I'd love to join your group discussion!

If you're interested in having me join your group via a Virtual Book Club Meeting, visit my website (www.TameraAlexander.com) and click on **BONUS FEATURES**, then **FOR BOOK CLUBS** to learn more about Virtual Book Club Meetings.

Also, if you're ever in Nashville, please make a point to see Carnton. Visit www.boft.org for details, and be sure to tell them you've read *With This Pledge*!

I've also written two other Southern series you may be interested in . . . The Belmont Mansion novels and the Belle Meade Plantation novels:



The families in these mansions knew one another in the 19th century. So in understanding that their lives connected in the 1800s, it only made sense that they should connect again...on the pages of these novels!

Continued blessings,
Tamera

Discussion Questions (also included in the back of the book)—

1. Before reading *With This Pledge*, had you heard about Carnton in Franklin, Tennessee? Were you familiar with the Battle of Franklin and with the history of the final months of the Civil War?
2. Did you feel closer to Lizzie or to Roland in the novel? Which of them did you identify with most? Are you from the North or the South? How do you think your own personal heritage shaped your perspective as you read the novel?
3. Lizzie felt powerless to change her world due to the social mores and restrictions placed on women during the 19th century. Have you ever experienced the brunt of such restrictions? If yes, how did you meet those challenges? Did your situation change?
4. Roland Jones was a slaveowner in real life and held extensive properties in Yalobusha, Mississippi. How did knowing this about him shape your view of him and the opinions he so staunchly held?
5. Though we don't know the real name of the older black woman who served as cook to the McGavocks, we do know that she was "left behind" when the rest of the slaves were moved South during the war. What are your thoughts about Tempy's character? And if you could write the rest of her story, what would it be? (Stay tuned... there's more for Tempy in books 2 and 3!)
6. As the battle unfolded that night and you ascended the stairs with Lizzie after the surgeon requested her assistance, what thoughts were going through your mind? How would you have responded in her place? Would you have been able to do what she did in the story?
7. Roland and Sister Catherine share a conversation in Ch 18 that centers around faith, believing, and temptation. Did you relate to what they were saying? Sister Catherine comments, "Sometimes life on this side of the veil is far more difficult than I think it should be. Especially for those of us who belong to God. But then again, his promises do not eliminate suffering." Do you agree or disagree? Why?
8. In Ch 20, Lizzie is faced with the choice of whether or not to be completely honest with Towny. Can you relate to Lizzie's motivation behind saying yes to Towny? Does her motivation translate in any way to today's culture? If yes, how?
9. We're introduced to Preacher E.M. Bounds in this story. Bounds really did accompany the Army of Tennessee into battle as portrayed in the novel. One of his favorite sayings was "Prayers are deathless. They outlive the lives of those who utter them." Do you agree or disagree? Has your life been changed because someone prayed faithfully for

you? Have you seen an answer to faithful prayer in your own life? Please share.

10. In Ch 30, Roland confronts Lizzie about her stance on slavery. What was the motivation behind his timing? Can you relate to Lizzie's reasons for the McGavocks not being aware of her beliefs? Do you think you would have had the courage to stand against opposing views on slavery during that time? What difficult choices have you made in your life in relation to standing for what you know is right?
11. In Ch 38, Roland struggles to reconcile the fact that two men he greatly admired and who largely shaped his faith might have been immoral men. What faith legacy are you leaving to your family? Will it stand the test of time?
12. Did you enjoy The Christmas Carol being woven into the story? Had you read that story before? What parallels did you see between Scrooge's life and Roland's? What lessons can we learn that we can apply to our daily lives?
13. In the epilogue, Lizzie writes a letter that's been "being written" inside her for a very long time. Who is the letter to? And have you ever written a letter like that to someone who's already passed? Do you believe those who've gone on before us can see back to this earthly realm? Can you give Biblical evidence (or supposition) for this?

Be sure and take a group picture of your book club (holding up your books!) and share it with Tamera at TameraAlexander@gmail.com.

Would you be willing to send Tamera a picture of your book club? She'd love to feature it on her [Facebook Page](#). Send the picture to TameraAlexander@gmail.com with your name(s), your group's name, and the city where you're located. Be sure to hold up your books!

Tamera's website:	www.tameraalexander.com
Facebook:	http://www.facebook.com/tamera.alexander
Twitter:	http://twitter.com/tameraalexander
Pinterest:	http://pinterest.com/tameraauthor
Tamera's group blog:	http://inspiredbylifeandfiction.com
Instagram:	http://instagram.com/tameraalexanderauthor/
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Recipe Ideas for Group Gatherings (more in the back of the book)—

Tempy's Skillet-fried Hoecakes

Tempy hardly ever measured anything, so you don't have to be spot on with this humble 19th-century recipe either. For each six to eight cakes desired, stir together the following, gradually adding more water until the consistency looks "just right." Use either white or yellow cornmeal, your preference. The amount of water will vary depending on the brand and freshness of the cornmeal, so start with a smaller portion and gradually add more if necessary.

Ingredients:

1 cup white or yellow cornmeal

1/2 tsp. salt

2/3 c. to 3/4 c. water, or more as needed

butter, bacon grease, lard, solid shortening, or vegetable oil as needed

In a medium bowl, stir together the cornmeal, salt, and enough water to obtain a thin (but not too runny) consistency (how's that for approximation!). Let the batter stand while you heat a large cast-iron skillet or griddle over medium-high heat until thoroughly heated. It doesn't *have* to be a cast-iron skillet, but cast iron fries these hoecakes so beautifully. And it's what Tempy used! Add 2 Tbsp. of fat for each four cakes prepared (I prefer the combination of a little bacon grease and butter, but it's up to you).

Continue heating the skillet until a splash of water sizzles when sprinkled on its surface. Using about 1 1/2 to 2 Tbsp. batter for each cake, spoon out generous tablespoons onto the griddle or skillet (usually about four at a time), making sure to keep them well separated. Gently spread the circles of batter out into thin rounds. The thinnest rounds will make the crispest hoecakes!

Cook until crispy and lightly browned on one side, then carefully turn with a spatula and cook until crisp and brown on the other side. This usually takes 3 to 4 minutes. Serve immediately with butter, honey, maple syrup, or jelly, if desired.

Makes 6 to 8 three-inch hoecakes. The recipe may be doubled or tripled as desired! Tempy would be so proud!

Tempy's Southern Teacakes

No matter how many times I make these, I still love them! They're more akin to a cookie than cake, and the story of where these cookies originated from varies depending on whose kitchen you're in. Likely, some frugal Southern cook found her cupboards on the meager side and whipped something up anyway. These cookies are—by nature and

circumstance of situation in the Civil War—usually fairly bland. To dress them up, cooks would add either a little cinnamon, or nutmeg, or (my favorite) lemon zest! But I do encourage you to try these little jewels. They're especially delicious with—you're reading my mind, I can feel it—a hot cup of tea.

Ingredients:

1 cup softened unsalted butter (2 sticks)
2 cups sugar*
3 large eggs
1 tsp vanilla extract
3 1/2 cups plain flour
1 tsp baking soda
1/2 tsp salt

Beat the softened butter at medium speed with an electric mixer (or if you're feeling particularly toned, by hand). Gradually add the sugar and mix until well combined. Add eggs one at a time, beating after each. Then stir in the vanilla. In a separate bowl, combine the dry ingredients and whisk well. Gradually add the dry mixture to the butter mixture, beating at lower speed until the mixture is fully combined. Then divide the dough into halves and wrap in plastic wrap. Chill for about 30-45 minutes.

Roll chilled dough out on a floured surface. Then using a biscuit cutter (or cookie cutter of choice), cut the cookies and place them on a parchment lined baking sheet. Bake at 350 degree oven for 10 - 12 minutes or until the edges have started to brown. Watch closely so they don't burn.

Recipes from all of Tamera's novels are available [HERE](#)

Tamera's novels

Listed by series, book order within series, and ISBN number
www.TameraAlexander.com

Updated January 2020

The Carnton Novels (4-book stand-alone series)

Christmas at Carnton, a Carnton novella (ISBN 978-0310293248)

With This Pledge, a Carnton novel (ISBN 978-0718081836)

Colors of Truth, July 2020 (ISBN 978-0718081867)

Book 3, Summer 2021

Belle Meade Plantation novels (3-book stand-alone series)

To Whisper Her Name, a Belle Meade Plantation novel, Book 1 (ISBN 978-0310291060)

To Win Her Favor, a Belle Meade Plantation novel, Book 2 (ISBN 978-0310291077)

To Wager Her Heart, a Belle Meade Plantation novel, Book 3 (ISBN 978-0310291084)

*To Mend a Dream**, a Belle Meade Plantation novella e-book, (ISBN 978-1401690731)

**To Mend a Dream* is also available in print in *Among the Fair Magnolias*, a Southern love story collection

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Stand-alone novel

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Timber Ridge Reflections (3-book stand-alone series)

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Within My Heart, Timber Ridge Reflections, Book 3 (ISBN 978-0764203916)

Fountain Creek Chronicles (3-book stand-alone series)

Rekindled, Fountain Creek Chronicles, Book 1 (ISBN 0-7642-0108-5)



Tamera with Murphy (left) and Bailey her sweet but slightly rowdy Australian Terriers (emphasis on *terriers!*).

Revealed, Fountain Creek Chronicles, Book 2 (ISBN 0-7642-0109-3)

Remembered, Fountain Creek Chronicles, Book 3 (ISBN 0-7642-0110-7)

Tamera's series books are considered stand-alone novels, meaning they can be read out of order, and that each story is "complete" and not carried over to the next book. However, if you're planning to read all books in a series, you're encouraged to read them in series order for the most fulfilling story experience.

Tamera's books are available in print, ebook, and audio—and in Dutch, German, Polish, Romanian, and Slovak.

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