

Interview with Terri Blackstock
Private Justice (ISBN 0310217571)

Zondervan: How do difficult and dangerous situations lead us to reexamine what's most important to us?

Blackstock: The reason I love writing suspense novels is that I can show ordinary people caught in extraordinary situations, and through that danger and fear, they're able to see their own lives more clearly. In *PRIVATE JUSTICE*, Mark and Allie are separated because of his interest in another woman. When a serial killer begins to murder the wives of the firemen, Mark realizes that Allie could be next. He sets out to protect her from the killer, despite the fact that she wants nothing to do with him. And when he's threatened with the possibility of losing her forever, he begins to realize how important his marriage is to him. As the killer closes in, Mark re-examines his life and sees how far he's strayed from his relationship with Christ. And that separation has led to his marital separation. Things he took for granted before, and was willing to discard, are suddenly his very lifeline.

Zondervan: What can suspense and adventure stories teach us about faith?

Blackstock: Through dealing with danger and disaster, I'm able to show God's sovereignty over darkness and evil, His provision and protection, and His redemptive power. My hope is that readers will read that and remember times in their own lives when evil seemed to prevail, until God intervened and used that evil for some good purpose. Sometimes the crisis turns out to be the blessing, and while we can't see that when we're in the midst of it, years later we can often look back and see that God was working and He had a plan. If that causes my readers to draw closer to God, then my stories have succeeded.

Zondervan: What are the challenges of writing strong fiction with Christian themes?

Blackstock: One of the challenges in writing Christian fiction is to keep the message from overpowering the story. I don't want to preach to my readers, and I never want to include what I call "gratuitous gospel," just because someone might expect that in a Christian book. My hope is that the themes and messages of my novels will be so interwoven that they are literally part of the plot. They're not just plugged in to make it a Christian book, and they couldn't be taken out to make it a secular book. I hope that people who are not Christians would enjoy my stories just as much as believers, because the plot hooks them and won't let them go.