

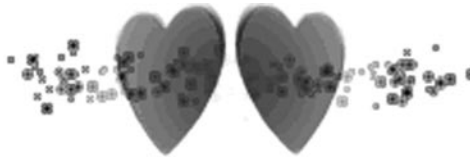
Tempered Dreams



Pamela S. Thibodeaux

***“For God does speak, perhaps once,
or even twice, though one perceive it
not. In a dream, in a vision of the night
(when deep sleep falls upon men)
as they slumber in their beds.” Job
33:14-15***

Tempered Dreams



Pamela S. Thibodeaux

A ComStar Media Book
Salem, Oregon

Tempered Dreams

Book Two of the Tempered Hearts Series

By: Pamela S. Thibodeaux



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ISBN: 1-933866-04-7

This book was published by **ComStar Media, LLC.**
Salem, Oregon, U.S.A.

First Printing, September, 2005

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0

Cover design by: Jennifer Lee Andersen and Jack Reynolds
Cover artwork by: Judith Leger

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Tempered Dreams

Dedication and Acknowledgements

All honor and glory belong to God for His wisdom, direction and strength to get through such a painful-yet-beautiful story.

This is dedicated to battered women everywhere; may you find the peace and joy offered through salvation, forgiveness, and the healing power of God's grace and mercy. To the people who counsel them and to the doctors who treat them, may God bless you in your endeavors. To the perpetrators of domestic violence and the children who are also their victims, may God reach your hearts and change your lives.

For James, in the spirit of forgiveness. Though painful, what we experienced was nowhere near this horrific or dramatic; for that I am eternally grateful.

And last but definitely not least, for my husband, Terry. Your love and support have paved the way for my dreams to come true. Thank you. I love you!

A special note of appreciation to Sandy Cummins, CEO of Writer's Exchange E-Publishing Co. <http://www.writers-exchange.com/> e-publishing for catching the vision and releasing *Tempered Dreams* as an e-book in June 2001. Thank you Sandy! May God bless the work of your hands and give you the desires of your heart.

And a very special "Thank You" goes to Lauron Sonnier (McCulloch) Stewart, President of Sonnier Marketing <http://www.sonniermarketing.com> for the original artwork for *Tempered Hearts* and *Tempered Dreams*. You helped make my vision a reality...for this I'll forever be grateful. God Bless you Lauron!

Shame darkened her eyes, tears trailed down her cheeks. “I know. It’s just that I’m afraid you’re wrong, and that they won’t like me after they find out about my past.”

He ground his teeth in agitation. “You don’t know them. I do. They would never be so shallow as to judge you for something you had very little, if any, control over. What makes you think I’ll go into detail about your past anyway? Do you think my love is so superficial that I’d do anything to embarrass or humiliate you?”

“I guess not,” she admitted avoiding his gaze, ashamed that she was afraid he’d do just that. “I’ll go if you want me to.”

Scott hesitated this time. He wanted her with them, but not because she felt pressured or obligated to go and certainly not if she was afraid of causing a strain between them if she didn’t. “Look, if you don’t want to go just say so. You don’t have to do what I want, whenever I want. You’re feelings count here too. Don’t give in just to avoid a discussion.”

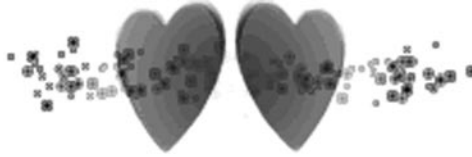
“It’s not discussions I want to avoid. It’s a fight.”

Raking his fingers through his hair, Scott suppressed a growl. “A difference of opinion doesn’t always end up in a fight, Katrina.” His voice was soft even though he was unable to disguise the agitation he felt.

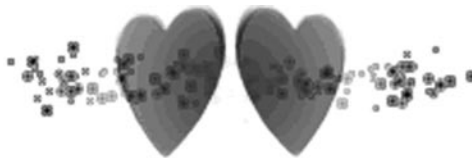
“Then why are you getting angry?” she countered, stepping away from him.

It was the ultimate show of fear. Scott closed his eyes and prayed for guidance and tolerance. What would it take for her to get over her fear and to trust him?

Chapter One



Katrina Simmons awoke with a jolt when the car she rode in slammed into the bridge, spun twice and came to a sliding halt against the concrete wall. She sat a moment, stunned, her heart banging against her ribs, her breath escaping in ragged pants. Thank God there was no one around. Reaching over, she shook her husband. “Jack?” He mumbled, eyes rolling languidly, and passed out. Rage unlike anything she’d ever known roared through her. Fumbling with the door handle, she managed to get it open and climbed shakily out of the vehicle. A groan, more anguish than pain, escaped her clenched teeth as she considered the damage to her car. “Great, Jack! Just great,” she raged at her husband, who reclined in a drunken stupor. “You’ve finally done it! You’ve ruined my car!” she accused, kicking the door.



Dr. Scott Hensley settled in for the drive to New Orleans. It wasn’t a long drive from Lafayette, but a trip he wasn’t looking forward to. Mardi Gras in New Orleans was not the place to be.

Putting the top down on his car, he reveled in the brisk evening air. A nearly full moon gleamed its glory against a backdrop of black velvet in the star-studded sky. A cacophony of night birds and insects sang in harmony, rivaling the sound of tires slapping on pavement. Much to his surprise, Interstate traffic was light. At the sight of an automobile accident, he slowed his vehicle and pulled over. Using his mobile phone, he called the police and climbed out of his car to check on the victims.

“Are you all right?” he asked, hurrying toward the young woman

paced alongside the car.

She whirled around with a screech, lunged through the window, and shook the driver. "You drunken idiot!" she raged, punching him soundly on the jaw. She shook him again, winced, and shoved away to continue her tirade.

Being a wise man, Scott stepped back from the raging female as the sound of sirens pierced the air. Showing his Identification, he talked with one of the police officers arriving on the scene while the other officer spoke with the young woman.

"Did you see what happened?"

Scott shook his head. "No, I pulled up afterward. Looks like they hit the wall." He glanced toward the stretch of concrete median dividing one of the longest bridges in Louisiana and the United States. Most of its four lanes divided by water, the stretch of highway passed over the Achafalaya Basin between Lafayette and Baton Rouge, making it a tedious section to travel with few exits. Endless swamps and cypress trees were the only scenery.

They watched the young woman pace, answering in monosyllables. She turned in an angry whirl, gestured wildly, then cradled her arm against her.

"She seems to be favoring her wrist," the officer observed.

Scott chuckled. "I'm sure it needs tending. She hit him."

The cop's eyes widened. "What? Who?"

Scott laughed softly and shook his head. "Her husband or boyfriend, whoever is driving. When I arrived, she was ranting and raving about him ruining her car. She lunged through the window, and punched him. I haven't had a chance to check on him. I doubt he's injured too badly. From what I can gather he's probably drunk."

"What did he do?"

Again Scott chuckled, feeling a tug in the region of his heart. The fiery little lady reminded him of someone he knew. Two someone's actually, someone he loved and someone he'd lost.

"He just groaned and passed out," Scott answered, walking toward them. He presented his I. D. to the other officer, requesting permission to check her wrist.

Katrina balked at the offer. "I'm fine," she hissed, not caring about her wrist. All she wanted was for someone to drag her husband out of the car and let her loose on him!

Scott reached for her, turning her to face him. "Easy, Sweetheart," he said, his voice a soft drawl. "I won't hurt you."

She looked up at him, her eyes wide and angry, her cheeks flushed, and fainted. Scott caught her as she slumped in his arms. Picking up her small

frame, he held her as the summoned ambulance arrived with sirens blaring. Carrying her to it, he waited as the EMT's opened the back and retrieved a stretcher before gently laying her there to examine her. Her wrist, swollen and purple, showed signs of a break. The golden band on her ring finger implied that the driver was her husband. Other than restless stirrings, she seemed fine.

Covering her with a blanket from the ambulance, Scott watched the officers pull the driver out of the car. Gut-wrenching fury clawed through him when they hauled the huge bulk of a man from behind the wheel. A tad over his own six-foot height, the man was a giant compared to his tiny wife.

Where Scott's broad shoulders tapered down and narrowed to a slim waist and long, muscular legs, this guy was rock-hard. His chest was easily as broad and thick as his shoulders. He had a solid middle and bulky, muscular legs and hips, the build of a football player, wrestler or body builder. From his belligerent attitude, he obviously took advantage of it.

"You leave me in jail, and you'll pay for it, Katrina," he hissed, slurring the words, obviously unconcerned that his wife lay passed out on a stretcher. When the young woman began to moan and writhe, Scott turned toward her.

"My baby," she whimpered. Clutching her stomach, she curled into a tiny ball and wept.

Scott noticed a widening stain of blood on her jeans as it seeped from her body. Pulling her against his chest, he did his best to soothe the trembling female in his arms. In all of his years as a physician, nothing prepared him for the array of emotions slashing through him. After she had quieted, never fully conscious, he lay her back down.

Walking over to the police car, he hailed the officer. "Add murder to his charges. She just miscarried," he growled, glaring at the man in cuffs.

It took a moment for the words to register on Jack Simmons's booze fuddled brain. He grunted. "Don't need no brats anyway," he slurred. His head rolled languidly, and he slipped into a drunken stupor once more.

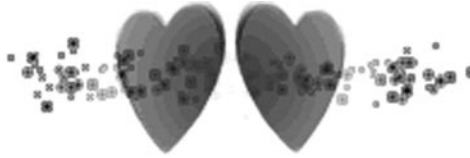
Scott's hands clenched into fists and for one fleeting moment, he thanked God that he'd taken an oath to preserve life. He could easily kill the man, so obviously unconcerned with his wife and unborn child that he'd driven, drunk, with her in the car. Domestic violence and child abuse were the two most hated diagnoses in the Physicians Desk Reference and he'd seen enough to leave no doubt in his mind that she had little, if any, say about the situation she was in.

The police drove off with the husband cuffed securely into the back seat, and the ambulance took her away. He watched their departure and

then decided to follow the ambulance to see how she was. Turning on his c. b. radio, he communicated with the drivers and found out what emergency room they were taking her to.

“Well, she’s from Lafayette, but we’re closer to Baton Rouge, so we’re taking her there,” the paramedic replied.

Using his mobile phone, Scott put in a call to the hospital he was traveling to and bought some time. Instead of the seven in the morning to seven in the evening shift he’d originally been scheduled, Scott had it switched to the opposite. He pulled in behind the ambulance and talked with the doctors and nurses on staff in the emergency room at Baton Rouge General. Then he waited.



Katrina swam up from the pain-induced fog to awareness. Tossing in discomfort, she opened her eyes. Surprise and shock widened them as she gazed into the soft brown eyes of a stranger.

Scott moved closer when she stirred. He’d been watching her for hours. The sunlight streaming in the room bounced off the red highlights in her thick, golden hair, turning it into a fiery mass. Her skin, silky smooth and the color of a sun-ripened peach, made him wonder about the color of her eyes. Probably the blue or green that usually accompanied her coloring, he thought. Hazel perhaps. Wrong. They were brown; deep, dark brown, like two huge chocolate drops in a bowl of peaches and cream. He smiled tenderly and she glanced away with a blush. “Do I know you?” she queried in a timid voice.

“I’m Dr. Scott Hensley. I was at the accident last night. I thought you might appreciate seeing a familiar face when you woke up. Can I get you anything or call someone for you?”

Her lip trembled as she shook her head. “My husband?”

Biting back a growl, he softened his reply. “In jail, Sweetheart. That’s all I know.”

“Good,” she muttered, blushing at the relief she felt but still trembling with the fear. Jack always threatened to hurt her if she ever had him put in jail or left him if he landed there on his own. This morning she didn’t care. He’d caused her pain for the last time and cost her the one thing she wanted most in life--her baby. The minute she returned home, she planned to call a lawyer.

Scott watched the emotions cross her lovely, fragile features and fought back the urge to take her in his arms. Professional ethics insisted that he remain objective, but it was difficult to adhere to ethics when a lone tear escaped from one of her tightly closed eyes to leave a trail down her silky cheek. He waited and watched, his heart cringing, as she fought valiantly against the tears, and lost. Her breath started to hitch and she succumbed to the sobs wracking her small frame.

Forget ethics.

Sitting on the bed, Scott pulled her into his arms and held her against his chest. The icy reserve he'd built around his heart over the last several years began to melt under the onslaught of her tears. His fingers sank into the luxurious softness of her hair while the other hand caressed her back in a soothing manner. Her sobs subsided into soft, hiccupping sounds; silence ensued.

Katrina stiffened fearfully when she realized the strength in the arms of the man holding her, arms of a stranger, of a man other than her husband. Grinding her teeth in mortification, she pushed herself away, a hot blush warming her cheeks. "I'm sorry," she mumbled, not daring to look him in the eye.

"It's okay, Sweetheart. I'm a doctor. I won't hurt you. Are you sure there's no one I can call for you? Your mother or some other family member?"

She shook her head. "No. No one," she admitted, knowing that her mother wouldn't be able to come even if she wanted to. Her stepfather would see to that. Coming from a long line of abused women, Katrina was determined to break the pattern. Never again would a man take advantage of her. Scott's voice broke into her thoughts.

"Is there anything I can do?"

"Leave me alone." She turned away knowing her words were rude and not at all grateful for the comfort he so easily and gallantly offered.

Totally unprepared for that answer, Scott frowned. He'd dealt enough with grief and pain to know when a patient was talking out of emotion, lashing out. He respected that. But coming from someone so tiny, so fragile, so vulnerable, it seemed out of place. He remembered her fury the night before and bit back a grin. Maybe not.

"Okay," he said, brushing the thick mane of red-gold hair off her face then stood. "I need to be going, anyway." Still, he hesitated. Something about her pulled at him. Maybe her fragile beauty, or the subtle waves of fear. Perhaps the gentle elegance of her fine, porcelain-like features giving the impression of a china doll, or the fiery passion he had witnessed last night. He shook himself mentally; maybe he was just tired.

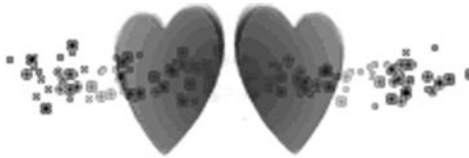
With a slight shrug he walked around the bed and toward the door.

Turning, he got a glimpse of the tremble that shook her slender frame. He walked back to the bed, reaching for his wallet and pulled out a business card.

“Look, here’s my card. If there’s anything, anything at all I can do for you, please don’t hesitate to call.” He wrote the phone number to the hospital in New Orleans where he would be for the next couple of weeks. She remained silent as he set the card on the bedside table.

With another subtle caress, he brushed the hair off her cheek and felt her stiffen. Of their own accord, his knuckles swept gently across her cheek again, soothing. He bit back words of comfort. It was evident though needed she didn’t want them. Turning quietly, he left.

Trina’s fingers trembled when she reached for the card and noticed that he resided in the same town as she. Questions rolled around in her head and all she could do was speculate about the answers. Dr. Scott Hensley. Who was he? What did he want? Was he like this with all of his patients or just the helpless females?



The two-hour drive to New Orleans passed without further incident; giving Scott plenty of time to think about the woman he left behind. Something about her stirred memories long since buried, some better off forgotten. Unable to resist, he picked up the phone and dialed the hospital. Requesting her room, he waited for her to answer. “Hello?”

“Mrs. Simmons...” he hesitated. What was he supposed to say? He didn’t even know why he called! Clearing his throat, he tried again. “Katrina, I’m serious about what I said. If there’s anything you need, please feel free to contact me.”

“Dr. Hensley,” she huffed out a sigh. “I know you’re aware that I’m a married woman. I don’t know what you want from me, but you won’t get it. I’d appreciate it if you just leave me alone,” she insisted, slamming the receiver into its cradle. Men! her mind screamed, drowning out the voice in her heart chiding her for the unfairness of her attitude.

Put ever so completely in his place, Scott hung up. A smile crossed his face as he thought about the defiant tone that belied the soft, sensual voice. Maybe it was time for a challenge in his life. He sighed, wishing once again to go anywhere but New Orleans and slipped a cassette in the deck. Soft,

soothing Jazz notes oozed out of the speakers as his mind roamed lazily along the path of his career.

In all of his years as a physician, his one desire -the desire to help those in need- was finally being fulfilled in this job. He was one of the leading physicians for the Louisiana Charity Health Care System, a system that served the needy. One of the joys of being on contract with the State was traveling to different facilities and working with various people. One of the disadvantages was not being able to refuse. But at least he no longer had to journey with missionaries to do the good he so desperately wanted to do. He'd given up on that after the death of his wife and parents.

Leaving his home in Texas more than six years ago hadn't been an easy decision, but a necessary one. Necessary for his sanity. Home was too full of memories. Memories he hadn't dragged out in a long time. Memories that surfaced now. His jaw hardened and fists clenched in automatic defense against the swift tug of anger followed by sorrow and grief that always accompanied the recollections of his wife and parents, and how they died.

He'd been on a three-month mission in South America. His family had flown down to visit him his second month there, his mother and father always so proud, and Melissa, his wife. He'd been swept away by her passion, not seeing until it was too late that there was very little substance beneath. Though not a happy marriage from the beginning, Scott did his best to adhere to his vows. Still, he was on the verge of divorce when he received the offer to travel with the missionary. He'd known then, even as he knew now, that the trip had only been an escape hatch and that when he returned home he'd have to make some serious decisions about his marriage.

As fate would have it, he went home sooner than expected when the plane they occupied was blown out of the air by terrorists. To date, their deaths were recorded as a senseless, unsolved tragedy.

He'd returned to Bandera, Texas to bury his family. Unable to deal with the grief, the heartache and the guilt, he sold the ranch to his friend Craig Harris, who then turned most of it into an arena and campground. The house was turned into a Bed & Breakfast, and the charity rodeo that the Rockin' H had hosted for over thirty years was now held there. The rest of the year, it was merely an extension of the Rockin' H. Guests came and went at the B & B, giving a substantial monthly income, which, at Craig's insistence, Scott retained. That decision made, Scott had moved on. Craig and his family still remained his closest friends. Now when he returned to Bandera for a visit, it was with joy; joy tempered by memories and heartache.

His mobile phone rang once, jerking Scott out of his reverie; which was a good thing since he nearly missed his exit. When it didn't ring a second time, he shrugged it off, knowing that if it were important, whoever it was

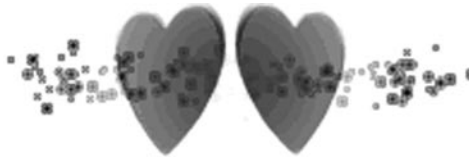
would call back. Arriving in New Orleans, he ordered flowers to be sent to Mrs. Katrina Simmons then took a badly needed nap.

The next ten days flew by with little time to dwell on the fiery little lady in Baton Rouge General, but she was always in the back of his mind, making him smile.

From the weekend before to the weekend following Fat Tuesday, New Orleans ran wild, parties ending in fights, fights ending in brawls, brawls ending in injury or death. It was rough, to say the least. New Orleans was notorious for its parties and passions.

Beautiful and old, the city graced the banks of the Mississippi river, as it had for more than a hundred years. In the old days, the French filled this port city with style and elegance. To date, it still held all the magic and beauty, with its river walk, shops and boutiques, French Market and, of course, the notorious Bourbon Street. Restaurants offered the best of French Cuisine and nightclubs offered the best in Jazz music. New Orleans was a beautiful place to visit, but Scott wouldn't want to live there, especially during Mardi Gras.

Scott knew the city and its people would settle down after Fat Tuesday. Rich in tradition, they would shelter in for the Lenten season, repenting of their wicked ways and drawing closer to God. This spiritual side increased the charm of New Orleans. Full of life, the people exuded laughter, love and faith, but like all of God's children, they had their rebellion and tantrums. During Mardi Gras, these aspects came out in the worst ways.



Katrina stared at the single, rebellious rose still alive amongst the bouquet of dead flowers. The arrangement had graced her kitchen table for almost a week now. A smile curved her lip. That one rose reminded her of him, the strange doctor with his tall good looks and Texas drawl. Stubborn too, she thought, but a gentle stubbornness. Trina knew she'd never met a man like him before.

Taking the flower from the center of the bouquet, she placed it in a slender vase. Burying her nose in its soft fragrance, she inhaled deeply, then exhaled on a sigh. This one rose spoke so boldly of life, life and hope, especially considering the rest had long since been dead.

A tear rolled down her cheek and emotions swarmed through her as she faced the sad facts. No life existed in her marriage, and no hope; nothing

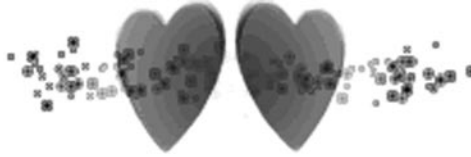
left to cling to after nearly ten years of abuse. There was only now, her life and her future, if she wanted one, if she wanted to live long enough to have one.

Trina knew the facts, the statistics. Most battered women lived frightened, lonely lives, if they lived at all.

For some unknown reason, she had survived through the years of abuse, first as a child then as a wife. Trina found it hard to believe that it was God who looked after her, not after all she'd been through and tolerated in the name of love.

Despite everything, she still believed in the sanctity of marriage. But she could no longer consider hers a true marriage. Until suffering the loss of her child, she'd never faced the fact that what she lived in for the past nine and a half years was not a marriage. Not in the real sense of the word. In truth, it didn't even come close. Trina knew what she had to do. Picking up the phone she called Legal Aide.

Chapter Two



Katrina locked the door behind her and sighed. In the four days since she had called Legal Aide, she'd been busy. At the advice of her attorney, Sam Ortego, she took half of the money out of the checking and savings accounts and removed her name from both. She'd packed up all of Jack's things, dividing the household items as fairly as possible after showing a list to Sam, and stored them in the shed in the yard. She'd had the locks changed on the doors of the tiny house they rented and contacted the landlord to tell him of the situation. He, in turn, made sure all of the windows had screens on them and that they were nailed shut. Jack would literally have to break in to get to her.

Walking into the kitchen, she tossed her mail onto the counter and put the kettle on to boil for a cup of tea. Turning toward the table, she caught sight of the single rose that, against all odds, continued to thrive in its vase. Taking it out of the window, she carried it to the table and set it down. Tenderly fingering a silky petal, she smiled.

"I don't know if you're a special breed of flower or just a stubborn one, or if you're a symbol of grace, beauty, and hope from God, but you sure are beautiful," she spoke softly, feeling a little foolish talking to a yellow rose.

Yellow rose of Texas. The thought made her think of him, the strangely tender doctor she'd met that night. Shaking off the foolishness of her thoughts, she buried her nose in the soft petals, inhaling deeply its sweet scent. "I think it's the latter," she confessed.

In the ten days following her return home after the accident, Trina had done a lot of soul searching, and more praying than she'd done in years. Scriptures from the Bible that had been stowed away most of the years of her life, and throughout the years of her marriage, assured her of what she had known in her heart for a long time. Hers was not, never had

Dear Readers,

Abuse of any kind is a terrible thing, but to be abused and betrayed by one you've vowed to love 'till death do us part' is a difficult thing to live through much less emerge from unscathed. But there is always hope. Not the kind you find in drugs or alcohol or any other form of escapism but true hope. Hope and healing that can only be found in the shed blood of Jesus Christ.

It is my prayer that if you don't already know Him, you'll seek Jesus as your Lord and Savior and if you do, you'll pursue a closer walk with Him. And remember, delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart.

Once again, until later, may God bless and keep you –and yours- in the palm of His loving hand!

Books 3 and 4 in the “**Tempered**” Series

Tempered Fire

Based on Proverbs 22:6: “Train a child up in the way he should go, and he shall not depart from it”, *Tempered Fire* revolves around Amber, Craig and Tamera's daughter. Conflict occurs when daddy's little girl finds love of her own. Craig must learn the hardest lesson a devoted father has to learn: **To let go and let God make of His children what He will.** They are, after all, a gift from God, entrusted to him for as long as He chooses.

Through love and laughter, temptation and tragedy, Amber Harris and Stanley Morrison must come to understand the absolute meaning of trust and forgiveness if their marriage is to last as long, and be as strong as her parents'.

Tempered Joy

Based on Psalms 126:5: “They that sow in tears will reap in joy,” *Tempered Joy* revolves around Ace Harris (Craig and Tamera's son) and Lexie Morgan (Scott and Katrina's adopted daughter). Can two young people who clash from the onset learn to trust in the healing power of God and find love and happiness amidst tragedy and grief?

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About the Author

Pamela S. Thibodeaux grew up in the town of Iowa, Louisiana and currently lives there with her husband, Terry. They have four children between them. A deeply committed Christian, Pamela firmly believes in God and His promises.

“God is very real to me and I feel that people today need and want to hear more of His truths wherever they can glean them. People are hungry for practical (and real) Christian values, not some ‘holier-than-thou’ beliefs that are impossible to believe and impossible to live up to,” Pamela says. “I do my best to encourage readers to develop a personal relationship with God. The deepest desire of my heart is to glorify God and to get His message of faith, trust and forgiveness to a hurting world.”

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