



Defiant Heart (Westward Hearts)

By Tracey Bateman
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Introduction

Fannie Caldwell knows all too well the sting of her master's hand against her fragile skin. Having spent three years as an indentured servant to a cruel, drunken storekeeper, she desperately wants a new beginning for herself and her twelve-year-old siblings Katie and Kip. After months of planning the three finally escape from the store, and secretly follow a wagon train heading west.

When they are discovered behind the wagon train, the handsome yet bullheaded wagon master Blake Tanner refuses to allow an unmarried woman on the train and demands they return to their town. But Fannie is determined—she will stop at nothing to ensure the safety and freedom of her two siblings. And Blake finds himself strangely drawn to this headstrong woman and reluctantly allows her to join the train. There is a fire in Fannie that he has never known in any woman.

As life on the trail tests endurance and faith, Fannie soon realizes the realities of life as a young, single woman on the frontier. And witnessing Fannie get in and out of trouble, Blake slowly recognizes how much he is falling for this beautiful lost woman. Little do they know that they are about to face the biggest challenge yet—and they'll have to sacrifice more than they ever imagined.

Questions for Discussion

1. Blake has a problem trusting women because of his mother's past. How does your upbringing affect your current relationships for the good or bad?
2. Do you think Fannie (and Toni) had the right to take the money when they left Hawkins? Why or why not? What would you have done in their situation?
3. Why do you think Sam is able to look past Toni's sins and into her heart?
4. Do you know someone with a tarnished past and wish you could give them the benefit of the doubt? Are you the one who is trying to change but find it difficult to convince people around you of your sincerity?
5. Throughout Fannie's early childhood she had a happy family life with two loving parents. Suddenly her world was upended when her father died. What could her mother have done to spare her children their hard life after her death?
6. Why do you think no one came to Fannie and the twins' rescue from Tom? After three years, surely someone noticed they were being abused. How far have we come as a society, do you think, where child protection is concerned?
7. What steps do you think Fannie should take to learn to forgive those who have hurt her, including the stepfather who sold her to Tom in the first place? How does her inability to forgive keep her from moving forward in her life?
8. Both Fannie and Toni are willing to risk everything to have a chance to start fresh out west. Has there ever been a time in your life when you were considering taking a huge risk for a new opportunity?
9. Throughout *Defiant Heart*, Fannie is incredibly brave, headstrong, and stubborn. Her very strong points can sometimes become weaknesses. When does that happen? Do you have any attributes that can become burdens?
10. When Fannie realizes that Blake wants nothing in return for paying her debt, she is able to make the parallel to Jesus. Discuss this debt-cancellation as it pertains to mankind.

About the Author

Tracey Bateman lives in Missouri with her husband and four children. Their rural home provides a wonderful atmosphere for a writer's imagination to grow and produce characters, plots, and settings. In 1994, with three children to raise, she and her husband agreed that she should go to college and earn a degree. In a Freshman English class, her love for writing was rekindled and she wrote a short story that she later turned into a book. Her college career was cut short with the news of their fourth baby's impending arrival, but the seeds of hope for a writing career had already taken root. Over the next several years she wrote, hooked up with critique partners, studied the craft of writing and eventually all the hard work paid off. She currently has over 25 books published in a variety of genres. Tracey believes completely that God has big plans for his Kids and that all things are possible to anyone who will put their hope and trust in the God.

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