



## Thorn in My Heart

*Liz Curtis Higgs*

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**Two brothers fight to claim one father's blessing.**

**Two sisters long to claim one man's heart.**

In the autumn of 1788, amid the moors and glens of the Scottish Lowlands, two brothers and two sisters each embark on a painful journey of discovery.

Jamie and Evan McKie both want their father Alec's flocks and lands, yet only one brother will inherit Glentrool. Leana and Rose McBride both yearn to catch the eye of the same handsome lad, yet only one sister will be his bride.

A thorny love triangle emerges, plagued by lies and deception, jealousy and desire, hidden secrets and broken promises. Brimming with passion and drama, *Thorn in My Heart* brings the past to vibrant life, revealing spiritual truths that transcend time and penetrate the deepest places of the heart.

*From the Trade Paperback edition.*

## **Thorn in My Heart Details**

Date : Published December 24th 2008 by WaterBrook Press (first published January 1st 2003)

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Author : Liz Curtis Higgs

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## **From Reader Review Thorn in My Heart for online ebook**

### **Anne says**

No where in the back of this book does it mention that the author uses the Biblical story of Jacob, Leah, and Rachel as the backbone of this novel. It's not just a hint of it either, it's a very obvious retelling of the story. Granted in the end she HAD to change the outcome because men were not allowed two wives in 1788 Scotland.

She did a fantastic job with the dialogue, substituting in the occassional old Scottish language. The book grew interesting towards the end but I feel that the author should be giving more credit to where she actually got this story and it should be noted on the back cover. Out of sheer curiosuty to see what she does with these character's I will read the next novel Fair Is The Rose.

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### **Carolyn C. says**

This historical novel is the first in a series of three and takes place in the Scottish Lowlands in the 1700's. It is loosely based on the famous biblical account of Jacob, Leah and Rachel. I ran across the three books at a store and was first of all drawn in by the beautiful cover art; I then noticed that the third book had a Christy Award seal on the cover which means the author had won an award for Christian literature:) This made me hopeful that the book would not contain objectionable content. There was however objectionable content...that was plenty of "ANGST"...both mine and the fictional characters!! I truly did suffer along with them in parts...do you do what you are compelled to do...what's honorable...or what your heart tells you?? Yeeeeesshh!!

I did not LOVE this first book as I found the story frustrating and quite sad in parts. The story is riddled with lies, deceit and manipulation...mainly through the intent of parents to get gain through their children. You know "the end doesn't justify the means!!" I do, however, anticipate that things will improve through the next two sequels (I hope, I hope!!).

Having said that...and on the up side...I enjoyed the Scotland experience:) I could actually hear the characters speak with a Scottish brogue...nice:) and I found the traditions and superstitions of the time fascinating!! I also appreciate that the author included a glossary of Scottish terms in the back of the book...which I flipped to frequently.

Hmmmmmm...An easy and relatively quick read...I guess I really did enjoy this book more than I thought!!:) The jury is pretty much out until I've read all three! Stay tuned!!

PS...here's a tip for you...copy your review - just in case. I wrote a review on this book yesterday and when I hit "save" it erased the entire thing:( Dang!!

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### **Erin says**

I rarely give a one. This book was pure torture though. You hope the guy will stop being stupid. You hope

the one sister will stop letting people walk all over her. And you hope the other will stop being a spoiled brat. None of those things ever happen. And then you look at the summary for the next book and find out it continues! Yikes! I won't be reading it.

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### **Kara says**

I wondered how Liz Curtis Higgs was going to manage to adapt the story of Jacob, Leah and Rachel to 18th century Scotland and she pulled it off beautifully! This book was a slow starter for me, I'm not sure why. It's beautifully written and eventful from the first page. I think it was just that I had a lot going on and not much time to read. It finally grabbed me not quite halfway through and I couldn't put it down! Definitely a heartwrencher. The characters are so vividly portrayed you really feel like you know them and the descriptions of life in 1788-89 Scotland make you feel like you're really there! I can't wait to read the rest of the trilogy!

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### **Amy says**

Whew! I had a hard time finishing this one. I really only enjoyed a few chapters near the end. I don't think it needed 77 of them! I can appreciate how it followed the Bible story-- maybe it made it too predictable for me. This book needed to be more succinct; maybe a little more substance and less fluff. Sorry:)

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### **Rebecca Kurtz says**

How I hate Leeana, let me count the ways...

When I picked up this trilogy I didn't know it was the story of the Biblical Jacob, but the author made it so obvious I picked up on this fact within a few paragraphs. Then I got excited because the love story of Jacob and Rachel is one of the most beautiful in the Bible. I still do not understand why the author chose to place the story in eighteenth century Scotland. The author was tediously paralleling Jacob's life in the beginning then heads into alternate Biblical history which I find disconcerting. The stories of the patriarchs should not be altered. Oh, and the middle English spellings of words was really annoying.

Why I hate Leeana (Leah) in this story. Over and over, the author keeps writing that Leeana should have been the choice of Jamie (Jacob) because she was the epitome of sacrificial love. Let me tell me how in the story Leeana was the **MOST SELFISH OF ALL**. First, when her father promises her hand in marriage to a man she is not physically attracted to, she doesn't try to love him and even refuses the marriage once Jaime comes to live with them - even though it is obvious from the first that Jamie is smitten with her younger sister Rose (Rachel). Jamie rebuffs her attempts and tells her plainly he's not interested, yet she keeps trying to win his affections. After Jamie becomes engaged to Rose, Leeana professes her love to Jaime, asking him to marry her instead, and is soundly told by Jaime that he loves only Rose. When that doesn't work, she hides herself under Rose's bride veil and presents herself in a completely darkened room as Rose to a sleeping, drunk Jamie who thinks his wife has finally arrived to consummate their marriage.

How is she the self-sacrificing one? The one full of love? She becomes obsessed with Jaime, stalks him after he's engaged to her sister, refuses to obey her father in marrying another, and then jumps naked into the bed

of a drunk bridegroom.

On the other hand, Rose doesn't want to marry Jamie because she's too young but obeys her father and tries to find affection in her heart for her future groom. She spends much more time with him and grows to romantically love him by their wedding only to find out that her sister took advantage of her drunk husband and is now his wife.

What is scary is that the author creates Reader's Notes at the end to let you know that two side characters, Neda and Duncan, are supposedly to help everyone do what is right in God's eyes.....But, Neda is the one who tells Leeana to jump into Jaime's bed and steal him for her husband. God would never give that advice.

The story ends with Jamie having an emotional affair with Rose while being physically faithful to his pregnant wife (except for kissing). The novel ends with Jamie's son's birth and him deciding to try and love his wife and put Rose behind him.

It is very obvious who the author is cheering for: Leeana. It appears she wants to re-write the Biblical Leah's tale and have her become the victor of Jacob's heart. I almost had to put the book down when the character Jamie says that he didn't know what love was until Leeana loved him for love was sacrifice. But I can't see this. If Leeana sacrificed her own obsession with Jamie, she would have let the two people who loved each other get married. She put herself first. Jaime and Rose's misery was because of Leeana's selfishness.

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### **Anne says**

I absolutely loved this book. It is a retelling of the old Bible story of Jacob and Rachael and her father Laban, only told in 18th century Scotland. Jamie and Evan, twins who are completely different are both wanting to inherit Gentrool, the family home. Much like in the Bible, Jamie, the younger and his mother's favorite, ends up getting his father's blessing and inherits the land. But his mother sends him to her brother Lachlan, to find a bride of one of his children, Rose and Leana.

One beautiful, but flighty, the other plain, but loving, practical and longing for love. When Jamie arrives, he is smitten by 15 year old Rose, while 20 year old Leana aches for him to love her. Rose too is in on the plan to get Jamie to love Leana, until Jamie insists on marrying her. She really does not want to marry yet, but agrees, hurting her dear sister, Leana, who raised her and she truly loves. Machinations by Lachlan have Leana ending up with Jamie, and all sorts of problems result. Knowing rejection, this book really resonated with me and I had trouble keeping from crying at times. I can't wait to read the next book in the series. Highly Recommended.

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### **Laina says**

Well, I read this 400 and something page book in two days, so that says something about it. But I won't say it's the best book I've ever read. I described it to my mom as "pitiful." Sad... pitiful. I've never felt so sorry for a character. I loved the Scottish culture-- as I always do-- and Higgs definitely knew what she was talking about, which was nice. The main male character, Jamie, irked me incessantly. I felt like spitting in his face and calling him a lustful jerk. Of course he just went after the beautiful, younger sister and ignored the adoring, quite, plain sister who clearly loved him with all her heart. I realized after I read it why it felt so familiar, though: It is based on the tale of Rachael and Leah from the Bible. I can't believe I didn't realize it

as I read! All the names started with the same letters as the people in the Biblical story. There was a very strong religious element in it, and it was treacherous and kind of bizarre. I don't suggest it to anyone who wants a fluffy romance to read because you will not be satisfied. In my opinion, it never did really end happily.

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### **Squiggles{Kelly} says**

It's hard for me to give this books five stars because I can't help thinking 'but I DIDN'T like it! It knots up my stomach just to think about it!' And that's the beauty of this series. They aren't sad it the Dicken's way - horrible people who terrorize and do brutal things- it's sad in a human way. There are no good people and there are no bad people. There are characters who make good choices and are caring and kind and there are people who are impulsive and selfish. Bad things happen and hearts are broken- but there is a pervading sense of hope. Somehow, these books, though they twist your heart to pieces and literally made me sob, do not leave you with a bitter taste in your mouth or nightmares. I did love these books- very much.

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### **Ruth says**

I absolutely loved this book. Set in 18th century Scotland, I couldn't imagine a more romantic setting for a novel. As the plot unfolded, I discovered this was a modern retelling of Jacob in the Bible and of Leah and Rachel. By the time I finished the book, I came to realize this is *Leah's* story. Higgs does a remarkable job of putting us in Leah's shoes, in situations that quite possibly could have existed in the original.

I **adored** the Scottish vernacular everywhere throughout the dialogue and the narration. I could easily imitate that Scottish brogue from Higgs' writing. I thoroughly enjoyed the countryside descriptions and travels through Lowlands Scotland. I loooooooove her prose. It is so authentically period to the time. It feels extremely Jane Austenian, but Scottish.

I can't say enough good about this book. Sure, the plot is stolen from the Bible, but even in the Bible this story is all told quickly and unceremoniously. It's wonderful to be able to anticipate and wait with the characters--unbearably so--just as they would have really had to. A beautiful, beautiful tale that I anticipate reading again and again.

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### **Ally (The Scribbling Sprite) says**

Let me begin by saying that I *do* agree with the description Goodreads has provided. A more thorny love triangle I have never seen or heard of, and there is almost more drama, deception, and jealousy in this book than I can bear. Oh, and there *are* many spiritual truths. I know, that last one didn't quite seem to fit, did it? But it's true, even though those little gems seemed to be buried under everything I didn't like about the book.

To put it simply, this story irked me. Yet the whole time I was reading it there was this inexplicable draw.

It starts off interesting enough. The parallel to the bible story is obvious. Jamie finds himself in trouble at home. After stealing his brother's blessing with the support of his mother, he begins to fear for his life. He may now be the one to inherit Glentrool, but what good is that to him if he ends up dead by his brother's

hands? It was a good beginning, but I found myself anxious to get to the drama of the story, when Jamie meets Leana and Rose(Leah and Rachel's counterparts).

Boy, if I had known... (Some minor spoilers ahead?)

With his brother after him, Jamie flees to home of his Uncle Lachlan, hoping to gain a wife during his stay. He's immediately attracted to the beautiful Rose that he barely even gives Leana, the tender compassionate mother hen, a second glance. Cue the love triangle.

Because Rose doesn't want to get married. She's fifteen years old for Pete's sake! So she and her sister agree that Leana must be the one to win the man.

I'm trying not to be too spoilery, but it's really very hard. In short, our characters are very, very fickle. There is lying, backstabbing, and deceit. A lot of the characters' actions were utterly despicable. Lachlan especially, but Jamie bothered me the most. His actions were innocent, yet so cruel. He's attracted to Rose, but he leads Leana on so many times it's no wonder she thinks him to be in love with her.

These characters take marriage so lightly. And divorce to be a perfectly acceptable thing! Yes, I realize this is a retelling of the Old Testament story, but these people are Christians! So why don't they act like it?

This book is classified as Biblical Fiction.

### **It reads more like a soap opera.**

I really hate to be so harsh. Despite all of this, I DO feel sympathy for the characters(except Lachlan). It wasn't easy for any of them.

And I'll be completely honest--I read this book in one day. *One day*. I had to put it down and pick it back up several times, but it was extremely well written. I don't know of another story that has made me FEEL so much. Hence the extra star. I liked the ending, though I hate how it twists the original story. The whole thing just left a bad taste in my mouth, and I won't be reading the next one, however much I want to know what happens next.

Content: Mature themes; mentions of the intimacy between man and wife

Originally posted at The Scribbling Sprite

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### **Trisha says**

Oh my goodness! This book was a slow start for me. My schedule was so busy when I started it that I was only able to read a chapter or two a night, and they are short chapters. I was really wondering if I was going to like this book at all, but about halfway through, I couldn't put it down. I was taking it with me everywhere, and reading a chapter before I went into wherever I was, and then another when I came out.(I came to really appreciate those short chapters!) I became very emotionally attached to the characters, and couldn't bear waiting to see what would happen next-even though this is a fictional retelling of an old testament Bible story, and I know what happens in the Bible! Fortunately, my husband bought me the other 3 books in the series when he bought the first, because there is no way I cannot keep going until I finish them all. Liz Curtis

Higgs writes very much like Francine Rivers, so if you like Francine Rivers, you will appreciate these books.

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### **Ashley (5171MilesBooks) says**

**See this full review and many more at: 5171 Miles Book Blog.**

I have been recommended *Thorn in My Heart*, the first book in the *Lowlands of Scotland* series, several times in the past couple years. When I seem to forget about it, it comes up in conversation again. Finally, I decided to grab it from my library during Spring Break and start on this retelling of Jacob, Rachel, and Leah's story from the Old Testament. This Biblical story has truly been the thorn in my own heart for years. I've struggled with this story more than any other because I have a hard time grasping God's Will here. Obviously, He used Jacob's numerous sons from different wives and servants to create the twelve tribes of Israel and eventually bring Jesus to us. Unfortunately, knowing all of the blessings to come offer me little comfort about Jacob, Rachel, and Leah. When I think of this story, I can't help but feel a smidge of resentment toward God for allowing such heartache in the lives of these women. I can't imagine sharing my husband. I can't imagine being married to someone who doesn't love me as he should or having him share my very own sister's bed. There is so much to the story that doesn't sit right with me. Maybe I'm too modern of a woman, but I can't help my feelings, try as I might.

Knowing how I feel and struggle with this story, I assumed I would have similar feelings toward this retelling. However, I hoped it might offer me a change of heart or in the least, a better sense of peace. Unfortunately, I didn't come out on the other side with new revelations about this particular story, but I sure felt the anguish.

This retelling allows readers to understand Leah and Jacob's perspectives from a new angle, though they are called Jamie and Leana in *Thorn in My Heart*. The same events readers might expect happen: Jamie deceives his father, stealing his twin brother's birthright. His mother encourages him to flee to her brother's home to escape her other son, Evan's wrath while allowing Jamie to look for a bride in his uncle's home. Once there, Jamie finds himself being deceived by his cunning uncle into working for his daughter's hand in marriage, though not the daughter Jamie had chosen for himself.

It all sounds almost exactly as it happens in the Bible story, so one might ask themselves why they would pick up a story they already know or can experience in fewer pages in the actual Bible. This is where Leah or Leana's perspective comes in. Readers are truly able to experience the feelings behind the deception of her marriage to Jamie. Each character is at fault in some way, causing hurt to themselves or others at nearly every turn. I felt truly conflicted about this story, as I was able to put myself in the shoes of each of the main characters, with the exception of the ruthless Lachlan (father of Leana and Rose). As the story progressed, I was able to feel drawn to Leana's story, per the author's persistence, and understand her heartbreak over being the least loved of the two sisters, though the first wife of Jamie. As someone who has asked God to take away my love for another before, I was able to sympathize with her agony in a new way. Usually, when reading the Bible story, I think of Rachel's perspective and her disappointment, not the other way around.

This story was unique in many ways with the Scottish setting, time period, and certain differing events from the Biblical story. It had a bit of an *Outlander* feel to it, based on the time period, setting, language, and names of characters. The plot kept me guessing throughout because I wasn't sure if the author would stay true to Biblical events or take creative liberties. The first half of the book was incredibly slow for me, and I wasn't positive I wanted to continue reading. After taking a short break with another read, I was able to come

back to this one with renewed interest. Luckily, the second half of the story was much more entertaining and emotional, but this is likely not a series I will continue reading. I don't know if I can emotionally put myself in Leana's shoes any longer with her constant disappointments and lack of love from her husband. I think I will have to consider this a standalone and move on for my own sanity and personal Faith. This is simply one of those Old Testament stories I can't quite wrap my head around, though I technically understand the hows and whys behind the events that transpired, my emotions tend to get in the way.

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### **Colleen says**

Higgs is re-writing the story of Leah, Rachel and Jacob set in 18th century Scotland with the characters Leana, Rose and Jamie. I can understand what she was trying to do, but the setting and time period made it all such a stretch it just made me annoyed. I usually really enjoy historical fiction, but the two stories just weren't cohesive. Plus, I never really connected to the characters. I thought they were all pretty pathetic or irritating in one way or another. Just when I'd start to feel sympathetic for one of the character's situations, they'd do something to make me not like them all over again. They were incredibly self-centered, even the one who is supposed to be all sacrificial, and totally self-motivated.

The book got a little too preachy for my tastes too. Not that I don't enjoy religious writing, I just didn't like this style.

I thought I'd give the second book a try to redeem the first, but I put it down after a couple of chapters. However, judge for yourself if you are a fan of the historical fiction/religious fiction genres, the book has been given a lot of good reviews. I guess this one is just not for me!

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### **Shannon says**

I felt like I was strung along and dropped off in disappointment. Some things were nice to think about but overall very very flawed characters doing things that no "christian" author should include in a book. Example: sister sneaking in to sleep with her sisters husband. Then it took forever to end. I have no plans of reading the sequel even though I already own it.

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