



## Prayers of a Stranger: A Christmas Story

*Davis Bunn*

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**Prayers of a Stranger: A Christmas Story** Davis Bunn

**While visiting the Holy Land, Amanda answers the prayers of a stranger . . . and begins an amazing Christmas journey.**

Amanda Vance is ambivalent about her husband's idea for a big family holiday up north. Last year she planned a special Christmas in their own home, carefully preparing a nursery and the keepsake ornaments for their newborn. Now that room stands as empty as her heart.

Then a neighbor's mishap turns into a last-minute chance for Amanda to take a much-needed vacation to tour the Holy Land.

An extraordinary turn of events allows Amanda to help answer a young mother's plea for healing. Then, filled with a sense of awe, Amanda visits the place of Jesus' birth. There she discovers anew the miracle of the Christ child—God incarnate as a tiny, vulnerable baby.

Her return to Florida marks a momentous shift in her soul and in her marriage as she begins to realize that her journey didn't end in the Holy Land. And that God doesn't just answer prayers of strangers . . . but also those of her own heart.

"A great story filled with emotion, depth, and spiritual beauty." —Debbie Macomber, #1 *New York Times* Best-selling Author

## Prayers of a Stranger: A Christmas Story Details

Date : Published September 11th 2012 by Thomas Nelson

ISBN :

Author : Davis Bunn

Format : Kindle Edition 208 pages

Genre : Holiday, Christmas, Christian Fiction, Christian, Contemporary, Fiction, Inspirational

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# From Reader Review Prayers of a Stranger: A Christmas Story for online ebook

## Cassandra says

I need to just accept that novellas leave me feeling unsatisfied. I want more story, more character development. This was an interesting story, wrapped up well at the end with important lessons learned. It just felt too short.

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## Erin says

Never have I ever....felt so underwhelmed by a story as I am at this very moment. It's a nice clean story about two couples struggling with acceptance and forgiveness. Maybe it would have worked better as a Hallmark Hall of Fame type movie rather than a novel.

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## Debbie Phillips says

Another great Christmas story I chose and read this season. With fun quotes like this, "You know what they say, dear. God gave us friends to make up for our families." (35) LOL

A story about healing. A story that takes place in the USA and in Israel, Bethlehem even. Very appropriate for a Christmas story. A story where God is very present. God works the best where healing is needed. There is always something to uplift and speak to my heart in a Davis Bunn book, like this quote.

"It's important that we try and focus on the positive. Especially when our world is clouded by worries. Give ourselves something to aim for. Try and determine a course that is in harmony with our hearts." (67)

Focus on the positive when our world is full of worries. Yes, I understand that. That is why I started my 1,000 gifts list. That is why I read that gratitude book I just posted the review about. That is why I read my Bible daily, almost daily, I do miss a day here and there. That is why I like Christian fiction, and Christian non-fiction too. These things help lift my eyes from my daily concerns to things spiritual.

Here is a long quote. But all of it necessary to show you what touched my heart in this book.

"We're all going through tough times. Many of us are facing some really hard choices, at work and in our private lives. But the thought I want to share with you this morning is this: there are more important things than our jobs, or troubles, or even our homes and providing for our families. There are eternal things, the matters of heaven. And the purest and most powerful way this presents itself here on earth is in love. The love we share with our families. The love we show to the family of believers. This morning I want you to think about one person who needs your love, who needs you to be there for them in a way that maybe you haven't. Maybe you have forgotten something, or neglected a duty, or been blind to a need or an opportunity. This person may have forgiven you the neglect, because they know what you're facing. But Jesus urges us to turn away from fear and pain and frustration, and toward love. I believe he wants us to repair our love, or strengthen our love. I'm encouraging you this morning to think of one simple act that represents your heart

for a new hope...”

Wow! This was part of a talk Chris gave to a Bible group he leads. It really touched me because we have been going through a lot of trials in our family and I am sure there are things I have neglected and things I have forgotten and opportunities I have passed over because I have only been looking at my own hurts. I hope to do better in the future and not be so self absorbed.

I hope Davis Bunn will not be angry if I share just one more quote. A sorta long one that speaks more about how Bunn weaves God into his stories. Another part of the book that deeply touched me.

“...the hardest part of this entire episode was learning that he was not in control. There was almost nothing about the situation that was entirely his to manage. And yet, throughout it all, he had been so very reluctant to release his clenched grip and allow God to take over. He wanted to fix things. It was his nature. Only now, as he sat in the reception area and waited for the lawyers to call him in, did he see how important it was to let go. Not merely this meeting. But of his desire to segment and control.

As Chris felt his internal barriers crumble, he realized that this was the true definition of wisdom. To see his earthly situation through God's eternal gaze.”

Ah... to do that is a wonderful thing, a gift from God. I wish I could see what purpose our current troubles have. Maybe God will show us one day, maybe not til heaven. Until then I will struggle on, trusting in his care, love, and involvement in our lives.

So, I recommend this book to all my Christian friends. I hope some of you will pick it up and enjoy it as much as I did.

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## **Tima says**

Amanda is suffering after the loss of her child. When a neighbor offers her the opportunity to travel to Israel, her husband urges her to accept. The trip opens her eyes to things she'd been missing for a very long time. She learns that sometimes stepping out of our own grief to answer the prayer of another grieving person is just the thing we need to begin our own healing.

The story is set around Christmas time. But it can be read any time of the year, because it is a story about forgiveness, healing, and unselfish giving. Simply and beautifully written in a way that captures your heart. I really enjoyed this book even though some of the subject matter was a bit heavy. I will definitely be keeping my eyes out for more of his books.

I received this book free of charge from Booksneeze in exchange for my honest review.

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## **Susan says**

Amanda Vance is ambivalent about her husband's idea for a big family holiday up north. Last year she planned a special Christmas in their own home, carefully preparing a nursery and the keepsake ornaments for their newborn. Now that room stands as empty as her heart.

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An extraordinary turn of events allows Amanda to help answer a young mother's plea for healing. Then, filled with a sense of awe, Amanda visits the place of Jesus' birth. There she discovers anew the miracle of the Christ child—God incarnate as a tiny, vulnerable baby.

Her return to Florida marks a momentous shift in her soul and in her marriage as she begins to realize that her journey didn't end in the Holy Land. And that God doesn't just answer prayers of strangers . . . but also those of her own heart

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### **Sam B says**

I picked up this book as my year's Christmas read, but was a little deceived. Even if the cover is a Christmas scene, the story doesn't revolve around Christmas all that much.

This was a good book: Amanda and Chris went through a rough time around Christmas the previous year, so when Amanda is given a chance to go visit Jerusalem with her neighbor, she accepts the invitation. This trip will both change Amanda and Chris (who stayed behind).

The story was good, but I felt that some of the scene were a little unrealistic. Unlike other novellas, the story didn't feel rushed, but it seemed that some issues weren't really addressed.

Overall a good book!

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### **Janice says**

This book was great! Amanda is still grieving over her newborn's death. Meanwhile, some people understand and others expect her to just move on. While filling in for a neighbor, she visits the Holy Lands. This was especially appealing to me, having visited before. I am thankful that my experiences at the Wailing Wall were different from hers! Amanda realizes she can help diagnose a child who is deathly ill, and this leads her to peace in steps that are filled with miracles. I am so glad to read this fantastic book this Christmas season!

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### **Loraine says**

SUMMARY: While visiting the Holy Land, Amanda answers the prayers of a stranger . . . and begins an amazing Christmas journey.

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Then a neighbor's mishap turns into a last-minute chance for Amanda to take a much-needed vacation to tour the Holy Land.

An extraordinary turn of events allows Amanda to help answer a young mother's plea for healing. Then, filled with a sense of awe, Amanda visits the place of Jesus' birth. There she discovers anew the miracle of the Christ child—God incarnate as a tiny, vulnerable baby.

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REVIEW: I wouldn't call this a Christmas book in the true sense of a Christmas story but rather that it took place at Christmas time. Yet setting that aside, Davis Bunn has once again created a story that draws the reader into the characters and story line. The story is tender, a journey of the heart, and a reminder of redemption and forgiveness.

The cast of characters, each on a journey of their own, intersect one another as they fulfill the spirit of Christmas, love for all mankind. Each one finds changes coming to their lives that makes them more at peace and more filled with God's love. I especially loved the two Jewish ladies, Nechma and Miriam, who helped Amanda find her love again for children's nursing.

A simple story well-told that will leave you want to read more by this author.

FAVORITE QUOTES:"You know what they say dear. God gave us friends to make up for our families."

"Sometimes the only way to see the truth is by turning a secret corner. Looking beyond the thing that's dominating your vision."

"Words may pass away. But these principals remain." "And you know this how?" "Because they are grounded in the eternal."

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### **NancyInWI says**

I don't know if it's because I was so busy and only read 15-20 pages a day that the story didn't keep my interest, but it seems like quite a few books I've read lately seem to plod until the last 30 pages. This book was no exception. This was one of only 2 Christmas books I read this year and didn't manage to finish this one until almost 4 weeks after Christmas. Finally sat down and read to the end today. The last portion had me in tears. I only wish I had read this Christmas week. It would have been even more poignant then.

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### **Kristin says**

Prayers of a Stranger: A Christmas Story is the first book I've read by Davis Bunn and I really wish I could say that I enjoyed it but I am afraid I will not read anything else from this author. I know that I am not the

best writer in the world so maybe I shouldn't have a gripe when it comes to grammar or sentence structure—but this author is a serious abuser of conjunctions. One sentence alone held as many as five and I would nearly groan every single time I saw the word “and” used. Also, the dialogue between the characters was flat and unappealing with odd descriptive phrases like, “He had the slender build of a violinist.” This is a news flash to me. My daughters have played violin for years and I have never realized that a violinist has a build that a person would use as a comparison.

Another complaint that I had was all of the medical jargon between the main character, Amanda and a doctor. I thought too much time was spent on a medical condition and though that information may have been accurate, I questioned the validity of it due to the fact that several times through the story doctors and mothers suggested an ice bath to bring down a fever, describing a high fever as 101-102F. Anyone with children would know that ice baths are not suggested to bring down a fever of 101-102 and that shivering can increase the core temperature. Further, the nurse went on to suggest using an aspirin for future treatment. The U.S. Surgeon General, the Food and Drug Administration, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and WHO recommend that aspirin not be given to children under 19 years of age as it can cause Reye's Syndrome. I do not presume to be a doctor and maybe aspirin is the correct treatment in a two year old with the condition this child had but such medical intricacies should be left to a medical professional as someone may get the idea that they need to pack their toddler in ice for a low-grade fever.

#### **About the Story:**

Amanda Vance is a nurse specializing in crisis-care in the pediatric/obstetrics ward of the hospital. That is—until she lost her baby. Her husband is struggling to cope with their loss as well as run a company that is struggling in today's economy.

When their neighbor gives Amanda the chance to travel with her to Israel, her husband encourages her to go. To seek peace and healing in the land of our Lord's birth. There, Amanda meets an older lady that cares for children out of her home and Amanda's medical knowledge leads to healing for a young child—and herself.

#### **Other Complaints:**

I really wish I could have expanded my review about the story. I feel it is short and doesn't tell much but honestly there isn't much to tell. The author rambles through the dialogue and uses very odd descriptions like this one “He could smell the vague odor of the long flight in her hair. He tasted the dryness of her lips” I literally sat there thinking “GROSS!” when I read that. She stank and had dry lips—not a very appealing description. Okay, maybe I already touched on the weird descriptions but I am still scratching my head over this and felt the need to reiterate how truly bizarre they were.

The characters also met random people that they struck up conversations with without so much as an explanation of who they were. One such character met Amanda on a train—a total stranger that went on to accompany her to another person's home and then to the hospital—demanding medical care for a child she had never previously met. Why? I mean...come on, never in real life would a total stranger take it upon themselves to accompany someone to the hospital and demand proper care.

I dislike giving negative reviews but there was nothing about this story that was remotely appealing and the odd descriptions were more than I could stomach. I will not be reading anything more by this author and I would have to say that this particular book earns the title of being the worst book that I have read this year. I honestly had trouble even giving it a 1-star rating as I felt it didn't deserve that much. Complete waste of my time and such a disappointment.

Disclosure of Material Connection: I received this book free from the publisher through the BookSneeze®.com book review bloggers program. I was not required to write a positive review. The opinions I have expressed are my own. I am disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255

**\*\*\*Update\*\*\***

I looked up information on the medical condition outlined in this book and wanted to share what I found.

Direct Book Quote: "Aspirin is usually better for the patient than paracetamol."

Information I found via <http://g6pddeficiency.org> states the following:

**G6PD Deficiency Drugs to Avoid and Other Contraindicated Substances**

NSAIDS (Asprin, Ibuprophen)

Tylenol

Quinolones

Drugs metabolized through the liver or known to cause blood or liver related problems or hemolysis

Sulfa drugs

Petrochemically derived substances (This is a long list and gets longer every year. Many artificial foods, dyes and vitamins are included in this list.)

Mothballs and anything containing naphthalene.

Artificial Food Coloring (Methylene and Toluidine blue)

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**Tarissa says**

This is the perfect book to put your heart in the right place at Christmastime. Heartwarming. Festive. Helps you to discover the true story behind Christmas.

This is my first book to read from Mr. Bunn, although I've heard great reviews of his books for years. I wasn't let down. I enjoyed Prayers of a Stranger SO MUCH!

Amanda Vance is a woman with a heart full of long-held grief. She makes it the Holy Land for a special vacation away from her job at the hospital. There are things she's avoided for a year, but she will soon learn how to face her negative feelings of the past. Her husband Chris also faces problems of his own at work, and a mutual feeling exists that their marriage may not be as tight as it once was.

The message of Christmas and God's Word is featured throughout the story, bringing families together as they should be and mending hearts back together.

A great choice to read this holiday season.

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## **Charmaine says**

Although this novel can not be listed among the greats of classical literature, it can be listed with the books that are "just a nice clean story". I listened to the audio version - so I'm not entirely sure whether I was underwhelmed with the writing style due to the writer's lack or if it was the reader's fault. At least by this reader, the writing "sounded" trite and cliché at times. Also, the reader was NOT good at foreign accents - so the characters with accents in this story did not seem truly authentic. All that being said, this was a nice story that dealt (at least on a somewhat shallow level) with some of life's big personal issues.

If you are looking for a Christmas story, this book might disappoint. Yes, some of it takes place around Christmas and the issue of families getting together at Christmas is in the story. However, it is not primarily a Christmas story - at least in my opinion.

Clean Readers: this one is 100% clean.

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## **Patty says**

I really enjoyed this beautiful story of struggle and love. The characters are real and the tragic loss of a child and how that affects the marriage touched me. The strength of their faith and how God works in ways one would never expect. I loved the quest for a miracle during a trip to Israel and the way that God steps into the lives of so many people. It made me want to read more about Israel, the people and the journey to follow the life of our Lord. I would have given a five star rating except for the abrupt ending. I would like to have known a bit more. But that is perhaps just me.

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## **Kathleen (Kat) Smith says**

I'm starting to sense God's presence in all things, especially in the latest books I've been writing and *Prayers of A Stranger* by one of my favorite authors, Davis Bunn is certainly no exception. In fact I've highlighted more passages that spoke to me personally than I think I ever had in a book before and to me, that means something.

"It's a shame that life does not give us a time free of other worries when we can heal."

In the novel, *Prayers of A Stranger*, Davis Bunn accomplishes something more than taking the reader along for a great story. He lets the presence of God speak to your own heart, if you are willing to listen and open yourself up to Him. In fact he does this so well, you feel as if the journey is designed especially with you in mind and I personally feel that is God's anointing on this wonderful novel without being heavy handed on religion that would put most people off when reading a Christian book.

*Prayers of A Stranger* is a story about healing and seeing the good that often accompanies difficult times we can not understand and may not this side of heaven in our walk on Earth. Amanda Vance works at the local hospital as the administrative assistant under a harsh director, Moira Campbell, who makes work a living hell for those working with her. In fact her day starts out like the ordinary but soon turns into something quite

unexpected. All the hospital staff seem to be in good spirits and being close to Christmas is not the reason. It seems that Moira is about to be reassigned, and thus the need for the rejoicing of all the hospital staff. It even puts Amanda in better spirits.

She learns the new director will be starting in the coming days and she is advised to take a few weeks off to think about what direction she wants to take her career in. Seems some of the staff think she will return to her former job as a critical care nurse since she was seen waiting just outside the nursery of the critical care infants. But she can't go back to that. Not yet. It's still too soon and the pain is as fresh as the day it happened. The day she lost their only child, before it had a chance at life. This is the reason she stayed as far away as possible and taken the position of working as an administrative assistant. How will she ever move forward.

When Amanda is given a gift of a trip to Israel with her neighbor Emily, who can't take her husband Frank since he is waiting a double hip replacement and can't endure the trip. Rather than having the trip wasted, Emily invites Amanda to see the Holy Land with her. Amanda isn't sure she should go since her husband Chris is still trying to find a way to save his company Avery Electronics from going bankrupt in this tough economy. Yet even Chris knows that Amanda hasn't been the same wife he married since the loss of their child and thinks this might be the answer to restoring her faith and helping to heal her from this loss. Yet neither of them could prepare for what happens when Amanda places a simple prayer into the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem. It's truly an inspirational story for cold hearts to make them whole again.

I received Prayers of A Stranger compliments of Thomas Nelson Publishers and Net Galley for my honest review. I have read several of Davis Bunn's books and remain amazed at how many different directions his writing has taken him. This is such a great book to share with those that may be questioning their own walk of faith through tough times. I know for me, it has truly been a huge walk up call and has melted my own hardness of heart and restored my prayer life. Thank you to Davis Bunn for sharing God's message to my own soul. For this reason, I personally rate this one a 5 out of 5 stars in my opinion, and I am sure that there is something for everyone in this one. It comes at the perfect time for those looking for a bit more than just a really good Christmas story. Perhaps one with just the perfect message in store to speak to your own heart. Are you will to listen and open your heart?

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## **Arlena says**

Author: Davis Bunn

Published By: Thomas Nelson Publishers

Age Recommended: Adult

Reviewed By: Arlena Dean

Book Blog For: GMTA

Rating: 5

Review:

"Prayers of a Stranger" by Davis Bunn was indeed a wonderful read that really touched me from deep down. This writer really knows how to truly touch ones heart from his writing. "Prayers of a Stranger" was a novel of 'the healing and of the friendships of forgiveness' was simply wonderful. We find in the read that Amanda and her husband Christopher Vance had suffered a great loss last Christmas...losing a baby...then after a trip

had turned horrible for Amanda at her husband's family for Christmas...a gift comes...then Amanda gets a trip with a friend to the Holy Land. Only will this trip help heal Amanda's needs? All along this time Chris was having trouble with this company at work. Just how will this all come out for Chris? This is where I say you must pick up "Prayers of a Stranger" to find out. I don't want to give away to any major details however, this read will take you through 'grief, loss, pain, struggle and hope.' I loved reading this story because the script was simple to follow and very interesting. All of the characters were good...some even lovable taking you on a ride of their experiences of their highs and lows of it all. How this author was able to intertwine all of this story together was really something to read about... only doing a good job. "Prayers of a Stranger" is a wonderful novel to where this couple will discover that God will not only answer prayers of their own heart but will answer prayers of strangers.

"Prayers of a Stranger" is a warming Christmas time novel that will warm your heart at you home not only at Christmas but any time of the year and YES, I would recommend this novel as a excellent read.

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