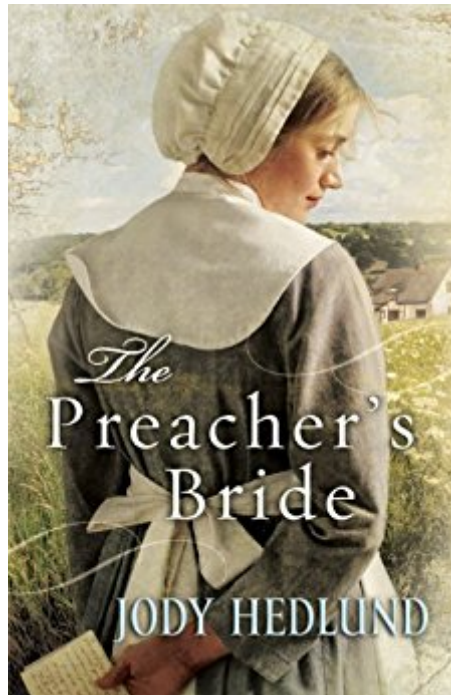


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The Preacher's Bride (Hearts Of Faith Book #1)



Synopsis

In 1650s England, a young Puritan maiden is on a mission to save the baby of her newly widowed preacher--whether her assistance is wanted or not. Always ready to help those in need, Elizabeth ignores John's protests of her aid. She's even willing to risk her lone marriage prospect to help the little family. Yet Elizabeth's new role as nanny takes a dangerous turn when John's boldness from the pulpit makes him a target of political and religious leaders. As the preacher's enemies become desperate to silence him, they draw Elizabeth into a deadly web of deception. Finding herself in more danger than she ever bargained for, she's more determined than ever to save the child--and man--she's come to love.

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Customer Reviews

When John Costin's wife dies of childbirth fever, Elizabeth Whitbread agrees to become his housekeeper and fights for the life of his infant son, although John is sure the baby isn't going to survive. At first John doesn't think he needs a housekeeper, but he changes his mind as he tries to juggle his tinker business with his growing calling as a Puritan preacher. But

politics are precarious in England in the mid-1600s, and, when Oliver Cromwell dies, John's ministry comes under attack, and Elizabeth's help becomes dangerous. In addition, he makes several mistakes in his dealings with Elizabeth, and sometimes he ends up making things harder than they should have been. Given some of the negative reviews, I had a few misgivings when I began this book, but I was pleasantly surprised. During the Stuart era, men's attitudes were different, and John reflected some of this. However, he did come to realize his failures and grow and change. I found some minor problems, but they did not change the enjoyment. At first, I thought the narrative didn't reflect the time period very well, but this seemed to improve in the last half. People in the book referred to themselves as Puritan, which would have never happened, because it was a very derogatory term then. Narry was used several times for Nary. Yet, the story used correct research in the plot without bogging down in the history. Although the times and the story are turbulent, the book ends well. In her notes, the author said she loosely based the story on John Bunyan, and I appreciate that she didn't use his name for her character, since this is definitely fiction. I'm not sure I agree with the ethics of using actual people and fictionalizing them, so they think and do things that may not come close to actuality. This seems to be a trend today, even in Christian novels, and it bothers me. I certainly wouldn't want anyone to do that to me. Overall, I enjoyed the book enough to give it five stars, and I will look for more from this author.

The Preacher's Bride is historical fiction at its very best, it is based on people that actually live in the mid 1600's and followed many of the recorded historical events of the time. The man character, John Costin is based on the life of John Bunyan the author of Pilgrim's Progress and his wife Elizabeth and their children. Bunyan's first wife died leaving him with four children, one a blind daughter and one a new born infant with little or no help from the community, he struggled to keep his family together and still answer his calling to preach from God. The time period was full of tension and problems between the Independents and the Royalists over religious freedom and many of the events in the book actually took place. The story is a compelling one that shows the hardship of the times for the common people and the ruthlessness of the powerful elite nobility. Two sets of laws were applied to each group with the common people having no power to protect them from the injustice inflicted in the name of the law by wealthy and powerful men of the era. From the struggles of the common men of this period comes many of the laws and ways of government that came from England to the American colonies. Jody Hedlund did an excellent job showing how the common people lived and how difficult their lives were in the 1600's.

I actually did not realize this was based on the life of John Bunyan until after I finished the book and read the author's notes at the end. I'm kind of glad, because I enjoyed the story so much--and then to find out that it was based on some historical fact really drove the story home to my heart even that much more. Excellent read. To comment about some of the other comments....the hero of the story, I felt, was quite true to life for someone dedicated to preaching "back then". Look at Paul the apostle in the Bible...he was so dedicated to God that he didn't even want to have a family. I felt like the hero in this story was torn between two, but felt he could not let God down. I have actually known preachers who feel this way about God and about their family, so I did not feel like the character was badly drawn at all--as a matter of fact, I think the author did a very good job trying to guess how things may have gone in a family such as this, during this particular time period. People were much more used to hardships back then--we are, in general, much more coddled in our day, and would not understand the mentality back then. The author did a good job, I feel, trying to paint a true picture of the times. I also think that Elizabeth's character was also done well. She wasn't necessarily perfect, but as a Puritan, she had been trained from an early age to be, basically, "perfect". If you remember, the religions of the hero and heroine were slightly different, hers being more strict, so it follows easily that she would seem more "perfect" than him. And when her station in life changes--you also notice her frustrations increase. For most of the book she had no expectations, and thus no reason for having faults. But as her life changes, she does tend more toward anger and different struggles. Quite realistic for someone of her religion, I felt. I am an avid reader of all sorts of books....and found no great faults in how the characterization and plot were done in this story. I did feel like more should have been done to protect the heroine from the bad things that happened to her, but on the other hand, the author definitely could have been "meaner" to her and was not, so that was a relief. Very well done book....kudos to the author. Loved it.

I had no idea when I began reading this book that it is a true story of the life of John and Elizabeth Bunyan. He was one of the first ministers of the Gospel in the 1600's in England, and wrote "Pilgrim's Progress". The book takes us through all emotional upheaval caused by his preaching. This was inspiring and educational. I enjoyed the book and will think about it long afterwards. Now, I want to read "Pilgrim's Progress".

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