



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS WITH CHRISTA PARRISH

1. Sarah Graham, your protagonist, has a rather rough personality. Why did you choose to have her be a gifted classical violinist, a talent many would consider refined and elegant?

Often times, in life, we're surprised when someone we think of as coarse and common has an exceptional ability, a trait that's extraordinary. But we shouldn't be. God isn't a respecter of persons, He doesn't dole out His graces based on appearance or wealth or intelligence, on anything that comes of our own merit. Those unexpected gifts help us to see a person as someone God loves, rather than, as in Sarah's case, just some selfish, unhappy woman.

2. That's a thread that runs through *Home Another Way*, isn't it? That people can't be placed into neat, little boxes?

Absolutely. In the novel, each character has his or her strengths and weaknesses. Some are more obvious than others. As sinful people, we tend to judge others on things that matter so little in God's eyes—weight, income, physical disability, cognitive ability. We also can have little patience for those, like Sarah, who carry the burdens of past sorrows. Underneath all those things, however, is someone God loves. We need to remember that.

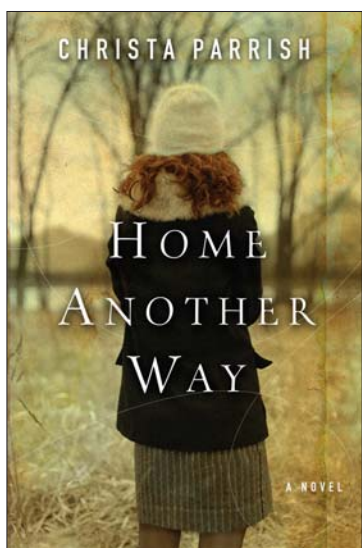
3. Much of the story is narrated in first person by Sarah, but you also have portions that are told in third person describing the more private side of the other characters' lives. Why did you choose to use two different perspectives in the novel?

Initially, I began writing the novel in first-person, but after a number of chapters, I realized the reader needed to see Sarah through eyes other than her own; her bitterness and self-loathing needed to be tempered with the potential others saw in her. I rewrote the beginning of the novel in third-person, adding in the chapters by the secondary characters—Jack, Maggie, Memory, Beth—but it still wasn't right. Sarah's unique voice had been swallowed by the change in point of view. I decided to keep Sarah's chapters in first-person, and the other chapters in third-person. The result allows readers to have deeper insight into both Sarah and the people who want to love her, fully faceting the novel.

4. We receive in *Home Another Way* such a vast range of complex and interesting characters. Can you tell us about your favorites, and what inspired you to bring them to life?

I honestly don't have favorites, but I do like each one for different reasons—mostly because they have characteristics I wish I had. Beth Watson has a gentle faithfulness I don't think I'll ever be able to muster, and Memory Jones is completely comfortable in her own skin. Jack Watson keeps on doing the work he's called to

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by Christa Parrish

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Media Contacts

PRINT/ BROADCAST: **Noelle Buss**

952-829-2765

noelle.buss@bethanyhouse.com

INTERNET: **Jim Hart**

952-829-2526

jjim.hart@bethanyhouse.com

Please send tear sheets to:

Noelle Buss

11400 Hampshire Ave. S.

Bloomington, MN 55438

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do, despite his discouragement, and his mother, Maggie, doesn't let her pain stop her from serving. And Sarah, even in her bitterness, shows a tenacious desire to persevere, even if it is for the wrong reasons at the beginning of the book. They are a foot, a hand, an ear, an eye—a Body—each unique for a purpose, each filling a necessary role in the Kingdom.

5. What do you hope the reader takes away from this novel?

One of my passions is to see the church acting like the Church, and I wanted to show this in *Home Another Way*. As Christians, we can't let excuses—even good, valid excuses—keep us from doing what we're called to do for both one another and “the least of these.” Many of the characters in this book could plead, “Well, I can't do this, Lord, because I'm a sinner,” or, “Sorry, Lord, I have my own problems.” But they understand God uses His flawed, faithful people to bring His purposes to pass.

6. What does “Home Another Way” mean in relation to the story?

Psalm 68:5-6a states, “A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows is God in his holy dwelling. God sets the lonely in families.” Home, in this case, is two-fold. First, Sarah finds an earthly, temporal home with the inhabitants of Jonah—not a place to live, but the loving, trusting relationships she'd never had before. But, home—true home, where we all find our perfect security—is knowing God intimately, and Sarah also begins to understand this in ways she could not have imagined.

7. Describe for us your writing process.

I like to think of my novels as little, self-contained independent films. Before writing, I play my scenes in my head, watching them, a bit grainy and shaky, hearing the rhythm of the dialogue and feeling the pace of the action. I write what I see, and if something doesn't ring true, I highlight it, and rework it later. I also need to ruminate for days, sometimes longer, on a particular chapter. Because of this, I don't always write linearly, and my manuscript is marked with strings of capital Xs in places that I need to add things, and highlighted in various colors, depending on the editing needs of certain scenes.