



The Scarlet Thread

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Two women, centuries apart, are joined through a tattered journal as they contend with God, husbands, and even themselves . . . until they fall into the arms of the One who loves them unconditionally. Sierra Madrid's life has just been turned upside down when she discovers the handcrafted quilt and journal of her ancestor Mary Kathryn McMurray, a young woman who was uprooted from her home only to endure harsh conditions on the Oregon Trail. Though the women are separated by time and circumstance, Sierra discovers that many of the issues they face are remarkably similar. By following Mary Kathryn's example, Sierra learns to surrender to God's sovereignty and unconditional love.

The Scarlet Thread Details

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From Reader Review The Scarlet Thread for online ebook

Elya says

I read this book every time I have moved or go through some sort of big change. The theme of God working through all things is a very encouraging one for me.

Leila says

What can I say? I don't expect a ton from Francine Rivers. The most interesting parts of her books are people's conversion stories. That's where this one disappointed. Everything happened "too easily" and all the resolutions to each problem (that took HUNDREDS of pages going through each minor issue) took only a handful of pages to resolve. I didn't feel that any of the characters grew, they just shifted into these obvious molds. The moral of this story is unfortunate as well...it seems that no matter what your husband does against you, you had a hand in it by "not being the perfect wife." The dialogue is also cheesy, especially from a religious standpoint. Yes, I believe in some of what she's saying, but do I really thinking my marriage is a "three way love triangle with God"? There is too much emphasis on "falling in love with Jesus" and not enough on what it actually means to be a Christian. It seemed that her conversion just meant that she reads the Bible all day, and randomly exclaims: "But don't you see, Alex? God is sovereign!"

Not to overly complain, but the two stories that are supposed to be "woven together" don't actually have much to do with each other. Yes, each woman was upset about moving. But one was irrational, and the other one totally rational. I think we were supposed to understand a lot of things from the quilt, which was never properly described until the end. I felt like I was being told what the book was all about, instead of (to use an old writing cliché) being shown what was going on.

Not her finest work, and I'm not sure I'll be reading any more.

Geri Reads says

I'm seeing a disturbing trend among Christian fiction where husbands engage in extra-marital affairs and it's always, ALWAYS ends up being the wife's fault!! ALWAYS! Plus, the women ALWAYS end suffering and losing everything, (pride, dignity, self-esteem), and the husbands get off with no more than a slap in the wrist. And not only that, it's the wife who always ends up apologizing to the husband because it's their fault the husband had an affair. Unbelievable!! I'm all for love and forgiveness but really, where is the justice in all of this?

Meredith White says

After reading Redeeming Love, I couldn't wait to pick up another Francine Rivers book. The Scarlet Thread highlights the life of two women, generations apart but of the same family. Enduring differing but similar

hardships, it is their ultimate reconciliation with their Savior that binds these two women together. Per the title, the scarlet thread is represented in a quilt made by the earlier of the two women. Interwoven throughout is a scarlet thread representing Jesus/God and is throughout each of the differing patches. In particular, I love how she points on at the end that the final patch is a stone wall with a red thread coming down, representative of Rahab, one of the woman in Jesus' lineage (a harlot) and the rope instructed by the Israelites that she would need to hang from her window in order to be saved - neither woman had been a prostitute in the book, in the typical understanding of a prostitute. On the contrary, both of these women had been hurt by others (and had also done some hurting themselves); however, they had been 'prostitutes' who sold their souls to other gods. It is in the end that they return to Jesus and give their soul to Him, letting down their own scarlet threads, and the presence of the scarlet thread (Jesus) that is throughout their own lives. They make a point at the end of the book - we think that we are in control of our own lives, and that decisions are solely ours; however, Jesus is there, using every situation and choice to bring us back to Him. In that sense, everything does work for good, if we allow ourselves to return to Jesus.

While this book wasn't as engaging and soul clenching as I found Redeeming Love, I can say that I was enraptured by the outcome of the book. There is a way that Francine Rivers writes that tends to stir my emotions, and challenge me to take a deep look inward. In particular, this story is a constant struggle - the later woman finds herself in a place where by worldly standards it would be easier to blame her husband for his own infidelity and not take stock of her own decisions and choices; however, in the end she is brought to the realization of how she herself had a hand in the outcomes, and she too must ask for forgiveness though her sin doesn't seem to be the same equivalent. What a gentle reminder this was to me that sin is sin - there is no varying degree of less bad or worse sin, only the degree of the consequence.

Part of me wanted to argue throughout the book on behalf of both parties - in some cases, I wanted to shout to the second woman (Sierra) to just be honest with her husband and let things go, and on the other hand, I wanted to shout on her behalf, how could someone betray her. Perhaps this is because one of my personal fears is rejection and betrayal. That was eye opening for me, and probably a great reason why I haven't 'put myself out there'. I wonder why this is, because I grew up in a home loved and what I considered accepted for who I was. I suppose that this is something for later soul searching.

Things that I found profound and want to remember about this book:

#1 The sins of the father are on the son: This profound piece of scripture made me consider, what sins have I committed that will be on my children and my children's children? What must I change IMMEDIATELY and repent from in order to absolve this from their future? Also, what sins did my parents commit that might be on me now? Perhaps knowing and understanding may help me to better deal with myself and my own actions.

#2 Weeds in a garden: Gardens are a theme throughout - there is a point where the apparent growth of weeds strikes a point: if we allow the weeds to grow, they will choke the flowers of life. What weeds have I allowed to overrun my garden because of sadness, fear, jealousy, vindication? I think that there are some weeds I need to pull, but I can't do it on my own.

#3 Nothing ventured nothing gained.

#4 Sometimes people need forgiveness more than we need to hold onto a grudge.

#5 So blind to my own pain that I can't see the pain of others: Toward the end of the book, Sierra focuses on her own pain, and how at times she was blinded by her own pain and unable to see the pain of others. Right now, I am so blinded by my pain, and I've wasted precious time that I could have used to ease the suffering of others. For me, I must now put myself aside - I have had plenty of time to nurse my wounds, consider the cost, fixate on regrets and be selfish. How can I allow God now to change my heart into one after His own?

#6 I think I need my own community: Another character in the book, Aunt Martha, is reflected on by Mary (the woman/relative who made the quilt and wrote in a special journal outlining her life roots and her trip across the Oregon Trail). She speaks to her character and how she is adored and revered in the community. A woman of integrity, she is quick to lend a helping hand and slow to gossip or speak poorly of others. Generous to a fault, this woman (who had no children or husband of her own) is who I wish to be - one who is known for her character rather than her tongue, known for her calm rather than her irrationality, known for her quiet rather than her volume, known for her generosity rather than her stinginess and selfishness, known for her lack of fear replaced by the courage of the Lord, and known for her relationship with Christ as center (not as strange). Such a woman - such a model. I think in a sense I need my own community, which is frightening for I know what it implies...

I have so much to learn and so far to go - I think that I will try picking up my journal again and jotting my life down. Who knows, maybe it will serve to support and encourage another young woman in the future. In the meanwhile, I know that my heart was challenged by this book, and I intend to begin with immediate changes. I am thankful to Francine Rivers for using her writing gifts to share these messages with young women like me.

"Life isn't static, Sierra. Thank God. It's constantly in motion. Sometimes we find ourselves caught up in currents and carried along where we don't want to go. Then we find out later that God's hand was in it all along." ~Marianna Clanton, *The Scarlet Thread*

"Oh, Lord Jesus, do {what you did for my mother} for me. Please. You know me better than I know myself. Open the doors and windows and let the Holy Spirit move through me. You are welcome in my house. Come into me, into my foyer and my living room. Wander at will through my parlor and kitchen. Be with me in my bedroom and bathroom. Go through every closet and every drawer, from the basement to the attic of my life. I belong to you, Father. Stay with me forever. Jesus, please remove everything in me that doesn't glorify you. Make me your vessel." ~*The Scarlet Thread*

Jessica says

I didn't end up reading the entire book. Personal preference, but I was horrified when the husband up and announced they were leaving their home, moving somewhere "glamorous", and putting their house of ten years up for sale. With NO forewarning or previous communication. THEN the husband immediately pitches the argument that he's given everything up for HER, maybe she should repay the favor. Um, she's been raising your children and making a home for you for ten years. I don't see how she OWED him! The story gets better. Immediately following a very choppy first 40 pages, they're walking into a beat up 2 bedroom and their older children (a boy and a girl!) are sharing a room. He proceeds to announce he's going out for an hour or two to "talk business" and left her ALONE! THEN the guy (predictably) doesn't phone and walks in after midnight. (She's too forgiving, I would have packed up and left.) He then drags her to a dinner at his

new bosses' home, where his extremely cultured and intelligent wife proceeds to make her feel like an uneducated, backwoods moron... and to top things off, her husband has eyes for her. At this point, I predicted that he would leave her for another woman because she was so boring and dull; and, he wanted fresh and interesting. I skip ahead 300 pages. What do I see? Yes, he had left her for a woman named Elizabeth. AWESOME. Really, I'm ranting and raving to my laughing husband at this point, but it gets BETTER-remember, I skipped the 300 pages because it was an infuriating story line, and I've already called it; I tell my husband she's going to decide him being with another woman was ALL HER FAULT. I determine because she didn't full on support his decision to move with no warning, and no conversation, she will take him back. A few more pages ahead aaaaannnnnddddd (drum roll, please!) Yup. She did. (What I failed to mention was that her precious mother supported HIM in the move and then died. He left her to her own vices to heal the pain of the loss of her last remaining parent, which (to me) is atrociously evil.) THE MOST disappointing Francine Rivers novel, and I'm so disgusted. Women as subservient, quiet pawns in the game of men? No, that is NOT how God intended our marriages to be. Please don't let this solitary book be your lone representative of her work!

Sarah Miller says

I am facing an upcoming move with my husband, and a friend of mine saw how much I was struggling with it, and she gave me this book to "help." She had the best of intentions (I think).

While the story was completely captivating (I read it in 2 days), and I felt so attached to the characters, there were a few prevalent themes to this book that really bothered me.

1. The main character, Sierra. Where do I even start with her? She was bland, boring, and I could not understand why Alex was so "madly" in love with her. She repeatedly stated how uneducated she was, how much she loved carpool (she called it the "joy" of motherhood), and how she hung out in sweats and sneakers every day (even at fancy parties). I think the author was trying to make her appear low-key, but she was also super-whiny and pouted throughout the first 3/4 of the book. She was pissed her husband surprised her with a new BMW and new house.
2. Their marriage was sad to see. He informed her they were moving AFTER he took the job and set up a realtor to sell their house. He informed her they had to live in an old apartment. He completely ignored her as her mother died and she became depressed. I felt pain with her as he ignored her and emotionally abused her. But I also wanted to just punch her in the face as she laid back and took it. Then, when he had an affair, she came to the realization that it was all her fault for not supporting him more, and of course... he magically had a drastic character transformation and they got back together in the last 20 pages or so.
3. Basically, this is just another perpetuation of the terrible concept that women have to take a constant backseat to their husband's wishes, desires (he "needs" love, so will get it from his 26-year old office assistant?), and emotions. Women should be seen, but not heard. They should raise the children, follow their husband's commands, and have no thoughts or inputs on their lives.

(I think my husband would die of boredom if I demonstrated any of those character traits)

I understand my friend's helpful desire to encourage me to support my husband's move. But then she asked me yesterday, "Wasn't it so life-changing to see how much men need love, and how it's often the women's fault they stray and marriages go bad?"... and I just had to tell her that it was certainly an interesting

perspective that I really don't agree with...

Lynn says

I gave this book 5 stars as I loved and loathed it.... The parts I loved was the angst the drama, the dueling stories.... the goodness and love that was projected by several characters....

The parts I loathed.. hated.... was the hero...uh not a hero in any manner in ANY WAY ON ANY DAY OR ON ANY PLANET....do I need to clarify..lol. The other woman a side note of hatefulness (especially in her affair as well as the way she treated his son), the heroine she was at times a pill...but I rooted for her thru most of it...UNTIL she actually was "sorry" for the sin she committed against the slut who was sleeping with her husband....uh.... I get the whole HOLYness in the best way...but there is forgiveness and then there is your no longer praying you've crossed over into a pretty much unattainable forgiveness and blaiseness about this affair. This guy slept with another woman, during his marriage, left his wife for said slut, demanded a divorce, verbally abused the heroine from the middle of the book until near the end, BLAMED the wife for his children being upset with him (his son hated him)..... and then the horrible unhero finally beats her down to give him a divorce and he now has second thoughts as his slut took him to her rich parents house and they thought he was trash and she did not defend him...uh...you are trash..not by your ancestry by your complete lack of morals, character, fill in the rest. I actually felt sorry for the heroine that they would end up together as I am pretty sure that he will do this again..his butt in a seat at his catholic church no more keeps him faithful than the vows he took standing before God (even though they were married NOT in a church... hello buster God's everywhere in most the reliugions where God is a part of... uh... rant over.... LOL

Rissa says

Scarlet thread ??

I dont know how she makes me fall in love with the characters so quickly. Everything she writes is pure gold.

She is a rich white girl, he is an average hispanic boy. Their parents dont approve but love is love an unstoppable love.

They get married and start a family and everything is perfect. That is until that unstoppable love sees reality in the harsh world.

Jenn says

I just read this book for the second time - I think it's a good portrayal of what can happen in a marriage when both parties are selfish. However, there's got to be some way that people can talk about finding God in their lives without being completely cliché. It's frustrating to be reading along and enjoying the book when suddenly, WHAM, there's a phrase that just makes you groan.

One of Rivers' (as well as many other "inspirational fiction" writers) trademarks is using one phrase several times in one book - for nit-picky readers like me, that can be a death sentence. The phrase "raked his hand through his hair" must have shown up at least 3-4 times.

The transitions between Sierra's story and Mary Katherine's journal are a little rocky at times. I think if Mary Katherine had spelled "baby" as "abee" one more time, I might have put down the book.

The book kept me interested; Rivers is a good writer. I'd just like to see her solidify her writing a bit more.

Margaret Chind says

Originally posted on Creative Madness Mama Originally published in 1996, now refreshed with a gorgeous new cover for 2012!

Read from June 08 to 09, 2012 — I own a copy

Reading the slight description blurb for this book does not even begin to touch on what all is inside. This Creative Madness Mama had the God-timing to accidentally pick this book up after a very frustrating disagreement with the Engineerd. This edition is a reprint with a gorgeous new cover (also just reprinted The Atonement Child). As a person that loves matching book spines, seeing these new ones makes me really happy. Now back to the book... Asking now memory does not even begin to recall what the argument was about, but fury would best describe emotions present. This book and it's story is a God-send.

Characters through out this book are found in two different settings, one is contemporary (although written for 1996, everything still works well and fits as if it were 2012) and the other is historical in the time of Oregon Trail and heading west. With a combination of view points from sidelines to inside emotions and even a journal readers are kept captive from page one. This reader was not even planning to read this one yet as it just arrived and is not quite scheduled, but upon picking it up it became an impossibility to put it down until the wee hours of the morning and sleep demanded it. Even at around five hundred pages, this was read pretty quickly.

Into the heart, into the mind and soul this is a great read. I recommend it for anyone married or planning to get married. That's what this is about overall, marriage. Marriage between the love of your life and in the end the inclusion of God within that triune marriage. It's about a new marriage, an older marriage, a broken marriage, a fixed marriage and many things that influence a marriage in between. Filled with scripture and a friend, but not what some call overly preachy this book appeals.

Other Reviews:

Marta's Legacy Saga:

Her Mother's Hope

Her Daughter's Dream

Read an excerpt.

This review was originally posted on Creative Madness Mama

Natalie Vellacott says

I had high hopes for this book due to having enjoyed *The Atonement Child* and *And the Shofar Blew*, however, I was disappointed.

There are two stories which are meant to be running parallel and presumably woven together. But, they don't actually fit with each other and could easily be extracted from the book and told independently. The first story is about a gradually declining marriage leading to an affair and the other is told through the journal of a girl that used to live in the first couple's family home. I lost interest in the second story about halfway through the book so skipped over the remaining journal entries. I have read a number of books with two storylines and they really need to either be properly entwined so the reader has to read both or both as intriguing as each other. These were not.

This book was far too long. I am aware that this is a Rivers trait and actually the books that I have previously enjoyed were also long but held my interest.

The main characters were both selfish particularly the husband. The author is clearly making the point that it takes two to cause problems in a marriage and that blaming each other rather than working towards reconciliation is not the Christian response. I agree with this to a certain degree. However, I feel that she goes too far--the husband uproots his family against the wishes of his wife to pursue his selfish dreams. He forces them into a materially wealthy social group that she isn't ready for and begins spending more and more time at work, he ignores her requests to discuss things, his behaviour just gets worse and worse.....I won't ruin the storyline but I think in this case the author has unfortunately made a case for women to allow themselves to be treated like doormats. AND then to take all of the responsibility for the problems.

The Christian message was also somewhat lost. Some of the characters experience something of a conversion which seems to be about falling in love with Jesus rather than understanding the truth of the Gospel. There is no clear repentance or turning away from sin although the characters do refer to changes due to their belief in God. There is also a section about God being found through Catholicism (as well as Protestantism)--it almost reads as if we can get to God any way we like as long as we are sincere. It is not clear that the only way is through Jesus and His death on the cross.

I didn't read the part about a character suggesting that someone who had died may have been saved without knowing Jesus due to being sincere which I read in another review...I would have objected to that as well.

I don't recommend this as it is so long and full of arguing back and forth. I wouldn't describe it as profitable or edifying. In a way it reminded me of the Christian movie *Fireproof* which I do recommend. But in both I don't think the heart issues will be as easily resolved in real life as they seem to be in fiction. The only good point the book made really was that giving up on a marriage isn't the solution and that all things can be worked through with God's help.

There is no bad language, very limited non-graphic violence and some romantic scenes which are not graphic but may make some uncomfortable.

Check out my Francine Rivers shelf!

Amy says

For me the Scarlet Thread made sense. I could certainly relate to Sierra, her feelings about moving across country away from family and the life that they had established in her home town. I could also relate to her husband's need for adventure, feeling like he needed to better provide for his family and follow his dreams. I don't think it is always easy for a wife to follow her husband. And many times it takes lots of work on our attitudes when we are faced with those kind of decisions. In light of the fact that Sierra didn't appear to be a Christian at the time, or at least had not had a personal relationship with God, it is even more understandable that she would feel the way she did. I think the author portrayed things that many people go through in their marriages, although most would not want to admit it. We all have ups and downs, times of neglect, or getting our priorities twisted. I appreciated the fact that she did not cast all the blame on the husband or the wife, but it was shown more as a joint lack of prioritizing each other. The ending certainly made it worth the read! I would read it again, and recommend it to others.

Marianne says

The Scarlet Thread by Francine Rivers is NOT my favorite book. It probably never will be, no matter how many times I read it. I can't even say I like Sierra, the main character of the novel, or what she does, or Alex, the other main character. Why not? Because reading this book is like holding up a mirror and looking at myself, square in the face. Never did I feel I was inside Sierra's mind, but often I felt she had invaded mine. This novel actually is a story within a story, telling the story of Sierra along side the story of Mary Katherine. Both left their comfortable life among family to follow their husbands, and did this unwillingly. Though many years separated them, the two stories (Mary Katherine's narrative told through her journal which survived all those centuries) are closer than is comfortable. This clearly shows that humans through the ages have battled the same enemy. Ms. Rivers does not hesitate to write about the hard issues, and does not gloss over the repercussions that might arise from them.

This is truly a romantic story, not so much between husband and wife, though that is definitely there, but between God and His crowning creation. How He pursues us, and uses our choices and decisions to call us to Him. How He is always there, waiting for us to turn to Him at our lowest point, when we feel the most insignificant and always loving us, even when our determination is to have nothing to do with Him. So even though this is not my favorite book by Francine Rivers, this is one that has a permanent and prominent spot on my bookshelves.

Mandy says

‘... it is the men who dream of Oregon. It is as though Heaven itself beckons them and we must all cross hell to get to it.’

Set across different centuries, *The Scarlet Thread* follows the lives of two women who are joined through an old, tatty journal as they each grapple with their husband's ambition.

Twenty-first century woman Sierra Madrid is less than thrilled when her husband Alex announces that he has accepted a job offer which means they must move hundreds of miles to Los Angeles. She is so upset about the family being uprooted that she fails to see how God could have a hand in any of this, despite her mother's insistence that God has a plan for her life. Suspicious of her husband's new work colleagues and superficial new friendships, Sierra begins to feel like an uneducated country bumpkin and, therefore, worthless in Alex's eyes. In her loneliness, she turns to an old family journal – wrapped in a scarlet-embroidered quilt – and finds her life becoming intertwined with her ancestor Mary Kathryn McMurray.

Mary is a feisty young woman whose husband James insists on travelling to Oregon in a covered wagon in the 1840s. Like Sierra, Mary is reluctant to uproot her family and move hundreds of miles away. But she has promised to obey her husband and so – with bad grace – she packs up and prepares for the long, dangerous journey through Indian territory with her young family.

The hardships for both Sierra and Mary are real, and there are many ups and downs for them. They doubt themselves, their husbands, and God. But eventually, they each come to recognise that God really does have a plan for their lives. Mary's faith journey is carefully embroidered in scarlet thread onto a 'friendship' quilt. It's only when Sierra submits herself to God's plan for her life and learns to forgive and be reconciled with Alex that she understands what the scarlet-embroidered quilt means.

I loved this book. Any wife will identify with some of the things Sierra and Mary go through with their husbands; every marriage has its ups and downs. The fact that it is set in two different times drew me like metal to a magnet – I love this type of storyline. Like all of Francine Rivers' books, there is tragedy, drama, love, forgiveness, grace. Wondering how Sierra and Mary will cope with each new incident that comes along kept me turning the pages, eager to read on. Skillfully written, it brings history to life while showing us modern-day women that we can learn from the past.

Priscilla Lee says

I rated this two stars because I didn't think this book was bad and deserved one star. I finished it and that says something but I don't think this will ever be a recommendation I give to others. It's a slow read without surprises. I knew exactly how the book was going to pan out from the first 50 pages and I was spot on.

If you have nothing else to read then this novel will do but please know it is nothing like Francine Rivers' previous novels *A Voice In The Wind* or *Redeeming Love*.

QUESTION: Sierra's mother said she couldn't find anything regarding Mary's son, Joshua. Does anyone know why the author did this? She didn't mention anything else regarding her other 4 children so I was confused why she pointed out Joshua. Is he a descendant of the American Revolution's daughter?
