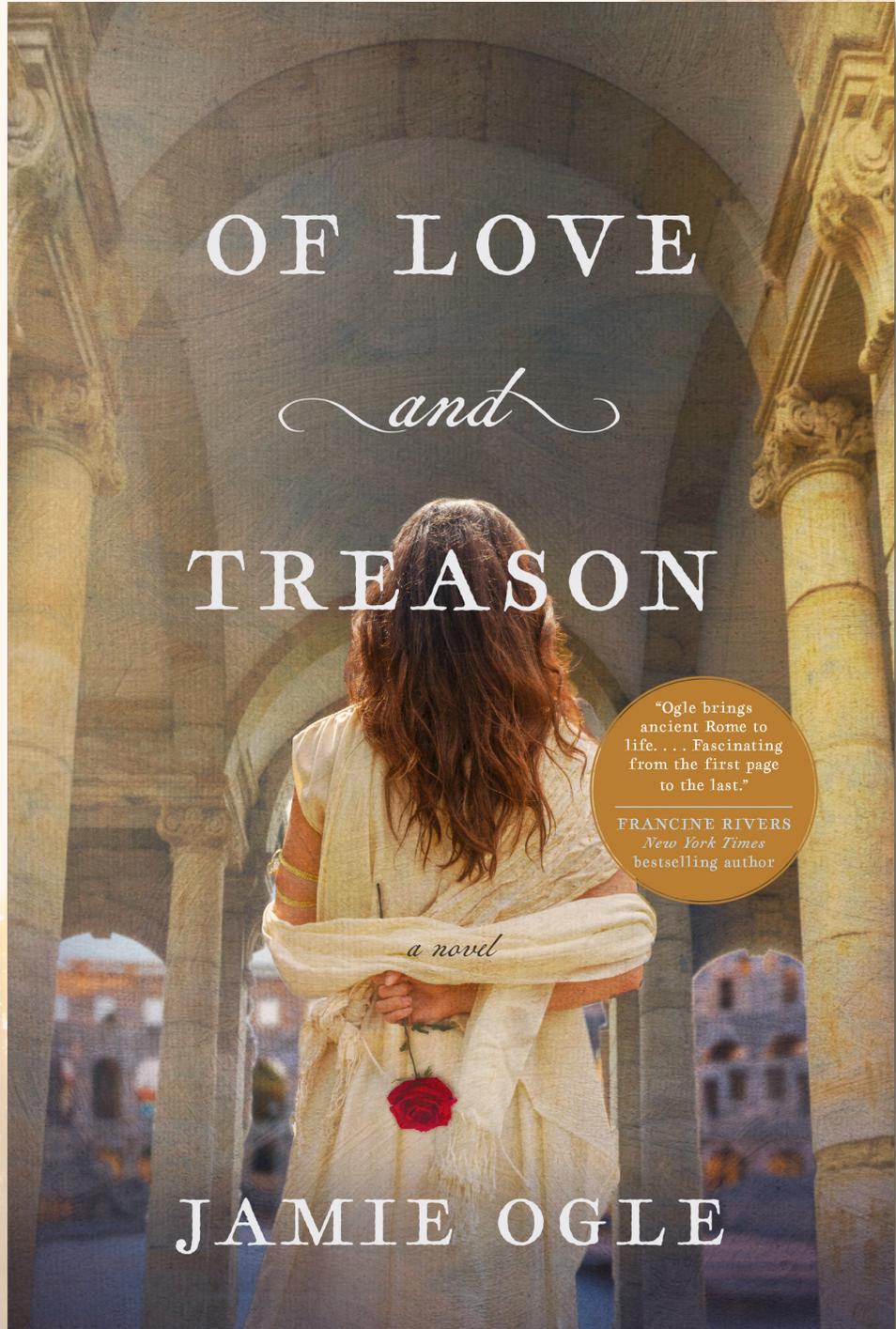


OF LOVE AND TREASON
BOOK CLUB KIT



OF LOVE

and

TREASON

"Ogle brings ancient Rome to life. . . Fascinating from the first page to the last."

FRANCINE RIVERS
New York Times
bestselling author

a novel

JAMIE OGLE



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

JAMIE OGLE

I grew up in northern Minnesota listening to my grandparents tell stories from their youth. Stories of fighting in WWII, of panning for gold in Alaska, of crossing the Nebraska prairies in a covered wagon during the Great Depression, of gypsies stealing chickens, of a city girl falling in love with a farmer. Listening to them, I fell in love with stories, with history, with grit and perseverance.

I also grew up listening to my parents read missionary stories to me and my sisters before bed. Those stories of faith, sacrifice, and courage inspired me even more. I read everything I could get my hands on and started writing stories of my own. My first story was self-published and self-illustrated on a piece of cardboard, and I've never stopped writing since. I studied English and writing craft at Iowa State University and am a member of the American Christian Fiction Writers (ACFW).

My husband and I love to travel, and currently live in central Iowa where we can usually be found gardening, beekeeping, homeschooling, and tromping through the woods with our three young children.

FOLLOW ALONG ONLINE:





Dear Reader,

Although I loved and studied ancient history, I never considered setting a story in the Roman Empire until I stumbled over the story of Saint Valentine and the jailor's daughter. Their story gripped my imagination and wouldn't let go. I HAD to write it.

But can we talk about that ending?!

I love happy endings, don't you?

The ones where our beloved characters get everything they want, and they all live happily ever after...sigh. Our souls long for happy endings. For all to be made right. For what is broken to be made whole. For the hero or heroine to save the day, and for the villain to get his due. I think those stories resonate so deeply with us because those heroes remind us of our True Hero who has already saved the day. Those endings remind us that He's promised to one day soon, make all things right.

The problem with this story was that the ending I wanted was at odds with history. And I wrestled with it.

A lot.

But as I wrestled with the ending and all its implications, I realized that some of my favorite Christian Fiction books contain what I like to call "non-traditional happy endings." They're happy not because the characters get everything they want in the end. Because they don't. These stories contain beloved characters who are not always rescued and often lose everything they spent the book dreaming of. Sometimes, they die. Often, these books don't get the love they deserve because we readers get it into our heads that all must end well here on earth, and if it doesn't, it's sad.

But it's not. Not really.



Happily-Ever-Afterers are wonderful. To me, they illustrate God's unconditional love, His offer of rescue, and the promise that He will make all things right in the end. But these "non-traditional happy ending" books illustrate that as well—They just do it in a different way.

The illustration is less subtle than the traditional stories, yet somehow harder for us to see. We think we know what a hero looks like, and it's confusing when the real hero is not who we expected... A long time ago, people thought they knew what a Messiah looked like—and they missed Him.

If we always read looking for the typical hero, we can miss those moments when the identity of the True Hero is revealed. When our chins and streaming eyes are tilted up toward the True Rescuer. The real Savior. The Author of the greatest Happily-Ever-After...ever.

Let me end with a quotation from Valentine's letter to Iris, "Hold fast to Him and do not lose heart. I know how it all ends. We win."

-Jamie

Q&A

with Jamie Ogle



This is your debut novel! What has the process of getting your first book published been like?

Like most authors who pursue traditional publishing, there were so many highs and lows (and a lot of rejections) along the way, but God was so faithful to lead, guide, and encourage me through it all. I didn't know if the end result of the work would be a published novel or if it was going to be a journey where God would grow my faith--it turned out to be both! Getting to publish with Tyndale is a total dream come true!

Of Love and Treason centers on a historical figure. Where did your interest in the legend of St. Valentine come from?

I was never really a fan of Valentine's Day. I thought it was a dumb, commercialized holiday, and my research began as an attempt to justify how stupid I thought it all was. But the more I dug into Valentine, Ancient Rome, and Church History, I found myself falling in love with the story. As scenes and snippets of conversations popped into my head, I started to write them down, and pretty soon I'd written the first draft of the novel.

This story touches on themes of surrender and sacrifice. How have your own life experiences shaped your exploration of these topics?

I'm a planner, a plotter, and a perfectionist—which are fine qualities for a writer, but sort of a detriment when it comes to things like trust and surrender. However, this whole writing and publishing journey has been one of constant surrender and trust that while I can do the work God has called me to, the results are not in my hands. It's a lesson I am learning and relearning all the time.

Who is your favorite character in the novel?

*I don't know why, but whether I'm reading or writing, I always find myself more attached to a secondary character over a main character. It just happens. Titus was that character for me in *Of Love and Treason*. In the original drafts, he was always there, doing his job as a secondary character, but when I realized we needed to hear his own side of the events in the story, he took on a whole new level of complexity and became my favorite character to explore.*

Q&A continued...

How does faith play a role in this story?

Within the story, we find each of the characters putting their faith in different things. Some place their faith in God, others look to pagan gods, themselves, alcohol, peer acceptance, etc. in hopes that these things will satisfy and solve the problems they face. It's so easy to look to other things to satisfy—I've done it in my own life over and over, and I'm so glad God continually calls us back to what will truly fill our longings (Himself). I think Augustine of Hippo said it best when he wrote, "You have made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless til they find their rest in You."

What do you enjoy about historical fiction? What was it like writing a fictional retelling?

I love that historical fiction lets us explore the adventures of the past, while showing that the inner struggles and desires of people then, are still similar and relatable to us today. It's a dichotomy of being both an escape and a mirror.

Writing a historical retelling was an interesting challenge! The history of Saint Valentine has turned to stuff of legend over time, with each version of the story differing here and there. I had to operate under a mindset of "If these stories are true, how could they have happened based on what we know of the culture at that time?" After many edits and revisions, it was really exciting to see it all fit together, even though there were a few things that I wish didn't have to be historically accurate.

What do you hope readers take away from *Of Love and Treason*?

I hope readers are as captivated by this story as I was. Digging into the courageous stories of how our spiritual ancestors deemed God worthy of their worship and obedience no matter the cost, changed me and challenged my own faith to go deeper. The thing I love most about history, and especially church history, is that in the darkest moments, when all seems lost, there's always a spark of light rebelliously pushing back the dark. I find these stories incredibly hopeful, because if God could use ordinary people to do extraordinary things back then, He can do the same with us today. I hope readers come away from this story with that same knowledge.



Discussion Questions

To start your group's conversation about *Of Love and Treason*, read through these questions with your book club and share your responses together.

1. Before reading *Of Love and Treason*, how much did you know about the historical St. Valentine? What parts of this story fit with what you knew? What surprised you?

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2. When the emperor passes an edict banning marriage, Roman church leaders argue that they can be faithful to God and still follow the new law, while Valens disagrees. Which position did you find yourself agreeing with?

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3. As they wrestle with the new edict, Cato says, "The Scriptures command us to honor the emperor." Valens replies, "Yes. . . . Honor him as a man made in the image of God. Honor him as a soul Jesus died to save. I will never slur him nor wish him harm, but that does not mean I agree with everything he decrees." Think of a time when you've disagreed with someone in power. Were you able to honor that person while still holding to your belief? How do you discern when to follow a person, law, or rule and when to take a stand in opposition?

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4. The early Roman church looked quite different from most Christian churches today, with believers meeting in small groups and sharing their resources. Are there elements of the early church you'd like to see the modern church return to? What do you prefer about church as it exists now?

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5. Before Iris's vision is fully restored, she receives a few brief glimpses of sight. Compare the story in Mark 8:22-26 of Jesus healing a blind man. Why do you think some healings happen immediately and others come more slowly?

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6. Iris also questions why she was healed while in other cases, God does not intervene to save or protect those who love Him. How would you answer her? Have you wrestled with the same question? What was the result?

7. Characters like Beatrix and Cato and Delphine have faced devastating losses yet held onto their faith. How were they able to do so? Are there people in your own life who stand as similar examples?

8. Titus twice gives Valens the chance to escape Rome. Why do you think Valens makes the choice he does each time? Did you understand his reasons?

9. Titus carries the blame for Iris's injury on his own shoulders, along with the belief that he should get the credit for what he has done. In a moment of frustration, he thinks, "He'd done everything he could to protect them, to keep them safe, to rescue them. He'd done it, not their god, not their friends, and certainly not Valentine." Why do you think Titus finds it so difficult to surrender responsibility for both the good and the bad? Do you imagine he will ever be able to accept grace?

10. Valens tells Iris, "We're told that all things work together for the good of those who love God, those who are called according to His purpose. . . . All things might be good things, and they might be terribly difficult things. . . . We have the assurance that no matter what happens—good or bad, by our estimation—anything can always be redeemed by God for good if we trust Him." How does this perspective affect how you view this story's ending? Have there been tragic or difficult circumstances in your own life that God has redeemed for good—or that you are still waiting to see redeemed?

Your book group questions:



CREATE THE ATMOSPHERE

Charcuterie board:

- 2-3 meats - salami, prosciutto, etc.
- 2-3 cheeses: cheddar, goat cheese, mozzarella pearls, etc.
- olives
- grapes
- honey
- dates
- fig jam
- nuts
- crackers



Globi - Roman cheesecake bites:

These ricotta-based fritters were delightful! Crisp, sweet, and sticky, I can see why Valentine was always swinging into the nearest bread shop for a treat. Make them plain or get creative and try Iris and Valentine's favorite flavors! Add cinnamon and raisins or dried cherries and pistachios.

Find the recipe and instructions here:

<https://tavolamediterranea.com/2017/10/05/roman-sweet-tooth-cato-globi/>



Drink:

- Peppermint, lavender or chamomile "calda" (tea)
- sparkling grape juice, or wine if you choose

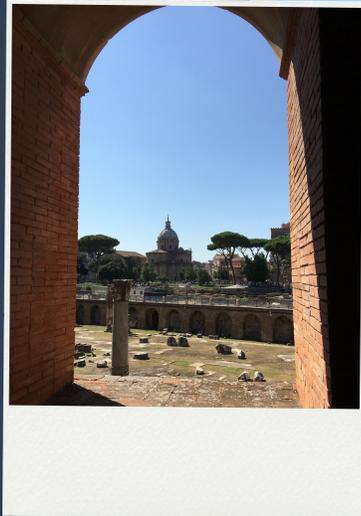
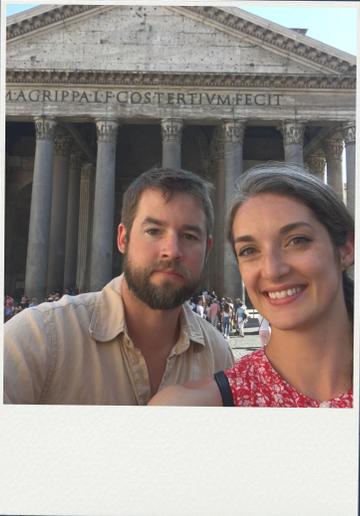
Extras:

- Decorate with red roses
- Do a YouTube search for "Ancient Rome soundtrack" (there are a lot of options), or listen to the *Gladiator* (2000) movie soundtrack.

Colosseum



Pantheon



Markets of Trajan



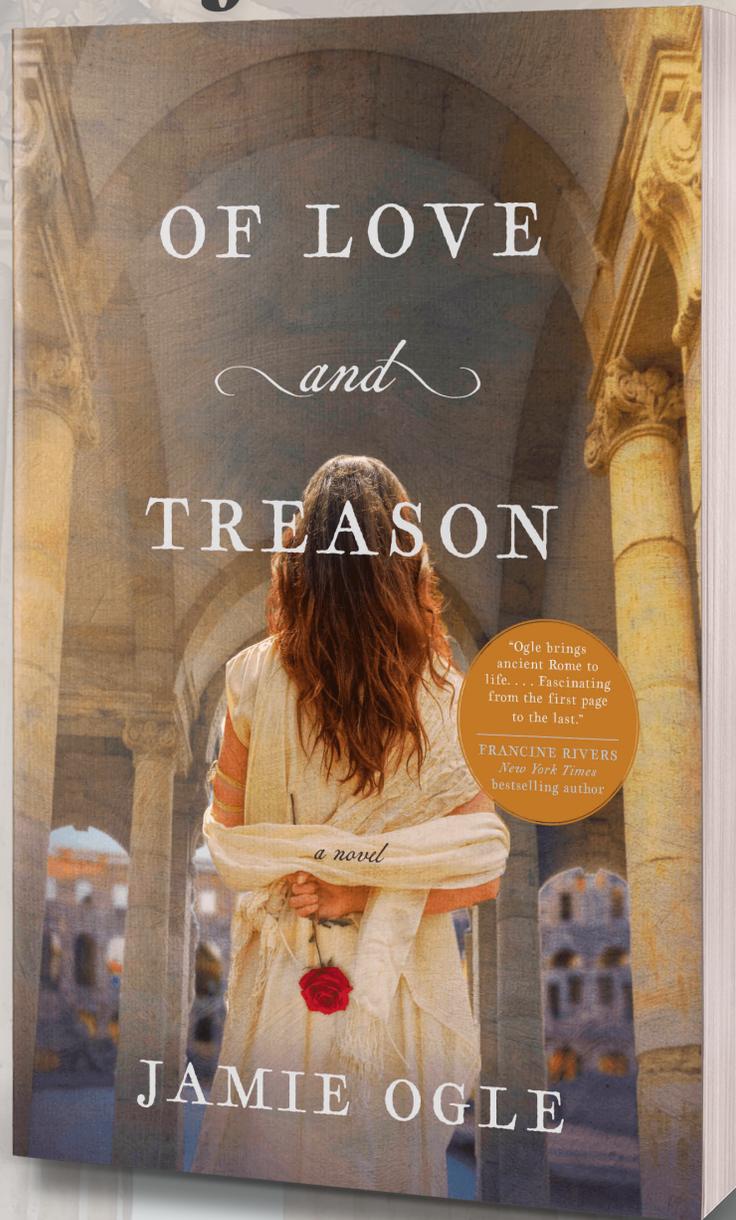
A few photos from when I spent 3 days dragging Phil around the Roman Forum and Markets of Trajan, taking pictures of E.V.E.R.Y.T.H.I.N.G.

Of Love and Treason came to life after walking those streets and touching those stones. It was truly a research trip of a lifetime!



Remains of Saint Valentine in the Basilica di Santa Maria in Cosmedin. When the guard found out I was writing a book about Valentine, he unlocked the barricade around the bones and said, "Well, go on! Go see him!"

Thanks for choosing



for your book club!

Watch for the next historical novel from Jamie Ogle!

Coming in 2025 from Tyndale
House Publishers

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