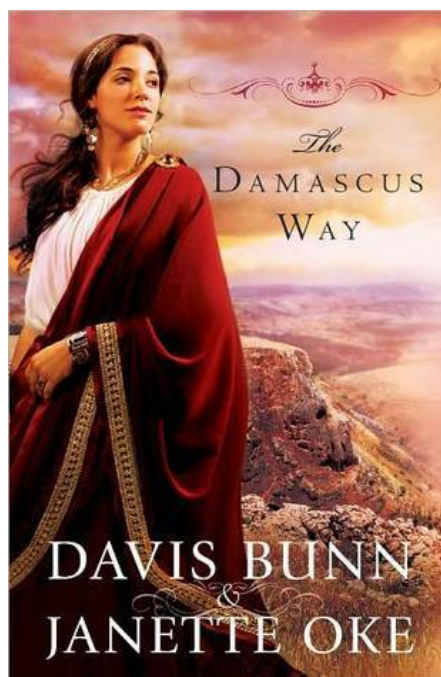




The Damascus Way

Davis Bunn , Janette Oke

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Julia has everything money can buy...except for acceptance by either the Gentiles or the Jews. Her Greek father already has a wife and family, leaving Julia and her Hebrew mother second-class citizens. But when they are introduced to followers of the Way, they become part of that community of believers.

Abigail's brother, Jacob, now a young man, is attempting to discover his own place as a Christian. He is concerned that being more serious about his faith means trading away the exhilaration of his current profession as a caravan guard. Hired by Julia's father to protect the wealthy merchant's caravans on the secretive "Frankincense Trail"--undercover transport of this highly valuable commodity--Jacob also passes letters and messages between various communities of believers. He is alarmed to find out that Julia, hardly more than a girl, is also a messenger. Can their immediate mistrust be put aside to finally bring their hearts together?

The Damascus Way Details

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From Reader Review The Damascus Way for online ebook

Eneida says

This is the last of the series and I felt that it lacked in some ways. I was happy that Jacob found his purpose and grew up to be a great man, and am also happy that Abigail and Linux end up together. However, I felt that the characters weren't as deep as what they were in the other two. Abigail felt whiny at times and Jacob was sometimes left out with the focus more on his future betrothed. I wished they would have spent more time developing Saul of Tarsus and his character in the story. What little they did focus on him wasn't filled with much sustenance. There were portions of the book that did touch my heart and reminded me of the greatness that is God - and for that, I have thoroughly been grateful.

Gerald Curtis says

I like fictionalized accounts about Bible accounts and people. I enjoy the backgrounds given into the culture and places, and thinking about what the day-to-day lives of the people involved might have been like, giving more insights to what I got from just reading the scriptures.

However, I will not be reading anymore of this author's attempts. I have read two of his New Testament novels, and in my opinion, 80 – 90% of what he presents is pure fiction having nothing to do with the scriptural accounts which, to my thinking, are only sidelines to his plots. Furthermore, he includes so many characters and different storylines that I just can't connect with any of them. It is too complicated for my liking and has so little to do with what I know about scripture.

David is a famous author, and I am not criticizing his writing skills. These two books were well written, but just not to my liking as Biblica fiction.

Sarah says

The many storylines of T. Davis Bunn and Janette Oke's Acts of Faith trilogy conclude in *The Damascus Way*.

Our protagonist is a new character, a young woman of mixed Greek, Syrian and Jewish heritage named Julia. She has grown up in a comfortable house with a gentle mother and a grandmotherly maidservant. There are only two ongoing problems in Julia's world: her father, the wealthy trader Jamal, is doting but never around, and the people in the nearest village are cold to Julia when she goes to market. Her mother never even leaves the house.

Eventually, our heroine learns that her mom is only Jamal's mistress, and that he lives with his official wife and legitimate children in Damascus when he's not accompanying his caravans across the desert. Helena, Julia's mother, is well-aware of the situation and resigned to it—Jamal took her as a concubine years ago in exchange for helping her family out of debt—but the girl is enraged at her father for this ill use of them both.

Her whole world upended, Julia becomes friendly with the sect known as the People of the Way, whom her

father reviles. (The title of the novel cleverly refers both to the famous road to Damascus, and the young Church there).

Here the thread of Julia's fate tangles with that of Jacob, whom we know from the first two books. He's about twenty now, and one of Jamal's caravan guards. (Jamal doesn't know about Jacob's faith and would probably have never hired him had he known). Our friends Linux (whose name should be spelled Linus), Abigail, Alban and Martha (although not Leah, for some reason) are back, along with Dorcas, Abigail's sweet little daughter by the late Stephen—warning: I will be ranting about this later. They have all left Jerusalem for good, both to spread the Gospel and to evade the Pharisees, especially one Saul of Tarsus, who wants all of them dead.

No content advisory needed. There is no real violence, no sexual content, and nothing else that would render the book inappropriate for a young teen reader.

The fictional aspects of the book find Bunn and Oke at the top of their game. They deftly juggle a huge cast of characters with a variety of dilemmas. Julia is the best protagonist in the series—easier to understand (and therefore root for) than Leah was at first, with an obvious motive. Unlike Abigail, who had no agency in her own book and barely any even now, Julia is proactive, even stubborn, and steers her own story admirably.

Julia's banter with the combustible Jacob stands out from the other two pairings in the series nicely, more intense than the gentle courtship of Alban and Leah, but less so than the agonizing slow burn between (view spoiler)

Meanwhile we see the two women in Jamal's life struggling to tolerate each other, while the merchant himself starts to feel the stirrings of a conscience for the first time.

So all the fictional characters get satisfying development, but the Biblical ones still fall flat (except Martha, who continues to be solid). We see Phillip meet with the Ethiopian eunuch here, which would have been a much more meaningful scene if we were given any characterizing information about Phillip up until now.

And poor St. Paul is so underserved. Despite being the main antagonist, he is given scarcely any page time. We hear of him and his cruel deeds, but we don't see him in person until the climax of the book, when he falls from his horse.

Hiding the villain can work in something like *The Lord of the Rings*, where we barely see Sauron but plenty of his minions show up in person. This approach does not work for Paul because he's not nearly that powerful, or even that evil. He's much closer to a Zuko or a Kylo Ren—vengefully pursuing the heroes while wondering in his heart if they're right—and both of those characters are strong because we see them a lot. We get to know them.

They operate not out of bloodlust or greed but a deranged sense of honor, just like Paul, who was convinced that the Christians were truly evil and would possibly cause the extinction of the Jewish people. Paul is a watershed figure in both Christian and world history, and can't be pushed to the side like this without greatly weakening the book. Yet the authors seem almost... *bored* of him. This puzzles me greatly.

One major flaw in the novel is carried over from *The Hidden Flame*: the very silly idea that St. Stephen

himself was married, and fathered a child, *after* his conversion. Dorcas is a sweet child and I like having her in the story—Linux is so cute with her, in particular—but there is no reason on Earth for her parentage. Nothing in the story indicates that she needs to be Stephen's daughter. She doesn't even need to be Abigail's biological daughter—in fact, making Dorcas adopted would have been a great way to show that Abby's commitment to helping widows and orphans is genuine.

But speaking of Stephen reminds me. Why is he the only character in this saga who died?

I was willing to overlook this in the first volume, since it took place over about a fortnight and none of the authority figures knew what they were up against. It was fine in book two, since Stephen's death was the warning that things had gotten real. But none of our fictional leads have been martyred, as of the story's ending, and I find that mighty strange. Everyone who joined the faith knew that they could be killed for it. Of all the original Apostles, only John avoided a violent end, and even he finished his days exiled and imprisoned.

This was handled so well in *The Robe*, which takes place over the same timeframe as this trilogy and ends with two of the three leads being led to the archery fields of Caligula's palace, there to meet the fate of St. Sebastian. Marcellus and Diana could have lived to old age as aristocrats, but they chose to die for their beliefs rather than live on in a sick culture and deny the truth. They sacrificed everything.

These characters, meanwhile...well, Alban and Linux sacrificed the army...and that's about it.

This is a wholesome series with nice prose, but it doesn't grasp the time period or culture it claims to portray. It's not bad. But the vintage Biblical novels of Lloyd C. Douglas and Taylor Caldwell are a lot better.

Jeffrey says

Betcha can't read just one! This is the third volume in the Acts of Faith trilogy, co-authored by Davis Bunn and Janette Oke. Having finished the previous two, *The Centurion's wife* and *The Hidden Flame*, I could hardly wait to attack this final installment.

This volume covers the Book of Acts from the persecution and Dispersion of the followers of Jesus from Jerusalem to the conversion of Paul on the road to Damascus. Skillfully interwoven into the historic events of the early church are the parallel romances of Abigail, the widow of Stephen the Martyr and Linux, the Roman officer who loves her and her daughter Dorcas. The other romance features Jacob the now adult adopted son of Alban the Centurion and Julia the daughter of wealthy merchant Jamal.

The action ping-pongs between these four individuals and a stellar cast of actual individuals from Acts. We are introduced to Helzebah, the Samaritan woman whom Jesus befriends at a well, and Saul the zealous and menacing persecutor of the people of "the way,"

The story largely takes place in the region of Samaria and the authors brilliantly bring the harsh realities of this desolate wasteland vividly to life. Their depiction of a terrifying desert "haboob" or massive sandstorm is a highlight, along with the harsh lives of the outcast Samaritans.

Julia's father Jamal, it seems, has a secret that he has been hiding for many years from his wife Helena and daughter Julia. He has a second wife living north in the city of Damascus. The critical problem is that Helena

is not his legal wife but a woman purchased as a young girl by Jamal while he is legally married to the wife in Damascus. Poor Helena has no legal standing and relies on the mercy of her benefactor Jamal. Jacob becomes the chief guardian for Jamal's caravans that ply the region bringing valuable cargo back and forth.

Because of the persecution brought on the early Christians by both the Sanhedrin and Roman authorities, a network of secret couriers bring news and information to the followers throughout the region. Both Jacob and Julia are brought into this courier network because they are both believers but their discovery would lead to certain death.

Once again the authors carefully and accurately interweave their magic story line into the actual and factual accounts found in the Book of Acts. This entire trilogy would make an epic film series for screen or Television the likes which have never been seen before. In summation, this is one of the very finest fictional accounts out of the Book of Acts that this reviewer has ever had the pleasure to read.

Davina Sinclair says

Great page turner, following the various different characters who are "followers of the way". While clearly a fiction book it includes the characters of Philip and Saul (Paul) in the Bible and give an idea of the culture and dangers of the day i.e they paint a picture of the dangers and hazards on the road to Samaria (useful to help imagine the parable of good samaritan). I like the depiction of Saul and love one of the quotes from Philip "How can I live so that when someone sees me they are pointed to Jesus? When I speak is it the Messiahs truths they hear? How can I live that no power is seen to be mine, no authority, no crown, no glory. It all belongs to him. I am the willing, loving servant, providing hands, feet, voice, eyes and ears for the Holy Spirit to use".

bookme4life says

This is the third book in the Acts of Faith series, following The Centurion's Wife and The Hidden Flame (Acts of Faith Series #2). It brings together characters from the previous books and adds a new set. And as with those, events and people from the Book of Acts in the Bible are interwoven into this story. As the title hints, Saul of Tarsus also plays a role, though mostly secondary.

If you're looking for gritty realism, this isn't the book (or even series) for you. The stories are gently told and offer encouragement to live in a Christ-like manner.

Olivia says

What a great end to the series! There are some series that drag toward by the last book, but although it wasn't as amazing as the first two, I still felt the characters were just as strong and the story fascinating.

Followers of the Way are leaving for Jerusalem to flee from Saul of Tarsus, the Christian persecutor. As they scatter they take salvation other villages and towns in Israel. Abigail at first is hesitant to leave Jerusalem, the place where her husband loved and served, but by the prodding of others who care for her she decides leaving is the best choice.

Linux....I was SOO happy when his story was continued in this. I like him so because, yes, he's a believer, but he's still a soldier and that adds so much to his character. I loved his interaction with Dorcas and his strength is definitely appealing. The last chapter made me so happy.

Jacob, Abigail's sister, was a main character in this book. I love how his character has developed through all three books. From scrawny servant to Alban, to insistent young man wanting to become a soldier, to a strong man who believes in Christ and seeks His ways. He comes to realize that the reason why he hadn't seen God's direction is because he hadn't been seeking.

Julia, a Greek young woman, misses her father while he is away on business. As a caravan master, he has much to keep his attention. But when the followers of Christ effect the life of her Mother's maid, her home begins to change. And she finds that she must put her life at risk.

All the scenes concerning caravans were quite fascinating. I was pleased that Philips evangelism to the Ethiopian was described, as well as Paul's conversion. The desert storm was one of my favorite scenes. The only thing I didn't like as much in this book was the switching of POV's so often. I'm not usually bothered by four POV's, but because Linux and Abigail's story differed from Julia and Jacob's you feel as if the story holds two different stories, not one.

Once again, the authors have created a story full of redemption and forgiveness. Every scene has some truth in it indicating God's love and guidance. There is adventure and tension in this book, while on the flip side there is every day life described.

Annie says

Book three was better than the first two books, but my reviews of book one and two still hold true: This was a wonderfully and masterfully written book. The only reason I didn't give 5 stars is because the accounts aren't completely factual within biblical truths. I know that, as a novel, the authors have the liberties to do with the story what ever they so choose to do. However, being a Biblical account - even in novel form - should be far mor accurate that this book was. Having said that, I enjoyed this book immensely! I have enjoyed this entire series, have learned some important things about myself through the characters, and have come away blessed. Thank Davis Bunn and Janette Oke for another wonderful series of books. Both of your wonderful stories separately, but putting the two of you together really brings the term dynamic to a whole new level!

Erin says

The third book in the "Acts of Faith" series" takes place 5 years after the events of book 2. This time the story is to center on Abigail's younger brother, Jacob and Julia, the daughter of the leader of the caravan. While I enjoyed the previous two books in the series with a relish and a just couldn't put it down type of vigour, book #3 was in some places disappointing. I just didn't feel that the characters of Julia and Jacob were that interesting. I am guessing that the authors must have felt the same way because as I read there were more chapters from Linux and Abigail's point of view. Truth to be told, I knew their story wasn't finished by the end of book 2 and so I was relieved to see this occur. Glad they got their happy ending but disappointed that the passion and emotion of the first two books just didn't carry over.

Laura says

The Damascus Way by authors Davis Bunn & Janette Oke, is the third book in the Acts of Faith Series. It does not disappoint.

This series takes part after the resurrection of Christ, in the early days and each book has kept me entertained for hours. In this book, we are introduced to Julia, who has everything that money can buy because of her merchant father. But, she discovers a secret about her family that threatens to destroy her relationship with her father and she is devastated.

We also touch base once again with Jacob, Alban and Abigail as their stories soon become entwined with Julia's. Mix into this, a new threat to the Christian Community know as The Way - Saul of Tarsus - and you get a lot of drama. Will Jacob, Alban, Linux and Abigail escape his clutches? I'm not telling. Will Linux and Abigail finally get together? I'm not telling that either!

If you haven't read any of the other books in this series, do yourself a favour and start at book one. While you could read this as a stand alone, I wouldn't recommend it because the other books are so rich in history and in fleshing out the characters that you will miss out on something special.

Kudos to the authors for another thoroughly researched and engaging book.

Elaine says

Title: The Damascus Way.

Author: Davis Bunn and Janette Oke.

Genre: Christian, Historical Fiction, Biblical Retelling, Romance, Sequel.

Plot: Julia, the only daughter of wealthy merchant Jamal, has everything in life that money can buy. A wonderful palace to call home, fine clothes, plenty of food, servants to wait on her - yet she and her mother Helen live a very lonely existence between her father's visits. When Julia learns the secret why they are shunned, her world is thrown into chaos and only her new-found faith remains steady. A new depth and peace fills her as she embarks on a journey that will change her life in more ways than one, and lead her parents to salvation in Christ.

Meanwhile, Jacob, now a young man ready to take his place in the world, escorts an ill Alban to Jerusalem and leaves him in the care of the few remaining believers there. Taking charge of a secret commission for Jamal, Jacob searches for God's will in his life and hovers in indecision. Jamal, grateful to him and impressed by him, promotes Jacob and gives him another dangerous mission to fulfill. Unknown to Jamal, the believers also entrust Jacob with a secret mission, causing him to become a courier for the persecuted Christians scattered aboard - a dangerous task.

With Saul's persecution of the church increasing, the believers flee from Jerusalem while they still can. One of the last to flee, Abigail and her young daughter Dorcas leave with Alban and a caravan of other believers. Escorting them for the majority of their journey is Linux, once a Roman officer and now a strong faithful brother in the faith. Newly returned from a visit to his homeland, Linux sees the recent changes in the country and wonders with the others what will happen next. He is assigned command of the garrison near the village where Abigail takes up residence and quietly goes about making a change in the hearts of those he

comes into contact with.

With several character stories all growing, intertwining and reaching toward the final epic climax, this book will hold your interest to the final page.

Likes/Dislikes: Beautifully written and populated with wonderful characters, some new and some old friends, this is a classic. It was well organized and flowed well between each character shift in viewpoint. I was quite satisfied with the conclusion to Linux's interesting life story, told over the span of the three books in this trilogy. I would have liked at least one more chapter or even just a paragraph on what happened to Jacob and Julia but with my imagination, it's fairly easy to figure out. All in all, I highly enjoyed this book!

Rating: PG-14 and up, mainly for reading level. Highly recommended to all audiences!

Date Report Written: March 24, 2012.

I received this book free from the publishers in exchange for an honest review. I was not required to write a positive review. The opinions expressed in the above review are my own.

Caroline says

The Acts of Faith series helps me to realize how human and real the people of first-century Jerusalem were. Historical cultural details, mixed with the intimate struggles of fictional characters, help me appreciate the book of Acts so much more -- knowing the real Stephen and Martha and Philip were people like us, relying on the same God and learning of the same Messiah.

Reading each book, I'd remember certain events from the Bible that I knew must take place. But not knowing the details of exactly when or how...it's just like our lives in Christ today. We know the end of the story, but not how our part will play out. Those roads around Jerusalem were dangerous! How far they've stretched since then.

Abigail Mitchell says

This series was awesome!!! I love reading biblical fiction. It helps me feel closer to Bible characters and understand better how everyone in the Bible was feeling, and what they were going through. For instance Saul, when he came to Christ, I never really thought much on how long it probably took for him to be accepted as a follower of Christ, by the rest of the followers. And there are a lot of other things like in this story we have a character (Jacob) who hears of Saul's perspective journey to Damascus to persecute the Christians, he is filled with fear, and knows he needs to warn them. Well since I'm familiar with the story already I know what happens, and that he doesn't actually hurt them as he intended, but during that time they didn't know. So I enjoyed reading how they were probably feeling as this went in, as I said before, it kind of brings me closer to the Bible characters and the times. Very well written series! Highly recommended!

Francie (glitter glu) says

did not like the series. i only read half of the third book because i just i am not liking these books.

Regina says

The Acts of Faith series is a must read! Reading the book, The Damascus Way, grabbed me and drew me in from the first page. Sure it wasn't thrill seeking, but it describing how she felt, it was in a way that would draw the reader in.

I never thought I could get into a Biblical series like this series, but I did and I want to find more books like it.
