

**QUESTIONS & ANSWERS WITH VICTORIA BYLIN**

**Together With You**

by Victoria Bylin

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**1. *Together With You* is a romance, but there's a significant storyline about a child with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. What inspired you to write about FASD?**

FASD is a complicated subject. I'm not an expert in any way, but a boy in my son's Cub Scout troop put a face on it for me. There was something different about Tommy (not his real name). His facial features seemed flat, and his eyes were small and wide spread. There was no dent over his upper lip, and he had dental abnormalities.

While the other boys would laugh and interact, Tommy struggled with even the simplest tasks. My heart broke for him, especially when I saw how frustrated he became. My heart also broke for his mom. Tommy wasn't an easy child to be around. He understood some instructions but not others, was easily angered, and sometimes just zoned out.

Flash forward a few years . . . I was researching birth defects for a different book when I stumbled on a fetal alcohol website and saw pictures of kids who looked just like Tommy. Their struggles are heartbreaking, mostly because FASD is one hundred percent preventable. At that moment, I decided Tommy, or a character like him, deserved a book.

**2. Where do your books fit in the romance genre?**

I write contemporaries that look at modern issues with kindness and hope. A dash of humor is important, too. If a reader laughs and cries at the same time, I've done my job. I call this blend "romance fiction." The romance is at the heart of the story, but my books will always have strong secondary storylines as well.

**3. You write about our modern dating culture. Who is your target reader and why?**

Women of all ages enjoy love stories. That's one of the reasons I include characters from different generations. As a girl, I loved hearing my mom talk about how she met my dad, her wedding, and their newlywed years. The world has changed, but falling in love is a constant. On the other hand, women today face choices our parents and grandparents didn't have to make. The differences are staggering, and that tension makes for good fiction.

**4. *Together With You* is about a man from Los Angeles and woman from Kentucky. What inspired this match-up?**

I'm a California girl living in Lexington, the Thoroughbred Capital of the World and the heart of bluegrass. This is the first place I've lived where people ask where I'm from because I'm the one with the accent. Kentucky is wonderful place to live, but so is Los Angeles—just in different ways. When I created Carly Jo Mason, the heroine in *Together With You*, I took my personal experience and flipped it around. I miss the beach and my favorite Mexican restaurant. Carly misses the gorgeous Kentucky sky and Wildcat basketball. Carly is a fish out of water in Los Angeles, but she's true to herself and her values. I loved writing about her because she's smart, strong, and quick to love others.

**5. What do you hope readers will take away from *Together With You*?**

I'm a thematic writer. I need to know what a book is about in just one word. For *Together With You*, that word is *grace*. No one is perfect. I hope readers come away with a sense of how much God loves us even before we fully know him. On a more pragmatic level, I hope to educate women (and men) about the risks of fetal alcohol exposure. If even one woman reads this story and decides to put down that glass of wine, the book will have served a worthy purpose.