
Lost and *Found*



DELIA LATHAM

Lost and Found

Delia Latham

One lost Book of promises.
One beautiful sinner saved by grace.
A new hope within one man's heart.

This is a work of fiction, loosely based on a true-life event in the life of Dave Frahm. Names, characters, places, and incidents are the product of the author's imagination.

Lost and Found

COPYRIGHT 2014, 2016 by **Delia Latham**

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission of the author. Contact Information:

Delia Latham

www.delialatham.net

delia@delialatham.net

Cover art by Delia Latham

Publishing history:

2014, Sweet Freedom A La Mode, Give God the Glory Series, Book Two,
(Lost Promises...Found Hope)

2016 (Lost and Found)

Published in the United States of America

Lost and Found

CANCER!

Alyssa Baer's legs buckled. She sank onto the sofa, the ugly word echoing in her ear.

How much more could she take without completely losing her mind? First her job—gone without warning when the company buckled under economic pressure. One day she was earning a great salary, and considered herself pretty much set financially in a position she loved. The next, she was unemployed in a small-to-mid-sized town that offered little other possibility for work in her chosen field. Before hell week drew to a close, she'd also seen the end of a year-long, on-again-off-again relationship. Not that she'd been hearing wedding bells or anything, but Rick's sudden departure to greener pastures dealt out one more life change in the space of the same week.

Now this.

"Alyssa? Are you there?" Her father's impatient voice finally registered through the fog of shock. "Alyssa!"

"I'm here, Dad. I'm just—" Her voice caught in her throat and she swallowed hard. No tears. Her dad had enough to deal with. "I'm so sorry. I don't know what to say. I'll be there as soon as I can."

"No need for that. It is what it is. Pancreatic cancer is known for its speedy aggression, so I'll be busy putting my affairs in order. I just thought you should know."

So typical of him not to pick up on the fact that she *needed* to be with him. She was his only child, and Kellen Baer loved her, in his own way—Alyssa didn't doubt that. But he'd never been the kind of dad who'd let a little girl cling to him after a bad dream, or hold her while she cried over some teen angst that he considered trivial and petty.

“Well...all right, I guess. Thank you for calling.” She paused, nibbling at her lip. “When you're ready, let me know, Dad. Okay? I—I really want to see you.”

“I'll be in touch.” The phone went dead.

Alyssa dropped her cell phone onto the cushion beside her. Her hands trembled, and numbness tingled in her nerve endings. Her father was dying. He hadn't been the most demonstrative of parents, but he'd taken good care of her—and he'd done it alone after her mother died when Alyssa was ten. Their relationship wasn't ideal, but he was all she had, and she loved him. How could she bear to watch him die the kind of agonizing death that was all but guaranteed by the big C?

A sob burned and grated its way past her throat. Suddenly angry, she jumped up and made a wild dash for her bedroom to change clothes. She had to get outside before the walls closed in on her. Running would help. She'd put it off this morning, but it's what she needed right now.

She headed out of town, taking the same path she took every day when she ran. The slap-and-pound of her feet against the ground felt good, as did the refreshing breeze that kissed her hot cheeks. Within the first mile, her mind went blank. The whole world shrank to the visible stretch of road in front of her. All sound faded away, save the smack of her shoes against the pavement.



Alan pulled into the church parking lot and turned off the ignition, eager to get inside. He'd been a Christian for less than a year, and still basked in a perpetual glow of love for Christ, a state of existence he hoped never faded away. His life—no, his entire world was different. He'd been forgiven much, and had much to be thankful for.

The fellowship he'd found with other people here in the church—people who loved God with the same fervor he did—was like nothing he'd ever experienced. Yeah, he'd had friends in what he now considered his “other life.” Still had most of them, though a few walked away when he got saved, spitting out mocking invitations to look them up when he regained his sanity. But most of his old buddies still called him a friend, even though they didn't quite understand the new Alan.

But even his closest relationships “pre-Christ” didn't measure up to the bond he shared with the people inside this church building. The blood of Jesus Christ flowed through each of their veins. They were family.

He rubbed his jaw, working out an ache from the wide grin he hadn't known he wore until that moment. Time to go inside. He reached across the seat for his most prized possession—his big, black, beautiful Bible. His fingers groped in the rapidly descending darkness, and his kooky grin turned upside down. The seat beside him was empty.

Heart thudding with slow, painful force, Alan flipped on the overhead light and cast a desperate glance into the back seat, although he'd never once put the Bible there. It always rode in the seat next to him.

Not in the back seat, and not in the floorboard.

Fighting a weird sense of panic, Alan jumped out and opened the trunk, even knowing he never would have put his Bible in with all the junk and tools and miscellaneous textbooks beneath the turtle's shell.

He approached the driver's door again and leaned against the vehicle, both arms planted on the roof. His gaze dropped to the

surface between his elbows...and for a split second, he saw it. He knew. He'd laid the Bible on top of the car while he unlocked the door and placed his ever-present glass of iced tea into the cup holder between the bucket seats.

His heart sank, because then he'd climbed inside, and forgotten to get the Bible off the car. Heart sinking, he envisioned it sliding inch by inevitable inch toward the edge, then flying off the roof, delicate pages aflutter, and crashing to the ground. He'd driven through an entire eleven-mile stretch of disastrous possibility.

How could he have been so careless? That Bible—a rather costly one for a hungry college sophomore—hadn't just fallen into his hands. Alan had scrimped out the bucks to pay for it during the summer just past, shortly after he found the Lord. He'd sacrificed movie nights without regret, and hadn't missed the nightly trip to Burger Barn for one of their out-of-this-world Monster Burgers and a gigantic strawberry shake...well, he had missed that a little. Burger Barn was unbeatable.

But the sacrifice had been well rewarded. He'd not begrudged a single pinched penny when he held that Bible in his hands—the biggest, blackest, most beautiful one he could find—and saw his name etched in a graceful silver font on the bottom right corner. Alan D. Meagher.

Alan had spent countless hours lost in its pages during the ensuing months. He'd marked it up with highlighters and scribbled notes in the margins. Despite the faint but still-lingering smell of fresh ink and new leather, he'd made the Book his own. He considered it a treasure of far greater value than any other item in his possession.

And now it was gone.

Should he go back the way he'd come and look for it? But service would start in ten minutes. If he retraced his route now, he'd be late. He hated being late. Besides, night had fallen. Chances of seeing the Bible on the road would be slim. Even if he did spot it,

he'd probably find it had been crushed beneath the tires of someone's vehicle.

He trudged into the church and tried to put the loss out of his mind. God deserved his praise, whether or not he found that Bible. Still, despite his best intentions, his worship felt a little off-kilter.

Pastor Kevin Kramer's message curved Alan's lips back in the right direction, even if it didn't soothe the ache in his heart. The minister spoke about how God sends His Word out in all kinds of forms and venues and formats, and yet it never, ever returns to Him void. Somewhere along the way it touches someone, encourages the broken-hearted, brings a heart to repentance, or claims a soul for Christ.

"Every moment of a Christian's life is a message. Someone, somewhere is reading your every action, your slightest behavior, and taking those things as gospel. Why? Because you call yourself a Christian, and your life may truly be the only Bible they'll ever read...the only example of Christ...the only peek into God's Word."

Pastor Kevin picked up his worn Bible and held it high. "This Book holds everything anyone needs to know about eternal life, and yet some people will never look inside its cover. But they'll hear your testimony. They'll witness your godly...or ungodly...lifestyle. Sometimes the people who fill these altars at the end of a church service have never opened a Holy Bible. Their only contact with the Word of God came to them through someone like you—someone who showed them Christ in the life they lived before them."

Alan drank in the words, seeking a measure of peace in the midst of his mental turmoil. He could pinch a few more pennies, miss a few more meals and buy another Bible...but he'd never be able to replace the notes in the margins, the colorful highlights of various subjects—the epiphanies he'd experienced while perusing those pages. Still, while the loss left a gaping hole, his world wouldn't end. He resolved to use the knowledge he'd already gleaned from that big, black, beautiful Bible to turn his life into a walking testimony.

After service, he tried to slip out quietly. Despite his best intentions, he didn't feel like making small talk.

A hand landed on his shoulder. He turned to find Pastor Kevin shining that incredible smile on him. No one else he knew had eyes that shone with such an intense inner joy.

"You seem a little introspective tonight, Alan. Anything I can help you with?"

"I don't think so, Pastor, but thank you."

The minister's gaze narrowed. He gestured toward his office at the back of the sanctuary. "Wanna talk?"

Alan laughed. "No, I don't want to waste your time. I'm not in spiritual trouble, I'm just a little upset. I, uhm—" May as well tell the man. "Remember that Bible I showed you a while back?"

Pastor Kevin grinned. "Oh, yeah. Your big, black, beautiful Bible." He did a quick visual scan of Alan's person. "Where is it?"

"I lost it."

The other man's eyes widened. "No!"

"Yeah. I laid it on the roof of my car when I was headed here tonight, and..." He whooshed out a breath. "I forgot to get it before I drove off."

"Oh, man, I'm really sorry. Did you retrace your route?"

"I didn't have time before church started. Besides it was already dark." He shook his head. "I doubt I'd have found it in a usable condition."

"You're probably right, unfortunately. Well...hey, come with me." Pastor Kevin strode away, and Alan trailed behind.

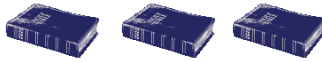
Inside the office, the minister indicated a stack of Bibles on a low table against one wall. Alan gaped. What a stack it was—all different colors and sizes and versions of obviously well-used Bibles.

"Take one of these." Pastor Kevin shrugged. "Maybe you'll find yours somewhere—and I'll pray you do, of course. In the meantime, take your pick. My wife and I picked them up at yard sales and thrift stores. We give them to folks who can't afford a new one, or who've...er...lost theirs off the tops of their vehicles."

Alan laughed. “Thanks, pastor.” He went through the stack and chose a Bible. It wasn’t black, and it wasn’t big, and it wasn’t exactly beautiful. But its slightly worn, faux leather cover still hugged the Word of God in a tight embrace. “I appreciate it. If I find mine, I’ll bring this one back.”

“*When you find yours, Alan. Nothing wrong with a little faith.*” Pastor grinned. “But if you never see that Bible again, maybe God will place it in the hands of someone who needs it. Someone who needs Him, ya know?”

Alan tilted his head and nodded slowly. He hadn’t even thought of that possibility. Yeah, he could pray. He could even relax and trust, while reading this far less impressive loaner. And if the Bible he’d been so proud of came back to him, well and good. If it didn’t...well, he might never know if it had gone into the possession of a seeking soul, but that’s what he’d believe.



The Bible didn’t show up, though Alan dragged a fine-toothed comb over those eleven miles between home and church at least a dozen times during the next couple of weeks. He hoped it hadn’t been ripped to shreds beneath the wheels of someone’s vehicle. Believing it was in the hands of some spiritually needy soul sat much more gently on his mind.

He’d discovered he didn’t really *need* a big, black, beautiful Bible. God’s Word was the same, even when read from a second-hand, dog-eared tome with a murky brown, fake leather cover. He’d already marked up the verses with highlighters and the margins with a ballpoint pen. The borrowed Bible was starting to feel right in his hands.

In the meantime, he still worked a full-time job and carried a full load of classes at the college. Add church services and the extra time he’d spent scouring the road for his Bible, and he had precious little time to mope about not finding it.

Friday's classes dragged themselves to an end. Alan was bone-tired, ready to get home and beyond grateful he didn't have to work tonight. A long, hot shower sounded like the closest thing to Heaven—and he was hungry too. He'd grab a Monster Burger and strawberry shake, take them home and kick back in front of the television. *Burger Barn, here I come.*

“Excuse me...?”

The sweet female voice stopped him in his tracks as he passed the dean's office. He turned and something happened to his breath for a moment. Being sought out by an angel could mean lots of things, not all of them good.

Maybe she had the wrong person. “M- Me?”

She smiled. “I think so. Someone told me you're Alan Meagher...?”

“Yeah, that's me.” He wracked his brain, but couldn't think of a thing he'd done to merit a visitation of the heavenly kind.

“Oh, good! You're not an easy man to track down.” Her slightly raspy voice sent little doodads up and down Alan's spine. “You're not listed in the phone directory, and I didn't know where else to look. A friend reminded me that we live in a college town, and it wouldn't hurt to check here.” She took a deep breath, gave him a somewhat shy smile and extended a small hand. “I'm Alyssa Baer, and I think I have something that belongs to you.”

Yeah...my heart.

He shook her hand—her skin was silky soft—and managed an awkward shrug. To his intense relief, his voice worked, despite the lack of air in his lungs. “I don't know how you could, Alyssa. Have we even met?”

She nodded, setting a curtain of dark blonde hair dancing across her cheek. “Actually, we have...in a weird kind of way.” Her smile revealed *almost* perfect teeth. White, white teeth, with a slight overlap of the front two that only made her smile more charming. “Uhm...Alan?”

He jumped. “I’m sorry. Guess I drifted for a moment.” Daring to touch her arm, he led her out of the path of several hundred college students in a huge hurry to be somewhere else, then shook his head. “I’m, uh...pretty sure I’d have remembered if we’d met.” And now that they had, he’d never forget.

Her cheeks pinked a little, but Alyssa rewarded his seriously lame comment with another of those breathtaking smiles. “Well, to be honest, we haven’t really *met* met, but I feel like I know you.” She glanced around at the sea of departing students, and a little frown pulled at her eyebrows. “I’m sorry. I’m sure you’re tired and ready to get home. I’ll make this quick.”

“I’m in no hurry.” Alan smothered a chuckle, remembering what a rush he’d been in three minutes ago. “But I am hungry. I’m headed for the infamous Burger Barn. Would you care to join me and tell me how we kind of, almost know each other?”

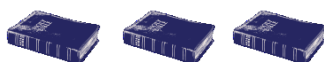
She hesitated, clamped her bottom lip between her teeth. Alan resisted a stupid urge to reach out and— *Whoa! You are seriously sleep-deprived, man.*

Could angels read a man’s mind? He rushed to smooth any possibility of offense. “Hey, I didn’t mean to make you uncomfortable. You don’t have to—”

“I love Burger Barn, and you know what? My stomach is talking almost as loud as I am. I’ll meet you there, okay?”

“It’s a date.” *Idiot! This is not a date.* Totally, utterly bemused, he watched her glide toward the parking lot. Did all angels move with that kind of perfect grace?

All the way to the diner, he prayed she would be there when he arrived...that Alyssa Baer was a real woman, not an angel. But the way she’d floated away from him back there, he had a sinking feeling she’d simply fly away, and he would always wonder what God’s purpose was in letting him see a heavenly being just long enough to fall in love.



Alyssa waited outside the door at Burger Barn, her questionably good sense setting up a clamor. What had she been thinking? She didn't even know this guy.

But she did. She knew he loved God. He'd painted that love into the pages of the Bible she'd found a couple weeks ago while running—literally—from what seemed like a whole boatload of trouble. She'd spotted the object on the ground from a distance and slowed as she approached it. She stopped on the path and looked around, an uncomfortable possibility slithering its way along her nerve endings. Was someone watching her, waiting for her to bend over and pick up the book on the ground? And if she did, would they assault her from behind?

Still, avid book lover that she was, she couldn't bring herself to leave the leather-covered tome lying there. She shone a miniature beam from her tiny flashlight around the area, then eased toward the ground in a squat while keeping an eye out for movement in any direction. With the item safely in hand, she'd jogged to a bench a little ways down the road.

A Bible. Alyssa hadn't picked one up since she was ten years old...when her mother died. Mom had taken her to church every Sunday of her life up until then. Dad didn't keep up the practice. He'd never shared his wife's love for God, and saw no need to continue filling his daughter's head with the "drivel" her mother had lived by. Over time, Alyssa forgot almost everything she'd once known about Jesus.

She gently brushed dust off the cover. Other than that generous layer of powdery dirt, the Bible seemed unharmed—and there, on the bottom right, was a name. Alan D. Meagher. Simply touching the soft leather brought back memories of her mother, and she blinked back tears. Surely Mr. Alan D. Meagher hadn't thrown this gorgeous Bible away on purpose. Her guess was that he'd lost it, although how he could have done that on this stretch of road without tossing it out of his vehicle, she couldn't imagine.

She took the Bible home, and after her shower that evening, found the courage to look into its pages. That's when all the years between her mother's teachings and the person she was now began to haunt her...

A hand on her arm startled her. "Hey." Alan's dark gaze rested on her face, making it tingle. How silly could she get? "Still hungry?"

"Starved."

Burger Barn wasn't the fastest fast-food place in town. They waited in near silence for their order, and finally sat down at a table in the back corner twenty minutes later.

"Do you mind if I say grace?"

A little shock of surprise ran through her...but why? She'd known Alan was a Christian. The scribbled notes in the margins of his Bible had told her that. "Please do." She bowed her head, and he prayed...quietly and with obvious sincerity, but not in great length.

"Amen." Alyssa repeated his last word, and raised her gaze to his. "It's good to know you're a Christian in real life."

Alan paused with his burger halfway to his mouth. "Real life?"

She lowered her gaze, her cheeks warming. "I know you won't understand this, but you're kind of a...I don't know, a celebrity, to me. I've tried to imagine what you're like for the past couple of weeks. I, uh—" She grinned. "I thought you'd be older."

He set his burger down and leaned toward her. "I'm lost. What in the world are you talking about?"

Puzzled, she frowned. Then she remembered—she hadn't yet told this man why she'd come looking for him.

A laugh burst from her lips. "I'm so sorry. I got ahead of myself. You may not even be the Alan D. Meagher I'm looking for...but somehow I think you are." She bit off the tip of a French fry while studying his mystified expression. Men shouldn't be allowed such beautiful eyes and long eyelashes. How was that even fair? "Did you recently lose a Bible?"

Alan had just pulled in a generous portion of his strawberry shake. At her question, he coughed and grabbed for a handful of napkins.

“You okay?” How could a guy look so cute with pink ice cream on his chin, and his face brick red from what looked like a bit of a choking situation? “Gonna live?”

He nodded and cleared his throat, then offered a sheepish grin. “Sorry. I’m fine. You asked about a Bible?”

“Yep. I found one while I was running a couple of weeks ago.”

“Oh.” What was that expression? Confusion, maybe. And definitely a bit of uncertainty. “Is it big?”

She nodded.

“Uhm...black?”

Alyssa nodded again, biting back laughter. “Yes, it’s big and black, and quite beautiful. And it has your name on the front—unless there’s another Alan D. Meagher around here.”

He seemed to have found his equilibrium again, as his lips now curved into a big grin. Alyssa smothered a sigh. Oh, this guy was adorable!

“Nope, you’ve found the right me—” He groaned. “I mean, the right Alan Meagher. Dare I hope my Bible is in decent condition? I lost it off the top of my car while driving to church, so...probably too much to hope for, right?”

“It’s in perfect condition, other than a bit of a scuff on the back. Nothing that would make anyone ashamed to carry it—at least, I don’t think so.” She hesitated. “I hope you don’t mind, but I read some of the notes you’d written on the pages.”

“Yeah?” He put away a truly impressive bite of his Monster Burger, then grinned. “Which ones?”

Alyssa narrowed her eyes. “You don’t think I remember them?”

He lifted one shoulder. “Do you?” The entire length of the fry between his thumb and index finger disappeared into his mouth while he held her gaze.

“I seem to recall a reference to ‘the Christian’s bar of soap,’ in the margin next to 1 John 1:9.” She popped another fry into her mouth, and refused to release his gaze while she ate it. “For your information, I even remember what the verse says.”

He chuckled. “Tell me.”

Alyssa was glad to see him relaxing. He’d seemed a bit put off by her at first. She swallowed the last of her fry, followed it with a sip of soda, and grinned. “But if we confess our sins to Him, He is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.”

She’d clearly stunned him. Alyssa hesitantly reached out and rested her hand on top of his. “I haven’t been to church since I was ten. My mother died, and Dad never quite agreed with her ‘religious mumbo-jumbo.’” She used the fingers of her free hand to paint air quotes. “So I never got to go back to church. By the time I grew up, I didn’t remember that I needed to. And...” She tried to reclaim her hand, but Alan quickly closed his fingers around it. She couldn’t help a quiet gasp, but she left it in his grasp and chose not to ask herself why.

“Even when my whole life went sour...” She met his gaze and managed a one-sided smile when Alan gave her hand a gentle squeeze. “I broke up with a guy I’d been kinda-sorta seeing for almost a year, lost my job, and found out my Dad has pancreatic cancer...all in the same week. My life literally turned upside-down, and I still didn’t remember God.” She flicked away a tear that trailed down one cheek, and offered a watery smile. “Then I found your Bible.”

Alan looked like he wanted to say something. His lips parted. Those dark eyes traveled her face...and he ultimately elected to say nothing.

Wise man.

“Because of that verse and so many others I’ve soaked up during the past couple of weeks, I—I know I need Him. I want to give my heart to God. So thank you, Alan D. Meagher.” Alyssa hauled in a

deep breath and steeled herself against a flood of grateful tears. “Thank you.”

He seemed uncomfortable with her gratitude, squirming in his chair like a kid on a church pew. Yet wonder and joy shone in the depths of his chocolate-colored eyes. “I don’t know what to say. This is wonderful! But you don’t need to thank me. I didn’t do anything.”

“Yes, you did. You shared your heart in that Bible. You highlighted verses that I might never have found without that special touch.” She crumpled her napkin and burger wrapper and laid them on the tray, then pushed it to the side. After a quick sip of soda, she looked up and directly into his eyes. “I told you that I felt like I knew you? Well, that’s why.” She chuckled, her cheeks far warmer than they should’ve been in the air-conditioned eatery. “I even caught a faint whiff of your cologne once or twice. You poured *yourself* into the pages of your Bible, Alan. And now that I’ve met you, I can see that you allowed it to become a part of you, as well.”

A dull wash of red climbed from beneath his collar right up to his hairline. She’d clearly embarrassed him, but she wasn’t sorry. The man needed to know what an important role his big ol’ Bible had played in her life.

“I don’t know what to say. Just...I’m glad.”

“Me too.” She nibbled at her lip, not sure how to ask what she needed to know. “About giving my heart to God...I’m not real sure how it’s done. And I don’t know one church from another. Where do you go? Could I maybe...come with you this Sunday?”

Alan grinned, and Alyssa wondered if a person could grin big enough to actually break a face—because if it were possible, this guy’s face was in serious danger.

“Are you kidding? Of course you can come with me. I’ll be—*whoa!*” He pulled in a breath and huffed it back out, obviously trying to get a handle on everything she’d told him. “I’ll be *thrilled* to pick you up. But Alyssa...”

Her heartbeat kicked into a higher gear when he reached across the table and took her other hand.

“Y—yes?”

“You don’t have to wait until Sunday to give your heart to the Lord. You can do it right here, right now.”

She blinked. “Seriously?”

He looked around. “Burger Barn is pretty quiet for a Friday afternoon, but you won’t be making a scene anyway.” His gaze traveled her face, leaving a trail of warmth everywhere it touched. “Have you heard the Gospel before?”

She nodded.

“Do you understand it?”

“I think so.”

He smiled. “Then the rest is easy. All you have to do is recognize that you’re a sinner in need of a Savior and believe that Jesus Christ, God’s perfect, sinless Son, died to save you. Then ask Him to forgive your sins and make you clean.” He gave her hands a squeeze. “Just talk to Him like you talked to me. He’s your Friend.”

“I see. Uhm...right now?”

“Well, only if you want to, of course.”

“I do!” As the reality began to sink in that she didn’t have to wait another minute to make her heart right with God, Alyssa began to tremble. “Will you pray with me?”

“You know it!” He bowed his head.

She watched him for a few seconds, then drew a deep, deep breath before bowing hers as well. “God, I’m not sure how to do this, so I hope you’ll understand if I don’t do it quite right. I’m a sinner, and I—I don’t want to be any longer.” A sudden rush of emotion brought on an unexpected burst of tears. She didn’t care. Let people see her with her head bowed, crying her heart out while she held hands with the man across the table. Didn’t matter. “Would You save me, please? I’m so sorry for a whole lifetime of sin, and...well, would You please forgive me, Father? I give You everything that I am—my heart and soul, my body and my mind. I’m Yours, all of me, if You’ll have me. Amen.” She raised her head, then bowed it again. “Oh, and Lord...thank You. For letting me find Alan’s Bible, and for

showing Yourself to me as I read it. And thank You for saving me. Amen.”

She looked up, and a little smile curved her lips when she caught Alan brushing away a tear. *Wow!* A man with good looks and integrity, who wasn't afraid to show emotion. She'd thought men didn't come that way anymore.

“That was perfect, Alyssa. Welcome to the family.”

She tilted her head, giving him a narrow-eyed gaze. “Family?”

“The family of God.”

Her heart leapt when his words sank in. She was a member of God's family! She'd given her heart, soul, mind and body to Christ. One of Alan's notes, scribbled beside a highlighted verse that she couldn't quite bring to mind at the moment, suddenly filled her memory. *I'm a slave, bound by choice to my Master, Almighty God. What a joy to serve Him!*

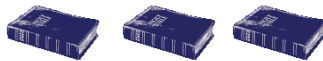
Yes! That's what she was now. Freed by God from slavery to sin, she'd chosen to become a slave to Christ, her beloved new Master.

And yet she'd never felt so incredibly free.

She shook her head. “Thank you, Alan. I don't deserve salvation, and I don't know why on earth God loves me. But He does, doesn't He? I can't believe I'm so blessed.” A shiver of wonder traveled all the way from her toes to her nose. “Will you still take me to church on Sunday?”

His crooked grin made her want to hug him. He looked like a kid on his way to Disneyland. “You just be ready. I'll be there.”

Alyssa smiled and brushed at her wet cheeks with the back of her hand. For the first time ever, she was experiencing tears of joy. “I'll be waiting.”



Alan took her hand again as they walked out of Burger Barn. He couldn't stand the thought of saying good-bye to his brand new sister in Christ.

But he couldn't deny—nor did he want to—that Alyssa tugged at his heart in another way too.

They'd exchanged phone numbers so he could call on Sunday to confirm her address and a time to pick her up. Right now, though, he had to let her get in her car and drive away, because he couldn't think of a reason good enough to keep her hanging around.

"Well, I—" *Now* his voice decided to act up? He cleared his throat and tried again. "I guess I'll see you Sunday then."

"Yeah. Thanks again—for everything." She turned to go, then whirled and threw her arms around his neck in a quick, hard hug. "Seriously. Thank you. You and your Bible have changed my life."

He opened his mouth and hoped he could do more than squeak a reply. The little rascal had given a hug and taken a heart. Some kind of angel she was! "You're welcome."

"See you Sunday."

This time Alyssa turned and walked off. Alan watched her until she reached her car. Only then did he start toward his own.

"Alan! Wait!"

Curious, he turned to see her jogging across the parking lot...lugging his big, black, beautiful Bible.

"Your Bible! I forgot to give it to you."

He turned it over in his hands. Took in the supple black leather and the silver scroll of his name in the bottom right corner. Then he shook his head. No, this Book no longer belonged to him.

This time, he surprised her with a hug. "Keep it. It's yours."

"Wh—what?" Her blue eyes rounded. "I can't take your Bible."

He pressed it into her hands. "Yes, you can. It was meant to be yours—even though it's big and black and made for an old man."

She lifted one eyebrow—and looked incredible doing it. Alan swallowed hard and crossed his arms over his chest to keep from pulling her into his arms again.

"What? Why is it made for an old man?"

He chuckled. “You said you expected me to be older. I figured you thought anyone with a big, black, beautiful Bible like that one ought be walking with a cane and wearing hearing aids.”

Her delightful laughter poured a burst of sunshine into his soul.

“Oh, my goodness! I didn’t mean that at all. Just...your comments. They seemed so heartfelt. And so wise. I’ve never known anyone our age to show that kind of insight about things like—well, you know. Like the Bible.”

He grinned. “Well, I’m not wise. I’m just a fairly new Christian who’s crazy excited that God took a chance on me.”

“Yeah, I know what you mean.” Her blue eyes misted again, but she blinked the waterworks away and held up the Bible. “You’re sure about this? I feel weird, taking it.”

“Don’t. I’m absolutely certain. It’s yours. I have another one.” She didn’t need to know it was a loaner from Pastor Kevin and had once belonged to someone named Merle Mackeprang. Thank God ol’ Merle hadn’t had his name engraved on the cover. Alan had found the name just inside, under “This Bible belongs to.”

Maybe he could find the guy and say thanks...maybe Merle had lost that not-really-big, murky brown, far-from-beautiful Bible, and maybe he wondered whatever had happened to it. Who could say?

He managed to get into his car and ease into the flow of traffic on the street.

He had led his first soul to Christ—without saying a word. Well, at least, not verbally. Just by writing in a big, black, beautiful Bible.

Amazing.

Letting Alan be a part of the miracle his Bible had brought about was a beautiful gift. But God hadn’t stopped there. That first, won soul belonged to the most incredible, most beautiful, sweetest woman he’d ever met. And he couldn’t wait to see her again.

“Life is great and God is good!” Alan couldn’t seem to wipe the big, goofy grin off his face. His jaw hurt, but he didn’t care. “Thank You, God. Thank You!”

He turned onto his street and slowed. The grin faded as the enormity of what had happened struck him with a near-physical blow.

One lost Book of promises. One beautiful sinner saved by grace. A new hope within one man's heart—a hope that had everything to do with one sweet, amazing new Christian woman.

Maybe four ones could equal forever.

He pulled into the driveway and turned off the engine, then sat for a moment with his head bowed. “Father? I don't mean to pester You, but I just gotta say it again. Thank You.” He swallowed a huge lump in his throat and croaked out the words one more time. “Thank You!”



Lost and Found is a fictionalized version of a true story shared by [Dave Frahm](#) on Facebook. My sincere appreciation to Dave for letting me “play with” this little piece of his life. Oh, Dear Reader...you wondered what the D in Alan’s name stood for, didn’t you? Still wondering...? (Written with Dave’s permission.)

Other titles by Delia Latham:

[*A Christmas Beau*](#)

The Paradise Pines Series:

[*Spring Raine*](#)

[*Summer Dreams*](#)

[*Autumn Falls*](#)

[*Winter Wonders*](#)

[*Oh, Baby!*](#) (A Heart's Haven novella)

[*Jingle Belle*](#)

[*At First Sight*](#)

[*The First Noelle*](#)

[*Bells on Her Toes*](#) (Love at Christmas Inn, #4)

[*A Cowboy Christmas*](#) (Co-authored with [Tanya Stowe](#))

[*Lea's Gift*](#) (Co-authored with [Tanya Stowe](#))

[*Do You See What I See?*](#) (A Smoky Mtn. Christmas, Book 1)

[*Love in the WINGS*](#)

[*Lexi's Heart*](#)

[*Jewels for the Kingdom*](#)

The Solomon's Gate series:

[*Destiny's Dream*](#)

[*Kylie's Kiss*](#)

[*Gypsy's Game*](#)

[Treehouse](#)

[Yesterday's Promise](#)

[Goldeneyes](#)

[Mine!](#) (A children's picture book)

[Morning Rendezvous](#) (Devotions, thoughts and random musings)