

CRIPPLE CREEK  
SERIES

# Book Club Kit



A Novel by  
Sara R. Turnquist

## About Sara R. Turnquist

Sara is a coffee lovin', word slinging, clean Historical Romance author whose super power is converting caffeine into novels. She loves those odd little tidbits of history that are stranger than fiction. That's what inspires her. Well, that and a good love story.



But of all the love stories she knows, hers is her favorite. She lives happily with her own Prince Charming and their gaggle of minions. Three to be exact. They sure know how to distract a writer! But, alas, the stories must be written, even if it must happen in the wee hours of the morning.

Sara is an avid reader and also enjoys reading clean Historical Romance when she's not traveling. Her books range from the Czech lands to the American Wild West and from ancient Egypt to the early 1900s. Some of her titles include *The Lady Bornekova*, *Hope in Cripple Creek*, *The General's Wife*, *Trail of Fears*, and the Convenient Risk Series.

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# Q&A With Sara Turnquist

- **What sparked the idea for a Christmas sequel to Hope in Cripple Creek?**

I love Christmas novellas. They are the perfect length to consume in an afternoon or over a few days. That allows for the consumption of many stories during the holiday season. I had finished Hope in Cripple Creek and wanted to portray what other challenges Wyatt and Katherine might face as a married couple with a ready-made family. That was the spark. And that gave way to the

- **Why is this a novella as opposed to a full-length novel? Was that on purpose?**

It was a purposeful thought. As mentioned above, I adore novella length for the holiday season. I like the regular novel length too, but the season can tend to be so busy that it can take even longer for a mom of younger children to consume a full-length story. I wanted something that had meat to it, but was closer to bite-sized, if you will allow the metaphor.

- **We revisit Katherine and Wyatt...how has their relationship changed?**

They have grown more secure in their relationship, but there are still challenges that face them. They have become reliant on each other, but there can be a danger of codependency... especially in those early years of marriage. My personality lends itself to that, so I wanted to explore that just a little.



# Q&A With Sara Turnquist Cont...

- **What was your favorite scene to write in Christmas In Cripple Creek?**

I loved the final scene when everything came together. Sometimes when I write novels and novellas, there is a rush to the finish. Not that I am rushed, necessarily, but the action speeds up at the climax and the resolution follows that closely and can feel a bit more fast-paced. I loved in this novella, that we kind of sit in the moment with the sweet family.

- **What was the most challenging scene to write?**

The moment when Katherine is in the church. I loved the scene, but I had never experienced this aspect of pregnancy/labor. So, I had to talk with friends who'd had this happen to adequately capture the reality of that moment.

- **Where there any new characters that you enjoyed writing?**

I loved having an older Jack and Susie. I have enjoyed all of the different stages with my children. So, having Jack starting to struggle with the loss of his biological parents as a little bit of an older child and having Susie as a toddler...was precious to me.

- **How does this book compare to the other books in the series?**

Well, it is shorter. It is holiday-themed. And it is a sequel that better explores the relationship in the next phase (early marriage). The other books take on the newness of a relationship leading to marriage.



## ~ Little People Nativity ~

I bought the cute Little People Nativity for my baby girl that first year, thinking it would be a safe nativity decoration that she could look at and interact with. I had no idea it would be the central part of one of our favorite Christmas traditions. Part of the idea was taken from another mom in a mom group, part evolved.

So, we take the nativity characters and scatter them around the house in the main areas...some a little hidden (based on my kids' ages and abilities). Except baby Jesus. He is hidden extremely well. Usually in my sock drawer.

Starting December 1st, then every 5 days after (Dec 5th, 10th, 15th, 20th) we feature the story of one of the characters, based in order on Scripture (e.g. the first night is Mary's story). I tried to keep as close to Scripture as possible while telling the story in a way that they can easily understand on their level.

So each night, the kids are told who to look for (e.g. Mary). They find that figure and we tell the story (most recently with a memory verse featured). Then the kids put the figure in the Nativity barn under the tree. And all December, they are trying to spot the characters, especially baby Jesus as he is the most well-hidden (they never find Him... He is so well-hidden because if they find Him, it kind of detracts from the point).

So, as characters join the Nativity, we are waiting on Jesus. And Christmas morning, when they come downstairs, Jesus is in His place in the Nativity. They are usually very excited to see Him finally.

That's my hope...that they will be excited about Jesus showing up on Christmas and it's not just about the presents, but about the coming of Jesus and what He means to us.





## *The Nativity Story*

### **DECEMBER 1st – MARY (Luke 1:26–55)**

God sent the angel Gabriel to the town of Nazareth in Galilee. There was a young woman who lived there named Mary. Gabriel had a message for Mary. He said to her, “Don't be afraid. God is pleased with you, and you will have a son. His name will be Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of God Most High.”

Mary did not understand these words. “How can this be?” she asked.

The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come down to you, and God's powers will come over you.”

Mary put her faith in God. “I am the Lord's servant,” she told the angel. “Let it happen as you have said.” Mary sang a song of praise to God:

*With all my heart I praise the Lord, and I am glad because of God my Savior  
God cares for me From now on, all people will say God has blessed me.*

### **DECEMBER 5th – JOSEPH (Matthew 1:18–25)**

“She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.”

Matthew 1:21

Mary was engaged to Joseph to be married. Before they got married, she became pregnant. At that time, Joseph didn't know about the angel who visited Mary and what the angel told her. Joseph was a good and righteous man, he didn't want to make problems for Mary and he planned to end the engagement in secret.

## **DECEMBER 5th – JOSEPH (Matthew 1:18-25) Continued**

After he made his plan, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Do not be afraid to get married.” The angel told Joseph about the baby, that it was God's plan. The angel said, “She will have a son and you shall call Him Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.”

So Joseph and Mary got married.

## **DECEMBER 10th – DONKEY**

JESUS IS BORN (Luke 2:1-7; Matthew 1:18-25)

It was almost time for Mary's baby to be born, but He would not be born in Nazareth. Israel was part of the Roman Empire and the leader was emperor Caesar Augustus. He wanted all the people in the empire to pay taxes to Rome. But first, everyone had to go to their hometown to be counted.

Mary's husband, Joseph, had to go to Bethlehem in Judea. Bethlehem had been King David's home and Joseph was from David's family.

It was a long journey. After three days, Joseph and Mary came to the city of David, but there was nowhere for them to stay. Finally, a kind innkeeper allowed them to stay in his barn. And there in a barn in Bethlehem, Jesus was born. Mary laid him on a bed of hay in a manger.

## **DECEMBER 15th – ANGEL/SHEPHERDS (Luke 2:8-20)**

On this night, there were shepherds watching their sheep in the fields near Bethlehem. An angel came down to them from the Lord. The brightness of the Lord's glory shined around them. The shepherds fell to their knees and put their hands over their eyes. They were very frightened. But the angel said, “Don't be afraid! I have good news for you, which will make everyone happy. This very day in the city of David, a Savior was born for you. He is Christ the Lord. You will know who He is because you will find Him lying on a bed of hay.”



## **DECEMBER 15th – ANGEL/SHEPHERDS (Luke 2:8–20) Continued**

Suddenly, many other angels came down from Heaven. They said, “Praise God in Heaven! Peace on earth to everyone who pleases God.” The shepherds went to Bethlehem. They found Jesus lying on a bed of hay in a manger. They told Mary and Joseph what the angels had said about Jesus. Mary thought about this, she wondered what it meant. As the shepherds went back to their sheep, they could not stop talking about the baby and praising God.

## **DECEMBER 20th – WISE MEN FROM THE EAST (Matthew 2:1–12)**

Herod had been named king of Israel by the Roman emperor Caesar Augustus. Herod lived near the city of Jerusalem. After Jesus was born, some wise men from the east came to see Herod. They asked him, “Where is the child who was born to be king of the Jews? We saw a new star in the east. That means a great new leader has come into the world. We have come to worship Him.”

Herod was amazed. Could this child be the one the prophet Micah had told about? Micah had said that this leader would be born in Bethlehem. Now Herod was afraid of this newborn king, but he pretended to be glad. He said to the wise men, “Go to Bethlehem and search for the child there. If you find Him, let me know. I want to go and worship Him, too.”

The wise men set out, following the star. Finally, it stopped over a house in Bethlehem. The men went into the house and saw the child with Mary. They got down on their knees and worshipped Him. They gave Him special gifts they had brought with them: precious gold, and the sweet and strong-smelling spices of frankincense and myrrh.

Later, the wise men had a dream that told them not to go back to Herod. They went home by another road. Joseph also had a dream. An angel told him the Herod was not happy about the baby and told him to take Mary and Jesus to Egypt. Joseph got up right away and took Jesus and Mary to Egypt that night. They stayed there until God told Joseph to take them back to Nazareth



## DECEMBER 24th – JESUS

Mary lived in the town of Nazareth. God sent an angel to her. The angel had wonderful news for Mary. She would be the mother of God's own son. It was time for the baby to be born. Mary and her husband, Joseph had to travel to the town of Bethlehem. There was no room for Mary and Joseph at the inn. They had to stay in the stable. The baby was born there. They named Him Jesus. When He was born, a bright star shone in the sky.

That night angels came to some shepherds in the fields. They told the shepherds about the baby, Who was Christ the Lord. The shepherds came to worship Jesus. Some kings from the East saw the star. They followed it to Bethlehem. They bowed to the baby Jesus and gave Him gifts

# Discussion Questions

**Read these questions in your book club and talk about your answers.**

- What do you like about Christmas? What do you like about books with a Christmas theme?
- Are there any characters you wish you could have given advice to? What would you tell them?
- Were there any character struggles you identified with?
- How did the author keep you interested or surprised throughout the story?
- What differences did you see in Katherine and Wyatt?
- What happens to the main couple after the novel ends?
- What feelings did the book evoke as you read it?
- Were there any parts you struggled with?
- How did the fact that this story takes place at Christmas affect the book? Did it add or distract?



## *Dear Holiday Reader*

Thank you for coming along with me to explore some early marriage year memories of Katherine and Wyatt and their young family. They are faced with hardship despite the festive season, but they persevere and find the meaning behind the twinkle and sparkle. That's what I love most about Christmas, the heart of it, the spirit of giving and goodwill to mankind made manifest with the coming of Christ to earth.

I so enjoyed writing this story. I absolutely couldn't put it down as I was writing it. I had to know what would happen next. True story, I wrote this book in 3 days. Not that I was rushed or on deadline or anything. But that I fell so into the story and the action that it flowed out of me quickly.

I do appreciate your reading this book and your support. You readers are one of the biggest driving reasons for why I do what I do. The other is to be faithful to what God has entrusted me with—writing, storytelling, and sharing about the story He is telling in me as well.

May God bless you and all your holidays!

*Sara*



CRIPPLE CREEK  
SERIES

**Book Club Kit**  
**Book Club**  
**Menu**





## Christmas Pistachio Cake

- 1 pkg (2 layer cake) yellow cake mix
- 1 pkg (4 serving size Jello Pistachio instant pudding
- 4 eggs
- 1 c Water
- 1/2 cup oil
- 1/2 tsp almond extract
- 1/4 cup chocolate syrup

### Directions

- Combine cake mix, pudding mix, eggs, water, oil, and extract in a large mixer bowl.
- Blend, then beat at medium speed for 2 minutes.
- Measure 1 1/2 cups of batter; stir in chocolate syrup.
- Spoon batters alternately into a 10-inch Bundt or tube pan sprayed with Pam.
- Zig Zag Spatula through the batter to marble.
- Bake at 350 degrees for 50 minutes.
- Cool for 15 minutes. Remove from pan and finish cooling on a rack.
- Sprinkle with powdered sugar.



## Christmas Fudge

- 2 (12 oz) pkg semi-sweet Chocolate chips
- 10 oz jar marshmallow creme
- 12 oz can carnation evaporated milk
- 4 c sugar
- 1 lb pecan pieces (optional)
- 1 stick margarine
- 1 tsp vanilla

### Directions

- Cook sugar, evaporated milk, and margarine together until cooked and boil for 8 minutes.
- Pour over chocolate chips and marshmallow creme and blend until creamy.
- Add vanilla & pecans
- Pour onto a cookie sheet covered with wax paper.
- Refrigerate & then cut into squares





## Christmas M&M Cookies

- 1½ cups plus one tablespoon all-purpose flour, see note
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ½ cup unsalted butter softened but still cool
- ½ cup granulated sugar
- ⅓ cup brown sugar, lightly packed, make sure it's fresh and soft
- 1 large egg
- 2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
- 1½ cups M&M's or a mixture of M&M's and chocolate chips, divided
- ¼ cup holiday sprinkles

### Directions

- Gently stir in M&M's and chocolate chips. I usually add about 1 generous cup into the batter, and the rest gets pressed on top of the cookies before baking.
- Place the sprinkles in a shallow bowl.
- Scoop balls of cookie dough, between 1½ and 2½ tablespoon portions. Gently press a few M&M's onto the top of each dough ball then press the top of each ball into the bowl of sprinkles. You can bake the cookies right away (they'll be on the thinner side) or chill the dough balls in the fridge for about 15 minutes to ensure they bake up with a nice thickness.
- Place dough onto prepared baking sheets leaving an inch or two for spreading. I like to make sure the dough balls are mounded higher rather than wider so that the cookies aren't too thin.
- Bake for 8-11 minutes (see note), until the edges of the cookies are set but the center is still slightly underdone; this will create a soft cookie. See note about shaping the cookies as soon as they come out of the oven.
- Place the baking sheets on wire racks and allow the cookies to cool completely. They will firm up as they cool.

<https://celebratingsweets.com/christmas-cookies/#recipe>



## Christmas Puppy Chow

### Christmas Puppy Chow

- 8 cups (240 g) Chex cereal
- ½ cup (128 g) creamy peanut butter
- 4 tbsp (57 g) unsalted butter
- 1 cup (140 g) semi-sweet chocolate chips
- 1 tsp (5 ml) vanilla extract
- 2 cups (240 g) powdered sugar

### Holiday Mix-ins

- 1 cup red and green M&M's
- 2 cups chocolate-covered pretzels
- 1 cup mini peanut butter cups
- 1 cup salted caramel or butterscotch chips

## Directions

- Heat the chocolate chips, peanut butter, and butter in a medium saucepan. Frequently stir the chocolate, butter, and peanut butter to ensure they melt and are well combined.
- Pour the Chex cereal into a large mixing bowl.
- Once the chocolate and peanut butter mixture has melted, pour half the mixture onto the cereal. Mix the cereal until mostly combined with the chocolate peanut butter. Repeat with the remaining half of the chocolate peanut butter mixture. Mix well until all the cereal pieces are well coated.
- Pour the chocolate peanut butter-coated cereal into a gallon-sized ziplock bag filled with powdered sugar. Shake well until all the cereal pieces are coated in the powdered sugar. If you would like to coat the muddy buddies in powdered sugar twice, reserve ¼ cup (30 g) of powdered sugar in another ziplock bag.
- Pour the muddy buddy mix onto a parchment-lined baking sheet. Allow the coated cereal pieces to set for about 30 minutes.
- Make the mix-ins. I love adding a little salt to break up all the sweetness.
- To make the chocolate-covered pretzels, melt 2 oz. white chocolate in a small bowl. Drizzle over 15-20 mini pretzels. Top with holiday sprinkles and set for about 30 minutes.
- Add the mix-ins to the Christmas muddy buddy mix. Stir until all the M&M's, salted caramel chips and chocolate-covered pretzels are mixed in.

<https://olivesnthyme.com/christmas-puppy-chow/>



Thank you so much for reading  
*Christmas in Cripple Creek*  
Would you like for Sara to visit  
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