



## Courting Mr. Emerson

**Melody Carlson**

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Melody Carlson's latest Christian romance, *Courting Mr. Emerson*, is the sweet, trend-resistant tale of a young grandmother and a confirmed bachelor who find that life may be better if they're together.

George Emerson lives a neat life. An English teacher in the small Oregon town he grew up in, he organizes his days according to routine: coffee just after seven, out the door a few moments before the half hour, honey and peanut butter sandwiches for lunch.

Against George's past, which is marked by tragedies, such order feels necessary. But then George meets Willow West, a free-spirited artist who's back in town with her nearly grown grandson in tow. Pushing herself into George's lonely life, Willow brings new color to his days, along with one transformative question: "What if you get to the end of your life and find out that you're wrong?"

George and Willow may be an odd couple, but they end up balancing each other out. The push-pull of their early interactions is fun to follow and always marked by hope. Willow's serious grandson, Collin, and troubled daughter, Josie, bring bursts of conflict that draw George and Willow together, including through renovation projects in Willow's building and at George's childhood home.

Miscommunications lead to gentle momentary discord: over Collin's college application, a surprise hot air balloon ride, and even an irresistible Maine Coon. When religion does come in, it's somewhat of a surprise—particularly coming from Willow, who's otherwise full hippie. If the theology here trends treacly, it's also comfortable for the genre, and sure to charm those rooting for George and Willow to overcome their differences.

Clean, light, and full of second chances, *Courting Mr. Emerson* is a charming midlife Christian romance.

MICHELLE ANNE SCHINGLER (March/April 2019)

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