

Family Fiction

August 2019



Special: Overcomer **CHRIS FABRY**

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

Kendrick Brothers | Roseanna M. White

Speculative Panel: Worldbuilding as Christian Authors

PLUS: 30+ New Christian Books & DVDs

FROM THE CREATORS OF WAR ROOM

OVERCOMER

A NOVELIZATION BY
CHRIS FABRY

BASED ON THE MOTION PICTURE BY
ALEX KENDRICK & STEPHEN KENDRICK



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Spanish version

SURE TO INSPIRE THE WHOLE FAMILY, THE *OVERCOMER* NOVELIZATION IS THE STORY OF A GIRL AND HER COACH WHO RECEIVE A POWERFUL REMINDER OF WHERE THEIR TRUE IDENTITY IS FOUND.

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Read more here:

<https://www.familyfiction.com/lynette-easons-4-1-collection-offers-nail-biting-visit-tanner-hollow>

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Read more here:

<https://www.familyfiction.com/new-childrens-book-award-winning-author-illustrator-jan-spivey-gilchrist>



CONTEMPORARY: CHRIS FABRY

BRINGING OVERCOMER TO THE PAGE

The Christy Award Hall-of-Famer takes us behind the scenes adapting the newest film from the makers of *War Room*.

An award-winning author and radio personality, **Chris Fabry**'s novels include *Under a Cloudless Sky*, *Almost Heaven*, and *The Promise of Jesse Woods*. He has won five Christy Awards, an ECPA Christian Book Award, and two Awards of Merit from Christianity Today. He was inducted into the Christy Award Hall of Fame in 2018.

His latest fiction is *Overcomer* (Tyndale House), an adaptation of the new film by the makers of *War Room*. In fact, director Alex Kendrick specifically requested Fabry's involvement! In the story of *Overcomer*, based on themes from the book of Ephesians, life changes overnight for coach John Harrison when his high school basketball team and state championship dreams are crushed under the weight of unexpected news.

In this interview, Chris explains what it was like working again with the Kendrick brothers, shares the behind-the-scenes process, and reveals the rewards of putting our future in God's hands.

Chris, what most attracted you to writing the novelization of *Overcomer*?

I had read the book *Union with Christ* and featured the author [Rankin Wilbourne] on my radio program. The study of Ephesians 1 and 2 was on my radar and then, suddenly, the Kendricks approached me with the same topic only in fictional

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form. I felt it was not happenstance that all of that came together, so there is part of me that felt I couldn't NOT do it.

You also adapted the Kendrick brothers' film *War Room* to the page. What is it like working with them again?

I'm so excited about tackling another great story with the Kendricks. I love asking questions about what's going on inside the people you see on the screen, so the book will give you all of the film plus some deeper looks at the backstory and other meaningful threads that can't fit into a two-hour film.

No spoilers, but what can you tell our readers about *Overcomer*?

The film focuses on a fifteen-year-old girl, Hannah Scott. She's been through a lot of loss in her life and struggles with her identity, which is universal. As you watch her grapple with what life throws at her, you will be encouraged to run your own race. Her coach also has a big part in the film and novel because he's struggling with some of the same questions.

What was it like visiting the film set?

I was amazed at the complexity of all the moving parts. I was also struck by the commitment the Kendricks and their team have to tell the story they're given and not deviate. Their commitment to prayer on set was heartening and rich.

How do you relate to this story personally?

I aspire to have my identity come from what God has done for me in Christ. In reality, I struggle with the same thing these characters are struggling with. Do I gauge my worth by my performance? Do I gauge my acceptability with God by some external thing, or do I really believe God accepts me as I am and that he sees the righteousness of Christ in me? Do I strive or rest? Those are questions that are huge in my life and I think will make a difference for anyone who reads or sees this story.

What goes on behind the scenes when adapting a movie into a novel?

I wish you could see the emails that go back and forth. We get into such minute detail in some cases. Alex has the freedom to say, "I didn't like this chapter." And then I probe and find out how I missed the mark.

It's such a collaborative effort, but at the same time I feel a freedom to go certain directions that we might not eventually use. I have freedom to fail, which is important in any creative endeavor.

I was able to develop some of the story lines a little further and show a little more than the film can show in two hours. So, my desire is for a satisfying read that takes you deeper into

your own heart. Then, when you see the film, I hope you'll be amazed at how the two versions of the story come together.

What are the pros and cons of writing your own fiction versus writing something based on someone else's story?

When I first thought about novelizing a screenplay, I thought it would not be a very creative process. But I was surprised by what happened. The Kendricks basically make all the hard decisions about plot. They put up the fence line and I get to play in the pasture and ask questions and dig deeply into each character.

I love the sense of exploring characters and their hearts. To me, these are real people. I like to put myself in the place of a coach who has defined himself by wins and losses. I like to run with Hannah and hear the struggle she has with asthma. And I enjoyed getting to know Hannah's grandmother, Barbara. She's a difficult character in the film, but in the book you learn some of the backstory of why she acts the way she acts. I just love that process.

The most challenging thing about writing someone else's idea is that I have to stay consistent with something someone else invented. It's easy for me to go in some direction or add some motivation that isn't necessarily on target with the vision of the Kendricks. So, I lean on Alex mostly to rein me in and keep me in the pasture.

You're also a national radio host. How much do your experiences there influence your storytelling?

I had a good friend counsel me in 2007 that doing a daily radio program would tether me to the real world. And it's true.

The struggles and difficulties that listeners are going through help me see God at work in people's lives and inform my stories—and also give me ideas for other stories yet to be told. More than that, the people who call in enrich my life in ways they can't understand.

The storyline suggests that surrendering our lives to God is the only way to discover the life we were meant to live. What can you tell us about that?

I once knew an old missionary to India who told me, "Your greatest mission in life is submission." The best thing we can do with our lives is to fully surrender to God's work. For those of us who like to control things (me being chief controller), this is a scary, vulnerable thing to do. But we find real, abundant life when we get to the point where we're willing to allow God to do whatever he wants to do in and through us.

What are the risks—and rewards—when we surrender control and place our future in God's hands?

Surrender is a huge risk because we lose control. We lose the ability to write our own story. But when you take that step of faith—and another and another—you begin the journey of entering the Bigger Story, the Larger Story of what God is doing in you and in the world. Look at the disciples before they fully entered that story and after they entered it. You'll never reach your full potential until you submit to God's working in your life. **FF**

Visit Chris Fabry's author page here:

<https://www.familyfiction.com/authors/chris-fabry>



Overcomer

Chris Fabry
Tyndale House

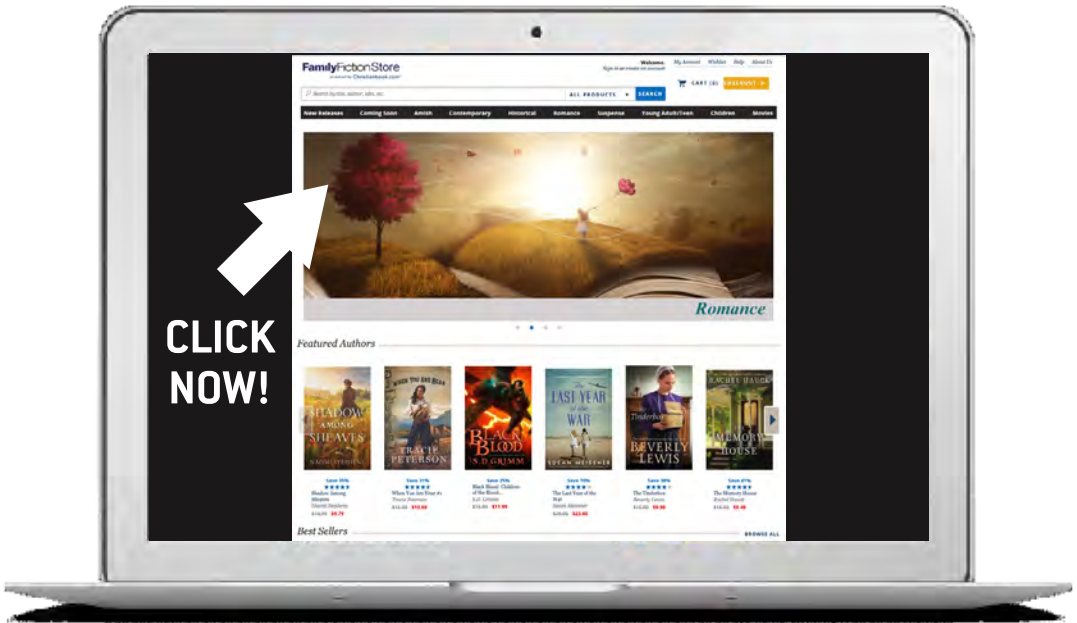


Life changes overnight for coach John Harrison when his high school basketball team and state championship dreams are crushed under the weight of unexpected news. When the largest manufacturing plant shuts down and hundreds of families leave their town, John questions how he and his family will face an uncertain future. After reluctantly agreeing to coach cross-country, John and his wife, Amy, meet an aspiring athlete who's pushing her limits on a journey toward discovery. Inspired

by the words and prayers of a newfound friend, John becomes the least likely coach helping the least likely runner attempt the impossible in the biggest race of the year.



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KENDRICK BROTHERS PUTTING FAITH ON THE BIG SCREEN

The filmmakers behind *Overcomer* talk about encouraging movie audiences to find their identity in Christ.

The highly anticipated sixth film from **Alex** and **Stephen Kendrick**, *Overcomer*, will be in theaters this August. Filled with a powerful mix of faith, a twist of humor, and a ton of heart, the Kendricks' new venture tackles the vital issue of spiritual identity in a unique and fresh way.

Life changes overnight for coach John Harrison when his high school basketball team's state championship dreams are crushed under the weight of unexpected news. When the largest manufacturing plant in town suddenly shuts down and hundreds of families begin moving away, John must come to grips with the challenges facing his family and his team. Urged by the school's principal to fill-in and coach a sport he doesn't know or like, John is frustrated and questioning his worth—until he crosses paths with a student struggling with her own journey.

Filled with a powerful mix of faith, a twist of humor, and a ton of heart, *Overcomer* stars Alex Kendrick, Priscilla Shirer, Shari Rigby, Cameron Arnett, and introduces Aryn Wright-Thompson. Opening nationwide on August 23, *Overcomer* dares to leave you filled with hope, inspired to dream, and asks the question: What do you allow to define you?

"The movie *Overcomer* is about identity, an issue everyone deals with," says Stephen Kendrick. "Everyone needs to answer the questions: 'Who is God?,' and 'Who am I?,' and

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the Scriptures deal with both of those things. When a person discovers who they are in Christ, it opens up an understanding of how they can live that out on a daily basis in what they do in their relationships with others. When we started the process with *Overcomer*, Alex began to unpack this idea of a cross-country runner who's dealing with the issue of identity, and at the same time, I'd been studying Ephesians 1 and 2. We can see how the Lord was paralleling our paths to specifically make this movie."

"Cross country is a very difficult sport," says Alex Kendrick. "From the time you start, you do not stop or pause until you cross the finish line. And in many regards, that's like our life; that's our journey of faith."

"As people are walking out of the theater," says Stephen Kendrick, "we hope that they begin to ask questions about where their identity is found, because too often we find it in our circumstances, in our titles, in what other people are saying about us, in our jobs, in our positions or awards. Those things can be taken away."

“I hope moviegoers will realize their salvation is about much more than just having a ticket to eternity,” says Priscilla Shirer, who plays the role of high school principal Olivia Brooks in the film. “They were actually given a brand-new identity. Which means, they have access to spiritual blessings, they have an inheritance, they have all this stuff that’s available to them, this side of eternity. And when you realize that, that means the decisions you make, the relationships you have, the trajectory you choose, the ambitions that you hold, all of that stuff will reflect, and be indicative of your brand-new identity. That changes and transforms the way you live.”

Building A Legacy Of Faith On Film

Last year marked the 15th anniversary of the release of *Flywheel*, the Kendrick brothers’ first feature film. Produced with a shockingly modest budget of only \$20,000 and intended for Albany, Georgia residents where the brothers served on staff at Sherwood Baptist Church, *Flywheel* went on to sell over a million copies in DVD format.

“We’re just amazed at what the Lord’s done with it,” says Alex Kendrick.

In the years since that debut, the filmmakers’ body of work has grown to include hits *Facing The Giants*, *Fireproof*, *Courageous*, and *War Room*—all of which made an impact at the box office. With more than \$150 million in box office receipts across five films, plus millions more in DVD and on-demand sales worldwide, the Kendrick brothers are recognized as leaders in faith-based films.

“When the Kendrick brothers start a new film, a lot of people around the world take notice,” notes Rich Peluso, Executive Vice President of Affirm Films. “We’re really excited about *Overcomer*. I think we’re going to see the biggest, widest impact of a Kendrick brothers’ story that we’ve ever seen.”

Despite their successes, the Kendrick brothers did not deviate from their tried-and-true formula for *Overcomer*. First, they pray for a topic. Then, they seek confirmation. During the process, Stephen Kendrick pores over Scripture developing content that can be used for the film along with ancillary items such as books and curriculum.

They called upon Christian novelist Chris Fabry to write the novelization of the movie’s captivating story based upon biblical themes from the book of Ephesians. Known for his rich character development and trademark lyrical prose, Fabry translated the Kendricks’ new movie into an inspirational novel of three characters’ journeys as each find and refine their true identity in Christ.

In fact, director Alex Kendrick specifically requested Fabry’s involvement. “We have great admiration for Chris Fabry’s work and ministry heart. He was an absolute joy to work with on the novelization of *War Room* and was able to read the *Overcomer* script early and join us on set this summer to hear the message and heart behind this new film.”

What Is An *Overcomer*?

“*Overcomer* in many regards,” says Alex Kendrick, “is a discovery of who we are in Christ, who gets to determine our identity and what we have to overcome to embrace the life God has for us.”

“Overcoming is about powering through,” says Shari Rigby, who plays the role of Amy Harrison, “and realizing that on the other side of it you are stronger and more courageous than when you started.”

“Being an ‘overcomer’ means you keep your head up and you know that you’re going to get through it,” says Aryn Wright-Thompson, who plays the role of Hannah Scott. “You figure out a way to get through it, you keep your faith strong, you get through it, and you just thank God.”

“At Affirm Films, we want the movie to matter,” says the studios’ Rich Peluso. “We want people coming out of it changed, thinking about their lives and their relationships differently. It really is an investment of time that I think can change lives.”

Reel Life

“Audiences are going to see a much more cinematic film than they’ve seen from the Kendrick brothers before,” says Stephen Kendrick. “We have four different sets right next to one another that our art department has built from scratch. It’s incredible to be able to see the progress in the filmmaking. The learning curve has been steep for us. It’s not only fun for the crew, but the quality of the finished product is going up.”

“With these guys, what you see is what you get, and they are so genuine it’s scary,” says Cameron Arnett, who plays the role of Thomas Hill in the film. “They have a clarity that comes from trusting God, from believing God, and it’s penetrating...it calls you, because deep calls unto deep.”

“One of my favorite parts about being on set with the Kendrick brothers is that every single day starts with devotions,” says Priscilla Shirer. “Not only that, but throughout filming, throughout the days, they will often times stop and gather cast and crew to pray over a particular scene, just to ask God to have His favor and blessing upon it in a unique way. This is one of the things that sets their filming sets apart from others: everything is dedicated to God.” **FF**

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<https://www.familyfiction.com/genre/movies>

Kendrick Brothers/*Overcomer*

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Overcomer

Directed by Alex Kendrick
Produced by Stephen Kendrick
Screenplay by Alex and Stephen Kendrick
Affirm Films
Provident Films



Life changes overnight for coach John Harrison when his high school basketball team's state championship dreams are crushed under the weight of unexpected

news. When the largest manufacturing plant in town suddenly shuts down and hundreds of families begin moving away, John must come to grips with the challenges facing his family and his team. Urged by the school's principal to fill-in and coach a sport he doesn't know or like, John is frustrated and questioning his worth—until he crosses paths with a student struggling with her own journey.

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SPECULATIVE PANEL:

WORLDBUILDING AS CHRISTIAN AUTHORS

10 Christian F&SF authors talk about representing the Creator while creating their own literary worlds.





Over the years, **FamilyFiction.com** has talked to a lot of Christian authors who write fantasy and science fiction. While most authors writing from a position of faith set their stories in the world we see around us, speculative Christian authors often set their tales in worlds they made up. What are the unique challenges of creating a brand-new world that is still grounded in a biblical worldview? We've asked that of several authors—and here's what ten of them had to say.



Speculative Panel: Worldbuilding as Christian Authors

For my fantasy novels, *The Bloodheart* and *The Lightningfall*, that's a trickier question. Those stories involve the use of elemental magic by both heroes and villains. In that case, I start from the perspective that magic in the story world is not what the Bible classifies as "witchcraft" or "sorcery." Instead, it is an elemental force that I made part of the fictional Creation, and therefore just as much God's handiwork as gravity and wind.

In summary, the more fantastical the story, the more I reference my faith to determine if what I'm portraying jives with the Bible, if the concept is even mentioned.

Read the original interview:

<https://www.familyfiction.com/science-fiction-qa-steve-rzasa-us-humans>

<https://familyfictionchristianbook.com/departments/panel-bathed/steve-rzasa-us-humans-07602544004-978044605>



For Us Humans: A Tale of Alien Occupation

Steve Rzasa

Enclave



Lisa M. Clark

World building in general is an interesting challenge! At first, it was great to let my imagination run wild. But by the second book, I had to be consistent! There's an entire document now that my editors and I created simply to keep details straight.

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Speculative Panel: Worldbuilding as Christian Authors

As a Christian author, I wrestled with many questions about the world I was creating. It's important to me as a Christian to be honest about reality. And that includes the fact that our world is not perfect. In order to talk about grace and forgiveness, we need to acknowledge the need for both.

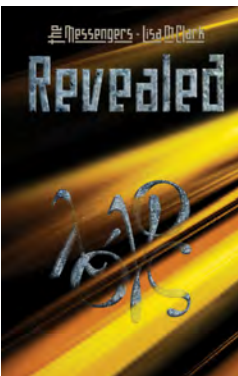
The dystopian genre was a perfect way for me to explore some of the dark places in our lives while also shining the Light of the world. I tried to balance the dark places with hope, and I tried to write so that different readers with different maturity levels will take in certain themes in appropriate ways. That was especially the case in the last book.

Ultimately, I didn't write anything that hasn't already happened in one way or another, which was a way for me to stay honest in my setting.

Read the original interview:

<https://www.familyfiction.com/speculative-qa-lisa-m-clark-revealed>

<https://familyfiction.com/instabook.com/keenspot-dystich-novel-comicetters-lisa-lev/amanda-barratt/9780925446054/pdf/44605>



Revealed

The Messengers #3

Lisa M. Clark

Concordia Publishing



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Patrick W. Carr

Actually, it's not as much of a challenge as you would think. I write incredibly flawed characters. Errol is a drunk and Willet is a killer. Neither of these characters would be out of place in the Bible. My books are populated with men and women who make mistakes and sometimes they make really bad decisions. Later, they suffer the consequences of those decisions and learn from them.

I understand the urge to create a fictional world where the main characters shine like paragons of virtue that others look up to, but that's a bad, and dangerous, fantasy. By bad, I mean it's not only bad writing, it's bad theology. We're going to make mistakes.

If you're walking around in your earth-suit and you don't have some serious regrets, then I think you've got a problem. Our characters should reflect ourselves. Clean, sanitized characters don't connect with anybody. I'd much rather see someone claw their way out of the muck.

Read the original interview:

<https://www.familyfiction.com/patrick-w-carr-making-best-bad-decisions>

<https://familyfiction.com/book.com/details/search/most-banned-books-list-100-2014-2015/pd/44875>



The Wounded Shadow

The Darkwater Saga #3

Patrick W. Carr

Bethany House



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Gillian Bronte Adams

I think the way that you phrased it is kind of the answer to the challenge, at least for me. As I begin to build a new story-world, I intentionally think about the themes and the symbolism that will be woven into the story and into the structure of the world and whatever natural or magical systems power it. Those themes and symbols are “grounded” in Scripture. And so there, in the very building blocks of my world, my characters, and my plot, I hope to weave a string of biblical DNA, if you will.

Our God is a Creator and He is infinitely creative. I love seeing God’s creativity in the world around me. Just take a peek inside the ocean if you want to be totally wowed and awed by beauty and diversity!

As a fantasy writer, I love that I get to explore this aspect of God’s character, His creativity, on a very tiny scale. And as I explore and let my imagination run wild, fueled by Scripture, I want the stories I tell and the worlds I dream up to leave readers longing to understand the Great Story that God has been weaving in our world since He created it.

Read the original interview:

<https://www.familyfiction.com/gillian-bronte-adams-singing-hope-world>



Song of Leira

The Songkeeper Chronicles #3

Gillian Bronte Adams

Enclave



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Matt Mikalatos

One way we get to a biblical worldview is by being completely honest in our search for truth, because Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. So even though I'm inventing people groups and magic systems and characters, I want to keep asking, "If this sort of magic were real, how would it honestly function, given what we know about human beings and the world around us from what Scripture teaches?"

So, in the Sunlit Lands one of the magical systems works in a sort of zero-sum way: If I use magic to build a house faster, that means someone else will find that building their house will take longer.

The biblical worldview comes in as we start asking the sorts of questions God cares about: Is this sort of magic just or unjust? Could it be used for good in the right setting? If there is injustice, how do the people of God overcome that?

Read the original interview:

<https://www.familyfiction.com/ya-qa-matt-mikalatos-crescent-stone>

<https://familyfictionchristianbook.com/forums/discuss-wood-burners-just-law/mandu-barnett-9780275448074.pdf44805>



The Heartwood Crown

The Sunlit Lands #2

Matt Mikalatos

Wander



S.D. Grimm

Soleden comes from two words “soul” and “Eden.” I put those two words together as a little play on words for me. Just like people here on Earth have roots in what was created in the Garden of Eden, I wanted to remind myself that those same struggles and failings and joys and triumphs that make us human are present in my characters. Just like things aren’t perfect here on Earth, things also aren’t perfect in Soleden.

I never really intended to tell readers that’s why I chose the name, but there it is.

For me creating a fantastical world grounded in a biblical worldview is second nature. It’s my job to create stories, and who I am is grounded in a biblical worldview, so those two things just play naturally into one another.

Read the original interview:

<https://www.familyfiction.com/speculative-qa-s-d-grimm-black-blood>

<https://familyfiction.com/instabook.com/kearns-dietrich-novel-compellers-just-low/amanda-tarrant/978025446034/pd/44605>



Black Blood

Children of the Blood Moon #3

S.D. Grimm

Enclave



James L. Rubart

The challenge is making them believable. Even though the Bible is built entirely on a supernatural foundation and is full of supernatural stories, many Christians balk when they hear about supernatural things in novels.

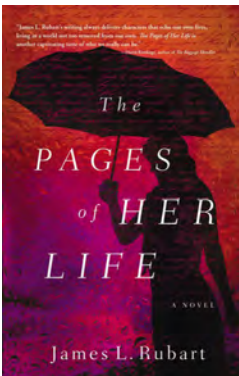
A friend of my mother-in-law told her, “I really love Jim’s book, but wow, he always has fantastical things in them. Is Jim really a Christian?” That cracked me up since any supernatural elements I weave into my stories come straight from Scripture.

So even though my fantastic elements come from the Bible, I have to make people believe they could happen in present day. Of course, the benefit of my type of stories is I have few limits to what can happen, which people have said make my stories deeply intriguing and unique.

Read the original interview:

<https://www.familyfiction.com/speculative-author-interview-james-l-rubart-fully-alive-free>

<https://familyfiction.com/book.com/detail-the-itch-novel-bomb-for-the-lazy/amanda-baratt/37802544654/pl/4465>



The Pages of Her Life

James L. Rubart
Thomas Nelson



Jill Williamson

The challenge is that there are so many different interpretations of biblical truth, it's impossible to please every reader. In every world I create, I make my own list of rules and truths for that world, then I can measure characters' actions against that standard. But biblical truths depend on the story and my goal for the story.

The Kinsman Chronicles were allegory for an Old Testament world that would become a New Testament world, so I was able to make a lot of biblical parallels. A story I'm currently working on is about a much subtler biblical truth of being created in the image of God, so that story won't have as many biblical parallels for every little aspect of the story and world.

Read the original interview:

<https://www.familyfiction.com/jill-williamson-biblical-truths-fantasy-world>

<https://familyfiction.com/author/jill-williamson-biblical-truths-fantasy-world>



King's War

The Kinsman Chronicles Book #3

Jill Williamson

Bethany House



Joshua A. Johnston

I think the biggest challenge is deciding what kind of Christian novel one wants to write. One school of thought is that the stories should deal directly with Jesus and the Bible, perhaps with conversion stories and even apologetics.

Speculative Panel: Worldbuilding as Christian Authors

The other school of thought is that the stories should incorporate Christian themes in a more salient way, be it allegorical or drawing from biblical themes. I don't know that there is a wrong way, per say, but figuring out which direction to go is a really important decision.

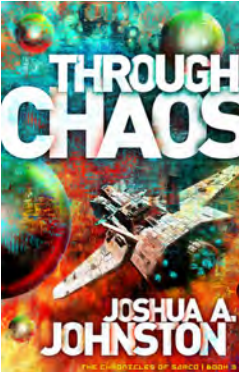
From early on, I determined that I wanted my approach to be more salient, in the vein of Narnia or Lord of the Rings. For me, the next step was figuring out how to situate faith in a science fiction world in a way that was natural for both.

It was a big challenge, but also came with a big sense of accomplishment, especially in the way things played out in the endgame.

Read the original interview:

<https://www.familyfiction.com/joshua-johnston-epic-journeys>

<https://familyfiction.com/facebook.com/steven-dietrich-writer-barnetters-just-how-amanda-barnet/978025446054-pd44605>



Through Chaos

The Chronicles of Sarco #3

Joshua A. Johnston

Enclave



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A former military officer, **Jo Ann Brown** has published over 100 titles under a variety of pen names since selling her first book in 1987. Her latest novel is the romance ***The Amish Widower's Twins*** (Love Inspired).



In this interview, Jo Ann reveals the inspiration behind the novel, explains what drew her to these characters, and tells us why she loves writing about the Amish.

What inspired the story in *The Amish Widower's Twins*?

I wanted to do a second chance at love story that was a bit different. I didn't want the couple to have been driven apart the first time they were involved because of one of them doing the wrong thing. My story question became: What if someone did the right thing and still ended up hurting the person they loved most in the world?

Tell us about your leading man and leading lady. What about them made you want to tell their story?

Gabriel Miller is a widower who's being eaten alive by the secret he promised to keep, even if it means again breaking his heart and the heart of the woman he's never stopped loving. He's struggling to be a good father to baby twins while making his new dairy farm a success.

Leanna Wagler, a twin herself, has just about put her heartbreak that Gabriel married another woman behind her when he and his

family move next door. She's developed a business for herself with making soap from her goats' milk. However, she's so determined to do what is right herself that she agrees to be a temporary nanny for Gabriel's twins.

That these two characters are willing to make their own needs secondary to help family is what appealed to me about them. In fact, they both have to learn over the course of the story that it's okay for each of them to work as hard for their hearts' desires as when they help others obtain theirs.

How does this book fit into the bigger picture of the Amish Spinster Club series?

The Amish Widower's Twins is the fourth and final book of the Amish Spinster Club series. Leanna is the fourth and final member of the "club" who hasn't married. The group was initially her idea, so she's watched as her friends and her twin sister have found the loves of their lives while she's been trying to mend her wounded heart. She needs to learn that the old adage may be true: Good things can come to those who wait.

What draws you to writing about the Amish?

I grew up on a small farm, and I love writing about the rural aspects of a life that I remember from my childhood. As well, I admire how the Amish try to live their faith every day in the decisions they make as individuals, as a family and as a community. Families are at the center of their lives, and that's something that's really important to me, too.

I've learned through working with these characters and telling their stories that falling in love and the joy and challenges that come from risking your heart are the similar for everyone, no



matter if you're Amish or not. So, I have fun thinking about new situations, and then I “work” with a set of characters to see how those circumstances will play out in an Amish household.

Why do you think readers are so drawn to stories about the Amish?

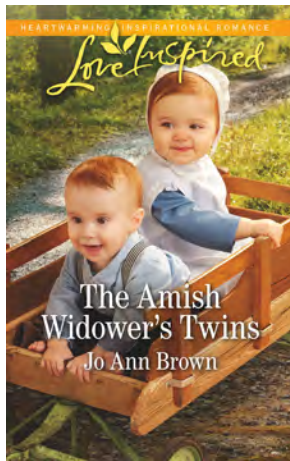
I've discussed this with editors and with other authors who write about the Amish. The answer we come up with most often is that the Amish represent a way to live a quieter, less stressful life amid the modern world.

Readers also appreciate how the Amish work to be faithful to the teachings of the New Testament and are comfortable in their places within their community. As well, readers—and I'm counting myself as one because I enjoy reading Amish romances, too!—love a good story about two people falling in love in such a bucolic world. **FF**

Jo Ann Brown

Visit Jo Ann Brown's author page here:

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The Amish Widower's Twins

Amish Spinster Club

Jo Ann Brown

Love Inspired



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Susie Finkbeiner is a CBA bestselling author who has mastered the skill of writing stories that tug at the heart of every reader. In her newest novel, ***All Manner of Things*** (Revell), she invites readers into the hearts and home of the Jacobson family during a time in which the chaos of the outside world has shaken their lives and their community in ways they never imagined.



In this interview, Susie explains the personal reason behind setting her novel in the 1960s, tells us about the family in the middle of it, and reveals the lessons learned from the story.

***All Manner of Things* covers some volatile times in American history, including the Vietnam War and the 1960s. Why did you decide to focus on this time period?**

I grew up hearing stories about the sixties from my parents. Whenever we listened to the radio in the car it was the Beatles, Aretha Franklin, Simon and Garfunkel, etc. We didn't have cable, so we were left watching reruns of *Leave It to Beaver* or *Donna Reed*. Early on I developed a fascination with the era, only fed by my dad's stories of his time serving in Vietnam.

After writing a series set in part of my grandparents' era (the Great Depression), I decided it was time to discover a story set in the years of my parents' youth. I would have been remiss to write about the sixties without including the Vietnam War, race riots,



and the massive social change that marked the decade. However, I'm happy to say that I only make a passing mention of hippies in the story because, as my mother says, they weren't everywhere back then.

What type of research was required to write this story?

One advantage I had when researching the 1960s is that Baby Boomers like to talk about their experiences. I had the great honor of interviewing a handful of generous folks who were more than happy to tell me their stories. Not only did they offer great insights into the era, they also gave me encouragement to keep going with this project.

Another boon for my research was the vast availability of newscasts, television programs, and musical performances on YouTube. The sixties was a fully televised decade and I reaped all the benefits. I was able to watch Walter Cronkite report on the Saturn V launch and Jimi Hendrix light his guitar on fire at the Monterey Pop Festival.

Finally, my parents were champs, answering whatever questions I had for them. My mom filled me in on hairstyles, clothing, parties, and what it was like to be a reasonable teen in a most unreasonable time. My dad wrote up his memoirs of serving as a Navy Seabee in Vietnam. For their input, I am so grateful.

In *All Manner of Things*, you introduce the Jacobson family, who are struggling through some very difficult times.

Can you provide readers with a glimpse into their lives?

The Jacobsons are a typical, lower middle class family living in a small West Michigan town. At the beginning of the book we find a family of four, a mother and her three children. They've lived without their father, Frank, for several years after he abandoned them. Although they encounter difficulty, they remain a strong family unit, fiercely loyal to one another.

This is the kind of family that I love, both in real life and fiction.

There are a number of lessons that can be learned from your novel. Can you expand on a couple of these lessons?

When I was a kid, I was stunned when my mom told me about the "Duck and Cover" drills they'd practice in school in case of nuclear attack. Now a mother myself, I am stunned that my children have their own version, called "Lock Down" drills. It would be so easy for me to "duck and cover" or "lock down" emotionally, just thinking of the threats of danger in this world.

However, shutting down and shutting my eyes would keep me from experiencing and witnessing all the beauty this world affords. I could possibly miss so much of God's glory if I hide away, fearing what could happen.

Mike encourages Annie not to duck and cover but instead to keep her eyes open. After I wrote that scene, I sat back in my chair, knowing that I was being encouraged by the Spirit to stop allowing fear to blind me. Is the world scary? Sure. Do horrible things happen? Of course. But if we hide under our arms, eyes squeezed shut, we'll miss so much good that God has for us.

Jesus offers us an abundant life. It sure would be a shame if we missed out because we were hiding.

***All Manner of Things* offers a message of hope. Can you expand upon how this theme is portrayed in your book?**

I've realized recently that my novels hinge on hope. I believe the reason for this is my absolute reliance on the hope I have in Christ. I couldn't go a single day without it.

In *All Manner of Things* hope is a lifeline during an uncertain time. Not only is the nation in a complex and deadly military conflict, but the Jacobsons find themselves sending one of their own to serve in the midst of the danger. As I imagined Gloria dropping Mike off before he "ships off", I considered how a mother does such a thing.

Hope.

Hope is the only way. Because she has hope that she will see him again. And that hope becomes greater than fear.

Ultimately, it's hope that keeps us going even in the middle of the worst times. Hope that tomorrow could be better than today, that God can be taken at his word, and that we have more to live for that stretches beyond this current existence. It's the hope

Susie Finkbeiner

of the space Christ is preparing for us in heaven that keeps us breathing and serving and loving. **FF**

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With more than 1.5 million copies sold, award-winning author **Jane Kirkpatrick** has become well known for her historical novels based upon real-life events. Her latest novel, ***One More River to Cross*** (Revell), is another compelling reconstruction of the true survival story of the Stevens-Murphy wagon train which had to endure storms, bad timing, and desperate decisions to outlast the winter in the untamed Sierra Nevadas. The author plunges readers deep into a landscape of challenge where eight women, seventeen children, and the men of the journey discover that fear and courage go hand in hand.



In this interview, Jane shares the research behind the novel, offers some details of the harrowing historical record, and reveals the themes woven throughout the book.

You are well known for your thoroughly researched novels based upon true-life events. In *One More River to Cross*, you write about the Stevens-Murphy company. What motivated you to research and write about this group?

I stumbled across a footnote referencing a cabin in the Sierra Nevadas, where eight women, seventeen children, and two men spent the winter of 1844. I wondered how this happened, who they were, and what they were doing there.

When did you hear about the Stevens-Murphy company?

I first learned about the Stevens-Murphy company in 2014, while I was doing research for my book *A Light in the Wilderness*. That book tells the amazing story of the first African American woman to cross the Oregon Trail.

The Murphys had emigrated from Ireland to Canada and then to Missouri. But there were few religious schools available to them in Missouri. They traveled west to find a place that would accept their Catholic faith, which was often discriminated against on the frontier. Their company was joined by others from Missouri who were also seeking a new start in the West.

In *One More River to Cross*, you relay how the Stevens-Murphy company was experiencing success with their move out west until October 1844. What event occurred that severely affected their progress?

The Stevens-Murphy company experienced great progress in their journey until an early snowfall hindered their advance. The snow continued, with later estimates indicating eight feet that winter.

The Horseback Party consisted of two women, one of whom was ill; four men; and a dog named Chica. It was meant to be an easier route, so that they could get the ill woman to California quickly. They dealt with near drowning, injuries, and dwindling food supplies.

The next group, Wagon Guards, was comprised of three men. They remained at the lake to guard the supplies, which were in the three heaviest wagons. They dealt with starvation and eventually attempted to walk out when game became scarce.

The third group, Wintering Women, included eight women, seventeen children, and two men. They built a cabin near the mountain and would remain there throughout the winter.

The remaining men, the Sutter Fort party, believed they could reach Sutter's Fort quickly and would then bring back rescue parties. Ultimately, the Wagon Guards and Wintering Women



faced starvation and, for some, a crisis of faith that took them on a journey of forgiveness.

***One More River to Cross* has several underlying themes. Can you explain what those are?**

One of the main themes in *One More River to Cross* is that, even in dire circumstances, love wins when we shelter each other and share generous hearts. This book also touches upon the themes of leadership, faith, courage, selflessness, forgiveness, abandonment, and the importance of decision-making.

All of these elements played a key role in the survival story of the Stephens-Murphy company. This company's outcome was very different than what the well-known Donner Party experienced two years later in the very same location.

What do you hope readers will gain from this book?

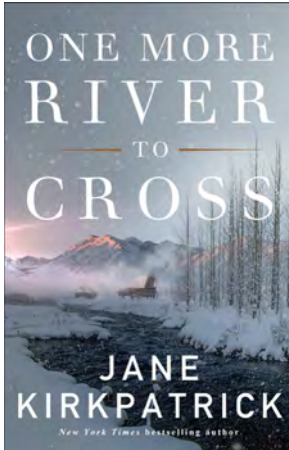
I hope readers will be encouraged to see how pioneering people worked together to manage challenging situations. My desire is that readers might find community in their own contemporary lives and know that love wins. **FF**

Jane Kirkpatrick

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One More River to Cross

Jane Kirkpatrick

Revell



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Roseanna M. White is the author of numerous novels, ranging from biblical fiction to American-set romances to her new British series **The Codebreakers**. The first book in the historical romance series is ***The Number of Love*** (Bethany House): Amid biological warfare, encrypted letters, and a German spy who wants to destroy not just them but others they love, codebreaker Margot De Wilde and wounded veteran Drake Elton will have to work together to save themselves from the very secrets that brought them together.



In this interview, Roseanna shares why she wrapped her latest romance around a female codebreaker in World War I, the challenges of writing a mathematical genius, and the most surprising thing that came out of her research.

How did you come up with the idea of a female codebreaker in England of World War I?

As I was researching the Great War in England for my previous series, *Shadows Over England*, I came across some tantalizing information about England's secret intelligence division—the codebreakers of Room 40. This group grew from a few talented mathematicians at the start of the war, when the Admiralty realized they could intercept every single wireless communication from the enemy, to a huge team of codebreakers, secretaries, and agents in the field. I knew I wanted to tell their story—but I wanted to do it through a fictional character.



While there were over twenty female employees of the historical Room 40, none of them were actually codebreakers. However, I decided it would be great fun to have one of those young women who everyone thought was a secretary really be one of their most talented cryptographers.

What were the challenges of writing a character like Margot De Wilde, mathematical genius?

I've always been good at math, but I never really loved it. When I developed the character of Margot, however, as the little sister of the hero in a previous book, *A Song Unheard*, I wanted her to not just love math, but to think in it. Her character was actually inspired by a premise I'd come up with during college, in which the smartest person in the world was a thirteen-year-old girl.

Margot is a very unique character, which in some ways made her easy—her voice is so strong! But on the other hand, she's such a challenge to steer through emotions, which she deems foreign

and unwelcome. Writing her story had some difficult parts, to be sure, but I loved every bit of it!

What's the most interesting or unexpected thing you learned in your research?

I was quite honestly shocked by the immense and seemingly all-powerful intelligence network that Binker Hall set up, which included Room 40 and also countless field agents. They had to decide daily what intelligence could be acted on and what would tip their hand to the enemy.

But in some ways, this was a game to them. Hall was famous for feeding false information not only to England's enemies in the war, but also to his own political adversaries in England. He was frequently likened by his peers to Sherlock Holmes—capable of drawing connections and seeing solutions where normal people could not. Learning about him was just amazing, and I can only pray I do him justice in my books!

Which characters are historical figures, and which are fictional?

While my main characters are all fictional, I use the real historical figures of Room 40 as my backdrop. All mention of the officers and staff in charge are factual, and the central codebreakers do have cameo appearances. But the hero, heroine, their families, and their closest friends are all fictional.

What will happen for *The Codebreakers* moving forward?

The next book in the series, *On Wings of Devotion*, will follow two secondary characters into a story of their own. We'll learn more about pilots in the Great War, nurses working at the hospitals where injured soldiers were brought, and of course, about the

Roseanna M. White

intelligence game and some of Admiral Hall's more far-flung operations. And as always, there will be spies and mayhem dogging their steps! **FF**

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The Number of Love

The Codebreakers #1

Roseanna M. White

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Inspired to create a fantasy variant of **Star Wars** with a biblical worldview, **Joanna White** started writing on the serialized fiction platform Wattpad. Now a series of books being published by Ambassador International, the **Valiant** series is for readers hoping to teleport into exciting worlds and newly created realms.



In this interview, Joanna explains the origins of the series, the challenges of writing fantasy that's grounded in a biblical worldview, and how the books are connected.

Joanna, please tell us about the world(s) you've created for the Valiant series.

At the time, I didn't really know what world I was creating. I made each book stand-alone at first, that way I had the freedom to write what I felt inspired to. This allowed me to create so many diverse worlds. In the end, with the last few Valiant books, I put all the worlds together and made a galaxy. I created 40 extra worlds to make it seem like an actual galaxy, and then added 40 more.

What are the challenges of writing fantasy fiction that's grounded in a biblical worldview?

For me, it was figuring out how much I could tweak the Bible stories I paralleled the books with. I wasn't sure if it was okay to take a Bible story and tweak it with fantasy aspects.



How are the novels in the Valiant series connected?

Each book is a world that is being taken over by darkness. The Dark Master is corrupting the galaxy. So these worlds may seem random but each world is inhabited by one of the Chosen, who are meant to help stop the spread of corruption.

What inspired you to write these books?

At first, I would say Star Wars. I wanted to write an epic franchise like it, only fantasy not Sci-Fi. It wasn't until I was working on the final two books in the series that my husband and I realized the entire series paralleled with the Bible and we didn't do it that way. That was the moment I realized God had inspired me for it and had written the series through me.

How does your faith impact how you approach storytelling?

It means I write clean stories without cuss words, no explicit scenes, and basically write clean books. I want to be able to give people worlds to delve into, plotlines to experience, characters

Joanna White

to love and all the while knowing nothing bad is going to be in the book. That is so hard to find these days. I want the books to inspire and encourage them.

In the case of the Valiant series, one of the overall themes is twofold: that God brings good out of bad. No matter how bad it gets, there is always a purpose. And two, if you seek His forgiveness, it's yours. No one is too far gone. **FF**

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Joanna White

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Hunter

Valiant #1

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Retired Long Beach police officer Janice Cantore draws upon twenty-two years of experience on the force to lend authenticity to her suspense novels. She wraps up her Line of Duty series with *Cold Aim* (Tyndale House): Police Chief Tess O'Rourke's small town is still reeling from a devastating fire when the FBI asks for help: Would she shelter a witness in a high-profile human trafficking case? What she doesn't know is that Rogue's Hollow is already home to a suspect from a twenty-five-year-old murder case—and someone is taking cold aim at those Tess is sworn to protect.



In this interview, Janice pulls back the curtain on some real-life events behind the story, explains the importance of communities, and reveals how writing the series has bolstered her faith.

Janice, *Cold Aim* is the final book in your Line of Duty series. How do you expect the novel to resonate with your readers?

Besides the spiritual message that God can be trusted even in the most difficult situations, one of the things I wanted to bring out had to do with human trafficking. Yes, the book is fiction, but the problem of human trafficking is very serious.

Young girls in all walks of life are targeted, not unlike in the manner my bad guy Ice uses in the story. They seek to separate children from their parents, at first in an apparently nonthreatening way. When the threat arises, it's too late for the child. Parents need to be vigilant. Keep your children close and your eyes open.



***Cold Aim* delves into the mystery surrounding a twenty-five-year-old murder case. Can you share some of the real-life experience and research that went into crafting the plot of this novel?**

I've always been fascinated by cold cases. In Long Beach, there were a couple of long-cold murder cases where officers were killed and their killers never caught. One was shot and killed in his driveway as he got home from work. My prayer is that the killer will be caught, someday, somehow. In my novels, my imagination can dream up ways for cold case killers to be brought to justice.

What lessons does the *Line of Duty* series teach about the importance of strong communities?

Disasters like fires can happen anywhere. Last year just about the whole town of Paradise, California, burned to the ground. It's people pulling together in community that helps those suffering from great loss. Many people escaped the fire with only what they were wearing, and the community came together. People helping one another with the loss, with rebuilding, buffers the loss and helps everyone move forward.

Your books present strong female characters working seamlessly with strong male characters. Can you talk about why this is so important?

I really don't like the war between the sexes which often seems to be perpetuated in the news. When I worked in uniform, I liked and appreciated the male officers I worked with and around. We might have had different ways of handling problems, but more often than not, we complemented each other. Some victims preferred talking to women while others were more comfortable with men. All in all, men and women working together, not competing, do the best job.

How have you seen your own faith grow through writing this series?

Writing in general strengthens my faith. I start with a blank sheet of paper and pray the Lord will help me put together 85,000 words into an exciting, inspiring story that people want to read. It's always a leap of faith! **FF**

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Cold Aim
Line of Duty #3
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Jessie Mattis is a Jesus-loving wife, homeschooling mom, and award-winning writer. Her latest book is ***Power Up*** (Elk Lake): Eleven-year-old Lexi has learned all there is to know about God—or so she thinks until Miss Kate arrives and shakes up Kids' Church with her new ideas.



In this interview, the author talks about the book, what makes her 11-year-old protagonist special, and what she hopes readers take away after reading *Power Up*.

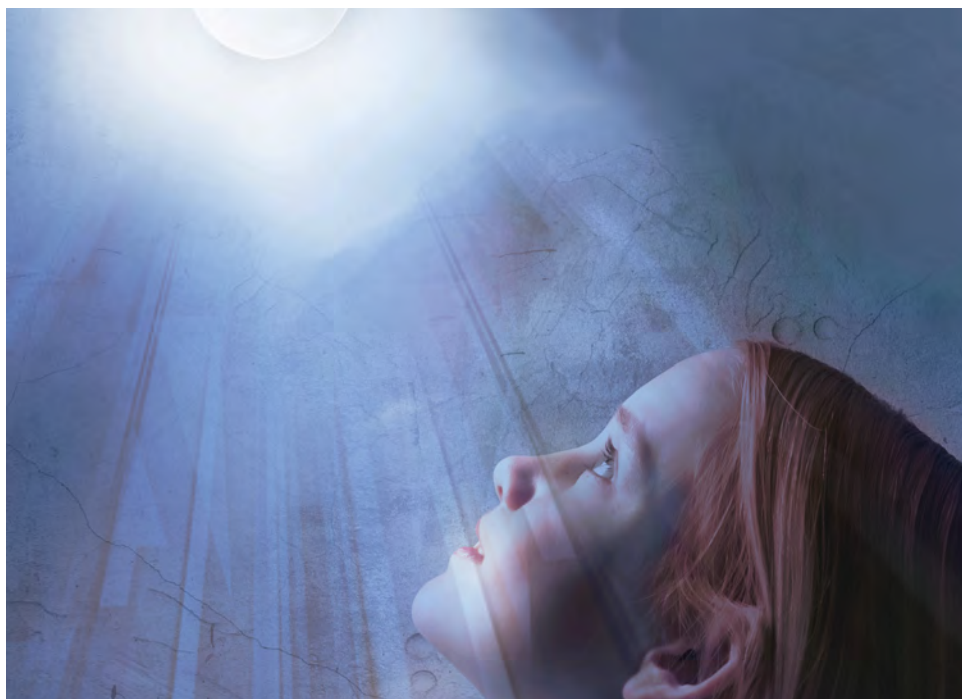
No spoilers, Jessie, but what can you tell us about *Power Up*?

Power Up tells the story of eleven-year-old Lexi. She's been a "church kid" all her life and doesn't think there could possibly be anything new to learn about God—until Miss Kate arrives and shakes up Kids' Church with her new ideas about the Holy Spirit.

This teacher even gives unusual homework assignments, which means Lexi is putting her new knowledge of the Holy Spirit to work in real life situations throughout the weeks. Through the pressure of a difficult school situation and a family crisis, Lexi has to decide whether to listen to the Holy Spirit and believe that God is good, or throw up her hands and be done with it all.

What about 11-year-old Lexi made you want to tell her story?

Lexi represents what I would guess to be the majority of grade-school aged children who are raised in the church. These kids go to church, have accepted Jesus as their Savior, and that's where it more or less stops. Unfortunately, a lot of Christian



adults don't give kids enough credit to be able to develop their own active, personal relationship with God through the Holy Spirit. Or maybe they just don't know how.

Because of this, children are taught Bible stories and facts about God, and it often doesn't go any deeper. I wanted to tell Lexi's story because her initial "ho-hum" attitude about church is all too relatable. In Lexi, middle grade readers will find a character they can connect with and trust to lead them through an entertaining story, which may also inspire them to take the reins of their faith.

How does your faith impact how you approach storytelling?

My faith is central to who I am. While I know there is value in fiction that simply entertains, I can't help but purposefully attempt to lead people closer to Jesus through my writing.

Writing takes countless hours of hard work, and working toward a goal of inspiring others in their walks with Christ is what keeps me passionate. Otherwise, I would have given up long ago!

That being said, my personal faith in a loving, forgiving, active God is what guided the entire story of *Power Up*. Without it, there would be no story to tell.

Who are the ideal readers for *Power Up*?

Ideal readers for *Power Up* are children ages 8 and up, who are already familiar with the church. I'm sure girls will be the primary readers, since the main character is a girl, but I did try to keep the book from getting too girly so that boys might find the appeal as well. I also attempted to make it accessible for not-yet-Christian children, making sure to cover the basics of the faith as the story moves along.

Somewhat surprisingly, I've had quite a few adults read and really enjoy it, telling me it opened their eyes to some new spiritual ideas as well! One parent said it was a powerful reminder for him to stay on top of encouraging his kids to make their faith their own.

What do you hope readers will take away after reading *Power Up*?

I don't want children to settle for simply being "church kids," and I don't want Christian parents to let them. Through Lexi's story, I want to inspire church kids to become Spirit-led Jesus kids!

My prayer is for children to be inspired and empowered to say "Oh hey, if Lexi can do that, I can do it too!" I want to help them realize that, even at a young age, they are empowered by God himself to be filled with the Holy Spirit and spend their

Jessie Mattis

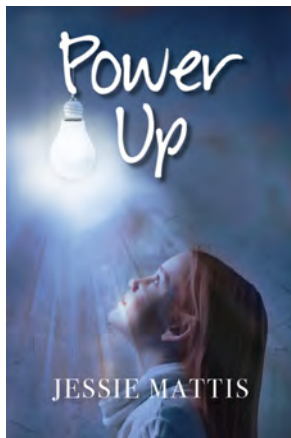
life (childhood included) listening to and following the loving guidance of the Holy Spirit.

As for not-yet-Christian kids, I want to introduce them to a loving, powerful, exciting God and open their eyes to the possibilities and adventures that the life of a Spirit-filled Christian provides. My prayer with this book is that lives will be impacted on an eternal level. And, of course, I want them to be entertained. **FF**

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Power Up

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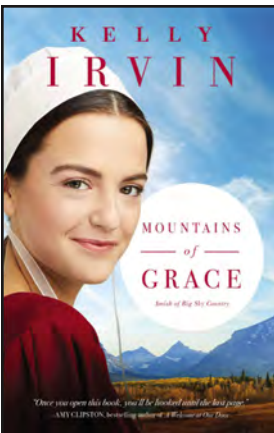
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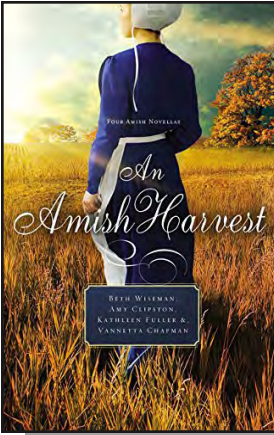
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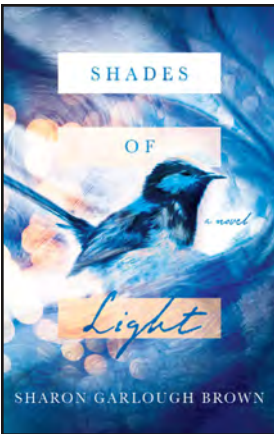
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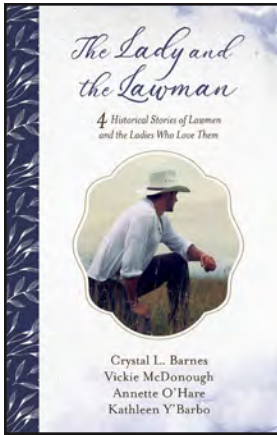
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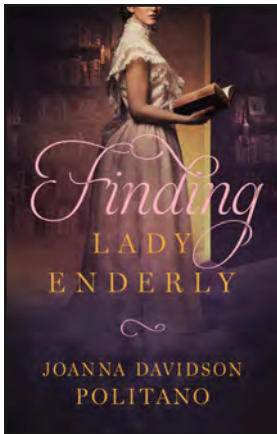
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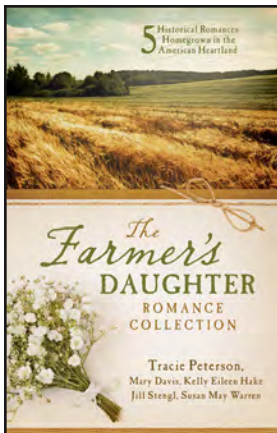
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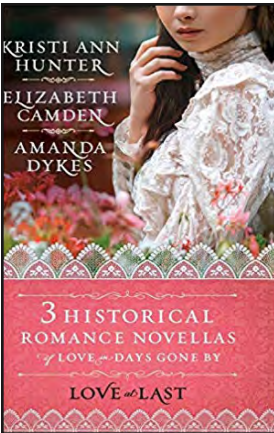
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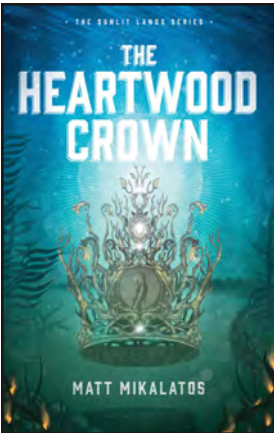
A Glitter of Gold

Georgia Coast Romance

Liz Johnson

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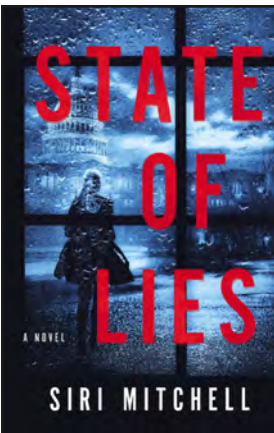


The Heartwood Crown

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Wander

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Siri Mitchell

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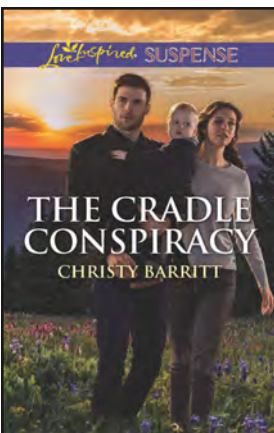


The Line Between

Tosca Lee

Howard Books

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The Cradle Conspiracy

The Baby Protectors

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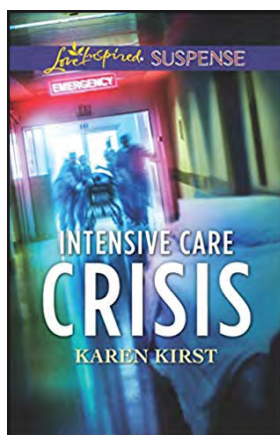
Vow of Justice

Blue Justice #4

Lynette Eason

Revell

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Intensive Care Crisis

Karen Kirst

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The Killing Tide

Coastal Guardians

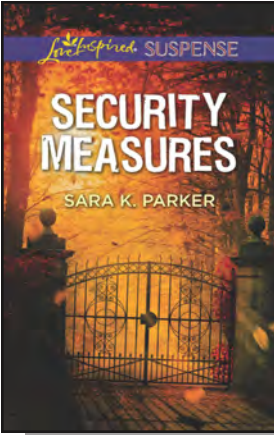
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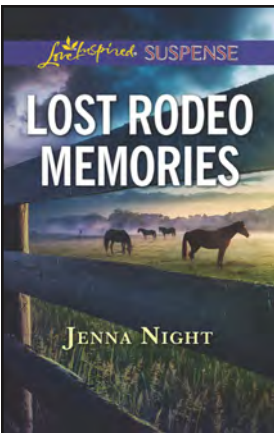
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Kaely Quinn Profiler #2

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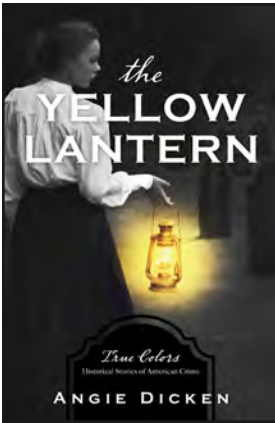
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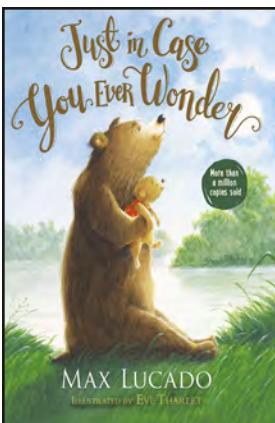
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Just in Case You Ever Wonder

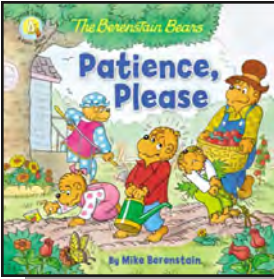
Written by Max Lucado,
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Mike Berenstain

Zonderkidz

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The Silence Between Us

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Love Struck Café

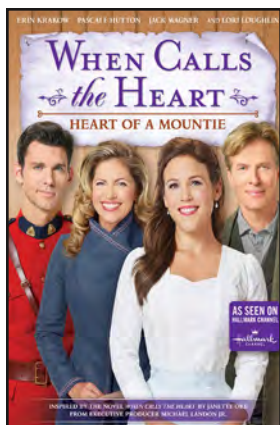
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August 13, 2019

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When Calls the Heart:
Heart of A Mountie
Cinedigm
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