

FamilyFiction

January 2018

A portrait of a middle-aged man with short, graying hair, wearing black-rimmed glasses and a blue collared shirt under a dark suit jacket. He is smiling broadly, showing his teeth. The background is a solid light blue.

Contemporary Author
CHRIS FABRY

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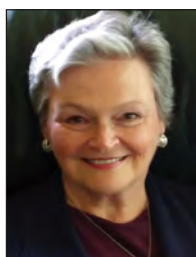
CHRIS FABRY

The Christy Award winner takes readers back to his Appalachian roots with a poignant story about good people and hard circumstances.



CHRISTY AT 50

Why the Christian fiction classic *Christy* has endured, how it impacted Christian publishing, why the MGM movie was canceled, and why Catherine Marshall's family loved the 1990s TV series.



CATHY GOHLKE

The historical author on the importance of remembering the legacy of important Christian authors who delighted and challenged previous generations.

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CONTEMPORARY: Chris Fabry

The Sky's the Limit

Christy Award winner **Chris Fabry** takes readers back to his Appalachian roots with a poignant story about good people and hard circumstances.

Chris Fabry is an award-winning author and radio personality whose novels have won multiple awards—including two more wins at this past Christy Awards ceremony. His books include movie novelizations, nonfiction titles, and stories for children and young adults.

*For his eightieth(!) published book, Fabry takes readers back to his Appalachian roots with a poignant story about good people and hard circumstances. A novel for fans of Southern fiction, **Under a Cloudless Sky** (Tyndale House) explores the well-kept secrets of a lush and storied coal-mining town—and the good people who live there—in danger of being destroyed for the sake of profit. Will the truth about the town's past be its final undoing or its saving grace?*

In this interview, author Fabry shares the dangers of keeping secrets bottled up, what it was like to win two Christy Awards in one night, and how wrapping truth inside a story is a tradition as old as the Bible.

You've described *Under a Cloudless Sky* as a "Gone Grandma" story (as opposed to *Gone Girl*). Without giving too much away, can you tell us about? Is this book a bit of a mystery?

Ruby is the main character, and at a pivotal point in the story, her daughter comes to Ruby's house and discovers she has disappeared. There are several possibilities as to where Ruby might be—all of them pretty dire. The reader has to figure out the clues and follow them along the trail. These breadcrumbs lead to a truth that Ruby's daughter would never have guessed

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about her mother's past. I'm hoping this "Where's Ruby?" motif will pull readers into the story and make them want to find her.

What can you tell us about your protagonists?

Ruby is a feisty older woman who loves her independence—and that is about to be taken from her. Her daughter, Frances, desperately wants to love her mother well, but there are things in her mother's past she doesn't comprehend. This is one of the main struggles in the story—to figure out how to love another person well and all that means.

One other character I have to mention is Hollis, a man who lives in the hills of Appalachia, who is dealing with loss of his own and how to love his family through some desperate times on Beulah Mountain.

What themes are explored in this novel?

Elderly parent-child relationships, the power of secrets, trusting the wrong people, what God promises us and doesn't promise us, the power of telling the truth, how the past can affect the present and future, and the power of forgiveness.

This story takes place in two different time periods. What are the unique challenges of writing this type of novel?

I'm always aware that what's in my head and what readers pick up can be two different things. I'm very focused when I write, but sometimes readers will say they're confused by the time period switch. My hope is to make things as clear as possible without explaining everything and telegraphing the story.

Ruby has a secret she has kept most of her life—which drives much of the narrative. How can keeping secrets be detrimental to family relationships? What steps can we take toward building trust and honesty, especially if we have kept a secret for a long time?

This is one of the things I've noticed in doing a radio program for the past few years that's somewhat confessional. People will call the show and reveal some deep things about their past. I'll ask who they've shared this particular story with, and almost to a person they'll respond, "This is the first time I've told anyone."

I'm grateful for the breakthrough, but also heartbroken that they haven't been able to share this with someone who loves them—and some of these callers are women in their sixties and seventies. I can hear the relief in their voices after they reveal whatever hard thing they tell.

I believe the enemy wants to keep things bottled up inside. If he can't move us away from God, he'll tempt us with holding things inside and covering them. That's why it's so reparative to confess our sins to one another. Something spiritual happens when I trust another person with that thing that has been hidden for a lifetime. And when Ruby's secret is revealed, there are ramifications she couldn't have dreamed she would experience.

The title of the novel is taken from a hymn titled "Dwelling in Beulah Land." What about this hymn led you to make it central to your story?

I remember singing it as a child in a little church in West Virginia. There's something about the tune that hearkens to a different time and echoes in the soul. The hymn talks about the noise of strife, the sins of earth, the doubt and fear that

encompass all of us. But in the middle of the muck and mire, we are able to rise above, to “dwell” in a safe place that God has prepared.

No matter what happens, I can be content and the storms of life won't shake me because I'm held by his power, his Spirit. That's an idea we desperately need today.

Many churches are moving away from traditional hymns as their method of musical worship. What do you think the church loses when the hymnbooks go into storage in favor of more contemporary music?

Let's be fair—at some point the hymns in the hymnal were new. So it's not about whether we sing new songs or not, it's whether or not we're tethered to the truths that have been tested and tried by the generations that have gone before us. One of the things I considered as I wrote the 1933 sections was how many of the hymns the people on Beulah Mountain would sing that we don't consider any longer.

When I sing a hymn that has been sung for hundreds of years, I'm singing truth to my own soul as well as joining others in that same truth. When I sing “Dwelling in Beulah Land,” I'm singing something my mother and father sang as they sat by me in the pew. There is much more to share about this, but being connected with those believers who have gone before us is a wonderful reason to sing hymns.

And there is so much theology in the songs we sing, good and bad. Just because it's in the hymnal doesn't mean it's true, of course, so we have to analyze what we're singing, and think carefully about style and repetition and if we're actually singing solid, biblical truth. I'm not tossing aside worship songs of

today; I've been encouraged by them as well. I just don't want to lose the legacy of great hymns.

As you mentioned, a core theme of *Under a Cloudless Sky* is forgiveness. What are some ways that people and the church miss the mark when it comes to forgiveness?

I believe one of the main reasons we see so much division in the church and in society in general is this topic of forgiveness. We have a fuzzy idea about what it really is and we're unable to extend it. That's because we don't understand what God has done for us in Christ. And our problem is that we are trying to give something we haven't fully received.

In other words, it's hard to give grace to someone if you've never received it yourself. This is part of the struggle of the religious leaders of Jesus' day—they had a righteousness based on their own ability. They felt justified in their attitude toward sinners, not realizing how sinful their own hearts were. So they pushed back against the kindness and forgiveness Jesus offered. I wonder how much like them I am.

Twice the Honor, Twice the Awards

At this past Christy Awards show, you won in both the short form category for *Looking Into You* and in the general fiction category for *The Promise of Jesse Woods*. How did it feel to win Christy Awards for two of your titles the same year?

I was surprised and overjoyed that both books were chosen for the Christy Awards. I was so happy for the team at Tyndale who helped me craft the stories. Honestly, because the characters are so real to me, I felt so happy for them—Matt and Dickie and Jesse and Treha. As a writer you want your stories to be “seen” and winning a Christy helps in that process.

Can fiction really change hearts? And is that your goal with your stories?

I suppose what I try to do with each story I write is to faithfully paint portraits with words so that we see ourselves in a different way. I could write a nonfiction book about how to treat an elderly parent, how to draw someone out about a secret in the past, how to extend forgiveness, how to treat scoundrels—and any other number of themes in the book. However, I've been moved by fiction in the past and I want to replicate that in others' lives.

So really, what I see myself doing is the same thing the prophet Nathan did when he approached King David. David had sinned greatly—but the prophet told him a story that made him angry and want to judge the unkind protagonist. The story slipped around the back door of his heart and when he let it in, it convicted him because it showed him truth in a different way than simply didactic teaching.

I'm aware that no two people reading the same book will come away with the exact same feeling or application to their lives. That's the power of a story—if it's well told. And I also believe a good story, to really change people on the heart level, has to have spiritual truth as its underpinning in order to achieve the desired goal.

As a writer, you don't want to force that or impose your will on someone else—just tell the story truthfully. The reader, for the most part, will participate with you in the telling and find those truth nuggets for their own hearts.

Looking Ahead

Can you give us a hint about what you are working on now?

I usually jump right into another novel almost immediately after I finish the last one, but this time I took a few months to ponder and ask myself what I really want to write. What interests me so much, what speaks to my heart so much that I have to put it down on paper? So I've been writing some short stories and doing my daily radio program and pondering several stories that may become the next full-length novel.

What are you looking forward to in 2018?

I'm hoping to jump into another writing project or two—I'm always happiest when I'm writing. And I'm looking forward to doing life with our big family—nine children and my wife of thirty-five years. We've been going to the same gym for a few months, so in 2018 I'm hoping to become fit as a fiddle, as my father used to say. **FF**

Visit Chris Fabry's author page at:

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Under a Cloudless Sky

Tyndale House

The Promise of Jesse Woods

Tyndale House

Looking Into You

Tyndale House



50 Years of *Christy*

Why Catherine Marshall's Classic Endures

An interview with **Nancy LeSourd**, publisher of Gilead Publishing's Evergreen Farm imprint, about **Catherine Marshall's *Christy***

*Some stories are evergreen, their themes and lessons standing the test of time and connecting with readers generation after generation. One such book is Catherine Marshall's *Christy*, originally released in 1967 and now celebrating its 50th anniversary with the release of a new hardcover edition and its first-ever release as an eBook from Evergreen Farm.*

*Based on Marshall's mother's life, the story of *Christy* is one of determination, devotion and commitment to making a difference in the world. Marshall's best seller tells the story of 19-year-old teacher Christy Huddleston who moves from her home in Asheville, North Carolina, in 1912 and finds herself in Cutter Gap, a Smoky Mountain community that feels suspended in time, trapped by poverty, superstitions and century-old traditions.*

Christy struggles to find acceptance in her new home, and some of the Cutter Gap residents see her—and her one-room school—as a threat to their way of life. Her faith is challenged by trial and tragedy, and her heart is torn between two strong men with conflicting views about how to care for the families of the Cove.

*In this interview, publisher Nancy LeSourd explains why the Christian fiction classic *Christy* still endures after 50 years, how it impacted Christian publishing, why the MGM movie was canceled, and why Catherine Marshall's family loved the 1990s TV series...*

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How many copies of *Christy* have been sold in the last 50 years since its original release?

Exact figures are hard to estimate as the way sales are tracked has changed throughout the years. The book has also been re-released in various formats from different publishers. However, with the information we do have, we believe more than 10 million copies have been sold.

Why do you think *Christy* resonated with so many people at the time it was written? What makes this story as culturally relevant today as it was when it was first written?

Christy was first released in 1967, a turbulent time in our nation's history. Americans were politically at odds with one another, and protest, frustration, anger and violence in the streets of America were at new heights. The civil rights movement faced tensions as the Black Power movement challenged the Martin Luther King nonviolent protest approach.

The number of young people drafted in the Vietnam war brought the reality of death to many families. Drugs were rampant.

The story of *Christy*, though set 50 years earlier, was not so different from the time in which the novel was first published or today. The Mission represented the desire of outsiders to live alongside the mountain people and provide education and guidance. In reality, it was an attempt to create social change.

The centuries-old "mountain ways" were threatened by the Mission school and its "newfangled" ideas. Christy's desire to educate her students, challenge superstitions, and to open up opportunities for them outside of the Cove threatened the fabric of the lives of these isolated people and even the cohesion of their community.

Evil existed in the excesses of alcohol and the problems of an economy heavily dependent on the sale of the moonshine. Feuding caused deaths that seemed senseless and tore families apart.

Now we are nearly in the 2020s, and *Christy* is just as relevant today as ever before. Wherever there are young people who are passionate about impacting others, changing society's social problems or caring for those who are impoverished or uneducated, there is *Christy*.

Readers throughout time have always had a strong emotional connection to *Christy*. What is it about *Christy* that resonates with young women especially?

The story of *Christy* has endured because of its timeless themes. A young person, barely 19, is inspired to contribute her time and talents to make a difference. Her idealistic ideas clash head-on with those who see her as an outsider, a do-gooder and a meddler. *Christy* has to learn how to come alongside people she wants to “help” and learn how to care—really care—for them, one person at a time.

Throughout the years, we have learned of many people inspired by the story of *Christy* who became a teacher or a doctor or who entered public service living among the poor in their communities in the United States or abroad.

Are there special features in the new edition for both those who have read and loved *Christy* many years ago and younger generations who aren't familiar with the book?

Actually, there are no commemorative features. In this new edition we went back to the original model, creating a book that can be easily read by millions of new readers.

Our intention was to create a book to be read, not placed in a shelf as a keepsake. In addition to this new hardcover addition, the book is available in digital format for the first time. We're so excited to be able to reach new readers with the eBook.

In what ways will millennials be able to relate to *Christy*, a character based on a woman who was born 120 years ago?

There is an entire generation who does not remember the CBS TV series. I gathered our children to watch it every week, but they were two and four when it aired. Today they are 25 and 27. The largest demographic by 2020 will be the millennials. Their choices and passions as well as investments of time, talent and treasure will impact America economically, politically and socially.

I am particularly excited to introduce this audience to the novel *Christy*, a timeless tale of courage, determination and passion—a story very much reflective of millennials today. With their desire to make a difference, ingenuity to create businesses or engage in work that has social impact and rejection of cash donations in favor of offering their time and talents or social enterprise, it is time to introduce them to this amazing young woman, *Christy*.

Christy and other key characters in the novel, such as the doctor and a minister, have to learn how to take who they are and what they have to give and learn to serve a community that challenges them in ways they cannot anticipate.

How these key characters approach trying to make a difference—all very unique and different—applies to every man and every women who desire to do the same in their own community today. The wonderful thing about millennials is that they

are disrupters; they want to make a difference. The desire to be a change agent often starts in the heart, as did Christy's desire to come to the mountains to teach children.

That inspirational motivation can sometimes flag when met with obstacles, resistance or even hatred. The story of *Christy* takes on these challenges head-on and does not flinch while depicting the realities of pitting the enthusiastic change agent Christy against resistant, suspicious people in the community. How she navigates her life in the Cove and her passion to make a difference applies to anyone who wants to make a difference in his or her community, business, charity or social enterprise.

Click here to watch the book trailer!

<https://www.familyfiction.com/50-years-christy-catherine-marshalls-classic-endures>

How has *Christy* shaped Christian fiction and the Christian publishing industry as a whole?

Christy was a trailblazer. When it was released in 1967, there really wasn't much of a "Christian fiction" genre.

The book's acclaim and success was an inspiration to a new wave of authors who went on to become the foundation of Christian fiction. When this category of writing achieved enough momentum to require its own set of awards in 1999, it was only fitting to name The Christy Awards after Catherine Marshall's pioneer novel that set the bar so high.

Many of the greatest Christian fiction stories throughout the years also take a page from the character of Christy Hudleston herself. One of the reasons she is so relatable is that

she struggles, falters and doubts. For most of us, our first true exposure to the darkness and brokenness of the world rocks our worldview, and *Christy* is no different.

Catherine Marshall wanted to emphasize that it's OK—even appropriate—to be filled with questions in the face of tragedy and evil.

Christy has good intentions, but she's definitely not a super-Christian. It's the influence of this character, one whose relatability transcends generation or geography, that continues to help shape the genre.

What would Catherine Marshall think of the book being so popular that it became a beloved TV series?

Because *Christy* was on the *New York Times* bestsellers list for 38 weeks, there was a heated bidding war for the movie rights. MGM purchased the movie rights to *Christy* shortly after it became a blockbuster success. In 1969, the movie was in pre-production. A well-known director and award-winning scriptwriter were engaged by the studio.

The script was written, and just like she did with the popular movie, *A Man Called Peter*, Catherine consulted with the studio. Then MGM was sold, and every picture in production was canceled.

As you can imagine, it was a deep disappointment to Catherine. The *Christy* film rights, which had been sold to MGM, were locked up for decades and held hostage by the studio that had no plans to do anything with the rights or the script now relegated to the basement files. This story, perfect for dramatization, was owned by a studio with no desire to bring it to life.

The CBS TV series resurrected the dream of *Christy* on-screen again—this time on television. Although Catherine was not alive to enjoy those episodes, her family was thrilled with Kellie Martin's portrayal of Christy.

We believe Catherine would have agreed and been delighted to see the character of Christy come alive visually and dramatically. Many of the episodes were drawn directly from the novel. A number of the endearing school children in the series were local to the area, and some had never acted before. The portrayal of Christy, Dr. MacNeill and Miss Alice by experienced actors who were ideal for their parts brought the novel's characters to life.

Catherine would have appreciated the authenticity brought to the series by the producers. She was a stickler for historic research both in *Christy* and her next novel, *Julie*. She believed the historic detail and the use of it in her vivid descriptions, plotting and characterizations transported the reader back in time to the community and brought them alongside Christy in "real time" as she was experiencing the Cove.

The authenticity of the location in which the series was filmed, the depiction of the Mission buildings, the detail in recreating this Scottish highlander mountain community and the care of the writers and the producers to bring the novel to life made the series a success.

Now, what about *Christy's* dramatic big screen or television future? There is nothing in the works right now. It was always Catherine's hope that one day, *Christy* would be a film musical. We can dream.

Watch the *Christy* (1994) television opening credits!

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What lessons can those who are about to make a life change and enter an unfamiliar world glean from the story of *Christy*?

In a word, courage. It took a lot of courage for Christy Huddleston to leave everything familiar and comfortable and enter a world different from anything she had experienced before. Her life in the Appalachian Tennessee mountains was a stark contrast to the life she had lived in the city of Asheville, North Carolina.

It required courage for her to face opposition and evil. It required courage for her to face her own shortcomings and doubts without running away. She continued to try new methods and ideas.

Perseverance is another lesson. Christy learned that change of social injustice and community values is slow and often painful. Changing a community and its way of doing things is usually the result of impacting one life at a time. Learning how to persevere in the midst of discouragement and setbacks is another life lesson demonstrated in Christy's encounters with the fiercely determined Scottish highlanders in the mountains of Tennessee.

Unexpected joy—it is often when we risk the familiar, launch out into the uncertain future, and leave behind what is comfortable and familiar that we encounter unexpected joy. Christy had no idea when she first arrived in the Cove that she would

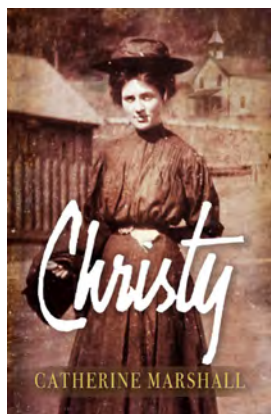
Catherine Marshall's *Christy*

experience unfettered joy with these ragamuffin children, encounter the depths of shared friendship and insights with an unusual mentor, or be taught about true beauty and joy in the simplest of things by a mountain woman.

She came as the teacher. She came to serve. She came to make a difference. As so often happens when we take these kinds of risks, she found herself the recipient of so much more. **FF**

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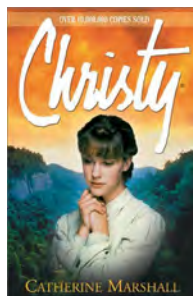


Christy

Catherine Marshall

Evergreen Farm

Christy over the years:



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Classic Christian Fiction for a New Generation

Remembering the legacy of important Christian authors that delighted and challenged previous generations.

by Cathy Gohlke

Award-winning historical author Cathy Gohlke writes novels steeped with inspirational lessons, speaking of world and life events through the lens of history. She champions the battle against oppression, celebrating the freedom found only in Christ.

More than one of Cathy's historical novels have referenced classic literary works. In fact, her latest novel—Until We Find Home (Tyndale House)—features guest appearances from beloved literary icons Beatrix Potter and C. S. Lewis.

In this essay exclusively written for FamilyFiction, Cathy highlights the importance of reclaiming the legacy of Christian fiction classics—some of which are at risk of being forgotten by modern readers.

My life has been changed through stories—especially the parables and stories of Jesus and of writers who, divinely inspired, penned on parchment the very breath of God. I never worry that the Bible, essential and timeless, will go out of print or vogue—it's by far the bestselling book of all time.

But I'm concerned that new generations will miss some of the stories—spiritual building blocks and bridges—that have encouraged and pointed my parents' and grandparents' generations—as well as my own—to the Bible. Novels that taught us, changed us, helped us on our journey to the cross—books too good to be forgotten.

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We tend to think of Christian fiction as a relatively new literary phenomenon. We've all read **Catherine Marshall's** beloved ***Christy*** (1967)—probably even seen the movie or serial adaptation, and who doesn't know **Francine Rivers'** life-changing ***Redeeming Love*** (1991)? It continues to rank high on bestseller lists. Those books are regarded as classics, and they are wonderful, life-building, enduring works of fiction—jewels in the crown.

But there are others, lesser known today. Sometimes the language, the style, even the length of these books create obstacles for modern-day readers, but I wonder if it's also that the books are no longer sitting on end caps of the aisles in brick-and-mortar stores, or that they're simply lost in the plethora of new releases claiming ad space in the short "shelf life" of books online in our twenty-first century. If no one tells us about these life-changing reads, how will we know? How will our children and grandchildren know?

That's the motivating force behind highlighting classic Christian novels, their authors, characters, or story premises in my books.

For example, the Christian's life journey—its purposes and pitfalls, its keys to eternal success—painted in longtime bestseller ***The Pilgrim's Progress*** (1678), by **John Bunyan**, is featured in ***Promise Me This*** (2012), my Titanic-through-WWII love story that pictures Christ's sacrificial love for us and our response to that unmerited gift.

The importance and implications of asking ourselves "What would Jesus do?" in every situation of life is the premise of ***In His Steps*** (first published as a book in 1896), by

Charles Sheldon. It's the question that started an entire movement in the 1990s: WWJD—What Would Jesus Do?

It's also the burning question for a group of women confronting the perils of human trafficking and their responsibility for sister victims in my novel ***Band of Sisters*** (2012), which takes place in the era of Ellis Island and the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire.

The above classics are absolute treasures, but there's an entire candy store of novels from the past worth resurrecting, worth bringing anew to this generation.

Some come in the form of allegories, like **Hannah Hurnard's *Hinds' Feet On High Places*** (1955). I'll never forget the challenging journey of "Much Afraid"—for don't we all begin as "much afraid"?

Aslan—a picture of Jesus—permeates **C. S. Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia*** (1950-1956) in the battle to save Narnia from evil. The young heroes and heroines in this series begin as children evacuated to a great country house during WWII. Lewis's *Till We Have Faces* (1956) is lesser known today, but I've read that he considered it his most mature novel.

C. S. Lewis—as well as **Lewis Carroll**, author of ***Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*** (1865), and **J. R. R. Tolkien**, author of the ***Lord of the Rings*** trilogy (written 1937-1949)—all claimed inspiration from the writings of the much-loved Scot **George MacDonald**, who published fairy tales and a wide range of other works in the mid- to later-1800s.

Tolkien denied that the Lord of the Rings trilogy was an allegory and insisted that his books didn't preach religion, but affirmed that he wrote in the Christian tradition and that his books were infused with Christian symbolism. Readers recognize Gandalf, Aragorn, Sam Gamgee, and even Frodo as representing different aspects of Christ at different times.

Such novels and the stories behind their writing make us think, question, dialogue, and breathe deeply, and ultimately they drive us deeper into the heart of God. How can we not love those works of fiction?

Some lead us directly to Jesus—novels that focus on His life and ministry, usually from the perspective of a fictitious character, but sometimes written about Him with great literary license.

Remember ***Ben Hur: A Tale of the Christ*** (1880), by **Lew Wallace**, and Judah Ben-Hur's nail-biting chariot race? We saw it portrayed on the screen in 1959 (and on Netflix since) by the fit and ruggedly handsome Charlton Heston.

Or the quest of Roman tribune Marcellus, who during the crucifixion of Jesus bartered for Jesus' robe, then spent the remainder of his life discovering and embracing who Jesus really was, in ***The Robe*** (1942), by **Lloyd C. Douglass**.

As a child I read (and still have on my bookshelf) ***The Prince of the House of David*** (1858), by **J. H. Ingraham**, a book of letters written from the perspective of a Hebrew daughter visiting Jerusalem to her father about her journey to know the Galilean—the Messiah—who changed her life. I remember feeling a strong kinship with this young woman, and wishing—longing—to have been there, to have seen what she saw.

As a teen I read ***Two From Galilee, Three From Galilee***, and ***The Messiah*** (1972), a trilogy by **Marjorie Holmes**, and yearned to visit the Holy Land—which I finally did, in 1982.

Then there are wholesome novels whose characters show us young people growing to adulthood, guided by love, family, sacrifice, and general Christian principles, like **Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*** (1868 and 1869), and **Lucy Maud Montgomery's Anne of Green Gables series** (1908–1939).

There are novels that clearly show characters coming to repentance and belief—like the novels girls read for decades by beloved author **Grace Livingston Hill** (1877–1949).

Even before that, **Martha Finley**—whose repurposed home still stands in Elkton, Maryland, wrote the Elsie Dinsmore series (1867–1905), popular in my grandmother's day. My sister and I discovered those books in our grandmother's attic trunk and devoured them, secretly glad we didn't live under such rigid rules.

In one of **L. M. Montgomery's** Emily books, the protagonist is told to “go and read the Elsie books”—as if that will help her find the “straight and narrow.”

More recently, **Lois Gladys Leppard** penned the Mandie series of novels (1983–2004) for girls. My own daughter, as a child, read and imagined herself the heroine of each one.

And then there are books whose characters slap the hypocrisies of traditional religion in the face—only to come with fortitude to faith and mercy by embracing the social justice espoused in the Bible. Think of the imagery, the parables and lessons found in ***A Christmas Carol***, by **Charles Dickens** (1843);

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, by **Mark Twain** (1884 and 1885); and **Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*** (first published in book form in 1852).

Such books—longtime classics—were purposefully conceived and written. In March of 1850, Stowe wrote in a letter to the editor of an antislavery journal that she planned to pen a story about the problem of slavery: “I feel now that the time has come when even a woman or a child who can speak a word for freedom and humanity is bound to speak.... I hope every woman who can write will not be silent.”

I have a magnet, purchased at the Stowe Museum, that quotes her: “I wrote what I did because as a woman, as a mother, I was oppressed and broken-hearted with the sorrows and injustice I saw, because as a Christian I felt the dishonor to Christianity—because as a lover of my country, I trembled at the coming day of wrath.”

All in all, we're reminded that writers write books of purpose and readers read books of purpose because we want to be drawn to higher, God-glorifying ground, to walk steadily toward the raised and radical bar Jesus held for us.

We know where to find that inspiration, that standard of justice, that high bar of love and mercy, that wisdom of the ages and the peace that surpasses all understanding.

For the best we go to the source, the **Holy Bible**. All the wonderful novels—classics from the past and novels penned with purpose today—are but faint echoes of the Book of Books.

But the wonderful, life-changing, life-challenging stories our grandparents and parents—and we—have read, have made us

part of who we are, have strengthened our characters and faith. They've become helps and companions on our life's journey.

What greater gift can we give than to share the books that have helped and changed us with those we love—give them to our family, our friends, and when the opportunity strikes, bring them to the attention of readers everywhere? We possess a strong legacy and a springboard toward faith for a new generation.

If not us, then who? **FF**

Visit Cathy Gohlke's author page at:

<https://www.familyfiction.com/authors/cathy-gohlke>

5 Questions About Cathy's latest novel, *Until We Find Home...*

Cathy Gohlke's latest historical novel, *Until We Find Home* (Tyndale House), is an unforgettable portrait of life on the British home front, challenging us to remember that bravery and family come in many forms.

What inspired you to write *Until We Find Home*?

Alarmed by the plight of young refugees fleeing gangs in Mexico to cross United States borders, and heart heavy for victims and refugees worldwide who've suffered and continue to suffer under oppressive regimes, I looked for a moment in history to tell their tale as I wish it could play out. I didn't have to look far.

The *Kindertransport* of 1938–1940 brought 10,000 predominantly Jewish children to Great Britain for refuge from Nazi oppression. Accounts abound of men and women who rescued children through resistance, often at great cost to themselves—even life itself.

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But what happened next? What happened when those children entered countries of refuge? I wondered about the average person and what role they might have played once the children were out of immediate danger—and what role we might play in the world's need today.

The UN Refugee Agency reported that in 2015, 51 percent of the world's refugees were children. Jesus told us to care for widows and orphans. How do we do that from where we live, and as Christians, how do we reconcile Jesus' directive with the world's reality and our need for safe borders?

The characters' personalities were inspired, in part, by people I know (the youngest character, Aimee, was inspired by my granddaughter). Some of the children's antics and some of the older characters' struggles were inspired by my own life stories, including Miranda's journey with cancer. Bluebell Wood's secret garden and many of the books and poems Claire loves in the story are based on books and poems I grew up knowing and loving—thanks especially to my dear grandmother, who read to me.

This novel embodies a great many things important to me. It is, in some ways, my victory book through battling cancer.

The novel is set during WWII in England's Lake District—not a location we typically think of in relation to the war. What is unique about this location and why did you choose to set your novel there?

England's magnificent Lake District—breathtakingly beautiful and pristine—might seem an unlikely place to portray wartime life on the home front. In reality, the area demonstrates just what could happen to an unsuspecting English village—a location that seemed safe and far from the maddening war.

Because of its apparent safety, the Sunderland Flying Boat Factory built an entire village—Calgarth—there to house its employees and manufacture its flying boats for the war effort.

After the war, those empty buildings set amid the peaceful and beautiful Lake District became temporary homes for the Windermere Boys—over 300 children who had barely survived Nazi concentration camps in Europe and who were in desperate need of rest and restoration.

Nearby Grizedale Hall became one of the first prisoner of war camps for German prisoners—particularly naval officers. In Keswick, a nondescript pencil factory, which had supplied the nation's pencils for years, secretly created spy pencils during the war—pencils with hollow barrels in which tightly rolled maps were hidden to aid British aviators shot down over enemy territory. In each eraser was a compass.

The region, like other areas deemed “safe,” took in child evacuees from Britain and refugees from foreign lands. The Lake District was also the home of Beatrix Potter Heelis—world-renowned children's author and illustrator. Including the whimsy of snippets from her stories and her ironic character as an older woman during these years provided a contrast and relief from the fear of invasion that residents endured for years.

These were just a few of the things that drew me to this portion of England's “green and pleasant land.”

How do you expect the novel, especially the struggles of your characters, to resonate with your audience?

Until We Find Home confronts fear and the lies we tell ourselves about our need to become worthy in order to be loved and

valued. Freedom from our own demons, forgiveness received and given, and redemption through Christ are available to all who believe.

Claire learns that repentance and belief open a personal relationship with Christ (not simply a “legal transaction”) leading to the abundant life He died to give us. Miranda learns that dying with grace and dignity is not as important as learning to live in God’s grace. These are things I’ve had to learn in life, and I hope these characters’ journeys spill into the hearts of readers.

I also hope readers will ponder this:

Most of us live quiet lives, rarely making decisions that change the world. But what if we could change the life of one person by providing a home and family for them? How would we cope with the everydayness, not to mention the prejudice, public opinion, injustice, necessary sacrifice, and potential crises? Would we do it? Will we?

There are no easy answers, and the answers are not the same for everyone. But we have been made for hard things. Will we stand up or sit down?

I also hope that the writings of **C. S. Lewis** will be brought to the attention of readers who may not know him or who may want to revisit his books. His was a voice of reason in a terrifying time—a voice of integrity and purpose that is needed in our day.

Can you tell us about the historical research that went into writing this novel? Did you learn anything new that surprised you?

Knowing I would set this story during WWII in England's Lake District, in 2014 I traveled with my friend and writing colleague **Carrie Turansky** to England and Scotland, where we both did research for our book projects.

For me, we traveled to Windermere and the Lake District to research **Beatrix Potter** and her renowned Hill Top Farm, explore the poetry and world of Wordsworth, and learn just what happened to refugees and evacuees in the district during WWII.

As a result I learned more about the Sunderland Flying Boat Factory and its village of Calgarth, camps for German prisoners of war including Grizedale Hall, wartime homes for British evacuees and foreign refugees, the Keswick Pencil Museum and the famous spy pencil, the postwar arrival of the Windermere Boys, and so much more.

I ran my fingers over the desk where Wordsworth had carved his name as a boy, visited his burial ground, and fell in love with that poet's fields of golden daffodils, the heady perfume of lilacs, the glory of woodlands spread with sapphire carpets of bluebells, and newborn lambs tottering across the fells, butting tiny heads against their mothers' sides in search of lunch.

We ferried across Lake Windermere, ate Grasmere's famous gingerbread, and took tea with jam and bread. Nowhere is the grass greener or the air purer than the Lake District in springtime.

Beatrix Potter Heelis's Hill Top Farm, with its rooms and their contents reminiscent of her books, was a real treat. During WWII, Hill Top Farm housed British evacuees.

Our research trip culminated when we joined a ten-day tour of Scotland's "Highlands, Islands, and Gardens," guided by **Liz Curtis Higgs**. Forty ladies followed in Liz's wake as she inspired us through Bible study each morning, then guided us through magnificent Scotland by day.

As a result of that trip, I could not help but include in my story a good Scottish doctor, as well as memories of the terrible feud between the MacDonalds and Campbells. In regard to that feud, we visited Glencoe and the site of that terrible massacre.

That was the travel portion of my research. Internet investigations and the reading of books, old and new, continued for months.

Included in those books were wartime diaries, especially those compiled from Britain's Mass Observation Project; day-by-day histories of the war waged against Britain; journals and letters from Beatrix Potter Heelis; journals, letters, and biographies of C. S. Lewis; the books and notes of C. S. Lewis; the history of Glencoe; biographies and histories of Sylvia Beach and details of Shakespeare and Company, the American bookstore in Paris; studies of Europe's child refugees housed in Britain; and so much more.

Perhaps the most fun was found in rereading childhood classics.

Stories of wartime like *Until We Find Home* highlight the difficulty of living in uncertainty and dealing with the unexpected on a daily basis. How does faith play into this aspect of the novel and into the novel more generally?

Each day is a gift, not a guarantee. Each day offers us a new beginning to remain focused on what we can do, to stay in the moment with our eyes on the Giver of Life, rather than to cower, paralyzed because we don't know how we'll deal with tomorrow.

This is faith that Claire learns—faith we all learn—to live in the present and surrender the future, and our worry for the future, to God.

Knowing that not a sparrow falls to the ground without our Father's knowledge—and that we are more valuable than many sparrows—is a reminder that “God's got this.” It doesn't mean that bad things won't happen—as Claire learned and Miranda knew. Jesus assured us that there will be trouble in this world.

But the good news is that we don't go it alone—He is with us, and He has overcome the world. Fear, as Claire learned, is a pinpoint in time, but faith is long-term—eternity driven—and sees the bigger picture. **FF**

Read the whole interview online at:

<https://www.familyfiction.com/authors/cathy-gohlke>

Until We Find Home

Cathy Gohlke

Tyndale House

Hope on the Plains (Good Books) is the follow-up to ***The Homestead*** in **Linda Byler's Dakota Series**, set during the Great Depression. After Hannah's family settles into a new town, a terrible drought and windmill fire devastate the community. Hannah faces some difficult questions—including whether her new suitor deserves her trust.

In this Q&A, Linda talks about the challenges of writing about the Amish, the flaws her characters wrestle with, and what she hopes to convey to her readers.

What were your goals in writing *Hope on the Plains*?

I tried to portray the natural disasters that struck frequently on the prairie. Hannah's reaction to the challenges brought on by the disasters was quite different than her mother's, in most cases. I wanted Hannah to be an Amish heroine who is less than perfect.



How do you approach writing about the Plain people in a way that is accurate to that way of life?

Being Old Order Amish myself definitely helps. I have lived for almost 60 years among the Amish, so can probably write more honestly than anyone else about our daily lives. In the end, we're all just people, so I like to think I can keep it real, and not hold my characters to ridiculously high standards that are basically untrue.

What can you tell us about the main characters?

Hannah is a girl who has been affected deeply by the sins of her



father, who harbors a sense of shame about the financial failure in Lancaster County. She is rebellious to a fault. Mose and Sarah are devout Amish parents, true to their upbringing, but Mose's leadership is questionable, as is Sarah's blind submission. Mose gets his faith mixed up with determination and sheer force of will.

What was most challenging?

Staying true to the boundaries of Amish writing. I often curbed what could have been more descriptive, especially between Hannah and the Jenkins boys and their way of life.

What can readers take away from the story?

The reality of Amish characters being flawed, even in the thirties. The chance to encounter an Amish heroine who is prickly, outspoken, certainly unconventional. Yet I hoped to convey the deep sense of belonging to a culture that is cherished. **FF**

Visit Linda Byler's author profile at:

<https://www.familyfiction.com/authors/linda-byler>

Julie Cantrell's latest novel, ***Perennials*** (Thomas Nelson), is a poignant, thought-provoking story told in a lyrical Southern style—and set in Julie's hometown of Oxford, Mississippi. When two estranged sisters reunite for their parents' 50th anniversary, a tragedy leads to unexpected hope and healing.



Here, Julie reveals the inspiration behind this moving story, how it relates to nearly everyone, and what she loves about her Southern hometown.

What can readers expect from *Perennials*?

Perennials is near and dear to my heart because it is set right here in Oxford, but I've also been incredibly moved by the responses I've received from early readers. You wouldn't believe the stories people share with me about their own sibling rivalry or estranged relationships. It seems everyone can relate in some way or another to Lovey and Bitsy's complicated sistership or the issues these characters have faced with the men in their lives. Most people have been hurt by someone they love, and that's what this book explores—what it really means to love one another.

What is it about family that causes so much turmoil in our lives?

I think our family wounds hurt us so deeply because these are the people we love most in the world, the people we want so desperately to love us in return. We long to be seen and understood, especially by our family members. And yet, it doesn't

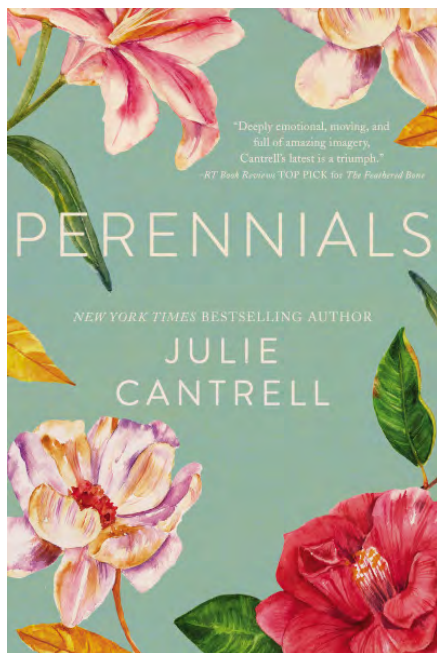


always work that way. The challenge is to find a way to love one another in spite of it all.

How did the idea for *Perennials* come to be?

That's kind of a bittersweet story, actually. I wrote this novel during a particularly dark time in my life. You know, life tends to do that to us at some point along the way, sweep the rug out from under us or whatever. One morning, when I was having one of those "Why me" moments, feeling hopelessly burdened by the situation I was facing, I started to feel like all was lost. It was truly a *dark night of the soul* moment, if I want to put it in terms of plot structure.

Anyway, I walked outside and saw a new bloom on my stargazer lily. It was just the sign I needed. It reminded me that life comes back. That lily had been given to me by one of my dearest friends nearly twenty years earlier. The flower had survived more than a dozen moves, as I transplanted her from home to



home. The last move had been under particularly dire circumstances, and I had to plant her in a shallow pot with sub-par conditions, and yet there she was ... in bloom. That's the spark that led to *Perennials*.

You set *Perennials* in your hometown, Oxford, Mississippi, a community that's been known for literature since the days of William Faulkner. How has Oxford shaped your journey as a writer?

There's no place quite like Oxford. I've lived many places across the country, but I had never met an author until I moved here fifteen years ago. Suddenly, writers were everywhere.

Beth Ann Fennelly was one of the first I met. We discussed pancakes during a Mother's Day ceremony at our children's preschool. Then, Tommy Franklin asked me to tie his daughter's bow during an elementary school Halloween carnival. I didn't know them. They didn't know me. We were just parents doing our best to support our kids. It wasn't until later that I realized they were also married to one another and they were both esteemed authors. That's when I realized you could be a parent, and a spouse, *AND* an author.

Fateful encounters like those changed the course of my life. Without Oxford, without Mississippi, I likely would never have dared write a book, much less publish it.

Your books all have an element of spirituality in them. Why do you incorporate faith in your stories?

I believe most stories examine spirituality on some level. Whether you call it Good vs. Evil or Light vs. Dark or you frame it into a particular religious context, the myths, novels, plays, parables ... they all teach us about conquering fears, overcoming challenges, slaying the beasts. This is faith. The belief that we have a purpose. That we are here to do no harm. That we exist to love one another. That our choices matter. That's faith.

Some readers have criticized my books for being too Christian. Others have criticized them for being not Christian enough. Either way, my stories seem to lead people to think deeply about what they believe and why. I consider that a good thing. **FF**

Visit Julie Cantrell's author profile at:

<https://www.familyfiction.com/authors/julie-cantrell>

Historical novelist **Susie Finkbeiner** wraps up her compelling **Pearl Spence series** with ***A Song of Home: A Novel of the Swing Era*** (Kregel). Having settled into a new life after her mother's departure, Pearl Spence finds her world turned upside-down again when her mother unexpectedly returns.

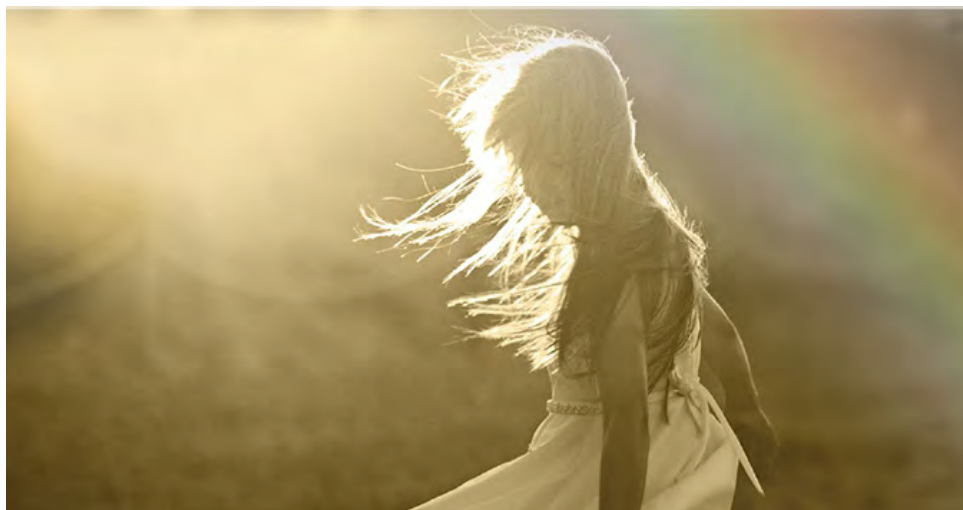


In this exclusive interview, Susie talks about her obsession with the Dust Bowl era, offers more insight into her young protagonist, and reveals how writing the Pearl Spence series has affected her own life...

The Pearl Spence series is set in the era of the Dust Bowl and the Great Depression. What captured your imagination about this time period and the events that occurred?

When I was a little girl, my grandma liked telling me stories from the Great Depression. She never romanticized the era, but her stories of survival and making do intrigued me, even at a young age. She lived in Southeast Michigan during the 1930s so her stories were about helping out on her aunt and uncle's farm, hitching rides to the local beach, and dancing in clubs.

It wasn't until I read *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck in high school that I learned about the Dust Bowl. That set me on a 20-year obsession during which I read everything I could about the era, watched every documentary, and studied the photography of Dorothea Lange.

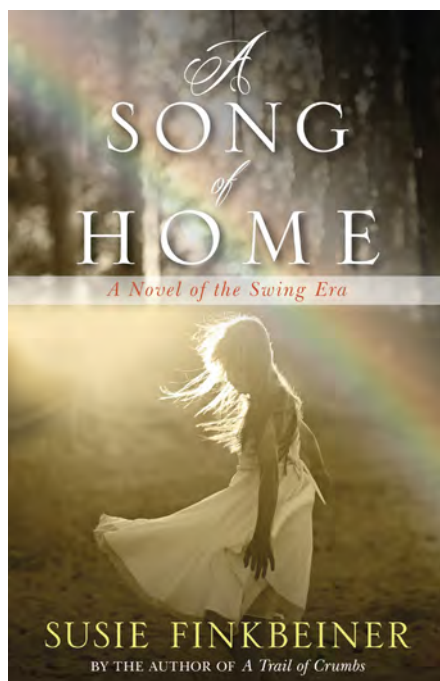


Honestly, I hope to write about the 1930s again sometime. It's a decade of history with many layers of rich story just waiting to be written.

Pearl Spence is a fascinating character. Would you tell us a little about her and why you chose someone this age to be your protagonist?

Pearl is at once spunky and vulnerable, tough and kind, curious and daydreamy. Of all the characters I've written, she's most like me. I feel a kinship to her that is quite difficult to explain. Suffice it to say I've thoroughly enjoyed writing her and miss her a good deal.

When I decided to write my Dust Bowl story (*A Cup of Dust*, the first novel in this series), I knew immediately that it would require a young protagonist. I wanted to capture the wonder of hope even in the midst of suffering and desolation. Such an outlook spoke of childlike faith to me.



There was risk involved in choosing someone so young to tell these stories to adults. Yet it was worthwhile and I'm so glad I chanced it.

In what ways are the stories in this series relatable to modern readers?

There is an underlying current which runs throughout the three novels: hope. Pearl lives on hope during the most difficult times. Even when it wavers, she never completely loses her faith in the God Meemaw

introduced her to. The God who sees us and cares, the God who hears us when we call.

No matter how difficult life becomes, no matter how deep in a pit we feel, we can rely on hope. Now, that hope doesn't mean that life will turn out the way we expected or planned. Often life shifts into something we could never have dreamed. Other times, we have to go through years of refining to see our hope realized. As Christians, we do have hope, no matter what. Hope that we are children of a loving Father who has sent His Son to rescue us.

The final book of the series is *A Song of Home*. Can you give us a synopsis without revealing too much? How has Pearl changed and matured throughout this journey?

Pearl is still settling into life in Michigan, trying to get used to winter and her new town. Lingered in the forefront of her mind is the grief of all she's lost: home, her sister, her mama. But when she learns how to dance, the music has a way of drowning out all those worries for a time. When Mama returns, Pearl and the family must adjust again. They struggle together to recapture what it means to be at home.

As with any child who experiences trauma, Pearl learns to be a bit more guarded, less trusting. Throughout her story, she comes to rely more on her family and her best friend, Ray. Meemaw's words concerning God's caring nature come to mind in her more troubling moments. By the end of the story, Pearl is still curious and daydreamy, but she's also growing in wisdom and the ability to forgive.

How has writing this series changed you? Has it challenged your faith in any way?

From the moment I wrote the first paragraph of Pearl's story, I knew that she would change me. Writing from her perspective has made me a gentler person, someone who is a bit more patient. I've grown in empathy, striving to see folks the way she would with her innocent and curious eye. Pearl has this ability to see the bad in the world but not be jaded by it. It's her lack of cynicism that I find refreshing, and it's something I try to incorporate into my own mind-set.

As I worked through this series, I was often surprised at the bits of encouragement I found on the page. Aunt Carrie, Meemaw,

Daddy, Opal, Ray—they found ways to lift up others with the words they spoke and the ways they treated others. This is home, isn't it? Speaking truth to others to point them to our Savior, loving someone else enough to edify and encourage, to remind them that they are loved. This is a practice I'm working into my everyday life, to remind the people around me of how truly dear they are to our Father.

Can you tell us what you're working on next?

These days I'm working with a different group of characters in the 1960s. It's taken me awhile to not feel as if I'm betraying Pearl, but I'm past that point. I'm falling in love with this story and hoping my readers will too. **FF**

Visit Susie Finkbeiner's author profile at:

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Historical romance author **Laura Frantz** is back with ***The Lacemaker***, a suspenseful story of love, betrayal, and new beginnings. At the dawn of the American Revolution, Virginia belle Lady Elisabeth “Liberty” Lawson is abandoned by her fiancé and suspected of being a spy for the British, with only Patriot Noble Rynallt to come to her aid.



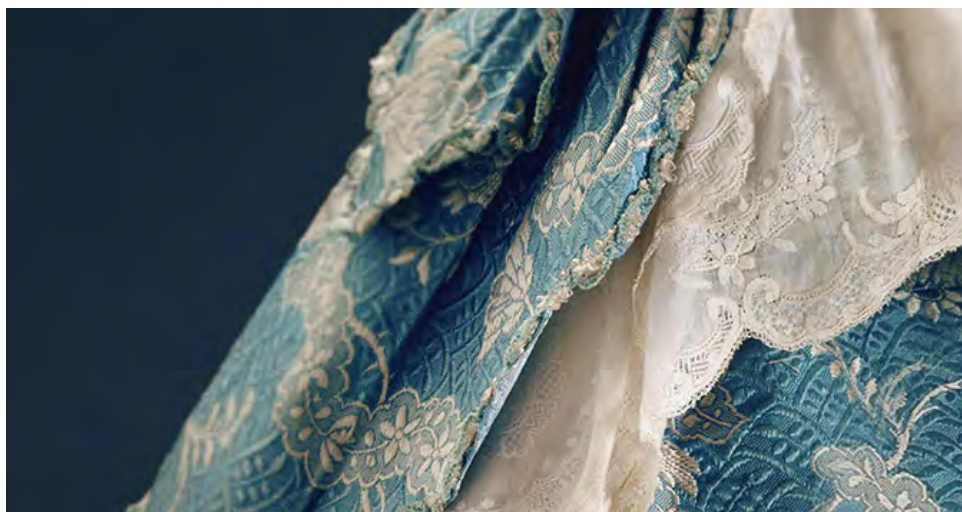
Here, Laura talks about her beleaguered main character, her story’s tumultuous setting, and what she learned about lacemaking in her research....

Would you tell us a little about *The Lacemaker*?

Lady Elisabeth Lawson has a great deal at stake when Virginia explodes like a powder keg on the eve of the American Revolution—her home, her fiancé, and the only life she’s ever known. But she also has much to gain, freedom foremost—for herself, her new country, and a future more exciting and romantic than she’s ever dreamed of.

This book is written around the American Revolution. Why did you decide to write about this time period?

Colonial America’s fight for independence was rife with passionate people and events that should be honored and remembered today. As a historical novelist, I’m doing my small part to keep that incredible history alive.



The main character, Liberty Lawson, is a lacemaker.

Was this a usual profession during the 1700s?

Lacemaking was a very special skill, artisan-like in quality, yet many women of that time period made or paid for lacework to adorn garments, etc. Handwork was considered a highly valued feminine skill, so that century abounds with everything from simple samplers to embroidery to the more complicated lacemaking.

What type of research was required for writing your book?

This novel was a special challenge due to its tie to a particular place, Williamsburg, Virginia, as well as a very pivotal event, the American Revolution. I studied the lacemakers of Massachusetts especially when creating my lacemaking heroine. One of my most valuable resources states, "In its lace making heyday in the late eighteenth century, Ipswich, Massachusetts boasted 600 lace makers in a town of only 601 households. George Washington himself, a lace aficionado, paid a visit to Ipswich in 1789 to support its extraordinary domestic textile industry" (Marta Cotterell Raffel, *The Laces of Ipswich*).



What do you hope readers can learn from *The Lacemaker*?

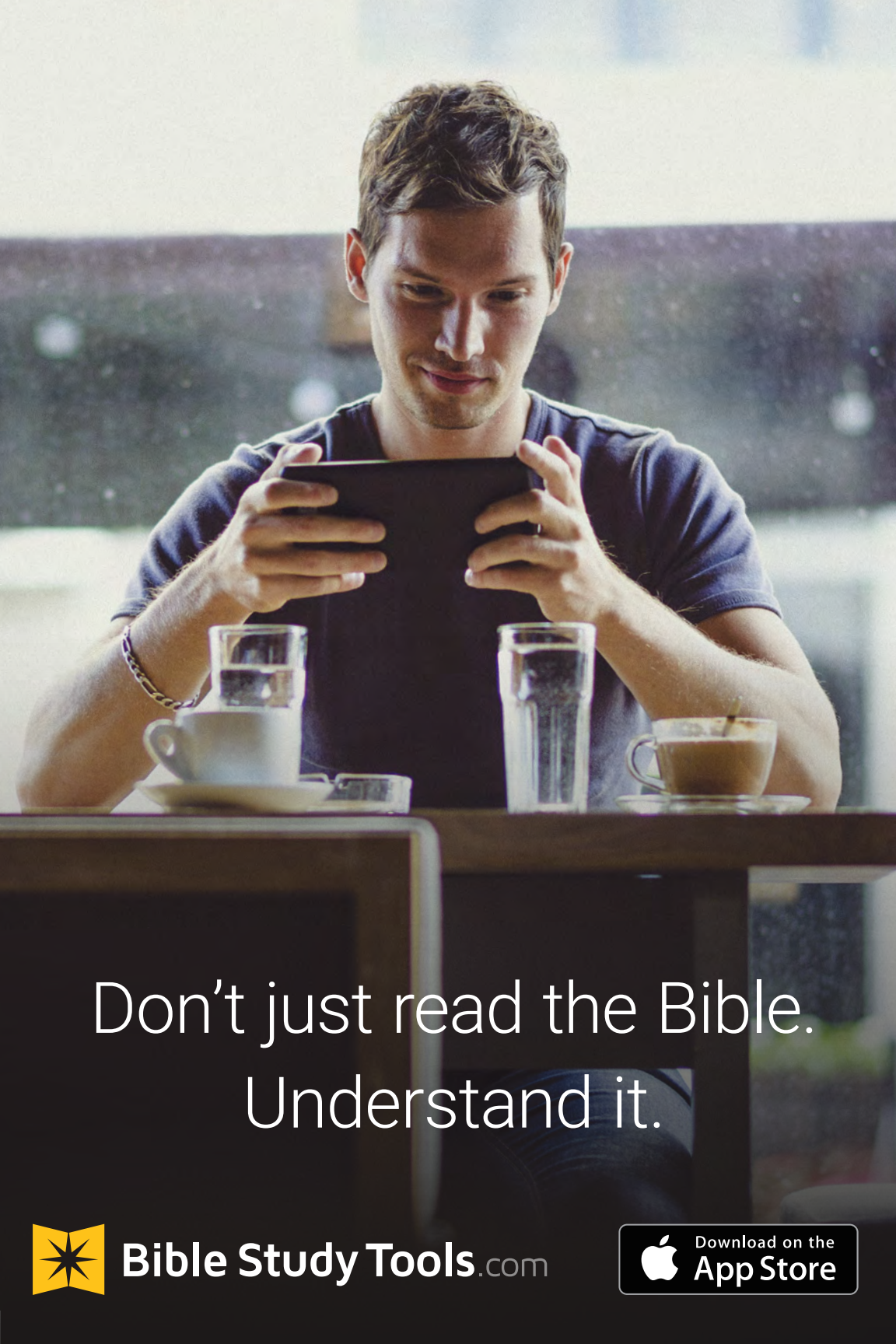
That history is truly God's story, and during that tumultuous period when America fought for its independence, he was at work creating one of the greatest, God-honoring nations in the world through the flawed yet selfless heroism of our founding fathers, the American people, and courageous women like our heroine who supported the cause for liberty.

What are you working on next?

I'm excited to bring you a Scottish story. Think Scots lairds and castles, a beekeeping heroine, ships and smuggling, indentures, and coming to colonial America in 1752! **FF**

Visit Laura Frantz's author profile at:

<https://www.familyfiction.com/authors/laura-frantz>



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Renegades (Revell) is **Thomas Locke**'s latest sci-fi page turner and the conclusion to his **Recruits series**. As gifted twins Sean and Dillon work together to save the Human Assembly from domineering enemy forces, they encounter a ghost-walker from another planet on a secret mission of his own.

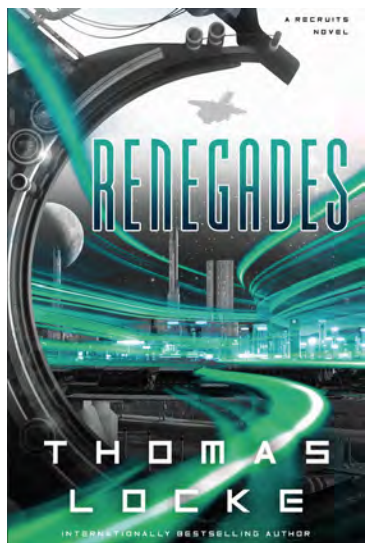


In this Q&A, Thomas reveals a bit more about this riveting story, as well as how he discovered his calling and what he's working on next!

Can you please provide a brief summary of *Renegades*?

For ten years and counting, Sean and Dillon Kirrell have survived the mayhem of a self-destructive home life through living a dream. Their bedroom is wallpapered with hand-drawn images of a long, circular train station. Glass trains glide through translucent tunnels, connecting this hub to a world they cannot name, but are certain exists. The travelers move along conveyor belts that curve over walls and ceilings, held in place by a system they have named modulated gravity. This is no dream. This is no fabricated scenario. They have known the place is out there waiting to welcome them to their *real* home.

But unseen forces aim to thwart their plans, and then redirect their newly-honed powers to destroy a planetary government. By absorbing the lessons and going *beyond*, Sean and Dillon forge an ambition to be of service to the interplanetary system. Suddenly it's no longer about being the best. It's about the survival of their ever-expanding community.



When did you first start writing and what prompted you to do so?

I began writing at age 28, two weeks after I came to faith. Before that point, I had never written anything. After that moment, there was nothing else I wanted to do with the rest of my life.

How did you become interested in writing fantasy and science fiction?

My first passions as a young reader were fantasy and science fiction. When I started writing, my first mentor was Arthur C. Clarke, author of *2001: A Space Odyssey*.

Over the past few years I've become increasingly frustrated by the constant negative directions that both fantasy and science fiction are taking. Dystopian fiction, hopelessness, the undead—do they all have to be tainted by this same darkness? Was there no place anymore for the same sort of heroic adventure that so thrilled me as a youngster? Finally I decided that it was time to stop complaining and do something different.

You have another book releasing this spring. What is the title of your next book?

The Golden Vial will release in March 2018. It is the third book in the Legends of the Realm series. **FF**

Visit Thomas Locke's author profile at:

<https://www.familyfiction.com/authors/thomas-locke>

As a constitutional lawyer who serves as Special Counsel to the American Center for Law & Justice, **Craig Parshall** has a unique background that sparks ideas for his fiction.

In his latest suspense, ***The Empowered*** (Tyndale House), disbarred criminal defense lawyer Trevor Black chases a deadly voodoo sect from Washington to

New Orleans—and uncovers more than he bargained for.

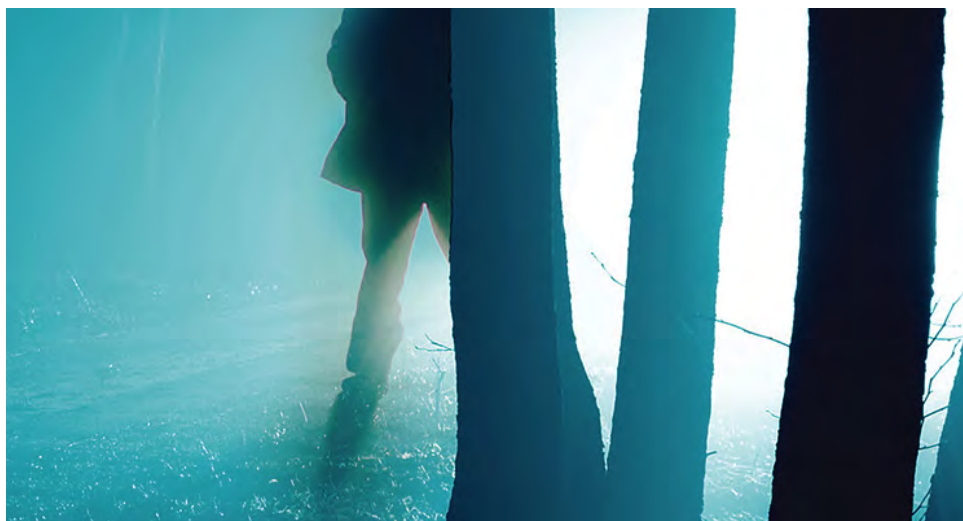


In this exclusive Q&A, Craig discusses the complex life of his main character, why he chose to include child trafficking in the story, and how his faith translates to his fiction.

Would you tell us a little about the character Trevor Black and what inspired the series that features him?

In *The Occupied*, Trevor Black assumes at first that he has left his youthful dance with evil far behind as he becomes a successful New York City criminal defense attorney. But when disaster strikes and he loses his marriage, his law license, and his professional reputation, he takes a spiritual step of faith that ends up granting him a unique but burdensome gift—the ability to see into the demonic realm. Trevor eventually embraces his new spiritual mission, but at the same time must reconcile that calling with several complicated relationships in his life.

In *The Empowered*, Trevor is “all in” on the spiritual mission part, but as he exposes the deeds of darkness as Ephesians 5:6 says, he learns that the immense power of his enemy may even endanger his own family. Abraham Lincoln famously said in his Gettysburg Address that America was engaged in “a great civil



war.” The Trevor Black series expresses my conviction that we are engaged in a *great spiritual war* between the Kingdom of Light and an Empire of Darkness.

How has your background as an attorney been helpful as you have written the Trevor Black novels?

As a trial lawyer I was always exposed to human tragedy and evil *after* the fact: after the crime, after the violation of rights, after the catastrophe. All of those things are evidence of a fallen world, of course. But in this series I have the joy of using Trevor Black’s prior lawyerly skills coupled with his unique spiritual gifting to thwart evil even before it reaches fruition.

In *The Empowered*, we find Trevor coming up against the dark world of child trafficking. Why did you decide to write about that topic?

I have had some experience with child exploitation in my legal work, and served on the board of a wonderful organization that



fight against internet dangers to families and children, so I was familiar with those issues. But in *The Empowered*, I wanted to give a real-life portrayal of what spiritual warfare would look like when a follower of Christ takes seriously the directive in Isaiah to “loosen the bonds of wickedness” and to “let the oppressed go free.”

How does your faith in Jesus inform your writing, particularly when dealing with heavy, real-world topics like this?

The wonderful thing about writing suspense fiction from a Christian worldview is that no matter how dire the situation becomes from a worldly perspective, there is an equally real spiritual solution. Jesus used practical, relatable parables to teach eternal lessons. In my novels I give a realistic, three-dimensional view of evil, but I also tried to give a true, encouraging portrait of the resurrection power of Christ that is available to every believer.

What do you hope readers will take away from *The Empowered*?

The power of evil, the troubles of the world, and our own personal weaknesses can be pretty overbearing. It's easy to feel overpowered, and defeated, especially when our enemy leaves such an impressive trail of devastation. My hope in

writing *The Empowered* is that by the end, every reader will understand where the real source of true, victorious power comes from, and how to connect with it.

Can you give us a hint about what you are working on next?

I was honored to contribute a chapter in a nonfiction book alongside some stellar Bible scholars on the topic of Israel. My contribution was to make the legal case for the existence of that tiny but profoundly significant nation, and that book will be released later in 2018, sometime after the release of *The Empowered*.

On the fiction side, I am considering other Trevor Black novels, assuming that Trevor has more stories to tell, more journeys to take, and more lessons to learn about spiritual warfare.

And I am also considering another hero for another book, who, like Trevor, has been bruised by life, but still remains unbroken. Stay tuned! **FF**

Visit Craig Parshall's author profile at:

<https://www.familyfiction.com/authors/craig-parshall>

Author **April Graney** and illustrator **Alida Massari** have created a story of hope and joy in ***The Marvelous Mud House*** (B&H Kids). Ben and his American family learn a valuable lesson when they travel to Kenya and visit the mud house that George and Mama George call home.



What inspired you to write *The Marvelous Mud House*?

Two events inspired me. The first was while we were sitting in traffic in Nairobi, Kenya. While my husband was negotiating to buy a souvenir through the left window of the bus we were riding in, I looked out the right side window and there, in the median right the middle of traffic, a pile of young teenage boys were just sitting stone-faced and sniffing spray paint. It broke my heart. I couldn't believe they were there for all of us to see just sitting in the median with all of the traffic passing by and no one doing anything about it. I felt helpless. I could do nothing. Our bus moved on from that scene, but the heartbreak of it stuck in my mind forever.

The second was the night I heard of Mama George's reaction to receiving our children's gift. After returning from Kenya, our children decided to sponsor a child to go to high school in Kenya. We prayed about who of the many children and families we met that we could help. We decided to send it to Mama George for her son, George. Then we received the message back that when



she heard the news, she cried and jumped up and down for joy. She had been telling her son George to keep working hard and that God would provide for them. I imagined her running back those two miles through the mountains to find George and tell him of God's answer, and I couldn't sleep that night until I wrote the first draft of the story down.

What do you hope children learn from the story?

I hope that children come away from the story realizing that they are not too small to start changing the world. When we realize that Jesus is everything we need, that everything good comes from His hand, that true fullness, contentment, and joy come from a relationship with Him, then we are free to share that joy with others.

I don't want parents and children to just read *The Marvelous Mud House* and think it's a great story. I want it to inspire them to action. I want them to open up a lemonade stand and give their profits to the local homeless shelter. I want them to get on



Compassion's website with their parents and choose to sponsor a child. I want them to be content with what they have and find joy in helping others. I want them to be inspired to change the world, one child at a time.

In your book, Mama George talks about being rich, but not in the way Westerners might think. In what way(s) do you feel that the people of Kenya are rich?

I remember my first morning in the mountains of Kenya, I woke up before anyone else in the house as the sun was rising. Hearing music from outside, I went out and sat on the back porch. It was Sunday morning, and I sat there for a good hour listening to the most joyful and loud children's singing drifting toward me from somewhere in the village. When we arrived at church later that morning, the service was filled with dancing and loud singing. Someone would stand up at the back of the room, start clapping and singing their song while making their way to the front, as others joined them in song. It was spontaneous, heartfelt worship.

The believers in Kenya are filled with a rich and abundant joy that they freely express in worship. They are rich in faith when circumstances are difficult. Even when they are struggling with drought and crops are failing, they continue to say how much they love God and trust that the Giver of rain will provide for them. They are rich in a way that those of us who trust in our riches to provide for us often are not. Their rich joy comes from relationships with God and others, not from their possessions.

How can this book spark conversations with children about our perspective on possessions, the way that others live, and blessing other people?

In the story, the Smith family has been overrun by their possessions, causing a lot of discord and discontentment in their home. In contrast, we see George and his mother in a beautiful lush setting where they work together in harmony. In the story, the Smith family gets to experience this beautiful place where possessions are few, but joy and peace abound. It changes their perspective on what is important in life. They come home more content and loving to each other, and willing to work hard together to help George. I think as kids hear this story, they hopefully will understand that true joy and contentment comes not from the things we have but the relationships we pursue, and ultimately from our relationship with God.

How can parents help their kids understand and appreciate people that live differently than they do?

The Marvelous Mud House isn't just a story about helping the poor. It's about what we can learn from those living in poverty. God has chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith, and this is exactly what we witnessed in Mama George's life and the other Kenyan believers around us. I realize that not everyone can take their family on a cross-cultural mission trip, but there are opportunities right here where we live to get to know our neighbors who live differently than we do. We can serve in a soup kitchen or homeless shelter, visit a nursing home, or volunteer in a children's program on another side of town. And we shouldn't go as the saviors trying to fix everything but as learners. Get to know the people. Develop relationships with them and listen to their stories. **FF**

Visit April Graney's author profile at:

<https://www.familyfiction.com/authors/april-graney>

Romance and danger abound in **Melanie Dickerson's** fairy-tale retellings, the latest of which is ***A Silent Songbird*** (Thomas Nelson), a reimagining of ***The Little Mermaid***. After running away from her royal family to escape an arranged marriage, Evangeline joins a group of traveling servants and pretends to be mute to keep her identity hidden. The group's handsome leader is intrigued, but what will happen when he discovers her secret?



In this exclusive Q&A, Melanie discusses why she chose *The Little Mermaid* as the basis for this novel, her research into the English monarchy, and why she believes storytelling is such a powerful way to communicate....

We know that *A Silent Songbird* is a retelling of *The Little Mermaid*. What inspired you from that fairy tale and led you to craft such a lovely retelling?

I loved the emotion behind a girl who wants to be something she's not in order to get the love she's desperate for. I wanted to write the story of a girl who would give up everything for love, and then discover how to reconcile with God after doing something everyone else in her life believed was wrong. I could relate to a girl like that.

I was also inspired by an article in an archeology magazine that I read while waiting at the library for my daughter, who had a meeting there. The magazine showed examples of graffiti that medieval people had carved into church walls and baptismal fonts. The graffiti was a desperate attempt to communicate with



God, and it really touched me. I knew I had to incorporate it into my story.

Did any of the characters surprise you in the course of writing the book? If so, how?

Evangeline started out as a sheltered girl, a little self-centered, but she became very unselfish and courageous. I never know my characters very well when I start writing, but I discover what they're all about as I write and as they react to different situations.

Beyond reading the original fairy tales, what type of research do you do for your fairy-tale romances?

For *The Silent Songbird* I had to find a historical figure who could have fathered a child who would be a ward of the king. So I had to do a lot of research on the English monarch Richard the Second and his family members. I also had to research the castles belonging to him to find a place for Evangeline to live. It was



quite fun, since I love castles. I always have to do some research, but the exact type of research depends on the story. Every story is different.

Why do you think that story-telling is such a powerful way to communicate truth?

Stories are easy to relate to and easy to remember. You can say, “Actions speak louder than words,” but when Jesus illustrates that with a story about two brothers, one who tells his father he will go into the field and work but then doesn’t, and

the other brother who says he won’t go but then changes his mind and goes out to work after all, we can “see” the principle in a way we can relate to. It has more meaning and is easier to apply to own lives.

How does your faith inform your writing?

I can’t really imagine living life without my relationship with God or my foundation of faith, so it would be hard to write about characters who don’t have faith in God. A relationship with Jesus doesn’t keep you from having problems, but he affects how you respond to your problems.

Melanie Dickerson

Can you give our readers a hint about what you are working on now?

I'm working on the finishing touches to an Aladdin story called *The Orphan's Wish*, and I'm starting a Mulan story, both of which are continuing the Hagenheim series. **FF**

Visit Melanie Dickerson's author profile at:

<https://www.familyfiction.com/authors/melanie-dickerson>

Movies/DVDs

Samson

From the creators of *God's Not Dead* comes ***Samson***, an action-packed biblical epic starring Billy Zane (*The Phantom*, *Titanic*), Golden Globe winner Rutger Hauer (*Blade Runner*), and Jackson Rathbone (*Twilight* saga). Samson's journey of passion, betrayal, and redemption inspires audiences to realize that life's failures need not define their future. The film premieres nationwide on February 16th.

The story of Samson is one of the best-known from the Bible. But there's more to it than a haircut and an ill-fated marriage. The film is based on the powerful, biblical epic of a champion chosen by God to deliver Israel. His supernatural strength and impulsive decisions quickly pit him against the oppressive Philistine empire. After being betrayed by a wicked prince and a beautiful temptress, Samson is captured and blinded by his enemies. He calls upon his God once more for supernatural strength and turns imprisonment and blindness into final victory.

"For anyone who ever wondered if they really could do what God called them to do, this film is for them," says Pure Flix CEO Michael Scott.

Samson also features Lindsay Wagner ("The Bionic Woman"), Caitlin Leahy ("Black-ish"), and Taylor James (*Justice League*) as Samson. The movie was filmed on location in South Africa, and is a production of Pure Flix, producer of *God's Not Dead*, the leading faith film of 2014.

Samson



“Most people know that Samson had long hair, Delilah cut it off, and that he lost his strength,” Director Bruce Macdonald comments. “But there’s so much more. Samson was an unwilling hero, and his journey to regain his faith—the whole story—is relevant [today].”

Samson was written by Zachary Warren Smith, Jason Baumgardner, Galen Gilbert, and Timothy Ratajczak. The film was produced by David A.R. White, Michael Scott, Elizabeth Travis, Alysoun Wolfe, Vlokkie Gordon, Bruce MacDonald, Craig Jones, and Brittany Yost. **FF**

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BENEATH THE SUMMER SUN

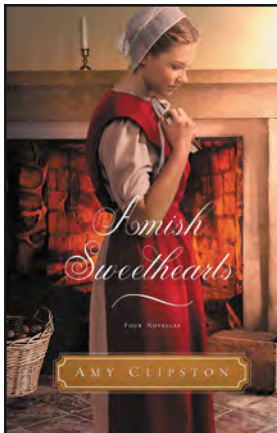
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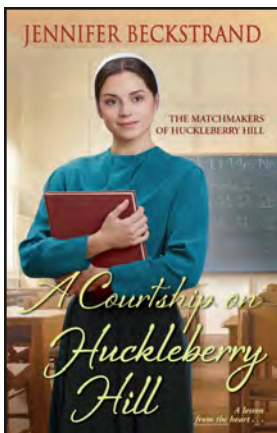
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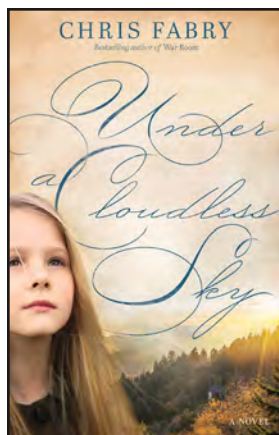
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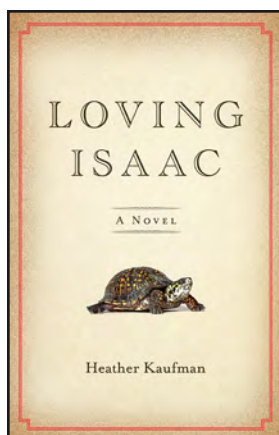
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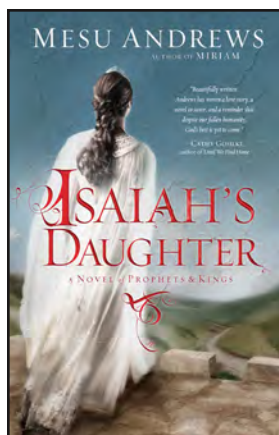
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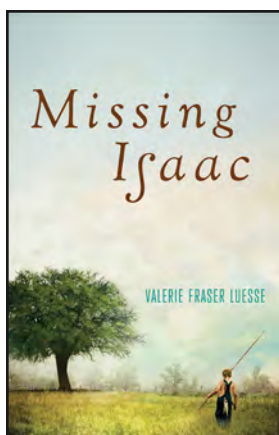
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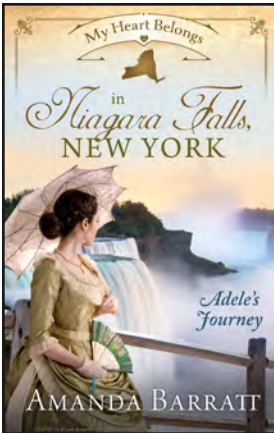
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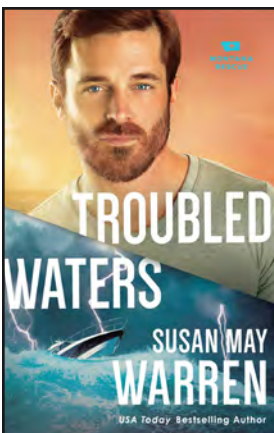
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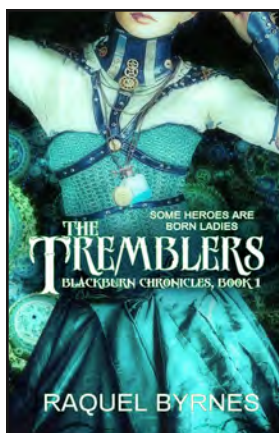
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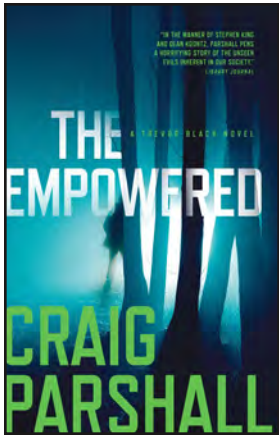
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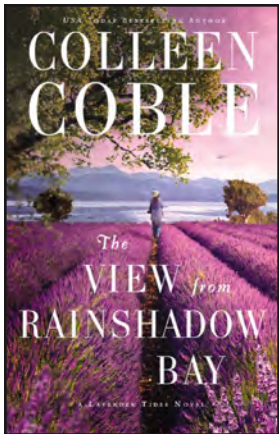
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TREVOR BLACK SERIES

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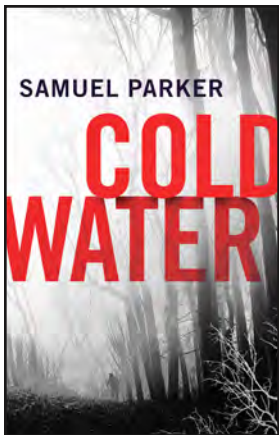
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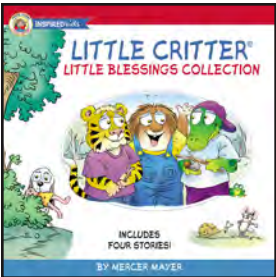
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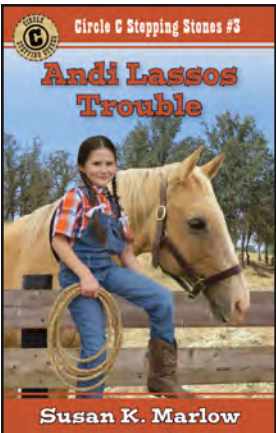


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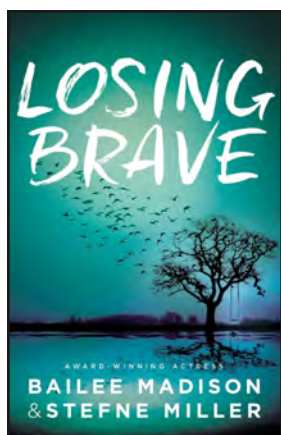
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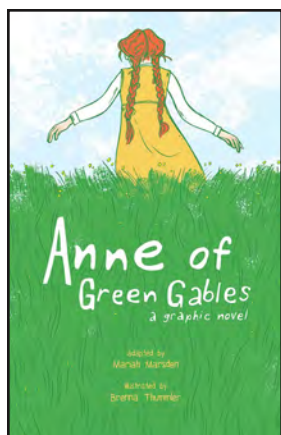
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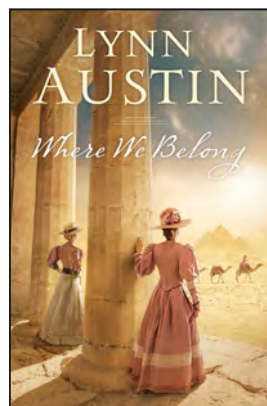
Genre: Movies



A QUICK LOOK AT SOME OF THE BESTSELLING TITLES FOR OCTOBER 2017

HISTORICAL FICTION

- 1** ***Where We Belong***
Lynn N. Austin
Baker Publishing Group
- 2** ***To Wager Her Heart***
Tamera Alexander
Zondervan
- 3** ***Cherished Mercy***
Tracie Peterson
Baker Publishing Group
- 4** ***Christmas at Carton***
Tamera Alexander
Thomas Nelson
- 5** ***The Promise of Dawn***
Lauraine Snelling
Baker Publishing Group

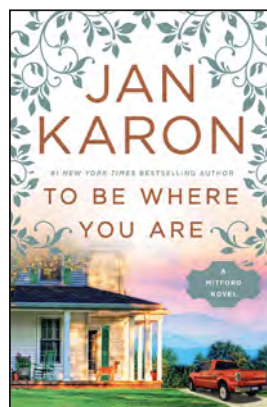


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CONTEMPORARY

- 1** ***To Be Where You Are***
Jan Karon
Penguin/Putnam
- 2** ***Loving Luther***
Allison Pittman
Tyndale House Publishers
- 3** ***A Time to Stand***
Robert Whitlow
Thomas Nelson Publishers
- 4** ***Bringing Maggie Home***
Kim Vogel Sawyer
WaterBrook Press
- 5** ***The Undoing of Saint Silvanus***
Beth Moore
Tyndale House Publishers



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ROMANCE

- 1** ***Blind Spot***
Dani Pettrey
Baker Publishing Group
- 2** ***The Proving***
Beverly Lewis
Baker Publishing Group
- 3** ***Beneath Copper Falls***
Colleen Coble
Thomas Nelson Publishers
- 4** ***The Writing Desk***
Rachel Hauck
Zondervan
- 5** ***The Beloved Christmas Quilt***
Wanda E. Brunstetter
Barbour Publishing



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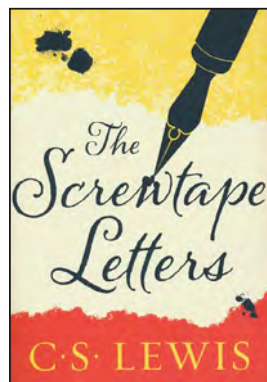
- 1** ***Dangerous Illusions***
Irene Hannon
Baker Publishing Group
- 2** ***The Harbinger***
Jonathan Cahn
Charisma
- 3** ***The Book of Mysteries***
Jonathan Cahn
Charisma
- 4** ***If I Run***
Terri Blackstock
Zondervan
- 5** ***If I'm Found***
Terri Blackstock
Zondervan



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- 1** ***The Screwtape Letters***
C. S. Lewis
Zondervan
- 2** ***Hinds' Feet on High Places***
Hannah Hurnard
Tyndale House
- 3** ***This Present Darkness***
Frank Peretti
Crossway Books
- 4** ***The Great Divorce***
C. S. Lewis
Zondervan
- 5** ***The Returning***
Rachelle Dekker
Tyndale House



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