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Summer 2014



AUTHOR INTERVIEW

**Max Elliot Anderson:
Targeting Reluctant Readers**

ECLA NEWS

**A New Direction
From the Editor
History of ECLA**

PROMOTION SKIT

**Dude! Our Library
Is Cheap!**

EDUCATION

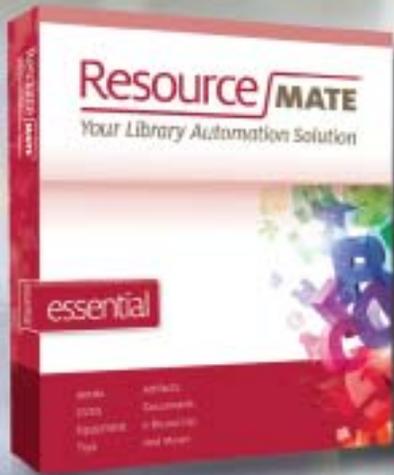
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CONTENTS

Church Libraries

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DEPARTMENTS

News & Notes	3
Book Updates	3
ECLA News	
From the Editor <i>by Lin Johnson</i>	4
A New Direction <i>by Ceil Carey and Mary Clapp</i>	5
History of ECLA <i>by Mary Bechtel</i>	6
Evangelical Church Library Association <i>by Nancy Dick</i>	7
Author Profile	
Max Elliot Anderson	
Targeting Reluctant Readers <i>by Kate Berkey</i>	9
Education	
Getting Boys to Read <i>by Kate Berkey</i>	10
Book Roundup	
Get Children Reading Early <i>by Cindy Grabill</i>	11
Education	
User-Friendly Library <i>by Jeanne Zornes</i>	15
Education	
Feedback Tip <i>by Candace Betts</i>	16
Humor	
Unforeseen Expenses <i>by Jeanne Zornes</i>	16

PROMOTION

Dude! Our Library Is Cheap! <i>by Suzanne Reeves</i>	13
A Library in Every Church <i>by Jeanne Gibson</i>	14
Bulletin Boards <i>by Maureen G. Birkett</i>	inside back cover

REVIEWS

Books	17
Bible & Theology	17
Biography & Memoir	18
Children	19
Christian Living	19
Church	20
Contemporary Issues	21
Evangelism	21
Family	22
Fiction	23
Finances	26
Men	26
Teens	26
Women	27
Reviewers	27
Music	28

Reviews are the opinions of individual reviewers, not necessarily of the editor or ECLA. Prices are subject to change.

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ECLA

Evangelical Church Library Association

The Evangelical Church Library Association is a fellowship of individuals, churches, and publishers for the purpose of enriching lives through the ministry of well-organized church and school libraries and media centers. Founded in 1970, ECLA is a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization.

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Book Updates

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Curious Creatures (Zonderkidz; combination of *Rain Forest Friends*, *Jungle Beasts*, *Polar Pals*, and *Curious Creatures Down Under*)

Life Behind the Wall by Robert Elmer (Zonderkidz; combination of *Candy Bombers*, *Beetle Bunker*, and *Smuggler's Treasure*)

Reprinted

God Can Do Anything but Fail, So Try Parasailing in a Windstorm by Stan Toler (Beacon Hill)

Knowing God by Name by David Wilkerson (Chosen)

Noah and the Mighty Ark by Rhonda Gowler Greene (Zonderkidz)

One Lost Sheep by Rhonda Gowler Greene (Zonderkidz)

Retitled

Praying through Hard Times: Finding Strength in God's Presence by Linda Evans Shepherd (Revell, originally *When You Can't Find God*)

Revised

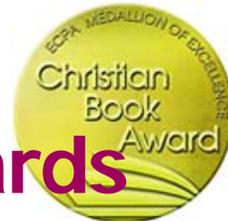
The Smart Stepfamily by Ron L. Deal (Bethany)

Save
the
Date!



Annual ECLA Conference
October 24-25
Wheaton, Ill. (Chicago)

Christian Book Awards



The Evangelical Christian Publishers Association announced the winners for the 2014 Christian Book Award program. Presented annually to the finest in Christian publishing since 1978, the Christian Book Award program honors titles in seven categories. Five finalists are selected in each category, following a stringent judging process by judging panels specially selected for each category.

The top-scoring book in each category is named the winner. The Christian Book of the Year is chosen among the finalists to represent Christian publishing's highest quality and greatest impact for 2014.

The winners are:

Christian Book of the Year: *Crazy Busy: A (Mercifully) Short Book about a (Really) Big Problem* by Kevin DeYoung (Crossway)

Bibles: *The MacArthur Study Bible NIV* by John MacArthur, general editor (Nelson)

Bible reference: *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (2nd edition) by Joel B. Green, Jeannine K. Brown, and Nicholas Perrin (InterVarsity)

Children: *The Sparkle Box* by Jill Hardie (Ideals)

Fiction: *Iscariot: A Novel of Judas* by Tosca Lee (Howard)

Inspiration: *He Walks Among Us: Encounters with Christ in a Broken World* by Richard and Renee Stearns (Nelson)

New author: *Falling into Place* by Hattie Kauffman (Baker)

Nonfiction: *C.S. Lewis—A Life* by Alister McGrath (Tyndale)

Use Our Reviews

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From the Editor

by Lin Johnson

In 1994 the Evangelical Church Library Association's Board of Directors hired me to edit *Librarian's World*, which was retitled *Church Libraries* with the Fall 1996 issue. We changed the format to a journal with 32 pages, expanding the number of reviews and adding more articles.

The journal has undergone a number of design changes since then. And due to rising printing and mailing costs, it changed again with the Summer 2011 issue to the password-protected PDF format that you know today. Then earlier this year, the Board voted to move in a new direction and cancel publication of *Church Libraries*. This issue is the final one.

This job has been my favorite freelance editing job. I'll miss the almost-monthly Board meetings that pulled me from my solitary office to meet and fellowship with other people who are as passionate about books as I am. I'll miss the annual conferences that provided opportunities to serve, train, and get acquainted with you who attended.

I'll miss you, our readers and members. Thank you for your comments, suggestions, and occasional submissions through the years.

I'll also miss having dozens of books and other media delivered to my mailbox and front door every week, feeding my addiction to books. It was an ideal situation for a bibliophile like me. And, gasp! Now I'll have to use the library more and buy books again.

I leave you with this challenge from Paul in Galatians 6:9-10:

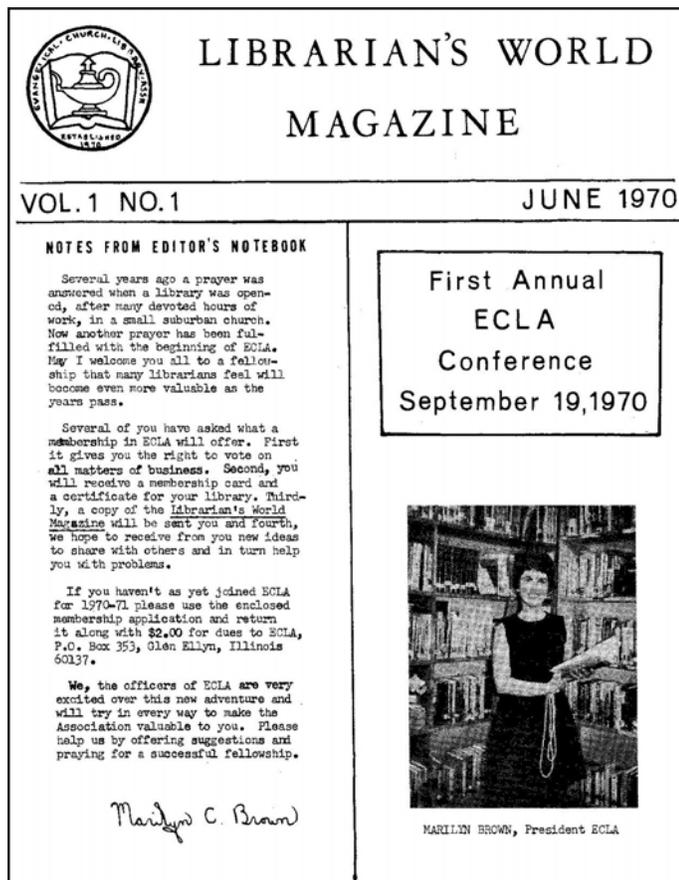
So let's not allow ourselves to get fa-

tigued doing good. At the right time we will harvest a good crop if we don't give up, or quit. Right now, therefore, every time we get the chance, let us work for the benefit of all, starting with the people closest to us in the community of faith (The Message).

To learn about the new direction the

Board is taking, be sure to read the copresidents' article on page 5. And for a look back at the early history of the organization, see Mary Bechtel's and Nancy Dick's articles on pages 6-8.

Lin Johnson is managing editor of Church Libraries and an Evangelical Church Library Association Board member.



The first issue of Librarian's World Magazine, the forerunner of Church Libraries.

A New Direction

by Ceil Carey and Mary Clapp

Have we got news for you! A big change is on the horizon for the Evangelical Church Library Association (ECLA).

Blog

We are moving to a blog format from our online journal. Although there are many reasons for doing this, one in particular is accessibility. A blog will be much easier to access.

We want you to know, our ECLA members, that this issue of *Church Libraries* is the last one you will receive in this format. But the blog will contain many of the same items you now look for in the journal. We are making it easier for you to access what you want and need.

Another plus will be that you no longer have to wait three months for the next journal. You will receive up-to-date information, reviews, and articles continuously. And you will no longer need a password to see the articles and book reviews on the blog. The target date for the blog to go live is July or sooner.

If you have enjoyed Tinna Mills and Christy Ewing and their many contributions on Facebook, you will be happy to know they will be managing the blog. You can look for the same enthusiasm and great library information as you have received from them in the past on Facebook.

Our new webmaster, Colleen Greene, may be known to many of you as the president of the Southern California chapter of ECLA. Colleen is a professional webmaster, so you can

expect great things from her too.

Membership

You probably are wondering how this change affects your membership. Membership dues will be reduced to \$20 for one year and will run from January to December, beginning January 2015. For many of you, your current subscription has ended or will end by January. You will then need to pay only \$20 to keep your membership active for another year.

For those of you who have paid the higher rate and your membership will run past January, feel free to contact us about making changes to your account. Your membership dues will not only support ECLA, the website, Facebook, and the new blog but also give you access to a members-only page with free resources, an archive of past journals, and free downloads of conference workshops.

As excited as we are about these changes, we understand that you may prefer a refund due to no longer receiving *Church Libraries*. If this is the case, we will be happy to provide it on request. But we hope you will consider this request carefully and check out the blog before making a decision. To ask questions or request a refund, contact one of us: Ceil at jackandceil@att.net or Mary at m.clapp@sbcglobal.net.

Conference

The fall conference planning is coming along nicely with workshops by well-known presenters, such as Rosalie deRosset, Chris Jager, and Julie Ieron.

*A big change is
on the horizon
for the Evangelical
Church Library
Association.*

Mark your calendar now for October 24-25 at College Church in Wheaton, Ill., and keep checking our website and Facebook page for updates.

Future

We appreciate your support and envision an excellent future for our organization. We are hoping you will turn to ECLA anytime for resources or help with your library.

Ceil Carey and Mary Clapp are copresidents of the Evangelical Church Library Association Board.

History of ECLA

by Mary Bechtel

Editor's note: These articles are from the Evangelical Church Library Association's archives.

A letter dated March 7, 1970 produced the spark from which began the organization known today as the Evangelical Church Library Association (ECLA). Arthur K. Saul, then manager of Scripture Press Bookstore in Wheaton, Ill., had, as early as 1964, been conducting a series of church librarian's workshops in the area.

At that time many church libraries were still "in a closet," poorly organized and seldom used. Volunteers who could be found to improve conditions soon became discouraged from lack of counsel from professional sources and lack of support from local congregations.

Saul's workshops and personal assistance were a welcome boon. Questions like how to establish a church library, how to catalog books and other materials, how to persuade church boards to provide funds—all these problems and more began to land on Mr. Saul's desk.

It was apparent in early 1969 that an organizational structure would have to be established to provide services for the growing ranks of enthusiastic church librarians. Many positive things were happening in denominational libraries, yet the need for a non-denominational approach was urgent.

Answers to his concerns and prayers came through two dedicated individuals who had participated in his work-

shops. Marilyn Brown, a librarian at the First Christian Church in Glen Ellyn, Ill., asked what could be done to provide assistance on a regular basis. At the same time, Nancy Dick, of Pleasant Hill Community Church in Wheaton, Ill., became excited about the potential of church libraries.

Writing to these two women, Art asked if they would be interested in serving, on a temporary basis, as officers of an organization that might be known as the Librarian's Fellowship for Church Librarians. His vision extended to a nationwide fellowship, which might eventually become international. He hoped this organization would become an affiliate of the Christian Booksellers Association.

Birth

On April 3, 1970, at a Librarian's Workshop, Marilyn Brown officially began her duties as president of the newly named Evangelical Church Library Association, with Nancy Dick as secretary and Art Saul as treasurer. A constitution was written and adopted, in-

cluding a statement of faith.

In May, letters were sent announcing the beginning of ECLA and inviting memberships for \$2. The first issue of *Librarian's World Magazine* appeared in June with helpful ideas, book reviews, snapshots, and advertising. It also announced the date of the fall conference to be held in September.

By September, Art had been appointed Southwestern field representative of Scripture Press and had left for Fullerton, Calif., leaving Marilyn and Nancy with the growing potential of the infant organization.

With diligence and enthusiasm, these two women fulfilled the charge with which they had been challenged. The first Board of Directors was appointed and included Marilyn Brown, Nancy Dick, and Carl Worrell.

Growth

The fall conference was held on October 24 (not in September as first announced) with 50 in attendance. It featured Dr. Robert Clark of Moody Bible Institute as keynote speaker and James Johnson as guest author. Twelve different workshops were held, and the day was rich in inspiration and practical advice.

An account of this first conference appeared in the February issue of *Bookstore Journal*, supplemented by another article on the value and goals of such an organization. The unique feature of ECLA from its beginning was its relationship with the Christian bookstore.

In the Beginning

Thirty-seven librarians from 15 churches were present at the first meeting of the Evangelical Church Library Association, held in April 1970, at Scripture Press. Bernard Palmer was the guest author.

*The motto
of ECLA is
"A library in every
church," though we
really mean
"A library-media
center in every
church."*

Whereas denominational library associations depend on the denominational structure for their impetus, Christian bookstores were to form the catalyst for ECLA. Close cooperation between church libraries and bookstores would benefit and prosper both. Thus Art Saul's original idea has proved to be responsible for continued growth for both libraries and bookstores.

Memberships the first year numbered 196, with 30 states and Canada represented. This increased the following year to 257 with approximately the same spread. With some lean years and some fat years, the current total is a rousing 447 members representing 38 states, Canada, and three other countries.

The membership fee has risen from the original \$2 to a current \$5, not quite keeping pace with the inflationary trend and making membership in ECLA the best bargain to be found anywhere.

The fall conferences have continued to be the major event of the ECLA year, though for a time spring workshops were also held. Conference speakers have included such notable figures as

continued on page 8

Evangelical Church Library Association

by Nancy Dick

The Evangelical Church Library Association was formed in April of 1970 as a ministry to church librarians and those desiring to organize a church library. Its main outreach is through the quarterly publication, *Librarian's World Magazine*, which features reviews of the latest in Christian books, promotional helps, book lists, and many other items of interest to the church librarian.

An all-day national conference is held each fall in Wheaton, Ill. This year's conference will be Saturday, November 2. At this time librarians are able to receive practical help through a variety of workshops covering basic library problems. Past workshops have included how to start a church library, book classification, book selection, audiovisual helps, and vertical-file tips. The main feature of the afternoon is an address by a guest author. Previous speakers have been James Johnson, Joseph Bayly, Virginia Matson, and V. Gilbert Beers.

The goal towards which the association is working is to have Christian bookstores throughout the country sponsor local chapters. In this way the benefits of the workshops can be enjoyed by more of the members as each local bookstore plans its own workshops. At this point there are sponsoring bookstores in Illinois; Texas; California; and Ontario, Canada.

Current membership stands at 245. The fiscal year begins on October 1 and membership is open to all interested individuals or churches. Those joining throughout each fiscal year will receive all four issues of that year's magazine. Membership dues are \$3.50 per year. For further information, write to ECLA, P.O. Box 353, Glen Ellyn, Illinois 60137.

Officers of the association are Mrs. Marilyn Brown, president; Dr. Robert Clark, vice president; Mrs. Nancy Dick, secretary; and Mr. Paul Snezak, treasurer. Other national Board members are Mrs. Ruth Skanse, Mrs. Mary Bechtel, Mr. James Sabinske, and Mr. Peter Gardner.

Nancy Dick was executive secretary of the Evangelical Church Library Association; editor of Librarian's World Magazine, the forerunner of Church Libraries; and a church librarian.

It was apparent in early 1969 that an organizational structure would have to be established to provide services for the growing ranks of enthusiastic church librarians.

Les Stobbe of Moody Press, Joseph Bayly of David C. Cook, and Mel Lorentzen of Wheaton College. We have been pleased to hear such guest authors as Craig Massey; Virginia Matson; Karen Mains; Jill Briscoe; and, this year, Philip Yancey.

A number of enthusiastic and capable persons have served on the executive board through the years. Besides those previously mentioned, these include Robert Clark, Paul Snezek, Richard Schock, Jim Sabinske, Peter Gardner, Tom Lindner, and George Nelson. Each has given generously of their experiences in the book and publishing worlds.

At present the board is made up of the following: Ruth Skanse, president; Ruth Fischer, vice president; Bobby Joe Slinger, treasurer; Nancy Dick, secretary; Joan Dye, Mary Bechtel, Peter Gunther, and Sharon Vance.

On September 21, 1976, ECLA became a nonprofit organization through the receipt of a charter from the state of Illinois and may now accept gifts and donations that are tax deductible. The bulk mailing permit that was obtained as a result has saved many dollars in mailing costs.

Services

Mailing is one large aspect of the work carried on by the executive secretary, Nancy Dick, in her cozy office in Pleasant Hill. *Librarians World Magazine* is published there quarterly with the assistance of Joan Dye, providing mem-

bers with a vast fund of information, inspiration, practical assistance, advice for the book-loaners, and reviews of the best books.

Nancy handles notices to members of forthcoming conferences, notices of board meetings, treasurer's reports, plus the correspondence and phone calls with persons who write or call for information or counsel.

Her faithfulness and steadfastness, her enthusiasm and joy for the task have been at the heart and core of ECLA. The flower of her efforts is an organization that is an effective ministry for Christ.

Relationships

Relationships with other groups of a similar nature have become increasingly important in recent months. Ruth Skanse visited an annual conference of the Church and Synagogue Library Association.

Board members have manned booths or conducted workshops dealing with aspects of library needs at the Greater Chicago Sunday School Association Convention, at the Greater Peoria Sunday School Association Convention, for the International Sunday School Association, and others.

The Southern Baptist Convention has provided materials; and some ECLA members subscribe to their fine journal, *Media*.

Chapters

The Evangelical Church Library Asso-

ciation continues to grow. One of the most important aspects of its membership explosion related to the starting of chapters in various parts of the country.

At the present time, chapters are alive and active in Hawthorne, N.J., and the South Chicagoland and Fox Valley areas of Illinois. Plans for the future include emphasis on developing local chapters in other areas.

A Library in Every Church

The motto of ECLA is "A library in every church," though we really mean "A library-media center in every church." But no matter what term is used or what we might choose to name ourselves in the future, it is the hope and prayer of our members that we may influence churches to establish and maintain active, lively, and effective libraries-media centers.

Given the enthusiasm, dedication, and prayers of its faithful members and Board, this hope will become a reality.

Mary Bechtel is a past president of the Evangelical Church Library Association and a retired school and church librarian. Excerpted from an article distributed at the 10th annual conference.

Books are a staircase to unknown worlds.

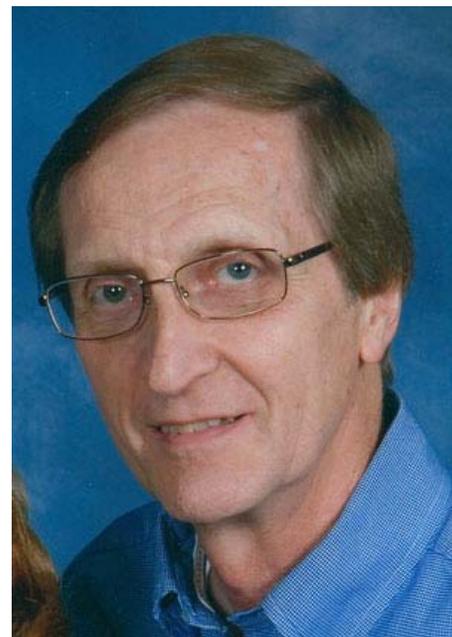
—Jason Ellis

There are perhaps no days of our childhood we lived so fully as those we spent with a favorite book.

—Marcel Proust

Targeting Reluctant Readers

by Kate Berkey



Max Elliot Anderson

As a child, Max Elliot Anderson hated to read, even though his father was the author of more than 70 books. He began his working career in film and became successful in it. After the tragic events of 9/11, however, his work in film production came to a standstill. Needing a new outlet for his creativity, Max turned to the thing he once hated: books.

As he entered the book world, Max never experienced a burning bush or any writing on the wall, but he felt a prompting from God to take a leap of faith. His writing career began when he took one of his screenplays and turned it into a novel.

Connected Professions

Max's career in film had "everything to do with writing," he said.

His father, Ken Anderson, was not only a writer but a pioneer in the Christian film industry. Max remembers spending many childhood days in the studio with him. He loved seeing movies being created, along with the audience's reaction to the ending. He especially remembers the films that allowed viewers to make spiritual decisions at the end.

When he began to write, he noticed that he wrote novels as if they were screenplays. "People would ask me, 'What are you working on?' And I would say, 'The film I'm working on ... no, no, no, the book I'm working on ...,'" Anderson recalled.

This visual aspect of his writing makes his books seem more like movies than novels.

Books by Max Elliot Anderson

Sam Cooper Adventures
Lost Island Smugglers (Port Yonder Press)
Captain Jack's Treasure (SharksFinn)
River Rampage (SharksFinn)

Barney and the Runaway (Comfort)
North Woods Poachers (Comfort)
The Scarecrow (CreateSpace)
Terror at Wolf Lake (Comfort)
When the Lights Go Out (Comfort)

Yet, Anderson learned quickly that his connections in the film world did little to help him in publishing. He spent three years writing 34 manuscripts without the security of a book contract. When those years ended, he joined an online writing group where he was able to bounce around ideas, get feedback, and eventually be discovered by a publisher. Still, he had to fight to break into the market.

Writing Process

As Max learned during his three-year writing period, the writer's job is to write constantly.

When starting a writing project, he never outlines. His process is more like following a GPS. He likes to begin knowing the beginning, middle, and end. But he allows the story to guide him through every twist.

His writing process also reminds him of when he told original stories to his children. When they asked for a story, he simply began and let the story go where it went.

AUTHOR PROFILE

Today his process is similar to this. But instead of telling the story to a person, Max records it into a tape recorder. It is an abbreviated version of the story, but it is still enough to know the characters, their strengths and weaknesses, the conflict, and the basic plot. From there he transcribes the story and files it away. He never opens the file while writing his first draft. But, inevitably, the end product looks identical to his original transcript.

Ideas for these stories come from any number of aspects of Max's life. From places he has traveled to news stories to church sermons, he observes everyone and everything around him in order to come up with his next novel idea. To him, these ideas are seeds for the books that will grow from them.

In the midst of writing, themes appear and are always set by the plot or main characters. Max never forces a theme into one of his stories. His books mostly focus on the battle between good and evil.

Since he writes for middle-grade readers, he also tries to focus on challenges kids face today. One of his characters may experience events that deepen his character as a boy. Another one may experience or participate in bullying. Through each story, Max attempts to hook young readers through action and to teach a lesson in the midst of it.

A Passion Close to Home

As is often the case, experiences from childhood weave themselves into experiences later in life. Max never liked to read as a young boy, but now his passion is to write books that young boys will enjoy reading. As an adult, he realizes the immense value and potential that reading holds for children. He also recognizes the problem our society faces as more and more boys would rather play video games than read.

When he was involved in producing films for children, he found that girls would watch an adventure or

Getting Boys to Read

Librarians around America are asking the same question: How do they get young boys to read one book, let alone visit the library? Max Elliot Anderson, the author of multiple books geared toward young boys, is deeply passionate about this issue. Drawing from personal experience and trends he has seen throughout the years, Max advises librarians to take multiple steps to encourage boys to read.

He suggests obtaining short stories in novel form. This way young readers can start and finish a story quickly and painlessly.

He advises librarians to stock books that kids like to read. Many church librarians may be tempted to focus on adult books. This alone can discourage young boys from visiting the library. He advises churches actively to combat this current trend because they are in the perfect position to impact young readers.

Librarians can begin a reading tutoring program in order to help those children most at risk. They can encourage fathers in the church to be obvious about reading in front of their children.

Max also suggests creating a presentation to give to adult Sunday-school classes and small groups about the importance of reading. Give it to young and older adults alike, as grandparents can help to influence their grandchildren, just as parents, aunts, and uncles can.

—Kate Berkey

mystery film if the main character was a boy. However, boys were not nearly as interested in the films that starred a girl as the main character. As he moved into the book world, he took this lesson and used it as a template for his stories. Thus both girls and boys enjoy reading his action-packed stories.

Many years have passed since his days as a young boy, but his passion to write remains alive. "Writing is the most fun I've had in my life," Max said.

He loves beginning with a blank file brimming with possibility. The pages fill up after days of hard work. When a book is done, he loves knowing he can make readers laugh, cry, and enjoy his finished product. The only process that comes close to this enjoyment is making a film and watching the audience's reaction for the first time.

"I wouldn't do anything else except, perhaps, make films," Max said.

The Road Ahead

With eight books currently in print and more out of print, Anderson's career is brimming with possibilities. Many of the manuscripts he wrote during the three-year learning period are still waiting to be published. Right now, he finds himself busy with an ongoing series with Elk Lake Publishing. He also spends his time in marketing and promotion of his writing, along with writing a monthly column.

No matter where the future leads him, he is thankful for his father's legacy. Ken loved his books and was young Max's biggest cheerleader. He and his son used to bounce ideas off each other and work on projects together. When Max first started writing, his father predicted that his son would "one day be a multipublished author."

After all these years of ups and
continued on page 16

Get Children Reading Early

by Cindy Grabill

My mother taught me how to read when I was three. That teaching led to a lifelong love of books. Children who read early tend to do better in school and be more successful as adults.

You can help children in your church or school become readers as they learn about God in these series for four- to eight-year-olds. The biographies teach solid values as children read about heroes who use God's power to do their best. Fictional characters who love Jesus show readers how to deal with difficult situations to which they can often relate.

So stock up on these series and promote them to young readers.

THE BERENSTAIN BEARS LIVING LIGHTS

by Stan and Jan Berenstain and Michael Berenstain

Zonderkidz, PB, 32 pages, 20+ titles, \$3.99-\$6.99

These books show young readers how God wants them to live. They include situations in which Brother and Sister Bear learn to be kind, forgive, treat others the way they would like to be treated, and pray earnestly. They learn to play fair and that Sunday school comes before play. Each book opens with an appropriate verse and concludes with activity ideas and questions from Brother and Sister Bear.

These bears may be familiar characters for kids since the Berenstains have been writing about Brother and Sister Bear for the general market since 1962. The simple words and short sentences make these books ideal for children to read independently. The situations are ones to which they can relate and grow from. They answer questions readers might have, including "Why pray before bedtime?" Children will draw closer to Jesus as they learn of His unconditional love.

You can help children in your church or school become readers as they learn about God in these series for four- to eight-year-olds.

CUL-DE-SAC KIDS

by Beverly Lewis

Bethany, PB, 64 pages, 24 titles, \$3.99

Each book in this series centers around a child or family in the Blossom Hill Cul-De-Sac. Abby and Carla realize that God made no mistake when He allowed the Korean adoption agency to send boys instead of girls. Dumford learns hanging out with friends in the neighborhood is more important than playing with his basketball alone. In yet another adventure, the nine children get into a major fight when they try to outdo each other decorating mailboxes.

These books for the upper end of this age level are funny. They include mystery and adventure, yet with a spiritual slant. Among values emphasized are friendship, priorities, and responsibility.

HEROES FOR YOUNG READERS

by Renee Taft Meloche

YWAM, HB, 32 pages, 25 titles, \$6.99

Written in simple rhyme, these books tell of everyday historical heroes whose faith in God allowed them to accomplish great feats for Him. Children will read, for example, of George Müller who housed 10,000 orphans and Eric Liddell whose faith shone when he refused to run Olympic races on Sunday. These characters faced danger, poverty, and the unknown; but

BOOK ROUNDUP

they trusted God who met every need.

These books will inspire both children and parents to love and obey God and consider what they can do for Him. Each book concludes with a one-sentence takeaway message and is made of durable material to survive many checkouts.

MORGAN LOVE

by **Stephanie Perry Moore**

Moody, PB, 100 pages, 5 titles, \$6.99

Morgan, an African-American girl, has a bad attitude. Her new baby brother is taking Mom's attention. She has to deal with problems that Alec, the bully, is causing. She has friendship issues. She even succumbs to peer pressure and joins the others in teasing a special-needs classmate. But her life changes when her mother introduces her to Jesus and she learns to treat others the way He would and to live like Him.

Girls will see themselves in these pages as they deal with similar issues. Moore tells readers about Jesus and weaves geography and English lessons skillfully into the text. New vocabulary words are highlighted in bold. A word-search puzzle and glossary of terms conclude each chapter.

MRS. ROSEY POSEY

by **Robin Jones Gunn**

Zonderkidz, PB, 32 pages, 2 titles, \$3.99

In *Mrs. Rosey Posey and the Fine China Plate*, Natalie can't understand why her parents won't let her go to a particular movie. Her neighbor Mrs. Rosey Posey explains she has been set apart like a clean china plate. That movie would make her dirty inside. In *Mrs. Rosey Posey and the Baby Bird*, Rachel searches for the baby bird missing from its empty nest. Mrs. Rosey Posey explains how God cares for the baby bird and all His creation.

These books contain simple sentences and plots to which children can relate, as well as strong spiritual illus-

trations. Children will learn how special they are to God and of how much He loves all His creation.

PRINCESS PARABLES

by **Jeanna Young & Jacqueline Johnson**

Zonderkidz, HB, 32 pages, 5 titles, \$12.99

Five princess daughters live in a castle with their father. Many of Princess Joy's friends make excuses when she invites them to her birthday party. Princess Charity watches passersby ignore a hurt boy, but she receives a wonderful blessing when she helps him herself. Princess Hope plants a garden, but all the plants except one wither when storms come. Princess Faith is willing to sell all she has to obtain a priceless treasure. Each book ends with "Parable Thoughts" that connect the story with the appropriate parable.

These tales bring parables to life and reinforce spiritual truths, such as God's love, the love He wants us to have for others, and the banquet to which everyone is invited.

PRINCESS TWINS

by **Mona Hodgson**

Zonderkidz, PB, 32 pages, 4 titles, \$3.99

Emma has to have everything just so. Her twin sister, Abby, is more laid back and enjoys nature and friends. Both girls are likable characters and learn lessons about fear, kindness, priorities, and perfection.

These are simple stories for the earliest reader. The underlying messages are conducive to parent-child discussions.

THAT'S NAT!

by **Dandi Daley Mackall**

Zonderkidz, PB, 96 pages, 6 titles, \$2.99-4.99

Natalie 24—her favorite number—is off to kindergarten in a school where there is no garden. She is frustrated by

her inability to read but makes friends quickly and tries to be a good helper. She colors the kitchen, applies stickers to her father's good shoes, and makes grape "omelnats" in the microwave with disastrous results. She learns about surprises, secrets, friendship, and that she can't always be a star.

These books are fast paced and action filled as children try to keep up with an energetic five-year-old. The values Natalie learns apply to readers as well, especially the reality that God loves them no matter what. These books will remind parents that five-year-olds need constant supervision.

WEMMICKS

by **Max Lucado**

Crossway, HB, 32 pages, 6 titles, \$15.99-16.99

Eli the woodcarver created wooden people known as the Wemmicks, including small Punchinello. They train Punchinello to believe he isn't good enough and happiness comes from amassing possessions and working hard. Collectively, they try to outdo one another and individually to accomplish tasks for which they aren't gifted. Each time, Punchinello talks to Eli who replaces these false teachings with eternal truths.

These books include timeless takeaway values applicable to both children and parents. They remind readers, for example, of how special they are to God and of whose they are. They also offer tips on how they can use their gifts to further God's Kingdom.

Cindy Grabill has worked as a public and school librarian and now manages her church's book table, at which she has sold more than 1,000 books.

Dude! Our Library Is Cheap!

by Suzanne Reeves

Editor's note: Permission is granted to print copies of this skit to promote your library.

Approximate running time: two minutes.

(JASON and SHAWN are talking. SHAWN is a stereotypical surfer dude. The role of JASON may be a female with the name changed accordingly, but the role of SHAWN will work better as an adult male.)

JASON: Hey, Shawn, did you check out the church library?

SHAWN: Yeah, man. I remember you telling me about that. I checked it out at the *(give location)*. It's a cool place. Lots of books and other cool stuff. Nice lady to help you out and everything. But I was thinking about it; and, dude, it's a really dumb idea.

JASON: It is?

SHAWN: Yeah, duh! You said they let you take the books for free, right?

JASON: Um, yeah. That's usually the way a library works.

SHAWN: Well *(snickers)*, I didn't wake up on the beach yesterday. This guy is not that stupid.

JASON: What are you talking about?

SHAWN: How is the church supposed to make any money if they give all these books away for free?

JASON: Shawn, the church does not make money on the library books. That is not what it's for.

SHAWN: Well, that's what I'm talking about! Dude, they've got tons of great books in there. They could be selling them. Even better, they should auction them off to the highest bidder. They could make a mint. It's like our very own gold mine sitting within our church walls!

JASON: Libraries don't make money on books, and they don't give them away.

SHAWN: Whaat? Oh, so now they're being stingy with all the awesome stuff in there? That's kinda hypocritical, don't ya think?

JASON: *(Exasperated)* OK, let's start over. The library is free. But they don't *give* the books away; they let you *borrow* them. All you have to do is stop by *(give location and procedure)*, and you get to take the book home. And then you bring it back, so other people can borrow it too.

SHAWN: Ohhhh. I get it. Hey, that gives me an idea. I'm gonna go get a book right now.

JASON: Good. Go borrow a book. You might actually learn something useful.

SHAWN: Dude, I'm not going to read it. That's just crazy talk. I'm going to pretend like I bought it and then give it to my mom. And maybe cuz I'm such a generous guy, she'll let me stay in the basement for another year. *(Gives Jason a slug on the shoulder and runs off shouting.)* I love this church ...

Suzanne Reeves is a freelance writer, play director, and the author of The Christian Chick's Guide to Surviving Divorce.

A Library in Every Church

by Jeanne Gibson

Whether you're trying to convince the board that your church needs a library or you're submitting a budget to operate your library and help it grow, you may hear a number of excuses from board members. Lack of space and lack of someone to be in charge of a library are the major reasons church boards give for not having a church library. Lack of money is the major reason a board gives for not having the library included in the church budget.

None of these excuses are good enough to outweigh the reasons why every church should have a library—and have the church's support of it.

Here are five reasons to use in making your case.

It Is an Evangelistic Tool

Many people testify that they turned to God after reading a Christian book. Providing good Christian literature is a great way to reach out to people who may be looking for answers to many of life's questions. Books can extend the teaching of the church into homes all week and, perhaps, end up being read by other people who do not attend church services.

It Will Help Church Members Save Money

Books are expensive, and many people cannot afford to buy them. But a library offers Christian books for free. Church members who can afford to buy books will be blessed by passing them on to the library, so other people may borrow and read them. And a line item in

the church's budget provides money to buy more books and media.

It Gives Members a Chance to Serve

Many people would like to do something in the church but aren't gifted to teach or lead small groups. Working in the church library gives them a chance to provide a needed service. Helping wash windows on a work day may not be physically possible for seniors and other members, but tending the library might be the perfect job for them.

It Provides Resources for Teachers

Every Sunday-school teacher I know is looking for supplementary material to help them do a better job of teaching. They need books to help them understand the social lives of Bible people, customs of the times, and geography of the area they are teaching about. A church library well stocked with reference material can provide this information.

As a teacher, I have purchased dozens of books over the years with Bible quizzes, ideas for keeping kids inter-

ested in class, and art projects that would be useful to other teachers looking for such material. Donating them to the church library makes them available to everyone.

It Encourages Independent Bible Study

What pastor wouldn't be delighted to know that his congregation was following up his Sunday sermon with individual Bible study at home, using reference books checked out of the church library? Most of us cannot afford entire sets of reference books, atlases, and commentaries and would welcome access to these tools in the church library.

Pastors who update their personal libraries could donate their older commentaries, Bible dictionaries, etc., to the church library. A number of different versions and translations of the Bible would also be valuable for study and comparison.

If your church doesn't have a library, why not start one? It doesn't necessarily have to be a big one. Even a closet with only a few books to start with can be a welcome addition for many people in your church. Before you know it, your library will outgrow that tiny closet and clamor for a room of its own.

Then you can use these five reasons to get a budget or ask for a larger budget to grow more.

*Books are expensive,
and many people
cannot afford
to buy them.*

Jeanne Gibson is a freelance writer and a former middle-school librarian.

User-Friendly Library

by Jeanne Zornes

As I walked into my church library the other day, carrying my fussing, three-month-old grandson in his car seat, I took a deep breath and said, “Yes! This is user-friendly! I can find the book I want and scoot!”

I wish it had been so when the little baby’s daddy was the toddler-in-tow and his baby sister in my arms—and I was desperate for encouragement for new mothers. But our church library was a drab wall of mostly older books on one side of a Sunday-school classroom. Few knew about it or used it.

Then the librarian resigned because of a personal crisis. With nobody else stepping to the plate—you guessed it—I did. What qualified me: I used libraries and loved books. (I’d written two by then.) What disqualified me: ignorance. She gave me a pamphlet of the Dewey numbers for religious subjects and said to call if I had questions.

Over the past three decades, three other librarians have helped grow our library. Each has left this ministry a bit better, resulting in a full room of well-organized books, a computerized card catalog, and child-friendly niches.

If your library is in the “humble beginnings” stage or maybe needs some sprucing, here are five items that made ours user-friendly and five more I’d like to have implemented.

Handy Location

Our library started out in a classroom. When our church built a new sanctuary, the plans included a library room just off the foyer. Hallelujah! But it

never happened. However, the nondescript default location happened to be near restrooms and the church’s multipurpose room. Translation: high traffic. Plus, it was on the main level, great for older folks, mobility-impaired people, or even young moms lugging babies and tugging toddlers.

Posted Filing System

A poster by the door details the main Dewey numbers for religious books. Shelf labels also help direct a reader to the right area.

Accessible Card Catalog

Now computerized, the card catalog is loaded on a desktop computer that’s easy to use via the log-on steps taped to the desk. As I recall the hours I typed title-author-subject cards for the old 3x5 system, never in my greatest Buck Rogers imagination (I’m dating myself) would I have dreamed this possible.

Obvious Checkout and Return.

When I started as librarian, the return box was a desktop wire basket, good for half a dozen books. Needing something bigger, I drew a rough plan for a simple, tall cart that a retired carpenter in the church built. About four feet high (for ease in signing checkout cards while standing), it had an open box in the middle for returns. The current cart has a slotted return box to discourage users from taking books that haven’t been checked back in.

Other user-friendly things I added: a calendar, good pencils, and scrap paper at the checkout.

Kid-Friendly Area

Our library keeps children’s books on lower shelves and encourages kids to enjoy books amidst bright rugs and kid-sized chairs and tables. Colored circle stickers code books by age group: read-to-me, primary, and juniors.

Table for Adults

Located by the commentaries, a table is handy for research. It also serves as a small meeting place.

Of course, there’s nothing like a perpetually-on-duty librarian to keep things spiffy and help people find books. Coming back to the reality of part-time volunteers, here are some other ideas to keep the library user-friendly when the librarian’s not there. They’re not happening yet in my church’s library, but I’d like to see them there.

Smile, Click, Print

Above the checkout area, post a photo of the librarian with name and contact information. Beside it, put an envelope for suggestions or requests.

Designated Drop-Offs

Post the policy for donations in the checkout area, and designate a corner or box where people can leave them. Encourage people to include their names with boxes or sacks for a donation letter for tax purposes.

Signposts for Series

Help readers choose fiction series to their tastes by taping or tacking 3x5

summary cards to shelves. For example: “Snelling/Red River series—Norwegian immigrants of early 1900s.”

End-Cap Thinking

Take a tip from grocery stores by featuring extra copies of popular books or books mentioned in sermons in a prominent spot. If they get people through the library door, hooray.

That’s what the library’s about, anyway: helping and encouraging people with the wisdom found in books and media.

Jeanne Zornes is a widely published author whose books include Spiritual Spandex for the Outstretched Soul. She writes a devotional blog at jeannezornes.blogspot.com.

Reluctant Readers

continued from page 10

downs, his father was right. Max’s books are selling, and he is impacting middle-grade readers through the thing he hated most as a kid: books.

Kate Berkey is a professional writing major at Taylor University and a freelance writer for WBCL Radio, The Aboite Independent, and Church Libraries.

People who say they don’t have time to read simply don’t want to.

—Julie Rugg

The love of books is a love which requires neither justification, apology, nor defense.

—J. A. Langford

Feedback Tip

When I became librarian, I discovered rather quickly that I could not read all the books I was unsure about before I put them in our library. To solve this dilemma, I finally asked some strong Christians—both teens and adults—to read novels and tell me about them. I have a 14-year-old boy who reads a lot and has good training in the Lord, but he does not express himself well.

Then I hit on the idea of a small sheet of paper with three questions to answer. Now I put the sheet in the books I give to my adult readers too. Here are the questions:

1. Was there a Christian influence? Was it strong or weak? Did people rely on their faith?
2. Was the book exciting, or did it drag?
3. Was there anything about the book that shouldn’t be in a church library?

With these questions, I get the kind of feedback I need, and I don’t feel guilty about not reading every book.

—Candace Betts, librarian,
Wellspring Baptist Fellowship,
Bolivar, Mo.

Humor

Unforeseen Expenses

Being a church librarian hones organizational and people skills and maybe builds character with a few trials.

When I was librarian, I wanted to keep the library as clutter-free as possible. So when boxes of donations flooded in, I dragged them home to process. As mom of two preschoolers, there was no doing it at the church building unless I wanted to invite insanity.

My “work table” was the table in our eat-in kitchen. At mealtime, I shifted the boxes to the tops of the nearby washer and dryer.

One day my old washer refused to work. With laundry piles reproducing like rabbits, I reluctantly called a repair person. He came and punched a button, and the washer roared to life. Apparently, in stacking boxes on the washer, I’d pushed one of the selection buttons in only halfway, causing the washer to malfunction.

He wrote a bill for his service call; and I ruefully wrote a check for it, thinking all the time, *How many books could this have bought?*

—Jeanne Zornes, writer

Librarians are the coolest people out there doing the hardest job out there on the frontlines. And every time I get to encounter or work with librarians, I’m always impressed by their sheer awesomeness.

—Neil Gaiman

BOOK REVIEWS

Bible & Theology

EXPLORING CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY: The Church, Spiritual Growth, and the End Times

by Nathan D. Holsteen & Michael J. Svigel

Bethany, 978-0-7642-1129-4, PB, 253 pages, \$16.99

Unlike other theology books, the authors of this one single out key Bible passages for each of the three doctrines they cover. They include a list of key biblical passages to master, what Christian scholars have said about the doctrines throughout history, facts never to forget, recommendations for the readers' libraries, and a glossary of terms for those who haven't read much in the way of theology.

Holsteen and Svigel, both theology professors at Dallas Theological Seminary, are also the general editors for the other three volumes. There are all kinds of useful things in this book. But if you're looking for systematic theology, the authors are weak. All they do is state what the selected passages mean. Church libraries would be much better served by Millard J. Erickson's *Christian Theology*. LRK

GOD IN THE WHIRLWIND: How the Holy-love of God Reorients Our World

by David F. Wells

Crossway, 978-1-4335-3131-6, HB, 266 pages, \$24.99

God is big. To keep Him manageable, people gravitate toward their favorite characteristic of God, leaving the opposite off. This is often seen when discussing God's love or holiness. Wells believes we should talk about God's holy-love, a joining of these two seemingly opposite characteristics. Understanding it can fix many modern problems in the church. He defines

love and holiness, and then shows how both play into salvation, sanctification, and worship.

This theological book, which contains many Scripture passages, is not light reading. Although it is from a Reformed Theology stance, many readers can gain from it. JW

ILLUSTRATED BIBLE SURVEY: An Introduction

by Ed Hindson & Elmer L. Towns

B&H, 978-1-4336-8221-6, HB, 607 pages, \$49.99

Large books with lots of words scare people. The Bible, a large book with lots of words, has intimidated people for years. But Hindson and Towns summarized the Bible in this handy reference tool with lots of pictures, maps, sidebars, and plenty of white space (maybe too much for a \$50 book).

Far from a commentary, each book of the Bible has a brief summary, historical background, tips for further reading, as well as study questions. A few chapters explain how the Bible was formed and how to read it, introduce the Old and New Testaments, and provide a brief sketch of the history between the Testaments. This book seems best suited for a Bible novice. JW

PERFECT ENDING: Why Your Eternal Future Matters Today

by Robert Jeffress

Worthy, 978-1-61795-183-1, PB, 240 pages, \$14.99

Prolific author and megachurch pastor Jeffress has tackled another controversial topic. Even among evangelical theologians there is a plethora of positions on Bible prophecy. Jeffress clearly, and with biblical foundation, outlines his viewpoint and then relates it to believers' lifestyles today.

Jeffress can be seen regularly on TV talk shows where he articulates a usually unpopular view in a nonconfrontational, understandable way. In this book, however, he goes the extra step to call out other popular Christian writ-

ers, such as Rob Bell, on what he sees as a misinterpretation of Scripture.

Jeffress added study questions to the back of the book, which makes it a good choice for personal or group study. Recommended for any library. JAW

THE STORYTELLING GOD: Seeing the Glory of Jesus in His Parables
by Jared C. Wilson

Crossway, 978-1-4335-3668-7, PB, 187 pages, \$14.99

Parable is a hard word to define. On top of that, one of the reasons Jesus said He spoke in parables was to obscure His meaning from people who did not have ears to hear. Parables are, thus, a source of confusion for many.

Wilson brings his years of pastoral ministry with him to help people understand Jesus' parables, as well as parables from the Old Testament. He is determined to look for a full understanding while not pressing interpretation into goofiness, as some do. Wilson brings a Covenant and Calvinist theology with him through this journey, which will annoy people who find such things annoying. JW

THEOLOGY QUESTIONS EVERYONE ASKS: Christian Faith in Plain Language

edited by Gary M. Burge & David Lauber

InterVarsity, 978-0-8308-4044-1, PB, 202 pages, \$20

Some professors from Wheaton College noticed they were being asked similar questions by incoming students. So they compiled a list of questions (e.g., Who is God? Who is Jesus? Who are human beings?) and answered them in separate chapters written by different professors.

Their answers follow a Reformed/Covenant theology and rely on church creeds from the Nicene Creed to statements by the World Council of Churches. There is also a smattering of liberal theology (e.g., "If God is male,

BOOK REVIEWS

then the male is God”) to be had as well. Not recommended for evangelical libraries. JW

Biography & Memoir

A LIFE OF MIRACLES

by Don Schulze

Tyndale, 978-1-1438321-7, PB, 268 pages, \$14.99

God is a hard boss. His pay isn't great, but you can't beat the perks: miracles. When Schulze dedicated his life to God, he had no idea where this decision would lead him, nor how God would prove Himself on endless occasions.

This autobiographical book chronicles the life and events of Schulze, an evangelist who has traveled everywhere from California to Thailand, all the while relying on God's benevolence. Counting on the power of prayer and the divine calling from God for ministry, he tells of trusting in God in the everyday and larger-than-life events, such as the weather, financial issues, and healing.

Readers looking to stretch their faith will appreciate *A Life of Miracles* if they take it a bit at a time. While it is a stunning and realistic story of how far a heaping of obedience and faith can take a person, the chapters chronicle every miracle twice or more, which makes the book drag. A summary and Bible verse cap off the end of each chapter. NNP

RICH IN LOVE: When God Rescues Messy People

by Irene Garcia with Lissa Halls Johnson

Cook, 978-1-4347-0688-1, PB, 272 pages, \$14.99

Married at 16 and pregnant, what was the likelihood of a fairy-tale life

together for Irene and Domingo Garcia? Add in alcoholism and abuse, and the answer is no hope. Reading their story changes that answer to one word: God. *Rich in Love* is the story of God at work in the lives of two people who thought their marriage was over.

Sharing in a personal way, Garcia allows us to see the changes God brought into their lives and their future as foster parents. In addition, we have a close look at loving orphans through the Garcias' many foster children who enter their lives and hearts. Highly recommended. JAA

RHINESTONE JESUS

by Kristen Welch

Tyndale, 978-1-4143-8942-4, PB, 253 pages, \$15.99

Remember the slogan, "Just say no!"? This biography is about just saying yes. Welch candidly describes the ups and downs of her life during school years, marriage, and motherhood. Then she took a trip to the slums of Africa through Compassion International, came face-to-face with unbelievable poverty, and saw peace and joy shining in the eyes of a young Christian boy in those slums.

The experience caused her to desperately turn to Jesus and say yes to the journey God has for her and her family. Welch reveals the struggles, heartache, joy, peace, risks, and love available for anyone who wants the deeper, authentic, and beautiful life God calls us to as Christians.

Profoundly moving, this adventure is a must-read for not only moms but everyone. Each chapter closes with helpful questions and challenges for introspection and inspiration. The author urges everyone to say yes to God and realize Jesus is enough. She is a blogger and founder of Mercy House, a maternity home in Africa. Highly recommended for moms groups and church and school libraries. LGM

RUTH AND BILLY GRAHAM: The Legacy of a Couple

by Hanspeter Nüesch

Baker, 978-0-8010-1670-7, HB, 378 pages, \$19.99

What were Ruth and Billy Graham really like together? This beautiful story of their life's work gives us an inside look at their relationship and insights for making Christ first in our lives, whether married or single.

The author has done an excellent job of portraying the couple in their joint work for the Lord. Billy, the public evangelist, and Ruth, the family anchor, worked together through the years as a team. Nüesch includes many photos and personal stories of the couple. In addition, he has done a fine job of research that allows him to chronicle the years and examine aspects of authenticity, partnership, integrity, and more. Highly recommended. JAA

A SHORT WALK TO THE EDGE OF LIFE

by Scott Hubbart

WaterBrook, 978-1-6014-2604-8, PB, 176 pages, \$14.99

Fulfilling a bucket list fantasy becomes a desperate struggle for survival when Hubbart realizes he's stranded in a desolate part of the Andes mountains. Through a series of heart-crushing events and timely miracles, he learns he must submit to God's will and trust His plan at any cost and in every circumstance.

This book differs from typical survival stories in that it focuses on God's grace in a seemingly hopeless situation. The story itself is similar to those seen on the popular TV show *I Shouldn't Be Alive*. Pairing meticulous attention to detail with his gift for storytelling, this Air Force veteran shares his astounding encounter as a testimony to God's physical and spiritual salvation. It's a heartening reminder that God is always faithful to those who trust in Him—even in the wastelands. MM

BOOK REVIEWS

Children

Picture Books

BEDTIME PRAYERS THAT END WITH A HUG

by **Stephen Elkins**

Tyndale, 978-1-4143-8354-5, HB, 168 pages, \$14.99

This book presents 52 topics that young children are concerned about (e.g., “Going to the Doctor,” “Visiting the Sick,” “Grandma and Grampa,” “Telling the Truth”), a short Scripture verse that focuses on that theme or topic, a “Snuggle Time Thought,” a “Bedtime Bible Thought” to comfort a child before going to sleep, and then a short read-aloud prayer. Each reading lesson then ends with a hug from Mom, Dad, grandparents, or babysitter.

Colorful drawings show children in biblical attire but doing modern-day activities. Most of the writing is reduced to one- and two-syllable words for beginning readers. Often phrases are set to rhyme. This book is a great way to get young ones ready to go to sleep each night, although it will take 52 nights to finish the book. DEH

BINK AND SLINKY’S ARK ADVENTURE

by **Donna Arlynn Frisinger**

Standard, 978-0-7847-3688-3, HB, 32 pages, \$12.99

Bink and Slinky, two snails, receive a message from God, telling them to go to Noah’s ark. As they leave family and friends to travel through rough terrain, they meet interesting animals along the way. When they are about to give up, they come across the ark as it begins to rain. Safe and sound, the two enjoy God’s blessings and protection.

This story is told in rhyming verses, and it features a recurring, short song about trusting in God even when the end of a journey is not yet in view. Bible verses are also provided. The drawings

of cartoon animals are engaging; the colors are bright and captivating. Children ages three and older will enjoy hearing parents and grandparents read (and sing) this story. It’s a new way of looking at the ark adventure from the perspective of some of the smallest creatures to come on board. AMW

Juvenile

THE ETHER: Vero Rising

Vero Rising #1

by **Laurice Molinari**

Zonderkidz, 978-0-310-73555-7, HB, 368 pages, \$16.99

Readers are given a glimpse into the world of angels and demons in this tale of adventure. Vero Leland, a 12-year-old boy with a passion for flight, discovers he’s a guardian angel after saving a classmate’s life. Vero is literally thrown into an ancient battle of good versus evil as he struggles to accept his calling and finally finds his wings.

Molinari provides a stimulating plot alongside a fascinating view of angelic duties. The action is well-balanced and exciting. Although character development feels a bit rushed, motivations and dialogue remain within the realm of belief. Potential readers should be aware that Jewish theology is prevalent throughout the story. This book is a good fit for older kids and young teens, especially boys. KLK

Christian Living

FOUND: A Story of Questions, Grace & Everyday Prayer

by **Micha Boyett**

Worthy, 978-1-61795-216-6, PB, 256 pages, \$14.99

Few of us are honest enough to

share the private moments of our spiritual walks with other people. Boyett is an exception. She echoes the lament of many mothers when she confesses in the first sentence of the Preface, “My first year of motherhood I lost prayer.”

Boyett seeks an answer to her dilemma in the early Christian monastic disciplines, and she takes the reader along on her journey. She uses monks’ ritual prayer times—Vigils, Lauds, Prime, etc.—as a framework for the book. Study questions would have been a welcome addition. Recommended for all libraries. JAW

THE GOD-FIRST LIFE: Uncomplicate Your Life God’s Way

by **Stovall Weems**

Zondervan, 978-0-310-32009-8, PB, 172 pages, \$15.99

Is God your first priority? This is the central message Weems discusses in his treatment of a Christian life lived with God at the helm. He moves through an overview of what happens when we place God first in our lives and what we need to do following such a transformational decision. He covers such topics as family, career, citizenship, church, business, politics, and individual freedom.

The subject matter is important, and Weems’s style is simple and engaging. Nonetheless, he sometimes employs loose theology (a de-emphasis on disciplines and godly limitations) in his treatment of what Christians need to do for full engagement in a life with God. Despite these potentially alienating miscues, this book remains a decent case study for people looking for help in reordering their lives around God and experiencing the joy and blessing that follows. MDP

GOD IS JUST NOT FAIR: Finding Hope When Life Doesn’t Make Sense

by **Jennifer Rothschild**

Zondervan, 978-0-310-33858-1, PB, 240 pages, \$15.99

God sometimes seems to play dirty.

BOOK REVIEWS

When it comes to the whispers of your heart, He's all ears. But what about during trials? What about the whimpers of your heart? How can He ignore those? As with Jacob, sometimes God wrestles with us not to hurt us but to cause us to cling to Him. "The only reason God wrestles with His children is to bless them," explained Rothschild, who has gone round after round with God about healing for her blindness. The miracle isn't always the outcome. It's the struggle, the clinging to God.

Rothschild expertly shares the whimpers of her heart in each precise, thought-provoking chapter, delving into understanding God's grace when life doesn't make sense. Bundled verses and personal stories are packaged into short and gracious chapters. The combination of hope and humor makes this book ideal for women struggling with depression or the woes life brings. NNP

THE HOPE QUOTIENT: Measure It. Raise It. You'll Never Be the Same.
by Ray Johnston
Nelson, 978-0-5291-0115-0, HB, 224 pages, \$19.99

Though seemingly earnest, Johnston has brought little of worth to Christian literature. He stresses the necessity of hope and the peril of discouragement. He prescribes seven actions he believes will raise the reader's "Hope Quotient," resulting in success and happiness.

Unfortunately, the book is poorly written and hazardously simplistic. Johnston frequently uses tired, generic anecdotes; and every suggestion is a bland staple of self-help literature. The assessment test meant to accompany the book is never even mentioned after chapter four. Johnston also comes close to stepping on multiple doctrinal land mines, which will likely alienate many readers. With an unfocused premise and unsteady prose, *The Hope Quotient* is unlikely to add value to any church library. NKA

LIVING IN CHRIST'S PRESENCE: Final Words on Heaven and the Kingdom of God

by Dallas Willard & John Ortberg
InterVarsity, 978-0-8308-3584-3, HB, 191 pages, \$20

This book is taken from talks Willard and Ortberg gave during the 2013 Dallas Willard Center Knowing Christ Today Conference. Four presentations by Willard and three by Ortberg are followed by Q & A or a "conversation" between the two men, with Ortberg facilitating. Topics include the Trinity, God's Kingdom, life transformation, and more. The book also includes "Conversation Guide" by Gary W. Moon.

Not recommended. Books on this topic by John MacArthur, Randy Alcorn, Joni Eareckson Tada, and R. C. Sproul are more helpful for church libraries. JAA

QUESTIONS GOD ASKS: Unlocking the Wisdom of Eternity

by Israel Wayne
Master Books, 978-0-89221-721-2, PB, 144 pages, \$11.99

Does God even need to ask questions if He knows everything? Wayne confidently tackles that paradoxical question. God questioned Adam and Eve, Abraham and Sarah, Moses, and Joshua. Therefore, Wayne uses their experiences to find eternal wisdom.

Thankfully, Wayne never cheapens God's omniscience but demonstrates that God's inquiries are for our self-reflection. The structure of the book is reminiscent of most devotionals. Wayne uses personal stories, anecdotes, and biblical events to encourage moral actions or to motivate spiritual responses. Unfortunately, his moral conclusions are often unoriginal and something most hearers have encountered in standard sermons and self-help books. However, the book moves forward because of the central concept: God asking questions. It simplifies complex concepts and offers practical

applications. Consequently, it can be appropriate for a large audience, even those with little biblical knowledge. TP

TEN Words of Life for an Addicted, Compulsive, Cynical, Divided and Worn-Out Culture

by Sean Gladding
InterVarsity, 978-0-8308-3656-7, PB, 264 pages, \$16

Are the Ten Commandments applicable today? In *Ten*, eclectic acquaintances meet over coffee to discuss this question. It's a unique blend of theology masked as fiction, but it doesn't quite work. Why? Because *Ten's* characters aren't its only eclectic feature. Portions are entertaining but often poorly written. Characters and dialogue provide good examples but feel contrived. Helpful context is given for these commandments, but facts are sometimes twisted to suit personal opinions. There are theological problems, and crude humor risks offending conservative readers.

However, there's much to make *Ten* worthwhile: challenging issues and essential, often-overlooked truths. The method of analyzing these commandments as basic elements would be good for new Christians, except readers need biblical background to sort truth from opinion. Although it possesses excellent ideas, I cannot recommend this book to anyone except discerning readers. Study questions are included. LW

Church

RADICAL JESUS: A Graphic History of Faith

edited by Paul Buhle
Herald Press, 978-0-8361-9621-4, PB, 128 pages, \$24.99

Looking for a different way to read about the history of the Christian faith? Look no further than *Radical Jesus*, a graphic novel of stories ranging from

BOOK REVIEWS

Jesus' life to the faith of martyrs. A modern and at times edgy telling of history, this book attempts to shake up uninteresting facts and portray them in a way that will hit home to this generation.

This book is unique. One of the first of its kind, it struggles at times with consistency of story and purpose. Readers might look for more humor in the book because of its similarity to comics, but they will not find much of that. It's split into three sections and different graphic styles from black and white sketches to fully painted illustrations. Readers who are used to more serious graphic novels will be able to connect with this one. KSI

Contemporary Issues

JUSTICE AWAKENING: How You and Your Church Can Help End Human Trafficking
by Eddie Byun
InterVarsity, 978-0-8308-4419-7, PB, 160 pages, \$13

When we think about slavery, we tend to treat it as a matter of history. Pastor and activist Byun challenges this perception, showing that there are millions of men, women, and children being trafficked throughout the world, both for sexual and labor slavery. Yet the church has been largely silent on this issue.

Byun asserts that it is our duty as believers to fight for the rights of the oppressed, and he gives practical advice on how churches can help curtail human trafficking via petitions, protests, letters to politicians, financial support for relief organizations like International Justice Mission, prayer, websites, books, sermons, and expanding public awareness.

Whereas the audience of this book seems to be pastors or other church leaders, it can also serve as a helpful and valuable resource for individuals or groups wondering what they can do to make a difference. Byun's instruction can be applied to almost any group interested in being of aid to the oppressed. However, his information is particularly informative to a body of believers striving to be witnesses of Christ in their own communities and around the world. TJS

Evangelism

Apologetics

IS REALITY SECULAR?: Testing the Assumptions of Four Global Worldviews
by Mary Poplin
InterVarsity, 978-0-8308-4406-7, PB, 319 pages, \$18

This is the best book I've read since 2002 when I read Philip Jenkins's *The Next Christendom*. Poplin teaches at the Claremont Graduate University, and she's gone from believing in material naturalism (Marxism); secular humanism; pantheism (the New Age movement, Zen, transcendental meditation); and, finally, Judeo-Christian theism and evangelicalism. She's a C. S. Lewis for this generation.

Poplin confesses as a professor that TV shows, nightly news, books, magazines, schools, and universities of the 1960s and 1970s were all resolutely secular. And she advocated secularism from the classroom—until she reluctantly became a believer in Christ when she was in her 40s after finding all the secular models boring and unsatisfying. In Part One she explores the question of whether reality is secular. And she devotes several chapters in each of the four other parts to the four global

worldviews. This is a readable book. I recommend it highly to all church libraries. LRK

Evangelism

FAITH IS LIKE SKYDIVING: And Other Memorable Images for Dialogue with Seekers and Skeptics
by Rick Mattson
InterVarsity, 978-0-8308-4411-1, PB, 208 pages, \$15

We are saved by faith, but Christianity makes sense too. Thus apologist Mattson explains his evangelism strategies. Careful not to make the book an instruction manual for making converts, Mattson reminds readers that God is responsible for salvation. But we should be as prepared as possible to answer questions, especially ones posed from atheists and skeptics. Fearlessly tackling difficult questions (e.g., Why should we trust the Bible? Why does God allow suffering?), Mattson builds a logical case for Christianity.

He focuses on one common objection to Christianity at a time, referring readers to related chapters on complex issues. He also includes chapter summaries and lists of resources for further reading. Although Mattson uses personal experience and reason for his arguments, this strongly evangelical book is also firmly rooted in Scripture. Even if readers disagree with Mattson on one or two points, his book is a valuable resource for anyone interested in strong analogies to explain difficult concepts in Christianity. EMW

I BEG TO DIFFER: Navigating Difficult Conversations with Truth and Love
by Tim Muehlhoff
InterVarsity, 978-0-8308-4416-6, PB, 219 pages, \$15

Life is full of difficult conversations. How should a Christian handle them? Communications professor Muehlhoff meets this challenge. Combining his

BOOK REVIEWS

knowledge of communication theory and relational wisdom with teachings from Scripture, he offers a step-by-step guide to handling difficult conversations with tact, wit, patience, and insight. To add substance to theory, he includes personal experiences in which he has put these strategies into practice. The final section offers three specific examples of proper communication during a disagreement. The book also includes a notes section with the sources of his extensive research.

This book prepares all Christians to face many of the blunt questions that unbelievers pose to them. It's a good handbook for survival methods during evangelistic outreach work. LVO

INCARNATE: The Body of Christ in an Age of Disengagement
by Michael Frost
InterVarsity, 978-0-8308-4417-3, PB, 237 pages, \$16

Most people wouldn't think zombie movies, the Internet, and short-term missions have anything in common. But Frost, founder of the Tinsley Institute, says they are part of culture's "excarnate" lifestyle. Symptoms of excarnate living include shallow relationships and a focus on self, rather than service to others, causing problems within individuals, society, and the body of Christ. Frost recommends service-focused, relationship-rich living as an antidote.

While the book suffers from a lack of organization, Frost's extensive citations of classic theologians and contemporary philosophers keeps it somewhat interesting. The overall thesis is timely. Those who are dualistic and view their Christianity as a mere belief rather than a lifestyle may find it a challenging counterargument. However, some of Frost's points are far-fetched, irrelevant, or poorly explained, such as discounting social media, claiming that modern relationships without a face-to-face component are "illegitimate." Because of its ex-

treme views and complex philosophical arguments, this would not be a vital book for the average church library. HW

JOY FOR THE WORLD: How Christianity Lost Its Cultural Influence and Can Begin Rebuilding It
by Greg Forster
Crossway, 978-1-4335-3800-1, PB, 320 pages \$18.99

Barely 30 minutes of watching TV is all that's necessary to confirm that our culture has strayed from its Judeo-Christian roots. Midgame entertainment has gone from a Bob Hope comedy routine and marching band to a musical-costume malfunction. Forster, who holds a Ph.D. from Yale, says it's not too late to influence our steadily deteriorating culture.

When Forster suggests using "the joy of God" to rebuild our culture, he is not speaking of an emotion. Rather, he refers to the miracle of a holistic Christian life, a work of the Holy Spirit. Using the framework of the familiar Christmas carol, "Joy to the World," he outlines how believers can proactively practice their faith in human civilization. He gives the reader four ways to accomplish this, two of which are perseverance and encouragement.

Not a quick, easy read for a summer afternoon, these 300-plus pages are chockfull of biblically based strategies to change our culture. An excellent choice for a church library. JAW

**You may have tangible wealth untold.
Caskets of jewels and coffers of gold.
Richer than I you can never be—
I had a mother who read to me.**
—Strickland Gillilan

Family

Marriage

THE GOOD NEWS ABOUT MARRIAGE
by Shaunti Feldhahn with Tally Whitehead
Multnomah, 978-1-6014-2562-1, HB, 192 pages, \$15.99

For once, here's some great news about marriages. Eight years of investigative research revealed the truth that marriages are happier, stronger, and staying together at a much higher percentage rate than originally thought. The text shows the vast amount of misinformation about divorce rates in general, why churchgoers have lower divorce rates, what men and women need to know about each other, and why remarriages are more successful than we think.

Positive surprises are in store for readers of this well-written volume. Feldhahn, a Harvard-educated social researcher, uses research and personal illustrations to disclose encouraging news and much needed information for those contemplating marriage and all who are now wed. Twenty-nine pages of research notes authenticate the findings. Recommended for church libraries and couples study. LGM

Parenting

I NEED SOME HELP HERE!: Hope for When Your Kids Don't Go According to Plan
by Kathi Lipp
Revell, 978-0-8007-2078-0, PB, 170 pages, \$12.99

Has your child ever done something that embarrassed you? Really? Welcome to Lipp's world and her book to help all moms survive. This book is a practical and encouraging look at parenting imperfect kids. Lipp under-

BOOK REVIEWS

stands that our expectations as parents are often shattered when our kids make poor choices, lack character, run from God, or are different.

She deals with each of these problems and more with transparent examples from her own parenting experiences and those of other moms. Pertinent Scripture passages grace the pages. Most chapters end with three helpful sections: "Practical Steps," "Prayers for My Child," and "Prayers for Myself." Recommended for church libraries that need more books on parenting. JAA

PRAYING FOR BOYS: Asking God for the Things They Need Most
by Brooke McGlothlin
Bethany, 978-0-7642-1143-0, PB, 189 pages, \$12.99

Are you raising sons and aren't quite sure what to do next? McGlothlin knows that praying for her boys can give peace, and God's Word can give wisdom for this parenting time. *Praying for Boys* contains much wisdom about raising boys and what they need to become men of God. The first section discusses parenting boys, their needs, prayer, single-mom parenting, and how to use the book. The next 21 chapters are specific things to pray relating to obedience, heart change, salvation, honor, wisdom, integrity, etc.

Reflection questions for parents and a 21-day prayer guide for small groups are included. McGlothlin is cofounder of the online community for mothers of boys, the MOB Society, and author of several books for moms. Highly recommended for church libraries. JAA

Singles

DATING LIKE AIRPLANES: Why Just Fall in Love When You Can Fly?
by Caleb Breakey
Harvest House, 978-0-7369-5544-7, PB, 171 pages, \$11.99

Everybody wants to fall in love. Yet

falling implies a lack of control, safety, and direction, all things crucial to a healthy Christian relationship. Breakey advises teens and young adults to embrace a countercultural perspective on dating relationships, namely, date with wisdom and strength. He builds on biblical principles and common sense to emphasize that true love is primarily selfless and loving. Jesus is the first step to loving others.

Breakey draws predominantly from personal experiences with his wife during their dating relationship. Although he includes occasional Q & A sessions with other couples, this book lacks diversity in its real-life illustrations. Nevertheless, he maintains a positive message throughout and encourages youth to intentionally build relationships that are purposeful, self-aware, and Christ-centered. AS

Fiction

ALL MY BELONGINGS
by Cynthia Ruchti
Abingdon, 978-1-4267-4972-8, PB, 334 pages, \$14.99

Becca is the daughter of a convicted serial murderer, so she attempts to change her life and identity with the help of her friend Geneva. Becca gets a job caring for the dying mother of Isaac Hughes, a young businessman. But when Isaac's mother dies suddenly and unexpectedly, Becca becomes the prime suspect for her murder. Knowing she will have to prove her innocence, Becca turns sleuth and eventually leads the police to the real killer. During this time of crisis and chaos, Isaac and Becca fall in love.

The story only includes a handful of characters; and with shallow backstories and limited development, they remain one-dimensional. The writing is overflowing with clichéd metaphors, the timeline of the story becomes con-

fusing by midpoint, and the plot twists are mainly unnecessary. Young female readers may find this of some entertainment for the romance elements, but more mature readers will consider it lacking. KEG

A CAPTAIN FOR LAURA ROSE
by Stephanie Grace Whitson
FaithWords, 978-1-4555-2905-6, PB, 336 pages, \$15

Laura has lost everyone she loves; and now she is also about to lose her home, a steamboat called the Laura Rose. Her only hope is to become a licensed pilot; but, as a woman living in 1863, that is easier said than done.

Whitson has written a well-crafted novel with a strong female character who grows throughout the story, as does the cast of great supporting characters. Laura's journey will take readers on both an emotional and a spiritual journey as she looks to God for the first time. Whitson does an excellent job of incorporating spiritual themes of trust, obedience, faith, love, and sacrifice with Bible verses without getting too preachy (which could lead to interesting topics for book groups to discuss). This story is mainly geared toward young women, but older teens who admire self-confident females will find this book captivating as well. Mature themes are present but not graphically described. TLB

CLOAK OF THE LIGHT
Wars of the Realm #1
by Chuck Black
Multnomah, 978-1-60142-502-7, PB, 320 pages, \$11.99

By presenting an engaging story with intriguing characters, Black provides a unique perspective on spiritual battles. He tells about spiritual warfare elements in a sci-fi speculative way and adds new perspective to spiritual struggles Christians face every day. Because the main character is an agnostic, the plot approaches religious issues in a way that a wider audience

BOOK REVIEWS

than only Christians can appreciate and evaluate.

The story is in line with biblical principles, and Black acknowledged the speculative parts as such. A study guide in the back with questions and Bible references allows the reader to go more in-depth with the concepts in the book. While the book has some darker themes, such as a school shooting, younger adults looking for well-written fiction will appreciate it. RSO

ONE PERFECT SPRING

by Irene Hannon

Revell, 978-0-800-72267-8, PB, 384, \$14.99

Everything around Claire falls apart: her home, her marriage, her neighbor's health. As a single mother, she is determined not to fall in love with a workaholic who resembles her ex-husband. However, Claire's neighbor has other plans for her young friend's love life.

Though this is a love story, limited time is spent in romantic situations. Instead, Hannon focuses on developing the characters, so the romance is superficial. The book is not groundbreaking, but adult women will relate to the characters' insecurities and genuine struggles to find where God fits in their lives, especially in pragmatic matters ranging from finances to child care and from prayer time to work obligations. Some readers may not agree with the book's leniency regarding a divorced woman dating. The writing style is uncomplicated, allowing a challenging life to be understood and empathized with. KMB

OUT OF THE RUINS

The Golden Gate Chronicles #1

by Karen Barnett

Abingdon, 978-1-4267-8057-8, PB, 325 pages, \$14.99

Caught in the midst of the great San Francisco earthquake of 1906 while also coping with the recent death of her sister, Abby Fischer struggles with her

faith and her budding romance with Dr. Robert King. Angry at God because of her sister's early death, Abby finally sees the Lord at work through the small miracles and faith of those around her in the aftermath of the quake. People share what they have to eat, nurse one another, pray, and begin to rebuild.

Barnett skillfully weaves a believable story, based on historical research, that will resonate with folks who have found themselves doubting God or facing tragedy. Her characters balance myriad strengths and weaknesses that make them three-dimensional and genuine in trying to cope with physical, spiritual, and emotional challenges. Women who enjoy a strong romance story set in a challenging era of history will find this book to be a page-turner. LH

THE PELICAN BRIDE

Gulf Coast Chronicles #1

by Beth White

Revell, 978-0-8007-2197-8, PB, 368 pages, \$14.99

Geneviève Gaillain and her sister Aimée escape religious persecution in France in 1704 by traveling to the New World as mail-order brides. After meeting brothers Tristen and Marc-Antoine Lanier, the young women encounter confusion, Indians, traitors, and love as they hide their Reformed belief in God in a Catholic colony. The complex characters and compelling dialogue vivifies the sisters' struggles of adjusting to the New World while sorting through the scars of their pasts.

White beautifully shapes her characters to reveal struggles between the French and Native Americans. She reveals the conflict of the Reformation in Europe while emphasizing that true faith in God is not always easy. This book is a great choice for a church library because it shows God's faithfulness in the best and worst situations while reminding Christians they are forgiven. Women especially will relate to the main characters. LK

SERIES UPDATES

Alaskan Courage

by Dani Pettrey

Bethany, 978-0-7642-1195-9, \$14.99

#4 *Silenced*

The Cate Kinkaid Files

by Lorena McCourtney

Revell, 978-0-8007-2160-2, \$14.99

#3 *Death Takes a Ride*

The Gregory Sisters

by Lorna Seilstad

Revell, 978-0-8007-2182-4, \$14.99

#2 *While Love Stirs*

Heroines Behind the Lines:
Civil War

by Jocelyn Green

Moody, 978-0-8024-0578-4, \$14.99

#3 *Yankee in Atlanta*

The Outlaw Chronicles

by Ted Dekker

Worthy, 978-1-61795-275-3, \$14.99

Hacker

A Place to Call Home

by Cathleen Armstrong

Revell, 978-0-8007-2247-0, \$13.99

#2 *One More Last Chance*

Port Aster Secrets

by Sandra Orchard

Revell, 978-0-8007-2223-4, \$14.99

#2 *Blind Trust*

Southern Crimes

by Lisa Harris

Revell, 978-0-8007-2191-6, \$14.99

#2 *Fatal Exchange*

BOOK REVIEWS

THE SENTINELS OF ANDERSONVILLE

by Tracy Groot

Tyndale, 978-1-4143-5948-9, HB, 326 pages, \$24.99

For Yankee POWs, the initial greeting was, "Welcome to Andersonville, the place where God has died." Groot illustrates the horrors and injustices surrounding Andersonville, a Confederate prison camp, through the lives of a Union prisoner, his compassionate captor, and the prison doctor's family.

Like a modernized version of *A Tale of Two Cities*, this Civil War saga shows Yankee soldiers thinking of their northern homes while being imprisoned in a southern town. Combining historical research and religious convictions, it produces a gripping plot that examines the power of deep spiritual truths.

Groot's use of authentic terminology (military, medical, political) can be challenging at times, but it adds an element of era-sensitive accuracy. Readers old enough to appreciate the belief systems of both the North and South will benefit from the Confederate perspective of this book, relating it to the grander spiritual theme of mercy for one's enemies. JCG

SONGS OF THE SHENANDOAH

Heirs of Ireland #1

by Michael K. Reynolds

B&H, 978-1-4336-7821-9, PB, 431 pages, \$14.99

When war divides the Hanley siblings' country, they hold onto their values and people they love. This novel tells the story of four Irish immigrants during the Civil War. Clare, along with her husband and sister, struggle to sustain their newspaper while representing their beliefs, which don't always match popular opinion. Meanwhile, Clare's brother Seamus moves to Taylorsville, Va., where he must face the person and future he had been running from. Another brother, Davin, also confronts the decisions of his past in pursuit of an unfamiliar future.

Reynolds brings to life the divisions of the Civil War through the eyes of the Hanley family. However, these views only differ moderately, diminishing the full picture of that war's political, social, and religious divisions. This book remains a powerful, enjoyable story that reflects the effects of war, not only on a country but also on families and individuals. The characters are relatable, as are their experiences with God. Since spiritual aspects are understated, some emphasis is taken off God, while making said experiences and consequences both realistic and often lamentable. Discussion questions make it appropriate for a book club. PAL

THROUGH THE DEEP WATERS

by Kim Vogel Sawyer

WaterBrook, 978-0-307-73129-6, PB, 352 pages, \$14.99

Dinah Hubley, unwanted child of an infamous Chicago prostitute, dreams of leaving the brothel to work as one of Mr. Harvey's waitresses in the West. Being only 17, she, instead, must fill a chambermaid position at Mr. Harvey's Clifton Hotel in Florence, Kan. Dinah tries to focus on her future as she attends church with her roommate and starts to fall for the humble chicken farmer Amos Ackerman. But she is continuously dragged back into her shameful past whenever she remembers how she earned her money to get to Kansas in the first place.

This book contains a chilling sexual assault scene, but it serves its purpose of showing why Dinah struggles to believe that anyone, even God, could love her. Her journey illustrates Christ's redemptive love. Although the dialogue isn't always realistic, the messages about forgiveness and compassion are. DMM

THE TURNING

by Davis Bunn

Moody, 978-0-8024-1168-6, PB, 296 pages, \$14.99

John Jacobs never wanted to lead a religious movement, but when Trent Cooper creates a new cult among the youth of America with the slogan "Hope Is Dead," he has no choice. A select group of Christians, connected by Providence, come together at the headquarters of Barrett Ministries and elect Jacobs, a convicted felon and truck-depot manager, to lead their counterattack. Together, they battle through adverse situations caused by malicious media executives in order to spread their message of hope.

This plot rotates around one major theme: The media are actively trying to destroy the church. This point is explicitly shown through Bunn's well-scripted dialogue. However, while demonstrating this point through fiction is an intriguing concept, Bunn's execution is somewhat lacking. The plot is underdeveloped in regard to character backstory and personal motivation, and cultural aspects of social media as a counterforce are given no credence. Even speculative fiction needs to have elements of credibility, and that's where this story suffers. ECD

WHERE COURAGE CALLS

by Janette Oke & Laurel Oke Logan

Bethany, 978-0-7642-1231-4, PB, 329 pages, \$14.99

As hard as it was for Beth Thatcher to leave her comfortable life and loving family, even harder struggles were yet ahead for her. Willing to accept a call to become a teacher in a wilderness area, she encounters trouble on her long train ride and even worse confrontations when she reaches her destination. Being pushed out of one's comfort zone is one thing, but having all the trappings of home taken from you while being expected to nurture, teach, and discipline a full class of multiaged youngsters seems too de-

BOOK REVIEWS

manding a task for anyone so young. Nevertheless, by showing faith in what she believes is a call from God to serve the less fortunate, Beth tapes a leap of faith and, indeed, goes where courage calls.

Oke has done it again—creating a story that keeps readers turning pages while illustrating what it is like to accept the Lord's will. She presents an image of beautiful faith and humility in the likable character of Beth. AAT

Finances

BROKE: What Financial Desperation Revealed About God's Abundance
by Caryn Rivadeneira
InterVarsity, 978-0-8308-4311-4, PB, 176 pages, \$16

According to some TV preachers, a burgeoning bank account and soaring IRA are signs of God's blessing. Author and speaker Rivadeneira has an alternate view based on her family's experience.

In an open, chatty style, she shares her spiritual journey and her family's simultaneous financial free fall. Her conclusion is that God's abundance flourishes even when bank-account balances dwindle. A timely addition to any church library. JAW

Men

THE MAKING OF A MAN: How Men and Boys Honor God and Live with Integrity
by Tim Brown with James Lund Nelson, 978-084-994-757-5, HB, 221 pages, \$22.99

Godly manhood gives young men the strength to make touchdowns both on and off of the field. Each of the 20 short chapters contains a story about Brown's NFL career and his childhood.

Brown ties each of these stories into a short lesson about living a godly life in regard to honesty, discipline, focus, dependability, and morality.

The lessons often create strong connections between Bible verses and stories of Brown's life. Occasionally, the stories wander a bit. But they provide insights into the world of a sports hero and his opinions on respecting authority, demonstrating faith in daily life, and maintaining sexual purity. Brown describes, in a positive light, his family's corporal punishment, which is considered harsh or unacceptable in today's society. This is an excellent book for young men, especially those interested in football. TW

Teens

MY AMISH BOYFRIEND
by Melody Carlson
Revell, 978-0-8007-2226-5, PB, 265 pages, \$9.99

Shannon is an ambitious 16-year-old girl who wants a job, car, and tattoo for the summer. Her plans are altered as she travels to Ohio with her mother, who is fighting a serious illness. Shannon meets Amish family members she didn't know existed. As she lives among them, she begins to fall in love with an Amish young man and contemplates living an Amish life.

Carlson shows readers young love, the strength of family, and God's ability to work miracles. This story is light fiction; but it offers lessons in acceptance, tolerance, modesty, faith, and cultural diversity. Its one weakness is Shannon's radical fluctuation at times from naïve teenager to insightful young adult. Instead of a steady cycle of maturation, she vacillates in emotions and behavior, making her hard to relate to. She and readers learn a great deal about Amish beliefs and customs, so reading this book is en-

lightening in that sense. It will appeal to older teens and young adults, primarily females. LMB

ONE REALM BEYOND
Realm Walkers Trilogy #1
by Donita K. Paul
Zondervan, 978-0-310-73580-9, PB, 416 pages, \$12.99

The day finally arrives when Cantor D'Ahma can advance from young trainee to dimension-traveling Realm Walker. Before that happens, he must find a dragon to become his partner. But the only one he's able to find is a klutzy dragon who manages to set himself on fire with his own breath. As Cantor's search continues, he discovers that the Realm Walkers Guild has become corrupt. And he must team up with the klutzy dragon, as well as a fellow quirky initiate, in order to expose the corruption.

The story starts off strong with three fantastic lead characters, an interesting approach to dragon lore, and a world with limitless possibilities. Unfortunately, it then flags. The fantasy world is not described in any unique detail, and the book lacks an overarching plot by which the main characters become changed. Additionally, the scenes are slow-paced, the dialogue is stilted, and the subplots are all conveniently and coincidentally resolved. There is some enjoyable comedy, but no depth when compared to fantasy writers like J.R.R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis. BB

SPOKEN FOR: Embracing Who You Are and Whose You Are
by Robin Jones Gunn & Alyssa Joy Bethke
Multnomah, 978-1-601-42597-3, PB, 224 pages, \$13.99

Acne, awkwardness, and arguments. It can be hard for teenage girls to feel wanted. *Spoken For* explains that God wants them and has claimed them. Gunn, a teen novelist, and Bethke, a mentor to college girls, use personal experiences of their own and

BOOK REVIEWS

of young women they have counseled to compare the pursuit of love and God's pursuit of His loved ones.

Unfortunately, their comical engagement stories aren't easily applicable to the lives of young teenagers, and older ones will be tempted to skim the book because the solutions and answers provided are rather stock and the language is out-of-date for college girls. Gunn is a good storyteller, so the anecdotes are entertaining even if their lessons are not original or unique. Additionally, for females who did not grow up in church, biblical references can be supportive and enlightening. The book is written in a story-telling fashion, not as a textbook, so it is reader friendly, even if the content is somewhat shallow. KMB

STAND STRONG: You Can Overcome Bullying (and Other Stuff That Keeps You Down)

by Nick Vujicic

WaterBrook, 978-0-30773-093-0, HB, 224 pages, \$17.99

Bullying is a social epidemic that sweeps across the world and takes each new generation captive. Vujicic offers testimonials and insights into his life as both a victim of and an advocate against bullying. He shares his bully-related struggles as someone born without limbs and how he overcame those struggles with God's power, in addition to giving advice to those in the midst of similar trials.

For the most part, especially for his target audience of teens, Vujicic hits dead-center on every point he makes. He gives solid, scripturally sound advice on how to deal with bullying situations; and none of the stories or suggestions are forced. At times, however, he is overly repetitive in the message, reemphasizing points previously established. I recommend this book wholeheartedly to anyone doing counseling related to bullying and to adolescents who experience these struggles firsthand. JB

Women

HEART WIDE OPEN

by Shellie Rushing Tomlinson

WaterBrook, 978-0-307-73193-7, PB, 197 pages, \$14.99

Do you yearn for a deeper relationship with Jesus but are unsure how to get past a lifeless faith? Award-winning blogger and speaker Tomlinson says, "Run hard after Jesus today, tomorrow, and the day after that, and you can discover the delights of an increasingly close relationship with Him."

Attending church all her life, Tomlinson did her checklist of Christian duties until one day she realized she was lacking something. Trading her mediocre faith for a passionate relationship with Jesus, she wrote this book in hopes the reader will catch fire of her newfound joy.

She addresses general questions hesitant Christians ask related to faith, prayer, witnessing, and a personal testimony and ends with a prayer to resolve any insecurity. Tomlinson offers personal anecdotes that tie in with her key points. Recommended for women who are seeking to deepen their relationship with Christ or to accept Him as Savior. KS

MOM SEEKS GOD: Practicing Grace in the Chaos

by Julia Roller

Abingdon, 978-1-4267-7102-6, PB, 179 pages, \$15.99

What a charming and insightful testimonial about one year in the life of a young woman who aspired to practice spiritual disciplines in the midst of being a busy mom, wife, and writer! Roller discusses 10 spiritual disciplines she attempted and learned through: prayer, fellowship, submission, study, simplicity, silence, worship, fasting, service, and celebration. The concluding chapter discusses the realization and beneficence of God's grace. We can

Reviewers

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Tedd Williamson, writer

BOOK REVIEWS

learn so much spiritually from the experience of motherhood.

This text is an adventure in learning and an easy read. Moms, and even dads, can empathize with Roller's daily life with a toddler and one on the way. She included lots of personal illustrations, as well as stories written by friends who experienced God while practicing spiritual disciplines. Parents can relate to this mom's journal, which is written in a candid, conversational style and sprinkled with humor. Recommended for the church library and moms study groups. LGM

RECLAIMING EVE: The Identity and Calling of Women in the Kingdom of God

by **Suzanne Burden, et al**

Beacon Hill, 978-0-8341-3226-9, PB, 174 pages, \$14.99

The Hebrew word *ezer* describes Eve in Genesis (also used to describe God) and means agent of rescue and a strong power. In Genesis 1:26-27, God described male and female as His image-bearers. Then in verse 28, He instructed

men and women to oversee, use, and care for the world. The authors encourage women to reclaim the real Eve of Eden, set free again by Christ's death on the cross, and partner together with our brothers to build God's Kingdom. Women can be what God created them to be: beautiful reflections of Christ.

It is truly a blessing to read this book that reveals the truth of God's mission in creating Eve. The author's research and learning about the *ezer*, blessed alliance, and sisterhood makes this scripturally sound volume an inspirational revelation. It's well-written and full of personal illustrations. The three authors are well educated in theological studies and counseling; one also served 13 years as a missionary. Recommended for the church library and women's study groups. LGM

WHY YOUR WEIRDNESS IS WONDERFUL

by **Laurie Wallin**

Abingdon, 978-1-4267-7200-9, PB, 208 pages, \$15.99

Living with feminine quirks can be

a struggle; but weirdness is a blessing, according to Wallin. "Obscure" traits should be considered special, God-given strengths instead of weaknesses. Unique traits come in so many forms that the author could not explain without using examples from personal experience, historical research, and biblical content to demonstrate that everyone has quirky strengths, even Jesus.

Although vague in defining the difference between quirks and weaknesses, this book explains how God sees humans as being individualistic. A woman's size, personality, artistic talents, and intelligence make her unique. Each chapter concludes with reflection questions for the reader to evaluate the traits that make her special. I recommend this book to women, mostly moms, as a help in answering children's questions about Mom's quirks—and theirs too. RAS

MUSIC REVIEW

Southern Gospel

A NEW SEASON

by **Matthew Hagee**

Difference Media, 8-19113-01022-2, \$11.99

Southern-gospel fans and TV viewers will recognize Matthew as the son

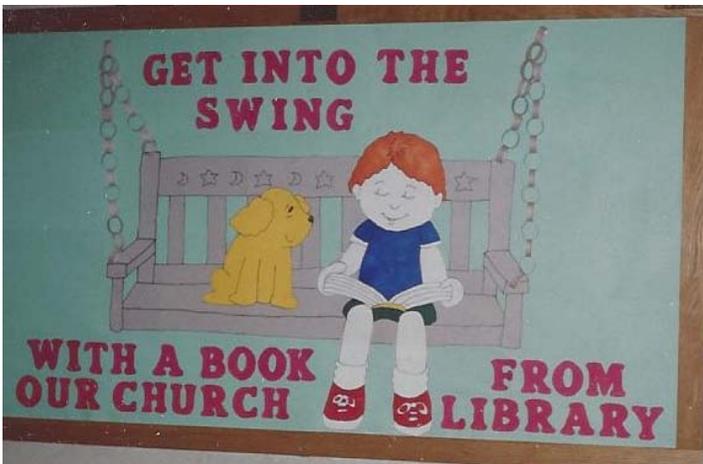
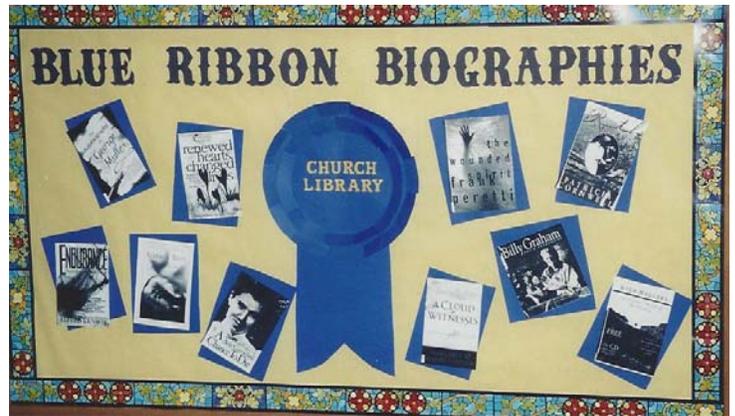
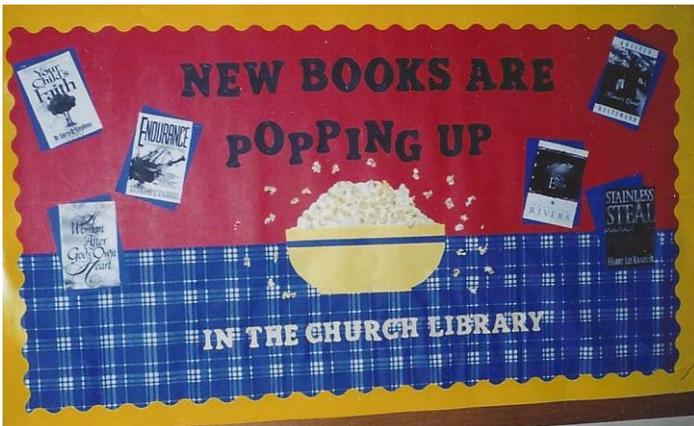
of preacher-author John Hagee. Matthew is a pastor, author, and executive producer-host of his dad's TV ministry. He's also a strong tenor and part of the Canton Junction quartet. In this solo project, Matthew draws on his heritage to present fresh takes on new songs and classics.

I loved the classics, including "Sweet, Sweet Spirit" (hadn't heard that since the 80s), "Until Then," and "Had It Not Been." Joining Matthew

on "The Day He Wore My Crown" are two members of the country group Restless Heart. Matthew also wrote or cowrote new songs for the project, including "Count It Joy," which he calls a "sermon in a song," and a pop-culture-inspired tribute to Christ titled "My Nomination," set as an awards show. This is a fun project, a blend of songs, an enjoyable listen. J-AI

Bulletin Boards

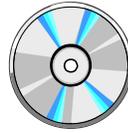
by Maureen G. Birkett



Helps for Your Library

Library Software Solutions by Debra Stombres—\$6

Library software reviews from
Winter 2010-11 *Church Libraries*.

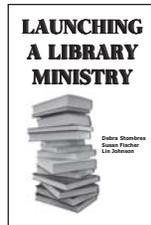


CDs

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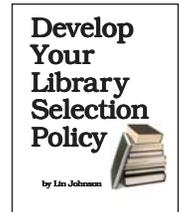
Launching a Library Ministry by Debra Stombres, Susan Fischer, & Lin Johnson—\$7

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mission statement, staffing your library,
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selecting books and other media, and
processing and classifying those materials.



Develop Your Selection Policy by Lin Johnson—\$3

This pamphlet will help you determine
what to put in your library and what to
leave out and to tailor a written policy for
your library.



Church Library Classification System by William B. Haburn—\$13

Dewey Decimal system adapted
for church libraries.

Book/pamphlet prices include shipping & handling in U.S.
Email mary@eclalibraries.org for extra shipping costs to other countries.

Check the titles you want, fill in your contact information, and send this form with a check or money order payable in U.S. funds to ECLA. Mail to ECLA, P.O. Box 353, Glen Ellyn, IL 60138-0353.

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