



*Five Star Reviewed Books & MORE
by The Reading Mom*

**A Monthly Resource Guide for
Faith-Based Inspirational Fiction, Non-
Fiction and Family-Friendly Resources
for *WOMEN* of All Faiths**

MAY 2009

A Note from The Reading Mom:

Happy Mother's Day, Dear Reading Friends!!!

One of the most rewarding things about motherhood is being able to snuggle with our children while reading together. So in this issue of Five Star Reviewed Books & MORE by The Reading Mom newsletter, I'm excited to share some of the most child friendly books with you!

Thank you for letting me be a part of your life!!! And thank you from the bottom of my heart for telling the women in your life about this monthly resource guide and inviting them to subscribe. In addition to subscribing requests, I am happy to get your comments, suggestions and questions, so email me at thereadingmom@gmail.com. Your kind words and support mean so much to me.

The other day, my husband announced that our computer had a virus and crashed. My first thought was immense relief that I hadn't been the last person on the computer (strange things always seem to happen when I'm doing my thing on it!)! Then I was frustrated because I depend on the computer for writing out my reviews, grading my daughter's schoolwork, emailing, etc. and now I was stuck. But God used my sick and out-of-commission computer to remind me yet again that nothing on earth is dependable. Only God is. So as it says in Colossians 3, "Set your eyes on things above and not on things on the earth..." I'm ready for the rapture, how about you?!

This Memorial Day remember our troops and thank God for those who've sacrificed their lives so we can have the freedoms we enjoy today. But true freedom only comes from the TRUTH—Jesus Christ, God's Son and our Savior!!! I leave you with my favorite verse found in Jeremiah 29:11 from God to you. Read it. Believe it. Embrace it. Share it.

Blessings, Hugs & Happy Reading!!!

Susan Choy Lee aka The Reading Mom™

Jer. 29:11

www.readingmom.net (under construction)

This e-newsletter is sent to you by request only. Your friends can be added to the list by emailing a subscription request at thereadingmom@gmail.com with SUBSCRIBE in the subject line!

Fiction Reviews

A Cut Above by Ginny Aiken is book three in the Shop-Til-U-Drop Collection (what woman can resist this series with a name like that?!?) and Andie Adams finds a new house, flies to Colombia to check into some fabulous emeralds and falls in love. Sounds simple, doesn't it? Well, you'll find out that it's anything but simple when you read about the next adventure Andie, Max and the hilarious duo Aunt Weeby and Miss Mona fall into!

www.ginnyaikenwrites.com

A Vote of Confidence by Robin Lee Hatcher is a book from the Sisters of Bethlehem Springs series. Robin's gift of storytelling takes you back in time to 1915 where readers will gain insight to what it was like being a woman in a "man's world." Guinevere Arlington is prompted by her twin sister, Cleo to run for mayor and things begin to look brighter when the local newspaper agrees to back her candidacy until... You'll definitely want to find out yourself what happens in this historical romance! www.robinleehatcher.com

Coming Across Jordan by Mabel Elizabeth Singletary is a story with an urban setting geared towards children ages 8-12. As book two in the Also Ran series, I found this book to be a great story on friendship. It's inspiring and it teaches an important lesson for all of us about mentorship.

Dark Pursuit by Brandilyn Collins is a heart-stopping suspense novel that will creep you out! Yet this is a beautiful story of love and sacrifice. The end has a twist that you'd never see coming (I know I didn't!), so buckle up and prepare for some Seatbelt Suspense® from Brandilyn! www.brandilyncollins.com

How Sweet It Is by Alice J. Wisler tells the story of one women's journey from pain and bitterness to healing and forgiveness. When Deena Livingston moves to North Carolina to claim the cabin from Grandpa Ernest, she stumbles upon a surprise stipulation. I think you'll enjoy this heart-warming story that will touch you emotionally. www.alicewisler.com

It's a Green Thing by Melody Carlson is Maya #2 in the wildly popular Diary of a Teenage Girl series. If you're looking for some reading material for that special teenager in your life, then look no further. This series is incredibly relevant for teenage readers and the readers guide at the back of the book makes this a perfect series to read in a small group setting. Maya Stark is a new Christian and boy, does she have a ton of questions for Caitlin (her mentor and youthgroup leader's wife) about Christians, forgiveness, boyfriend issues, etc. Plus, Maya is devoted to sharing her green tips even though it may take her out of her comfort zone... www.melodycarlson.com

Michal by Jill Eileen Smith begins The Wives of King David series taking you back to the humble beginnings of King David. This is a really interesting look at what life could have been like for King Saul and his royal family and one shepherd boy named David. I can't wait to share the next book in this series with you! www.jilleileensmith.com

On a Someday by Roxanne Henke takes you into the lives of the Westin family—Jim, Claire and Drew. I really enjoy Henke's style of writing because she takes you into each of her character's thoughts and feelings and gives you some insight from their perspective as they

Fiction Reviews cont.

go through a life moment together. When an unexpected crisis springs on the family, each member of the family has to make a decision about the future...immediately! Find out more!

www.roxannehenke.com

Rachel's Secret by BJ Hoff is the first book in the trilogy, *The Riverhaven Years*. You can always count on Hoff to bring you unforgettable characters and this time it's no different with Rachel Brenneman and her family, riverboat captain Jeremiah Grant and others. This beautiful love story about forbidden love will have you rootin' for all the right characters!

www.bjhoff.com

Rose House by Tina Ann Forkner is a suspenseful mystery that surrounds Lillian Diamon involving a tragic accident that leaves her alone, a painting and a lovely cottage. Forkner does an impressive job of bringing her characters and their surroundings to life. You can almost smell those roses and feel Lillian's grief, but most of all, you'll feel the hope these characters experience. You'll love the epilogue! www.tinaforkner.com

Shadows of Colossus by T.L. Higley is book one in *A Seven Wonders Novel* series. Set in 227 B.C., Tessa of Delos is known as "the marble Athena," but can she find true freedom through her plan? Reading this story will transport you to Ancient Greece where the quest for complete power brings danger, intrigue and even murder. www.tlhigley.com

City of the Dead by T.L. Higley is the second book in the series, *A Seven Wonders Novel*. This story is set in Egypt where one man's legacy will be preserved in stone for ages to come—the Great Pyramid of Giza. But, there's murder, a dark secret and very little time for Grand Vizier Heminu, the pyramid's chief architect and cousin to Khufu, Pharaoh of Egypt as their closest friends start dying off... www.tlhigley.com

Shepherd's Fall by W.L. Dyson is a romantic suspense that is full of intrigue, action and unexpected outcomes! This is book one in *The Prodigal Recovery Series* and readers who have siblings will enjoy reading a story filled with sibling dynamics in here. I was totally caught by surprise by the ending, so enjoy this suspenseful read! Be looking for my future review on the next book in this series, *Shepherd's Run*. www.wandadyson.com

Take One by Karen Kingbury is the first book in her series, *Above the Line*. One of Karen's gift in her storytelling is to seamlessly weave in characters from her other series. The Baxter's return to this story as well as a few other recognizable characters from the *Sunrise* series. Now, we'll get to take a journey and follow the unfinished story of Bailey and Cody... It's another winning series from Karen and you'll once again fall in love with her old and new characters you meet in these pages! www.karenkingbury.com

Who Made You A Princess? by Shelley Adina is *An All About Us Novel* for ages 13 and up. This teen series is successful because of the relevant issues high-school girls face such as fitting in, fashion, relationships and faith. When Shani learns about her family's history with Prince Rashid al Amir and the risks of the hard choices before her, she has nowhere to turn to, but upwards. This likeable series is one of my favorite young adult reads!

www.shelleyadina.com

Non-Fiction Reviews

Beauty by God™ by Shelly Ballestero (inspirational beauty coach, make-up artist, beauty expert for CBN.com, etc.) contains inside-out secrets for every woman. You'll find beauty facts (did you know that fats and soda [including diet soda!] contribute to aging?!?), information on skincare products, beauty tips on makeup, skin care, hairstyles and clothing, but most of all, Ballestero points out God's truth and insights about true beauty.

www.shellyballestero.com

Connections Bible for preteens ages 8-12 is filled with 125 stories from the Bible along with advice and comments from real teens that will challenge your preteens to connect deeper with God. And even though this Bible has been around since '04, I think it'll be a great devotional book idea for your preteen this summer!

Dealing with Dad by Susan Besze Wallace with Monica Reed, MD is part of The New Mom's Guides Series encouraging you not to neglect your husband! You'll learn about fighting fair, ideas for staying connected (even when your spouse is on the road frequently!) and you'll get an understanding of how new dads feel. The "Looking Inward" questions are great, so don't skip over them!

Finding Your Own Mothering Style by Susan Besze Wallace with Monica Reed, MD is also part of The New Mom's Guides Series which are filled with practical (the Traveling with Baby tips are great!) and easy to read tips for the new mom. You'll laugh (you'll hear from other moms, too!) and be encouraged as you find your own approach to bringing up your child.

Living on Baby Time is another book from The New Mom's Guides Series by the same authors. New moms will love the advice on comforting crying babies, practical tips (pg. 34 is great!!!) and more in this fun and down to earth series on being a new mom. It's not about being supermom, but about recognizing your limits and reprioritizing. Enjoy this journey!!!

Don't Panic MORE Dinners in the Freezer by Susie Martinez, Vanda Howell and Bonnie Garcia is just what you need to simplify your life and save money feeding your family! The beauty of cooking once a week or once a month is that you can do it with your friends and it makes your day less stressful as you have one less thing to think about! The Chicken Cordon Bleu looks easy enough to make for this domestically challenged mom (page 131), so get cooking!

Mama's Got a Fake I.D. by Caryn Dahlstrand Rivadeneira helps moms reclaim the person God made us to be! Look at this book as a practical guide to reveal the REAL YOU behind all that mom. In my opinion, you can probably use this for a mom's group because of the questions posted at the end of every chapter which helps foster great discussions.

www.carynrivadeneira.com

New Every Morning by Mel Cheatham, MD is a devotional journey (you'll need a pen because this is a devotional with plenty of space to journal!) exploring nice topics central to our lives as believers. Dr. Cheatham shares his experiences in medical relief work in war-torn and developing countries and he spotlights others in the medical field who share his passion for medical missions.

Real Solutions for Busy Moms by Kathy Ireland is your guide to success and sanity! In this book, you'll find solutions for financial planning (I love her Money Solutions Checklist on

Non-Fiction Reviews cont.

page 35!) to having a healthy home. Every chapter has a Solutions Checklist, great tips and ideas (even recipes!) and is written in an easy to read format with a problem presented and a solution given. www.kathyireland.com

Spilt Milk: Devotions for Moms by Linda Vujnov has funny stories and down to earth biblical insights that will encourage any busy mom. You'll find sixty short devotionals (what busy mom can't appreciate that, right?!?) with a little scripture verse to memorize to any fun tune you want! www.lindavujnov.com

The Between Pocket Bible is a Bible geared for girls! It has a special devotional section for girls ages 8 to 12 by Vicki Courtney with special colored and eye catching graphics. I love the look of this girly pink leathered Bible with floral designs embossed on the cover! This makes a beautiful gift idea for girls!

The Love Dare by Stephen Kendrick and Alex Kendrick with Lawrence Kimbrough (featured in the hit movie *FireProof*) is a 40-day challenge for husbands and wives to understand and practice unconditional love. The Love Dare journey contains three important elements: First, you'll find a unique aspect of love discussed. Second, you'll be give a specific dare to do for your spouse. Last, you will be given journal space to record your progress towards demonstrating genuine love. www.lovedarebook.com

Turn Up the Heat by Dr. Kevin Leman is a couple's guide to sexual intimacy written in an easy to read Q&A format. As usual, Dr. Leman's trademark hilarious wit and humor will keep you laughing out loud (you've got to read his introduction because only Dr. Leman can get away with the things he says!!!) which is why he's always one of my favorite authors to interview! www.lemanbooksandvideos.com

What Does the Bible Say About That by Carolyn Larsen is an alphabetical guide on topics ranging from clothes to money for ages 8-12! This fun and preteen user friendly book will give facts, answer questions and has a section for doing something practical related to the topic. Children will learn that God's Word is very relevant to every aspect of our lives. I love this book!!! www.carolynlarsen.com

What Jesus Said by Stormie Omartian is a purse sized book that's great to have around. This topical guide to the Words of Christ covers topics from adultery to worship. I love that every word Jesus spoke that is recorded in the Bible can be found in this little book under specific categories! www.stormieomartian.com

Working Mom's 411 by Michelle LaRowe is a tremendous resource guide for mother's who are juggling motherhood, a career away from home and managing their own home. You'll find tips on everything from choosing childcare, streamlining housework (the stock up tip on pg. 163 is what I do and it works!!!), meal planning and more! I love the Q & A found throughout the book and Michelle's Super Solutions (A to Z tips on common dilemmas)! www.michellelarowe.com

Family Friendly Resource Reviews

AGES 1 & UP:

Bible for Babies by Laura Derico is part of the Read Together series (it's very interactive!) where **Blue** is for you, **Orange** for your baby and **Green** is to do together. You'll find 20 rhyming stories with little touch-and-say activities along with short easy prayers for ages 0-2!

Touch-and-See Bible is level 2 in The NLT™ Story Bible Series that will provide toddlers with sensory exploration (textures to touch and see—I love the soft flannel on baby Jesus), toddler proof board pages (!) and interactive learning (age appropriate language in the stories for little minds to understand easily) with Bible stories specifically selected for ages 1 – 2.

AGES 2 & UP:

Bible for Toddlers written by Laura Derico is part of the interactive Read Together series that's color coded. **Blue** is for you, **Orange** for your toddler and **Green** to do together! There are 40 Bible stories, some easy act-it-out motions your toddler can do, easy questions to answer and simple prayers. I love this little Bible and so will your toddler!!!

Bob the Builder: Let's Build the Beach DVD has five (never before seen on tv) episodes where Bob and his Can-Do Crew work hard together to complete Bobland Bay! Children will meet two new members of the crew and enjoy two bonus additional episodes in featuring Fireman Sam™ and Fifi and the Flowertots™!

Lift And Look series are wonderful foam board books featuring the following titles: Jesus Loves Me, Creation, Daniel, Noah's Ark, Bible Animals and Nativity. These delightfully brightly colored books have pop out removable foam images that are perfect for tiny little fingers to lift up and look at the pictures behind it! It's like a puzzle book that your little ones will enjoy for hours on end!!!

HIT Favorites: Playtime Pals DVD contains your preschoolers' favorite characters such as Thomas & Friends™ (you realize how amazing animation can be once you see those dazzling fireworks!), Bob the Builder™, Fifi and the Flowertots™ (I love how she turns her garden into a beach!), Kipper™ (what's not to love about Kipper and his friends?!?) and more! This collection contains six exciting adventures that run for approximately 62 minutes.

AGES 3 & UP:

Flap-and-Tab Bible is a Bible storybook (level 3 in the NLT™ Story Bible Series) that's perfect and full of surprises for your preschoolers! The Flap-and-Tab Bible will provide flaps for interactive learning and hand-eye coordination, tabs to build early reference skills along with 15 Bible stories and more! What a great way to get your children hooked on God at an early age!!!

God's Palette™ series: Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue and Purple by Charlie Stewart have amazing illustrations and facts about each animal or insect that go with the colors. Each book in this series has board book pages, bright colors and easy little facts that your children ages 3-7 will absorb immediately! Children will learn about exotic creatures from God's amazing color collection!

Family Friendly Resource Reviews cont.

The House in the Middle of Town by Crystal Bowman teaches children the lesson found in Mark 13:31 about loving our neighbors as ourselves. Young children will learn the importance of helping others and blessing our neighbors! I love Crystal's rhyming style of writing (my nephews were HUGE fans!)!!! www.crystalbowman.com

AGES 4 & UP:

Gigi: God's Little Princess® There's a Princess in Me by Sheila Walsh is my favorite book in the Gigi series!!! The simple message and scripture verses combined with the delightful illustrations remind girls everywhere that God sees the princess in them no matter what! www.sheilawalsh.com

Hermie & Friends™: Skeeter and the Mystery of the Lost Mosquito Treasure DVD teaches children that God has made everyone unique found in the lesson taught in Psalm 139:13-14. What a great way to teach children how special they are through Hermie and his friends! Don't forget to watch the cartoon short, "Hermie Had a Little Lamb" (Hermie in a blond wig is hysterical!) and take advantage of all the great bonus material found in this DVD!

How Noah Knew What To Do by Karen Moore has the coolest squishy gel-pack on the front cover!!! Although this book is geared for young children, there's a message for all of us, too. See, Noah wasn't a shipbuilder by trade nor did he have any prior knowledge about rain and floods, but he *listened, obeyed* and *trusted* God. So, don't be afraid to try something new because if God is guiding you, He will see you through.

Read Together Bible by Bonnie Bruno & Carol Reinsma features 70 easy-to read Bible stories for ages 4-7 in this interactive Read Together series. There are color codes to indicate where one read (**blue**) and then the other one reads (**orange**) and then the **green** words are read by both readers. This can be read with a parent, older sibling or another caregiver adult and it makes reading so much fun!

Strawberry Shortcake Berry Big Journeys DVD has the cutest stories in this DVD adventure. In "Strawberry's Big Journey", Strawberry Shortcake along with Angel Cake, Rainbow and their new friend (a true jack-of-all trades!) Banana Candy enjoy a road trip they will never forget. Plus, the lesson of having a positive attitude overcoming obstacles is a great discussion you can have with your children. Then, in "Around the Berry Big World", Strawberry Shortcake competes in a challenge that reunites her with friends from all around the world! These delightful adventures will be fun for you and your girls.

FAMILY (GENERAL):

Train Master DVD is a wonderful family film (especially if you have train fans in your family!) from a first time director (impressive work) with a great lesson about respecting one another. When five children get stuck in a runaway train, you'll get caught up in the adrenalin rush as each attempt to rescue them fails. Look for this film in stores May 12th.

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