

A gentle warning to those interested in this book report: I am not a normal reader in a few ways... I really park myself in Juvenile Fiction and sprinkle it with Adult Non-Fiction as interest arises. Part of this is because I'm a homeschooler. I read to find good books for my kids (ages 8-14), and to discover good read alouds for us as a family.

One thing I have found over the years is that Juvenile Fiction still, for the most part, contains truth, kindness, excitement, and attempts (if it's a good author) to teach goodness. I find it hard to find well-written, clean Fiction for adults that isn't a romance (I truly would love for you to give me a list of great books if you know any!). If I'm reading Adult Fiction, it's a classic- like Jane Austen, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, or others. But for the most part, I live in the Children's section at the library, where I find classics and contemporaries who "scriptweave", as my son says, beautifully.

So here's my list of 12 books, one for each month, for you try this year:

1. **Tramp for the Lord** by Corrie ten Boom- truly a beautiful story of life after WW2 and how the Lord used her horrific story (read that in **The Hiding Place**) for His glory. Corrie shows how we need to take the Lord at His word. If He says it, we can trust it. It was a refreshing read for January. Also great reads by Corrie that I enjoyed this year are: **Amazing Love: True Stories of the Power of Forgiveness** and **In my Father's House: The Years Before the Hiding Place** (Adult Non-Fiction)
2. **A Place to Hang the Moon** by Kate Albus- also set in WW2, this fiction is the story of 3 orphaned siblings going through the difficulties of England's shipping children into the countryside during wartime. The three show the deep need that children have for a mother and father, but also the beauty of family as they care for one another. (Juvenile Fiction- great read aloud for ages 8+)
3. **The God of the Garden: Thoughts on Creation, Culture, and the Kingdom** by Andrew Peterson- This was an interesting read. Our family really enjoys Andrew's music and children's fiction (the Wingfeather Saga is a family favorite). Yet it was interesting to hear how sin and depression have been a struggle for him, and how community and being in God's creation have brought measures of healing over time. And I agree with him where he has a tangent about the US need for what the UK has- public trails through farmland, which allow you to walk through beauty from one town to another. Having had the blessing of going to Scotland this past year, that is a wonderful thing to experience and I agree with him that I think we'd walk more as a society if that was an option. (Adult Non-Fiction)
4. **The Seven Wonders of Sassafras Springs** by Betty Birney- this was a sweet story that I think we can all learn from- enjoying the place where God has you. This fictional story follows Eben McAllister, who deeply desires to leave the boredom of his small, rural town of Sassafras Springs. His father, after hearing of Eben's desire to travel to the 7 wonders of the Ancient World and his complaints about their towns, challenges Eben to find 7 wonders in the town they live in. Often we are so full of wanderlust that we neglect to see the wonders which God placed around us, which includes not just things, but people. (Juvenile Fiction ages 6+)

5. **Habits for a Sacred Home: 9 Practices from History to Anchor and Restore Modern Families** by Jennifer Pepito- I'll start with that I don't agree with all of this theologically. Pepito is using the Benedictine monastic rules to frame her book. But the practices that she unfolds are biblical things, and I appreciated her carefulness in not making them "do this or fail" practices. Instead, she invites the reader to see why these things are so needed in today's society, the effect they had in history (pulling from favorites like Amy Carmichael, Elizabeth Elliot, and Corrie Ten Boom), as well as the effect they could have on your family. Another great read from Jennifer Pepito that I read this year: **Mothering by the Book: The Power of Reading Aloud to Overcome Fear and Recapture Joy** (Adult Non-Fiction)
6. **Babe: The Gallant Pig** by Dick King-Smith- I love this book so much. It's so gentle and sweet. I read it with my children while we were in Scotland (we also read King-Smith's **The Water Horse**, which was equally delightful). But what I love about Babe is that he truly just wants to help his farm, serve his shepherd, while breaking down hatred between creatures and caring for all as need arises. As nearly always, the book is better than the movie. (Juvenile Fiction- great read aloud for all ages)
7. **The Electric War: Edison, Tesla, Westinghouse and the Race to Light the World** by Mike Winchell- this book was fascinating. It weaves through the backgrounds of all three inventors, and has you rooting for certain ones at the end. It gives an entire history of electricity during that time frame as well. I will warn, it can be a little horrific, one chapter especially, because the creation of the electric chair plays an important role. I did read this with my tween and teen because the history telling is excellent and clean, but I chose to skip over those sections, which are gory. (Adult Non-fiction).
8. **Hard Is Not the Same Thing as Bad: The Perspective Shift That Could Completely Change the Way You Mother** by Abbie Halberstadt- This was a fantastic read that I highly recommend for a mom's group. Halberstadt is like a kind (but needed) biblical gut punch. I say that because she doesn't shy from saying what is sin, but not in a legalistic way. She really strives to shift the mothering perspective that holds to "hard = miserable and bad". Instead she shows, through her own story, how hard might be the thing the Lord is using to teach us about His might, His providence, His glory, and to draw us into how to rejoice in our suffering because it produces steadfastness/patience, character, and hope. Another great read by Abbie Halberstadt: **M is for Mama: A Rebellion Against Mediocre Motherhood**. (Adult Non-Fiction)
9. **Nim's Island** by Wendy Orr- This is actually one of my favorite children's books. I reread it from time to time, because as a kid, I loved being outside, and as an adult I love being outside with my kids. Nim and her father live on an island far from society doing scientific research. When they are separated, it shows the creativity and resilience of kids but also the need of trusted adults and stories that make us brave. The whole series of Nim is fun. (Juvenile Fiction- great read aloud for the whole family)

10. **GraceLaced** by Ruth Chou Simons- I really enjoy all of Simons's books I've read, **Beholding and Becoming: The Art of Everyday Worship** and **Emmanuel: An Invitation to Prepare Him Room at Christmas and Always**. All 3 are full of her own gorgeous illustrations in watercolor, but more importantly- full of biblical glimpses of every day life. I would say they are not heavy devotionals, but they are just gentle reminders of what God has called us to in Christ. (Adult Non-Fiction)
11. **The Swiss Family Robinsons** by Johann David Wyss- I think a lot of people have seen this classic Disney movie, but few have actually read this incredible classic. Granted, it's long. But, it's full of a family who loves the Lord and defies the odds by making a home on the island they are stranded on. It's truly a wonderful book. The beginning as they make home can be a bit lengthy for a read aloud, but the whole book is full of fun, excitement, and adventure as they figure out how to survive and thrive where God has placed them. Fun addition that you don't see in most classics- they strive to keep the Sabbath day even in their hardships. (Juvenile Fiction ages 12+)
12. **Love Came Down at Christmas** by Sinclair Ferguson- I'm still finishing this book because it was given as a Christmas present. It has been a wonderful walk through 1 Corinthians 13, focusing on each and every aspect of love through the lense of Jesus's life. The chapters are short, making it a great add on to daily devotions. (Adult Non-Fiction, but honestly great for family devotions too)

Honorable Mentions:

-**Endurance** by Alfred Langsing- the story of the Antartic expedition "Endurance" to the South Pole. (Adult Non-Fiction)

-**The Pillar of Light** by Anna Travis- #1 in a 6-part series called "The Milana Legends"- Christian fantasy adventure for ages 12+ (Juvenile Fiction- great for girls)

-**Raising Dragons** by Bryan Davis- #1 in a 4-part series called "The Dragons in Our Midst"- Christian fantasy adventure for ages 12+ (Juvenile Fiction- great for boys)

-**Cheaper by the Dozen** by Ernestine Gilbreth Carey- a hilarious and heart-felt autobiography of Carey's famous, scientific family and all the adventures they had together, greatly centered around her father. (Adult Non-Fiction- warning, occasional 1900-1920's swear words).

Sincerely in Christ,

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