

In an effort to provide some new ideas for reading throughout the generations, we requested input from a Mother and her two daughters: Vicky, Abigail, and Mary Parnell

From Vicky:

Songs of the Nativity: selected sermons on Luke 1 & 2 by John Calvin

Perhaps you have never read Calvin's more scholarly works (e.g. Calvin's Institutes) because you were afraid that you wouldn't understand them. Yet as a reformed Christian you are thinking that I should read Calvin. Then this series of sermons that Calvin preached to his congregation in Geneva between 1559 and 1560 on the nativity of Jesus are for you. His pastoral tone will warm your heart as he preaches to you about the greatest story ever told. I purposely read this book during the Christmas season but you can read this book any time as a part of your devotions.

For the church history nerd: The Old Religion for the New World by Mark A. Noll

For the Christian education nerd: A Framework for Biblical Integration and Learning by Calvin L. Troup, PhD.

For a Women's book study: A Spiritual Checkup: For a Healthy Life with Christ by David McKay

For those interested in a daily devotional that includes prayers of the church fathers, catechism review, gospel reminders for the saint and historic church prayers: Be Thou My Vision: A Liturgy for Daily Worship by Jonathan Gibson

For those who watched the Netflix version of The Seven Dials Mystery and wonder what the book was like: (spoiler: better!) The Seven Dials Mystery by Agatha Christie

From Abigail:

Children's picture books:

1. The Postman by Allen Ahlberg. This book is made up of cute illustrations of a postman delivering letters to/from different fairytale characters. And you can open up the letters/take them out of the book. As a kid (and an adult) I loved all the little interactive pieces and fairy tale references! And there's also another book for Christmas deliveries: The Jolly Christmas Postman!
2. The Arch Books Bible Stories
3. The Monster at the End of the Book by Jon Stone. A fun book. Bonus points if you can read like Super Grover.
4. Quiltmaker's Gift by Jeff Brumbeau. Beautiful illustrations! The story is also aimed at discouraging greed/encouraging generosity.
5. Angelina Ballerina books. Loved these as a kid!

For Young Adults/Middle School readers:

1. The Courageous Princess by Rod Espinosa. Graphic novel about a princess who is kidnapped by a dragon and who escapes on her own and is trying to make it back to her home. I loved this book growing up! Cool adventure story and it has a lot of fun references to other fairy tales. (I didn't like the other books in the series as much though!)
2. The Catwings series by Ursula K LaGuin. Short easy reads with fun pics.
3. Princess Academy by Shannon Hale.

4. The Hero's Guide to Saving your Kingdom (there are three books in the series, that's the title of the first one) by Christopher Healy. Very entertaining! Kind of a dry humor that plays off of stereotypes.
6. Howl's Moving Castle by Diana Wynne Jones (there are two other books in the series, but this one is my favorite). There's a studio Ghibli movie based on it, and it's different but similar, and still fun.
7. The Chrestomanci series by Diana Wynn Jones. This series is based on the idea that there are parallel worlds, and there is magic in most of them. My favorite ones out of this series included Charmed Life, The Lives of Christopher Chant, and the Magicians of Caprona.
8. City Spies series by James Ponti (I love the family dynamic between the characters, and have enjoyed the series (I haven't read the most recent addition to the series. #3 might be my favorite so far)
9. The Chronicles of Prydain by Lloyd Alexander. Classic adventure story similar to Lord of the Rings but not as many songs. My dad read these to me and my siblings as a kid so they hold a special place in my heart.
10. The Wingfeather Saga by Andrew Peterson. I never quite finished this series, but I really loved the first one. (Christian Author)
11. N.D. Wilson's books. I especially love Leepike Ridge and the 100 Cupboards series. I like his writing style and he is a Christian author, which comes through in his writing/how his characters respond to hard things. He also wrote an adult (philosophical?) book called Death by Living, which I would also recommend (think Don't Waste Your Life, but more lyrical)
12. Carry on Mr. Bowditch by Jean Lee Latham. I loved this book as a kid. I also think math and learning languages is cool because of Carry on Mr Bowditch.
13. Treasure Island by Robert Louis Stevenson. Exciting adventure story! I think it and Carry on Mr. Bowditch were a couple of the books which got me more interested in reading.
14. The Little White Horse by Elizabeth Goudge. This book reminded me of the games of pretend I would play with my friends as a kid!
15. Airman by Eon Colfer. Fun adventure story
16. Halfmoon Investigations by Eon Colfer

Fantasy/YA:

1. Entwined by Heather Dixon. A retelling of 12 dancing princesses. It has some creepy parts but the story is so good and really centers on the restoration of a broken family relationship.
2. Enchanted Sonata by Heather Dixon Wallwork. A retelling of the Nutcracker. Super fun!
3. Fairytale Retold Series by Regina Doman. I really enjoyed these books growing up/still reread them! Set in the modern world and written from a Roman Catholic point of view. There are some more mature themes touched on/interacted with but never graphic. Also, I never read the last one/am under the impression it handles more mature topics.

Novels:

1. Peace Like a River by Leif Enger. Such a good read! Exciting, heartwarming, gut wrenching, beautiful. I liked the writing style as well!
2. Green Dolphin Street by Elizabeth Goudge. A story of true, self-sacrificing love.

Memoir:

Everything Sad is Untrue by Daniel Nayeri. Very good. Funny but also heart wrenching. Reflections on memories, community, courage, cultural differences, and sacrifice.

Science:

1. Why We Sleep by Matthew Walker. Very interesting! Sleep is such an awesome gift from God! The author doesn't give God credit, which can be a bit aggravating but definitely has plenty of examples of God's beautiful and amazing design in creation!
2. Amusing Ourselves to Death by Neil Postman. Even though this book was written in 1985, the problem has only expanded. A good companion book to this one would be 12 Ways Your Phone is Changing You. I think it is important to be conscientious of how we are influenced and to see how much of our culture is now geared towards entertainment! This book (in contrast to books like Brave New World and 1984) highlights how as a society we don't just need to be afraid of an overbearing government, because we can build a prison of our own choosing that is so pleasant we won't even recognize it as a prison. Definitely food for thought!
3. 12 Ways Your Phone is Changing You by Tony Reinke. I thought this book presented a well-rounded, God-centered view of technology (specifically our smart phones), the temptations associated with them, and our calling to Glorify and Enjoy God.

History:

The Wizard and the Prophet by Charles C Mann. Very interesting history of the different perspectives on conservation which still come in to play today. It is well written, and I found it fascinating!

Theology:

1. Singing the Psalms of Jesus by Michael LeFebvre. I found this book helpful and appreciated the way the book highlighted the beauty and privilege of singing the Psalms.
2. 7 Myths About Singleness by Sam Allberry. Some of the chapters/points felt a bit repetitive but I felt like he handled the subject of singleness well and in a balanced way, so much so that I feel like this book would be a good read for both married and singles!

From Mary:

Dracula by Bram Stoker

Dracula is *the* vampire story, and it might not be what you expect. Don't let the "Dracula" films or other vampire stories (cough "Twilight" cough) stop you from reading a great book. It is written in epistolary form, composed of journal entries, newspaper clippings, and telegrams, which makes for a fun and unique reading experience. It is a gothic horror novel, and it is creepy. But it is the kind of creepy that will make your skin crawl, not keep you up at night. I would not recommend it for children, as there are a few gory and sensual scenes, though not graphic. The reason I am recommending it at all is that even amid the darkness, there is also hope. A group of individuals is brought together by something horrible, and instead of despairing, they fight back. They fight to protect those they love and to free the souls that have been barred from Heaven. The camaraderie, courage, and friendship are what keep me coming back to this story, and why I recommend it to whoever is reading this. "Come... we must see and act. Devils or no devils, or all the devils at once, it matters

not; we fight him all the same.” Bonus recommendation: The audiobook published by Duke Classics, narrated by Tavia Gilbert and J. P. Guimont, is excellent!

The Space Trilogy by C. S. Lewis

If you enjoy The Chronicles of Narnia, then you might also enjoy The Space Trilogy. The Space Trilogy is similar to The Chronicles of Narnia in that it is a fantasy (or science fiction) series with a side of theology, or maybe it's the other way around! It explores theological concepts such as the fall, sacrifice, and spiritual warfare. The central protagonist is Dr. Elwin Ransom, a philologist who travels to Mars and Venus. He is called to some supernatural and difficult challenges and finds the grace and strength he needs from God. The trilogy is fantastical and fun, but also thought-provoking. The writing is beautiful and Lewis is great at painting pictures in your head. Thinking of this series brings an image of warm sunlight to my mind. It also presents theology in an approachable way, though I would say it is a level up from The Chronicles of Narnia. “I do not think the forest would be so bright, nor the water so warm, nor love so sweet, if there were no danger in the lakes.”

The Wingfeather Saga by Andrew Peterson

If I were to describe The Wingfeather Saga in two words, it would be whimsical and heartfelt. This children's fantasy series follows siblings Janner, Kalmar, and Leeli as they are pursued by Gnag the Nameless and his horde of Fangs. Why are they pursued? You will have to read to find out. It is written by a Christian author, and that comes through in beautiful ways. The children struggle with fear, jealousy, responsibility, and selfishness. They persevere through trials and suffering and are better for it. There are laughs, tears, and triumphs to be had for any age with these books. “Of all creatures, you should know that the darkness is seldom complete, and even when it is, the pinprick of light is not long in coming -- and finer for the great shroud that surrounds it.”