

# 10 great sum

*Summer's here. The days are longer, vacations are on the horizon and warm evenings will lure many to porch swings and hammocks in search of the simple pleasure of sipping raspberry lemonade and reading a good book. Whether you do your reading on the back porch, at the beach or on breaks at the office, summer is the ideal time for a good book. With that in mind, the Evangel staff offers our picks for the season. Our recommendations include a little something for everyone — from Christian fiction to self-help. Some will entertain, others will teach. All will encourage and edify you in your walk with God. For your convenience, each of our picks is available at [www.gospelpublishing.org](http://www.gospelpublishing.org).*

## ***Do You Think I'm Beautiful?***

**Author:** Angela Thomas  
**Publisher:** Nelson Publishers (2003)

**Aimed at:** Women

**Review:** Many little girls dream of being Cinderella: beautiful, captivating, swept away by a handsome prince. But when girls become women, they often put away the fantasy and settle for something closer to reality. After all, does anyone really need a prince's



love? Thomas contends women do. Every woman, Thomas explains, wants to be loved, treasured and seen as beautiful — needs that cannot truly be fulfilled outside of a relationship with Christ. Sharing her own personal quest for self-worth,

Thomas invites readers to awaken to their inner desires and pursue pas-

sionate intimacy with a Creator who thinks they're beautiful.

**Excerpt:** I once thought that my struggle was intensely personal, but now I know that it's intensely *feminine*. Every woman longs to know from the deepest places of her heart, "Oh, God, do You think I'm beautiful?"

I am realizing that the feminine design, my design, is both mysterious and complex. And yet, the design is completely God's idea. Why do seemingly strong, articulate, intellectual women huddle in the night with a romance novel? Why is romantic "Christian fiction" flying off the shelves? Why is the allure of romance in the movies and television so intense for a woman? Why does the wife choose the romantic comedy while the husband chooses the action film? It's more than Venus versus Mars or speaking a different love language. It's by design.

## ***Under God***

**Author:** Toby Mac and Michael Tait with WallBuilders

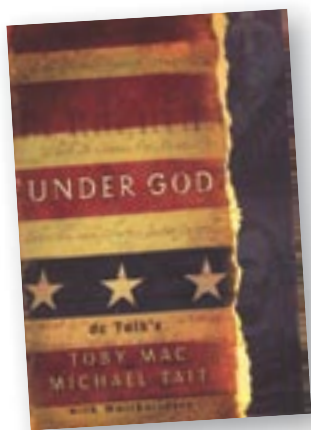
**Publisher:** Bethany House (2004)

**Aimed at:** Teens and history buffs

**Review:** Did the Declaration of Independence really become official on

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July 4, 1776? Is it true that some female slaves made their way North posing as elderly gentlemen? Is Rosa Parks really the mother of the civil rights movement? Did Benjamin Franklin actually stand before the delegates of the



13 colonies in the summer of 1787 and talk about the need for prayer before assembly meetings?

These and many other questions are answered in *Under God*. Though anyone who has

studied U.S. history in high school has learned about many of the events described in the book, most readers will enjoy the insights, powerful stories and off-beat nuggets of information that are offered. Many of the stories in the book also point to God's guidance, grace and provision. *Under God* is an easy read, but it does not shy from some of America's ugly moments such as the abuses Native Americans and blacks faced at the

hands of whites. Whether one is a history buff or casual scholar, *Under God* makes for compelling reading that entertains and educates.

**Excerpt:** Phillis Wheatley's hand shook as she opened the delicate envelope. A letter from General George Washington? He must have received her poem after all! Four months earlier, during the siege of Boston, Phillis had written a poem to encourage the American commander in chief. With excitement she opened the letter and read what the most important man in America had written to her.

Washington started by apologizing for the delay in his response, saying, "A variety of important occurrences" had distracted him. He then thanked Phillis for the poem, praised her poetic talents, and explained that he had decided not to publish the poem because her words were so superlative that people might accuse him of vanity. He then invited her to his headquarters, saying he would be happy to see a person "to whom Nature has been so liberal and beneficent in her dispensations."

No question about it, Phillis was extremely gifted. Kidnapped in Senegal, Africa, at age seven, she crossed the Atlantic on a slave ship bound for Boston.

## *Welcome to Holsom*

**Publisher:** Gospel Publishing House (2005)

**Aimed at:** Children and teens

**Review:** Finding a comic book written for kids is a rarity in this era of "mature audiences only" graphic novels and angst-ridden, violent dark avengers. *Welcome to Holsom*, by contrast, is downright wholesome, but definitely not old-fashioned. The running subplot concerns a missing mad scientist and the giant robot he abandoned 40 years ago in the small town of Holsom, but the

spotlight is squarely on the kids, and it's in focusing on the day-to-day trials and tribulations of being a preteen or teenager in the 21st century that the story truly shines.

Along the way, *Holsom* introduces important Christian topics and moral issues. The central characters deal with a wide range of topical subjects, including bullying, peer pressure, honesty and evolution, and the kids don't always make the right decisions — just like in real life.

If you or your kids haven't picked up a comic lately, you'll be pleasantly surprised by *Welcome to Holsom*. This is a comic book series kids of all ages will enjoy.



## *Halftime: Changing Your Game Plan from Success to Significance*

**Author:** Bob Buford

**Publisher:** Zondervan (2003)

**Aimed at:** Men, 40-plus

**Review:** Buford examines midlife, the point at which many Americans find themselves asking questions such as, "Is this all there is to life? Why am I so restless? What can I do to find meaning and significance?" Buford's goal is to redirect the time, talent and resources many middle-aged people have been using to make themselves successful toward something more significant and eternal in the later years of life. He focuses on the transition time, urging people to revitalize and catch a new vision for the second half, which

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he believes is the most rewarding part of life.

**Excerpt:** Some people never get to the second half; a good many don't even know it exists. The prevailing view in our culture is that as you close out your fortieth year or so, you enter a period of aging and decline. To pair age with *growth* seems to be a contradiction in terms. This is a myth I refuse to believe, and I want to help you shatter it as well.



Instead of giving up and settling for

life on its terms, you are ready for new horizons, new challenges. You're ready to move from success to significance — to write your own epitaph — daring to believe that what you ultimately leave behind will be more important than anything you could have achieved in the first half of your life.

## The Yada Yada Prayer Group Gets Real

**Author:** Neta Jackson

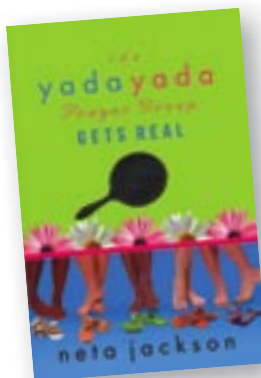
**Publisher:** Integrity Publishers (2003)

**Aimed at:** Women

**Review:** Jackson's Yada books have been widely received by Christian women, selling more than 100,000 copies and sparking prayer and discussion groups across the country. The fictional series focuses on a diverse coalition of Chicago-area women who formed a prayer group after meeting at a women's conference. The third book in the series, *The Yada Yada Prayer Group Gets Real*, explores concepts of redemption, forgiveness and new beginnings as friendships are tested and God's grace is demonstrated through sometimes brutally *real* circumstances. Check out Jackson's latest installment,

or pick up the whole series.

**Excerpt:** I laughed aloud at the look on Yo-Yo's face. Poor kid. She had barely stuck her toe into "this Jesus gig," as she called it, since coming to the Yada Yada Prayer Group, and she was still trying to figure out what she'd gotten herself into. "Uh, baptism," I said. "You know, to show we've died with Christ and ..." I stopped. Her round eyes and mouth were obvious clues that I was talking gobbledygook. "Never mind. We can talk about it later." *Avis can explain it later* is what I meant. *Or Florida*. Somehow my churchy clichés didn't communicate to Yo-Yo, who wasn't that long off the street and out of prison.



## The Bowden Way: 50 Years of Leadership Wisdom

**Author:** Bobby Bowden

**Publisher:** Longstreet Press (2001)

**Aimed at:** Anyone wanting to lead in his or her area of responsibility

**Review:** The top bowl-winning coach in college football history, Florida State's Bobby Bowden enjoys a resumé filled with superlatives. But his success rests on fundamental life principles lived out in the daily grind between games. Bowden's Christianity shines through each of the leadership principles he shares, but his book never reads like a tract. Biblical and business guidelines are interwoven so smoothly it quickly becomes clear that Bowden isn't trying to force a connection — he has repeatedly discovered that a God-honoring life leads to genuine success.

**Excerpt:** To keep from being overwhelmed by adversity, I work hard to

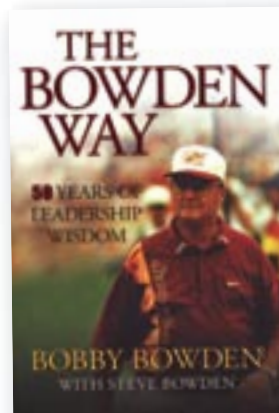
keep my priorities in order. The priorities in my life, ranked in descending order, are:

- God
- Family
- Others
- Football

It's easy to come up with such a noble-sounding menu as this. It's another thing entirely when life hands you the bill for your choices.

It's not always been easy to put God first or to maintain my family's priority over the time demands of coaching. I see things I could've done better, others that I should've done differently, and many that I regret. But I'd follow the same path if I had another 50 years in coaching.

Keeping God first is easy when you're successful. The real test comes when adversity strikes. Sometimes the only thing you can do is simply lift your empty cup upward in a defiant affirmation of faith. At other times, you cling to faith because you just don't want to live otherwise.



## Looking Forward to the Rest of Your Life? Embracing Midlife and Beyond

**Author:** Lorry Lutz

**Publisher:** Baker (2004)

**Aimed at:** Women, 55-plus

**Review:** Lutz tells women not to waste the best years of their lives. A woman facing an empty nest, retirement or life without her husband often feels as though she is no longer needed. But Lutz debunks negative stereotypes

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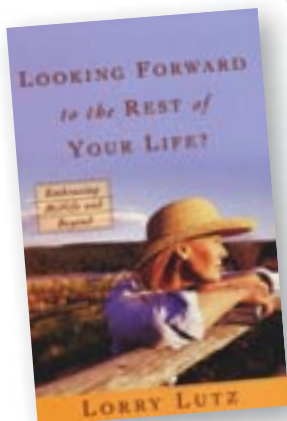
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and shows how senior women such as Vonette Bright and Joy Dawson — as well as women of great character and strength in the Bible — have used their ministry gifts to mobilize Christians. In the book, Lutz, who served as a missionary in South Africa for 22 years, also helps women revive their dreams and discover new talents and opportunities in their later years.

**Excerpt:** How easy it is to slip into apathy or to resign ourselves to feeling that we have nothing to offer; that we are just in God's waiting room and have left our reading material at home.

I want to wake up every day asking, "God, what do You have for me today? How can I demonstrate the Christ-life within me here at home, to those I meet or even on e-mail today? What open doors of opportunity should I be ready to step into? How can I know You better and love You more?"



I've tried to resist the temptation to feel depressed or useless since I retired from a global ministry by intentionally and daily asking God to lead me. I recognize in myself that the desire to seek public ministry could easily overwhelm my longing simply to reflect God's glory, however He "shines on me."

## Naked Fruit

**Author:** Elisa Morgan  
**Publisher:** Revell (2004)  
**Aimed at:** Women

**Review:** Morgan explores the fruit of the Spirit in 16 easy-to-digest chapters. Speaking from her own life experience, she explains that growing spiritual fruit isn't about plastering on

a smile and being "nice." It has more to do with allowing the transforming power of Jesus to take root in your life. Morgan, international president of Mothers of Preschoolers (MOPS), addresses real-life issues in a friendly, conversational manner



without waxing preachy or overly philosophical. Each chapter ends with a devotional thought and prayer. The simple language, brief chapters, and interactive format make it a manageable yet rewarding read for busy women.

**Excerpt:** Naked fruit is honest. We don't have to dress it up to make it better. It admits, "I really can't do any more today. I'm bushed. But I'd love to help out tomorrow." It suggests, "A better time for me to commit would be in the early afternoon while the kids are in preschool." Naked fruit isn't 24/7 availability to impossible expectations. But, drawing from a relationship with God, naked fruit does try — openly and sincerely.

Naked fruit is about getting past the peeling of "nice" Christianity and getting down to the honest, simple truth: The fruit of the Spirit is about being like Jesus.

God makes it simple. We make it hard.

## Max Lucado's Hermie and Friends Bible

**International Children's Bible**  
**Publisher:** Tommy Nelson (2004)  
**Aimed at:** Children, ages 7-11  
**Review:** Lucado, a best-selling author and noted minister, has released

his version of the International Children's Bible presented with whimsical illustrations and sidebars by Hermie, the common caterpillar, and several of his good friends, including Flo, Wormie, and Lucy. It is easily understandable and fun to read.

**Excerpt:** (A sidebar explanation of Matthew 14:23.) Jesus faced many impossible tasks while He was on earth. And during many of those times He got alone and prayed. This time He went into the hills to pray. Prayer was that important to Jesus. We don't know what Jesus did there or what He said to His Father. But we do know the result. While Jesus prayed, a storm swept down, and the winds and rain caught the disciples in the middle of the lake. The storm and lake became a path for Jesus, and the disciples saw Jesus like they never had before. We need Jesus in our boat. There are problems we cannot solve without Him.

There are people we cannot change without Him. But when you have Jesus in your boat, you'll be amazed! Nothing is impossible with Jesus.



## Monster

**Author:** Frank Peretti  
**Publisher:** WestBow Press (2005)  
**Aimed at:** Adults

**Review:** Peretti has a long-established reputation for casting issues of faith in fiction's unique light. He doesn't disappoint in *Monster*, a novel that poses hard questions about society's basis for belief and the repercussions when science acts on beliefs created in a spiritual vacuum. Despite

# ABCs OF SALVATION

To know God and be ready for heaven, follow these steps:

**A. Admit you are a sinner.**

"There is no one righteous, not even one ... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Romans 3:10,23 (See Romans 5:8; 6:23.)

**Ask God's forgiveness.**

"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." Romans 10:13

**B. Believe in Jesus** (put your trust in Him) as your only hope of salvation. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." John 3:16 (See John 14:6.)

**Become a child of God by receiving Christ.**

"To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." John 1:12 (See Revelation 3:20.)

**C. Confess that Jesus is your Lord.**

"If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." Romans 10:9 (See verse 10.)

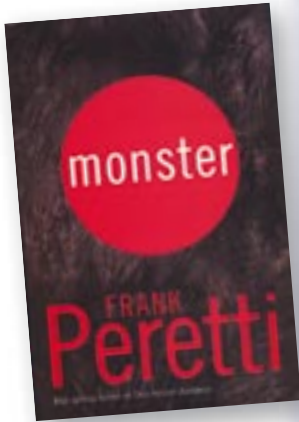
For further help, contact the Assemblies of God church near you.

If you would like someone to pray with you concerning your decision to follow Jesus Christ, please contact the church indicated on the back cover or call:

**1-800-4PRAYER**

Assemblies of God National Prayer Center

the title, *Monster* is not high on horror. But neither is it low on action or suspense. A wide array of characters must come to grips with forces both natural and unnatural. Peretti keeps up the pace with chapters divided into literary sound bites and cued to end on the edge of disaster.



**Excerpt:** Reed heard her go down, and he searched with his light.

"Beck!" There she was, flailed like a rag doll on the rocks about ten feet below the trail, her leg dangling in the flowing water, a streak of blood reaching down her face. He found a way down, a slow but sure course through brush, limbs, and saplings. "Beck!"

He grabbed the first limb and swung himself down, then another limb, then a fistful of brush. Lower, lower!

"Beck! Say something! Talk to me!"

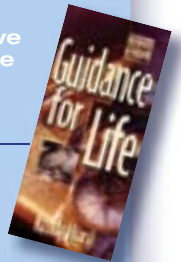
There was a commotion across the stream. *Oh dear Lord, don't let it be —*

The beam caught the silver-green glimmer of two retinas suspended within a massive black shadow that swallowed up his light. He screamed, half out of his own terror, half to cause terror. Would nothing chase this thing away?

The shadow moved so fast he lost it. He searched, waved his light about. It caught one fleeting image of his wife's body swept up like a toy, arms limp, long brown hair flying.

The shadow enfolded her like a blanket. There were heavy, bass-note footfalls up the bank, and then ...

Nothing. ■



E-mail your comments to [pe@ag.org](mailto:pe@ag.org).