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MY TOP 5

Five Lesser-Known Children's Fantasy Series That Point to the Gospel

Meet a new generation of authors picking up where Lewis and Tolkien left off.

KATHRYN BUTLER/POSTED MAY 16, 2022



Image: Illustration by Mallory Rentsch / Source Images: Benjamin Voros / Unsplash / Wikimedia Commons

When COVID-19 seized the world, and our kids, wide-eyed, first voiced their fears, our family devotions helped assure them that nothing, not even a pandemic, could wrench them away from God's love. And the quieter moments spent cuddled on the couch, steeped in the magic of Narnia and Middle Earth, reminded them of that truth.

In challenging times, stories that point children to the gospel are as vital as air. J. R. R. Tolkien argued that imaginative stories so thrill us because they echo the greatest story of all: our salvation through Christ. Great children's literature with themes of sacrifice, redemption, love, and radical hope offers families tangible and memorable reminders of the truths they read in Scripture, truths that carry us safely through the storms of this broken, fallen world. Reading and discussing great books with your kids can be a ministry unto itself.

C. S. Lewis and Tolkien have offered families rich opportunities for reflection for nearly a century, but over the past two decades another generation of Christian authors has lavished our bookshelves with vibrant stories. These books, imaginative and infused with their authors' convictions, promise to inspire young minds and nourish old souls for years to come. Peruse the following list, consider incorporating it into your own family

routine, and marvel at the hope, the glory, and the happy ending embedded in these stories.

[The Wingfeather Saga](#)

Andrew Peterson

Christian musician and author [Andrew Peterson](#) wrote the Wingfeather Saga “to tell a story that would strike a little match of hope in a kid’s heart that the light is stronger than the darkness,” as he explained in an [interview](#). His series more than delivers on that goal. Imaginative and witty, with moments that alternate between side-splitting hilarity and aching beauty, the Wingfeather Saga offers families a rich read-aloud experience that sparkles with gospel themes.



Peterson invites readers into an entirely new world as they journey with the Igibys, a displaced family endeavoring to combat the wicked Fangs of Dang, reclaim their homeland, and restore goodness, truth, and loveliness to a fallen kingdom. The Christian undertones strengthen as the series progresses, and parents will recognize scenes in the final book that reflect Christ’s sacrifice in the Gospels, as well as Revelation’s promise of a new heaven and a new earth.

Some readers find the ample world-building footnotes in the first book cumbersome; don’t stop reading! Snuggle up with your kids, press on, and prepare for your children to fall on the floor laughing, and for you to intermittently pause, gasp, and wipe tears from your eyes.

[The Green Ember series](#)

S. D. Smith

Author S. D. Smith [describes](#) his Green Ember series as “a new story with an old soul.” Even a cursory read hints at his meaning, as he interweaves threads of beloved old tales with the hope of the kingdom to come.

With echoes of *Watership Down* and *Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH*, *The Green Ember* chronicles the struggles and triumphs of Picket and Heather, two orphaned rabbits fighting to free the kingdom of Natalia from the clutches of the evil Morbin Blackhawk and his savage wolf army. The books offer children of all ages not only a hefty dose of gripping adventure, but story arcs of fall and redemption, sacrifice, and hope of a new world. One of the main characters, a prince who returns after presumed death to save the kingdom, is a clear figure of Christ.

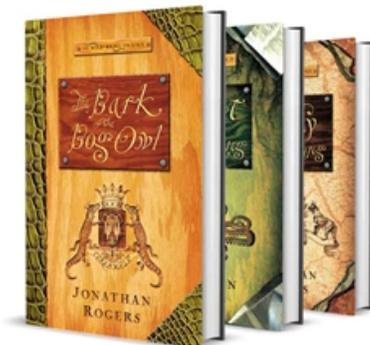


Perfect as a family read-aloud, *The Green Ember* is sure to inspire the youngest members of your family to muster their courage and venture into the unknown, “till the Green Ember rises or the end of the world!”

[The Wilderking Trilogy](#)

Jonathan Rogers

Alligators, Celtic fortresses, and King David. Only the most talented writer could weave these disparate threads into a cohesive, convincing narrative, and thankfully, Jonathan Rogers is just that sort of author. In his Wilderking Trilogy, Rogers retells the story of King David in a fictional setting that seems part medieval kingdom, part Louisiana bayou. With his gifts as a writer on display, he unites these unlikely elements into an engaging, moving story that will ring familiar for even the youngest Bible scholar.



Although Bathsheba doesn't appear in these books (to the relief of parents everywhere), Rogers's depiction of the tension between the protagonist Aidan Errolson and the jealous King Darrow offers rich opportunities to discuss David's conflict with Saul. Study these passages with your kids beforehand and enjoy the ride as Rogers guides your family through backwoods and swamps, offering glimpses of bravery, loyalty, and grace along the way.

[The Mistmantle Chronicles](#)

M. I. McAllister

Who knew a story about anthropomorphic squirrels could be so profound? In her Mistmantle Chronicles, British author Margaret McAllister offers families a beautiful, heart-wrenching story in lovely prose as Urchin the red squirrel combats the sinister forces threatening his island.



As the wife of a retired Methodist minister and the author of vivid retellings of Bible stories, McAllister weaves religion overtly through her narrative, referring to God as "the Heart," a creator who is good, loving, and true. She also reflects upon sin and our propensity to do what is right in our own eyes. While these books have the elegance and whimsy of Beatrix Potter, they deal in much weightier themes, and sensitive readers will want a parent close by. One caveat about this series: The later books are out of print and hard to find. The publisher reprinted the first two books last year, and we can only hope to see the entire series eventually!

[100 Cupboards series](#)

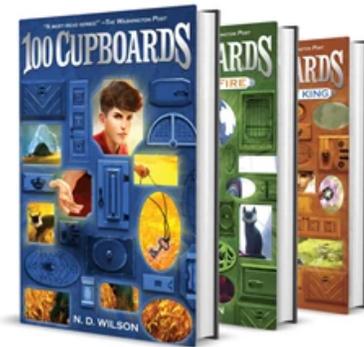
N. D. Wilson

Calling all tweens and teens! *100 Cupboards* chronicles the perilous adventures of Henry York, a boy who discovers magical doors that transport him to other realms. During his journey he accidentally frees an evil sorceress bent on overtaking the world, and Henry and his family spend the next two books fighting to save

humankind.

N. D. Wilson grew up on a healthy diet of classic literature, and *100 Cupboards* hints at this influence, with some details reminiscent of Arthurian legends. The books also feature themes of good versus evil, sacrifice for others, and redemption.

As a caution, these books, while thrilling and compelling, are too scary for most young readers; the antagonist is truly creepy, and there are some grotesque descriptions and violence that might induce nightmares. While the other books on this list are great read-alouds for many ages, this one is best reserved for kids 12 and up.



Kathryn Butler is a trauma surgeon turned writer and homeschooling mom. She is the author of Between Life and Death: A Gospel-Centered Guide to End-of-Life Medical Care and Glimmers of Grace: A Doctor's Reflections on Faith, Suffering, and the Goodness of God. The Dragon and the Stone, the first volume of her middle-grade children's fantasy series the Dream Keeper Saga, releases this week.



MEDIA

Andrew Peterson's Wingfeather Saga Raises \$5M for TV Series

On a new platform called Angel Studios, the campaign broke crowdfunding records set by "The Chosen."

MEGAN FOWLER