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**What is Inspirational?**

**By Staci Stallings**

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Over the course of the past ten years, the inspirational book market has exploded. Thanks to blockbusters like the Left Behind series as well as the Chicken Soup for the Soul series, the inspirational market has become a major contender for book industry dollars. There are now lines of inspirational romance, and Chicken Soup–esque fare like A Cup of Comfort, Hugs, and God's Way popping up in bookstores across the country.

In short, there is no shortage of inspirational reading out there. However, with the upsurge in options, a problem has surfaced in the inspirational writing community as well as in the inspirational reading community. Just what is "inspirational" or "Christian" anyway?

The inspirational romance lines, of course, have well–defined styles set out, and their readership holds them to that style quite securely. Generally speaking, this style is one in which the characters in these books are ultra–Christian. They go to church. They quote the Bible. They even have ministers who show up on their doorstep un–summoned at the first sign of trouble. They are so straight–laced that recently, authors have been asked to refrain from using preachers as heroes in the stories because that has simply been overdone.

There is also a faction of the inspirational market, however, who believes that Christian literature should have the leeway to tackle worldly issues such as divorce, abuse, and drug use as well as other such scurrilous topics. They argue that to reach the world with the message of Christ, inspirational authors must have the latitude to write about topics that the world faces on a daily basis, and readers who are clamoring for that type of material should be able to find it.

So who's right?

Here's the surprising answer: Both of them are!

Just as there is a season for everything in God's Kingdom, so there is a place for both types of inspirational literature in the market—whether it be fiction or nonfiction. I must confess that for many

## What is Inspirational?

years I was firmly entrenched on the worldly side of this argument. I argued to the point of insanity that I hated reading "fluffy Christianity that didn't tackle real issues." Then I was given the gift of seeing that all readers are not built alike. Basically, they don't all want what I want. Some come home from a hard day and want to read about people who make the right and Godly choice every time because they see so little of that at work. Some, on the other hand, want to come home and read about people just like them who stumble and fall but who ultimately find their way to God and His promises. Neither is wrong. It's just a question of what the reader wants to read.

Authors too should not be put into a box that says the only thing they can write and call inspirational is full of Bible quotes and kisses that are barely implied and only at the end of the book when that is not the story God gave them to write. There is honing and learning the industry. There is also staying true to what your heart is telling you to write.

That's why in July 2003, I began working on a website called The Inspirational Reader. The idea being that the problem was not what the authors liked to write or what the readers liked to read but that the two had no really good way of finding each other. Before this site, the best a reader could do was to read a few lines in a potential purchase, buy it, and hope their idea of inspiration was the same as the authors'.

Unfortunately more than one reader was disappointed, and more than one author was told that they fell short of being able to be called a Christian because their book didn't line up with the reader's idea of what a Christian book should be. How sad for both of them.

With the introduction of The Inspirational Reader, however, a reader can go to the site, choose the exact types of books he or she likes to read and a list of the books that fit that criteria is returned. The reader can then view extensive information about that book including Reviews and an Excerpt as well as full availability information. The goal is that authors can use the talent they were given to tell the stories God gave them to tell without having to squeeze those stories into some box that will fit a perceived mass market because the niche market they want to write for can now find them.

So now all the stories can be told—the sweet, the not-so-sweet; the ultra-Christian and the just good common sense ones. There is truly an author for every reader's taste. They all have a place in God's Kingdom, and they should all have a place in the inspirational book industry. Now they do.

If you're looking for an inspirational read to fit just the mood you're in, check out The Inspirational Reader at [www.theinspirationalreader.com](http://www.theinspirationalreader.com) You'll find the right book for you every time!

### **Need To Recapture The Magic Of Christmas? Try Inspirational Christmas Stories!**

**By Bernadette Dimitrov**

Everyone knows that life today is more hectic than ever before. Families are often very busy and family fun time is at a premium. This is never more apparent than at Christmas. Everyone wants Christmas to be magical and special, but many of us feel that it has become commercial and

## What is Inspirational?

impersonal. The solution, though, is so simple that many families are surprised. Inspirational Christmas stories can help you recapture the magic of an old-fashioned Christmas, but with a modern twist. Just consider:

1) Inspirational Christmas stories for children and adults are quick to read and can be read together at any time. You won't have to rearrange your entire schedule for this Christmas magic - all you need are a few stolen moments here and there.

2) Inspirational Christmas stories for children and adults allow you to create special Christmas traditions for your family. Many cultures read the Christmas story aloud during the holidays. Reading favorite inspirational Christmas stories for children and adults together can be a great way to develop special holiday traditions for your own family.

3) Inspirational Christmas stories for children and adults are about sharing time - not about spending money. Getting together to read inspirational Christmas stories out loud is about sharing time together. It is not simply another impersonal way to spend money. In fact, inspirational Christmas stories are very economical, no matter what your holiday budget this Christmas season!

4) Inspirational Christmas stories for children and adults can help you teach your family what the season is all about. These stories have modern settings and twists and are exciting and fun. At the same time, they are about the miracles and togetherness that Christmas should represent. Without lecturing or moralizing, inspirational Christmas stories for children and adults capture and reveal exactly what this time of year is all about - and they do so in a way that everyone can understand!

5) Inspirational Christmas stories for children and adults can create cherished memories for your whole family. Stir up some cocoa and serve some cookies to your audience. Take turns reading inspirational Christmas stories out loud, and put on some quiet Christmas carols in the background. Inspirational Christmas stories for children and adults can be the perfect way to set the stage for a fabulous Christmas celebration.

The magic of reading and the wonder of Christmas combine together in inspirational Christmas stories for children and adults to create a wonderful way to celebrate this most exciting time of year! Why not get some inspirational Christmas stories today and create a tradition that your family will love and cherish for years to come?

Visit

and sign up for our F\*R\*E\*E\* NEWSLETTER FULL OF TIPS,

TOOLS & RESOURCES for reviving the fun, joy, magic and real meaning of Christmas every day of the year.

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