

Children's books

RECENT PICTURE BOOKS

reviewed by *Emily Whitten & Betsy Farquhar*

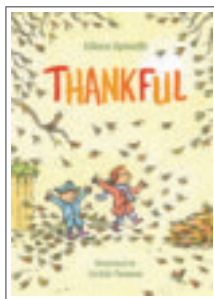


THE BIGGEST STORY *Kevin DeYoung*

"Once upon a time..." That's how Kevin DeYoung begins his retelling of the Bible's central story. He starts in Eden and moves on to show God—clearly the hero—continually rescuing His wayward people, fulfilling His promises, and working toward our final reunion in the new heaven and earth. Illustrator Don Clark provides richly hued, symbolic illustrations that flesh out the brief text in simple yet theologically rich ways. He creates stylized yet recognizable figures and doesn't portray Jesus' face. *The Biggest Story* is great for a slightly older audience than Sally Lloyd-Jones' *The Jesus Storybook Bible*, and its focus is on the overall story rather than the details of individual Bible stories.

THANKFUL *Eileen Spinelli*

In this clever Thanksgiving book, a brother and sister dressed in their parents' clothes pretend to be characters from their community. On each page, the children experience what a particular person is thankful for, from a waitress's "comfortable shoes" to a poet's "words that rhyme." Archie Preston's illustrations combine the playfulness of Quentin Blake's sketches in Roald Dahl's novels with the sweetness of classic Beatrix Potter watercolors. While it would have been more powerful to include thankfulness for God Himself, Spinelli still offers a subtle nod to faith's place in their world: a pastor "thankful for God's word."



WAITING *Kevin Henkes*

Like his Caldecott Medal-winning *Kitten's First Full Moon*, Henkes' latest picture book is a quiet, character-driven story. Several toys—an owl, bear, puppy, pig, and rabbit—make their home on a shelf near a window. All of them (except one!) have something to look forward to throughout the year. As each toy looks out the window, waiting for the beloved event or object to appear, they experience loss as well as joyful surprise. Henkes' fine, spare illustrations highlight the universality of the waiting experience. Christian parents especially will appreciate a story that models cheerful patience.

WHAT PET SHOULD I GET? *Dr. Seuss*

Recently, designer and art director Cathy Goldsmith and her team of editors and illustrators set out to turn this discarded project by the late Theodor Seuss Geisel (Dr. Seuss) into one last treasure. She succeeds to some degree: The rhyming text is lively and fun as the book's characters encounter beast after beast in a wonderful pet shop (including cats, dogs, and a "yent" in a tent). The story, though, feels outdated. (Did parents ever really send their children to the pet shop to pick out a pet—alone?) It also lacks the creativity and humor of Seuss' best work.



SPOTLIGHT

Two recent picture books help parents talk to their children about difficult topics. *Emily Lost Someone She Loved* by Kathleen Fucci (Kathleen Fucci Ministries, 2015) is the story of an exuberant girl who loves school and diving practice until someone close to her dies. Nearly overwhelmed with grief, she finds comfort as a parent points her to Jesus Christ and His promises for eternal life. Appealing illustrations and an unspecified cause of death make this a good choice for grieving families.



God Made All of Me by Justin S. Holcomb and Lindsey A. Holcomb (New Growth Press, 2015) offers an opportunity for parents and children to discuss how God made our bodies and what kinds of touch are appropriate. This colorfully illustrated book, intended for children ages 2 to 8, prepares kids to avoid inappropriate touches and seek help without guilt if they are ever sexually abused. —Megan Saben

