

## 2015 Australian Christian Book of the Year

### Captains of the Soul:

A History of Australian Army Chaplains

Michael Gladwin

Big Sky Publishing

9781922132529

The letters and journals of both chaplains and soldiers animate this account of the work of chaplains in every theatre of war involving Australian troops. While the role of the chaplain has changed over time, the common task remains the ministry of God's Word and the sacraments to soldiers, burying the dead and representing an alternative reality to the conflict, chaos and suffering. Increasingly unfashionable in some spheres of society, chaplains continue to be valued in proportion to the proximity of battle. Gladwin does not flinch from portraying chaplains who behaved disgracefully nor from facing up to the problem of fatalism amongst some Australian troops. However, acts of heroism by 'the soldier without a gun' abound and provide Christian communicators with a treasury of inspiring, home-grown stories. This is a history of national importance and an insight into the Australian character.

### Judging criteria

The **Australian Christian Book of the Year Award** is given annually to a book written by an Australian citizen normally resident in Australia. The award recognises and celebrates excellence in Australian Christian writing. A shortlist is announced in July and the award is presented during August. The award carries a prize of \$3,000. Supplementary awards may be made. Entries are judged with an eye to the:

#### Original nature of the work.

**Literary style**, including suitability for the target audience.

**Competence** and expertise displayed by the author in writing the book and examining the underlying thesis.

**Design**, layout, cover, text and illustrations.

**Contribution** that the book makes in meeting a need for Christian writing for the Australian situation and in the Australian market.

### Judges

**Mark Conner** is the Senior Minister at CityLife Church, a diverse community meeting in locations across Melbourne. He has a doctor of ministry degree from Fuller Theological Seminary and is passionate about seeing people change and grow. Mark is married to Nicole and they have three adult children. He loves basketball, music, reading and cooking. He is an avid Geelong Cats supporter.

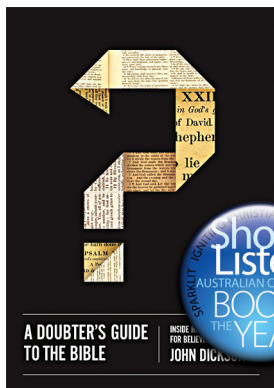
**Alex Crawford** holds degrees in arts, law and theology. He is a practising barrister in Brisbane. Outside the law, he is interested in books, music and seeing the Brisbane Lions win. Alex is married to Penny. They have three adult children and attend St Mark's Anglican Church, Clayfield. He is the secretary of the Mathew Hale Public Library.

**Judith Nichols** is married to Tony. They have four children and thirteen grandchildren. She has a doctorate in classics and ancient history and

qualifications in theology, missiology, education and linguistics. Judith and Tony have ministered together in Indonesia, with indigenous Australians at Nungalinga College and trained missionary candidates. She currently coordinates women's ministry at Dalkeith Anglican Church, Perth.

### Coordinator

**Michael Collie**  
National Director  
SparkLit



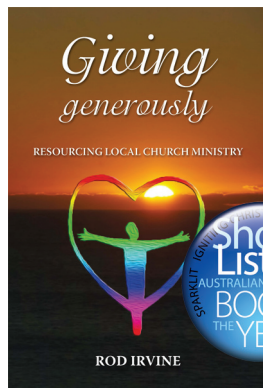
### Shortlisted

**A Doubter's Guide to the Bible:**  
Inside History's Bestseller  
for Believers and Skeptics  
John Dickson

Zondervan

9780310518433

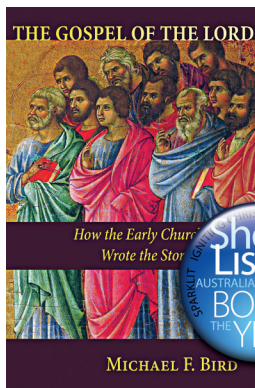
John Dickson's road map to the Bible provides a clear and competent explanation of the Christian faith. He addresses contemporary questions with wit and insight, and deals honestly with interpretations disputed among Christians. Arguments are supported with well-chosen references to a wide range of writers. The place of the Old Testament in Christian belief is particularly well-handled: 'mercy isn't just the first premise of the Old Testament law; it is also the ongoing assumption of the law'. This is a book that can be given with confidence to anyone: not only to sceptics and seekers, but also to believers wanting to give an answer for their faith.



### Shortlisted

**Giving Generously:**  
Resourcing Local Church  
Ministry  
Rod Irvine  
Barton Books  
9781921577284

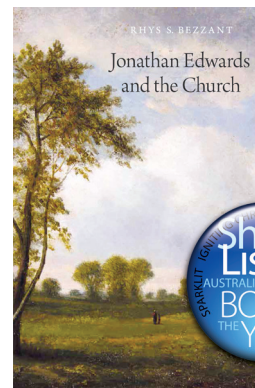
Well, you can't judge a book by its cover! No one has written about fund-raising for the Australian church with such wisdom and authority. Leaders and congregations alike will profit from Rod Irvine's experience and clarity. He understands the tensions that arise between congregations and leadership over money but demonstrates that when people share a vision, the money will follow. Hopefully this book will mark an end to the manipulative and cringe-worthy techniques for raising money that plague and disgrace the church. There is a better way to honour and emulate our generous God.



### Shortlisted

**The Gospel of the Lord:**  
How the Early Church  
Wrote the Story of Jesus  
Michael F. Bird  
Eerdmans Publishing  
9780802867766

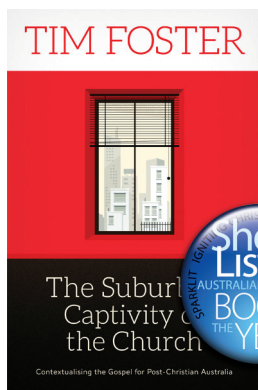
Michael Bird has produced for students of Gospel criticism a concise yet detailed survey of how the early church preserved the stories of Jesus and how this process has been reconstructed by modern scholarship. He engages with the Jesus tradition, form criticism, source criticism, the Gospel genre and the fourfold Gospel. While not all biblical scholars will agree that the New Testament documents are products of 'the community of faith', Bird argues convincingly that the Gospel traditions are essentially reliable. New Testament scholarship doesn't come any more accessible than this. Bird navigates complicated material with dexterity, freshness and humour.



### Shortlisted

**Jonathan Edwards and the Church**  
Rhys Bezzant  
Oxford University Press  
9780199890309

For the first time, a scholarly work takes the reader beyond the usual focus on Jonathan Edwards' evangelistic and revivalist impact, to his developing theology of the church. Rhys Bezzant traces the international application of Edwards' theology in the eighteenth century and its contribution to our understanding of the place of the church in God's eternal purpose. There are lessons here for modern Christians, especially those familiar with Edwards' biography and the New England Puritans. Edwards preached a Gospel concerned for God's purposes for the world. It is the corporate Christian experience and the growth of the church, as well as the conversion of individuals, that is the necessary fruit of his preaching.



### Shortlisted

#### **The Suburban Captivity of the Church:** **Contextualising the Gospel for Post-Christian Australia**

Tim Foster

Acorn Press

9780992447618

Tim Foster challenges evangelicals compromised by the adoption of middle-class, suburban values to re-examine the Gospel and to rediscover the countercultural nature that recommends it to the Gospel-poor. He begins with a helpful reminder that the Gospel is not centred on individual needs but on the purpose of God from Creation to New Creation. While Foster's description of our dominant cultural tribes (suburban, urban and battler) verges on caricature, his argument is worth consideration: the Gospel fulfils human aspirations while demolishing the idols of personal safety, privacy and comfort.



### Shortlisted

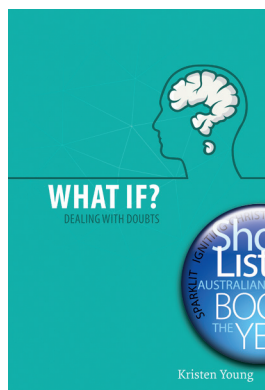
#### **Time Poor Soul Rich:** **60 Second Solutions and other Lengthier Remedies for Busy Professional Women**

Anne Winckel

Ark House

9780994194107

The distractions, temptations and challenges endemic to the life of professional women are tackled in this practical book. It is replete with thoughtful advice and hints for self-care and the wise management of time and relationships. However, it is the real-life stories collected from the author's family, friends and colleagues that form the heart of this book. Experiences of failure, struggle and success are shared freely. Of what value are our achievements if we neglect what is most important?



### Shortlisted

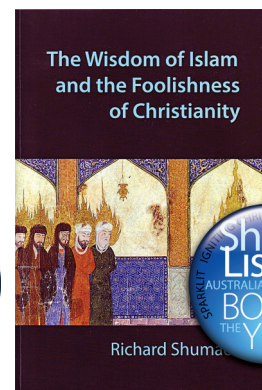
#### **What if?** **Dealing with Doubts**

Kristen Young

Fervr

9781925041460

Kristen Young writes for teenagers who wrestle with the big questions of life: issues such as the reality of God; the challenge of science; the claims about Jesus; the reliability of the Bible; dealing with feelings and failure; the purpose of life; and the problem of suffering. Her writing is clear and unpretentious, succinct and readable. This book does exactly what it claims to do: to initiate discussion it gives 'the beginning of answers' to questions young people are asking. To feed the conversation, each chapter ends with suggestions for books and websites. 'What If' is a useful and digestible starter for young enquirers and helpful revision for believers of all ages.



### Shortlisted

#### **The Wisdom of Islam and the Foolishness of Christianity**

Richard Shumack

Island View Publishing

9780992499709

'Come on! Surely you cannot believe what the Bible says about God! Surely you must realize that because the Bible is full of crazy ideas like the Trinity, it must be corrupted.'

With generosity and insight Richard Shumack systematically examines nine philosophical objections to Christian belief held by Muslim thinkers. The incarnation, the cross, grace and revelation are counter-intuitive. But when we move from a legislative model to a fellowship model of divine-human interaction they are also rational. Shumack is clear, respectful and persuasive.



## 2015 Young Australian Christian Writer Award

### Winner



#### Tim Sharp *Undying*

The Realms are at war and all Creation is in peril. Our narrator is a young assassin on a mission which brings her

from her realm to ours. The action is unpredictable and her survival is in doubt up to the final act. Characters develop and mature realistically and offer insights into human nature. A bold plot delivers a powerful warning and message of hope.

#### An extract from *Undying*

*Jolted awake by a sharp slap across my face, I was sitting upright in my bed looking frenziedly about for my attacker. The paranoid expression on my face must have spoken volumes as to my state of mind, for a nasty little snicker drifted out of the shadows in the opposite corner of the room.*

*'Oh, Nidairii,' it hissed mockingly. 'Who would have thought that the proud little sister of the great Kivahn du' Mortis could sink so low?'*

*'Who's there?' I seethed, careful not to raise my voice.*

*'Why do you whisper, Nidairii? There is no one here but you and I.' She stepped out of the shadows and I caught my breath.*

*I was dreaming. I had to be dreaming, for the creature standing before me was an Immortal ... she was me. But not me. Her eyes were murky, her skin almost grey, such was its unhealthy pallor. This other me looked dead.*

*'Am I dreaming?' I asked flatly, for the first time in my life actually trying to restrain my temper.*

*The other me laughed, her eyes twinkling merrily. 'You may have plummeted to the depths, child, but I am pleased to see that you are at least untainted by the plague of cowardice. And you seem to have at least a tentative grasp on reality.'*

*I glared. 'What is this about?'*

*'I grow weary of watching you wallow in your self-pity. You sob and sigh about being useless to your allies but you will not even move a muscle to fix your situation!'*

*'How can I?' I demanded, bewildered, and flushing hotly at the intense criticism being directed my way. 'My sword was destroyed!'*

*'Excuses!' sneered the other me. 'Do you think any Executioner or Assassin wields the blade he or she used as a Novice when they achieve Master status? They have all lost their blades in one way or another, and they have all discovered what a real weapon is! You have never seen your brother get even remotely serious in a battle, but do you honestly think that the House of Spring's Watcher paid money for her bow and those enchanted arrows? She may be a weak and spineless little thing, but her arrows compliment her fighting style to perfection ... that is something that money cannot buy!'*

*'I don't understand what you are telling me!' I protested. 'If she did not fashion or buy her weapon then where could she possibly have got it from?'*

*Infuriation sparked across the other me's face and she looked like she wanted to tear me to pieces. A little tremor raced up my back*

*as I realised the last place I had seen this look ... the Dark One that had destroyed my sword.*

*'Maybe it's time for me to take over,' the dark girl suggested, her voice edged. 'Instead of walking upright, you have been hobbling around bearing a burden of imagined wrongs! How can you fight with a crooked spine? I do not know what has happened to you, Nidairii, but it has crippled ...'*

*'You have nothing to offer me,' I murmured, cutting her off. I now realised exactly what I was looking at. This was the me of only a few days ago. Arrogant, irritable, and completely full of myself. And she was trying to get back in control. 'Kivahn is right. Immortal-kind are drowning in an ocean of apathy.' I squeezed my eyes shut and shook my head, doing my level best to clear it of the cobwebs. When I opened my eyes again, she was still there.*

### Second Prize



#### Trudy Adams *The Sunshine List*

A teenage protagonist and her family deal with rising tensions as changing circumstances threaten close family

bonds. The narrator's voice is believable and engaging. Emotions and hopes are revealed in her diary, letters and 'to-do' lists. Themes include common contemporary issues such as cyber-bullying, drug abuse and the fragmentation of family relationships. At the end of a complex story that continues to produce surprises the narrator reaches a sense of resolution and hope.

#### An extract from *The Sunshine List*

*I looked down and saw Kade's bare feet behind mine. I glanced at Reece. His face was pale and his eyes begging me to be free. He managed to say, 'Let her go!' but it came out feebly.*

*I could feel Kade's heart racing against my back. His breathing was heavy and I realised he was scared too. He'd been caught and injured. He was stuck between three teenage boys and a cliff. He was just as vulnerable, and I was his only protection.*

*If I could just remove myself from the equation, we would be safe.*

*I raised my foot and stamped it as hard as I could on Kade's left foot.*

*The hiking boot came down heavily. Kade screamed. I moved my foot away and saw the blood and disfigured toes that I'd broken. The sight of it made my stomach lurch. Kade loosened his grip. He dropped the knife downward and cut the back of my hand as I moved to get away. Reece, Harry and Lucas ran forward. I saw them coming with wild anger and stepped aside, momentarily afraid of the violence I saw in their eyes too. The three of them tackled Kade to the ground, and the knife fell over the edge.*

*Reece hit him again, and I think he would have kept hitting him but I yelled at him to stop.*

*I was crying by then. 'Oh Caity,' he said when he realised, and he hurried back over and held me. Harry and Lucas stood over Kade, who was unconscious.*

*'I thought I was going to die,' I sobbed into Reece's chest.*

### Third Prize



**Sarah Backholer and Rebecca Nisbet**  
***Seasons of Grace***

Fresh and honest devotions will leave young mothers feeling understood and

less alone. The illustrations are real and the theological reflections appropriate and enlightening. Short chapters match the cadence of a young mother's hectic and fragmented life.

### An extract from *Seasons of Grace*

*Parenthood is grace upon grace; we receive beyond our capacity and are called to give beyond our capacity. ...*

*I fear that in giving unreservedly to another, I'll somehow lose myself. Babies take when we are not ready to give. It's easy to end up angry, wearing a constant sense of being owed. Decisions are made out of fear and self-defence, rather than generosity. It's all we have. Our resources are limited.*

*But his are not. As followers of Jesus, we need not fear losing ourselves—we're called to do so wholeheartedly. Parenthood takes sacrifice, energy we don't have, and the humility to cry out for help when we need it. Let us embrace this with fearlessness and resolve, rather than cowering from it in fear. Be courageous! Christ leads the way.*

### Special mention

**Bethany Buckley**  
***The Road Home***

### Judging criteria

The **Australian Christian Teen Writer Award** carries a prize of \$1,000 and is offered annually for the best unpublished manuscript written by an Australian citizen under 18 years of age. This award was withheld in 2015.

The **Young Australian Christian Writer Award** carries a prize of \$2,500 and is given annually for the best unpublished manuscript written by an Australian citizen under 30 years of age.

Supplementary awards may be made.

The winning works will explore a Christian perspective or theme and incorporate, explain or encourage Christian life and values. Entries are judged with an eye to the:

**Original nature** and content of the work.

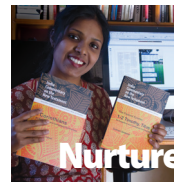
**Literary style**, including suitability for the target audience.

**Contribution** that the work makes in meeting a need for Christian writing in Australia.

## You can fan the flames of faith



Where the Gospel is preached literature will be needed. You can help **SparkLit advance God's Kingdom by empowering Christian writers and publishers** around the world.



**SparkLit nurtures emerging publishers** by directing funds, expertise and energy where Christian writing is needed most.

We encourage local initiative and support sustainable enterprises. As a result, indigenous churches are given a voice, Christ is made known and lives are changed.



**SparkLit equips publishing professionals.**

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resources are scarce. We provide theological texts and essential reference works to students and pastors in Asia, Africa and the Middle East.

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**Books submitted for the  
2015 Australian Christian  
Book of the Year Award**

**Acorn Press**

*The Suburban Captivity of the Church: Contextualising the Gospel for Post-Christian Australia*  
Tim Foster

*Beyond the Myth of Self-Esteem: Finding Fulfilment*  
John Smith with Coral Chamberlain

*The Songs of Jesse Adams*  
Peter McKinnon

**Amethyst Books**

*Awaken the Spirit*  
Jay Jeffries (editor)

**Anglican Press Australia**

*Human Sexuality*  
Mark D. Thompson (editor)

**Aquila Press**

*Matthew: A Great Light Dawns*  
Peter G. Bolt

**Ark House Press**

*Beauty All Around*  
Catherine Grace

*Beyond the Palm Trees*  
Robyn Harbour

*The Tent and the Elephant*  
Colin Reed

*Time Poor Soul Rich: 60 Second Solutions and other Lengthier Remedies for Busy Professional Women*  
Anne Winckel

*There Runs a Quiet River*  
Lien Nguyen Walker

*He Speaks Our Language*  
Rob Douglas

**Authentic**

*Heart of a Lioness*  
Irene Gleeson

**Barton Books**

*Giving Generously: Resourcing Local Church Ministry*  
Rod Irvine

**Big Sky Publishing**

*Captains of the Soul: A History of Australian Army Chaplains*  
Michael Gladwin

**Birdcatcher Books**

*Real, Radical and Revolutionary: Building Kingdom Relationships with God, with each other, and with the world*  
Lynn B. Fowler

**Black Inc.**

*Born Bad: Original Sin and the Making of the Western World*  
James Boyce

**Cascade Books**

*UnCorinthian Leadership*  
David I. Starling

**Cityharvest International**

*Grieve Upwards*  
David Schaeffer

**Collective Wisdom**

*Girlwise: A Guide to Taking Care of Your Body*  
Sharon Witt  
*Girlwise: A Girl's Guide to Life*  
Sharon Witt

**Eavis & Donovan**

*Healing in the Church Today*  
Sid J. Eavis & John B. Donovan (editors)

**Eerdmans Publishing**

*The Gospel of the Lord: How the Early Church Wrote the Story of Jesus*  
Michael F. Bird

**Even Before Publishing**

*Lemon-sized Tumour*  
Jenny Overton

**Fervr**

*Growing Up by the Book*  
Dr Patricia Weerakoon  
*What if? Dealing with Doubts*  
Kristen Young

**Fiona Pfennigwerth**

*The Gospel According to John Illuminated*  
Fiona Pfennigwerth

**Heritage Resources**

*Gallipoli: The Road to Jerusalem*  
Kelvin Crombie

**IceFire Publishing**

*Echoes of Jesus*  
Jonathan Clerke

**Island View Publishing**

*The Wisdom of Islam and the Foolishness of Christianity*  
Richard Shumack

**Jim Reiher**

*The Sunburnt Circus*  
Jim Reiher

**Josh Reid Media**

*Powerful Christian Radio*  
Josh Reid

**MAF**

*Crosswinds*  
Ron Watts

**MediaCom Education**

*A Bird's Eye View of the Bible*  
Doug Rowston

**Moody Publishers**

*Facing Leviathan*  
Mark Sayers

**Morning Star Publishing**

*Dolphin's Leap, Hind's Feet*  
Hedley Beare

**NewSouth Publishing**

*Fraying*  
Michele Gierck

**Oxford University Press**

*Jonathan Edwards and the Church*  
Rhys S. Bezzant

**Paternoster Press**

*Paul in Syria: The Background to Galatians*  
Paul W. Barnett

**Peter O'Sullivan**

*Touch & Go*  
Peter O'Sullivan

**Poetica Christi Press**

*Circumnavigation*  
Cathy Altmann

**Rhiza Press**

*Too Pretty*  
Andrea Grigg  
*A Summary of the Bible*  
Nick Hawkes

**Russell Brandon**

*Dark Clouds & Silver Linings*  
Russell Brandon  
*Danella Pl: The Case of Charlie and Mr Crab*  
Russell Brandon

**Signs Publishing**

*The Man the ANZACS Revered*  
Daniel Reynaud  
*Why I try to Believe*  
Nathan Brown  
*Do Justice*  
Nathan Brown & Joanna Darby (editors)

**Strand Publishing**

*C. S. Lewis and the Country House Murders*  
Kel Richards

**Tabor Publications**

*Living in the Image of God*  
Barry Chant  
*Gifts of the Spirit: A Reappraisal*  
Barry Chant  
*My Personal Practical Prayer Diary*  
Barry Chant

**UNOH Publishing**

*A Climate of Hope*  
Claire Dawson & Dr Mick Pope  
*The Book of Acts*  
Jim Reiher

**WestBow Press**

*Working for God*  
Colin Noble

**Windsor Scroll Publishing**

*Grace Undone*  
Marlene Marburg

**Zondervan**

*A Doubter's Guide to the Bible: Inside History's Bestseller for Believers and Skeptics*  
John Dickson

The 2015 Australian Christian Literature Awards were announced and prizes presented in Melbourne on Thursday 13 August 2015.

The Australian Christian Literature Awards are administered by SparkLit. Formerly the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge Australia and the Australian Christian Literature Society.

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