

# Reviews: A devotional guide, a children's book, a text on transitional ministry and Christian fiction

December 13, 2016

[\*Grace Always Comes: Daily Devotionals Through the Bible\*](#)

*By Lyn Robbins (Austin Brothers Publishing)*

Most people who train to complete a long race try not to do it alone. The miles pass more amiably if they run with a friend. A fellow runner provides accountability and companionship, both vital to completing the challenge.



That's sort of how Lyn Robbins' new book, [\*Grace Always Comes\*](#), works. It's a 366-day partner for someone who wants to read the Bible cover-to-cover in a year. Robbins provides a plan—a four-chapter-per-day reading guide. He also offers a bonus—a single 250-word devotional inspired by each day's text.

Robbins' book comes alongside the reader like a faithful running buddy who whispers, "Don't give up; we can do this." He read the Bible through and wrote his daily essays in exactly one year. So, if you think you don't have time, get tired or maybe find yourself a little bored by Numbers,

Robbins is right beside you. Only, since he also wrote each of those devotionals, it's kind of like he's running beside you *backwards*.

Robbins is a creative, thoughtful Bible student and teacher. He amplifies truth from across the pages of God's word—sometimes elaborating on the expected; sometimes mining scriptural surprises. He's also a committed disciple. Just like a great companion aids a runner-in-training, he'll help you grow in your faith.

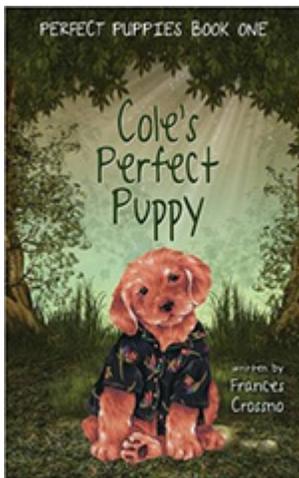
*Marv Knox, editor*

Baptist Standard

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### ***Cole's Perfect Puppy***

*By Frances M. Crossno (First Edition Designs)*



*Cole's Perfect Puppy* is a chapter book for grades 2-5. The interesting story about Cole, his brother, Caleb, and their friend, Rachel, won Mom's Choice and Purple Dragonfly awards.

Cole wants a puppy more than anything. He finds the perfect one when golden retriever Scarlet escapes the pet store and takes a bunch of people on a funny chase. Cole is disappointed when he's sure the present scooting around the Christmas tree is a puppy, but his uncle's girlfriend purchased Dandy Danny, a pot-bellied pig.

Cole takes the pig to visit his new friend Rachel to complain. When he's invited for hot chocolate, Cole learns her daddy died, and she couldn't keep her kitten. He can't understand why she's always happy. Rachel tells Cole her daddy taught her always to have faith.

After the holidays, the pet store owner pays Cole to walk dogs and clean out cages to buy Scarlet. Rachel helps Cole care for the kittens and especially loves one of them. Just when he has the money, Cole must decide whether to buy a kitten for Rachel or get Scarlet. Will the scoundrel puppy ever be his?

The book teaches lessons in a fun way. We should pray to God for everything. We should take care of our pets. We should stop a person who is being mean. We should be kind even when it costs us, and we should remember John 3:16 when we tell the Christmas story.

*Sawyer James Hillman, age 8, with his grandmother*

*Kathy Robinson Hillman, past president*

*Baptist General Convention of Texas*

*Waco*

***Transitional Ministry Today: Successful Strategies for Churches and Pastors***

*By Norman B. Bendroth (Rowman & Littlefield/Alban Books)*

What church is not going through some sort of major transition today? The answer might be churches that are in denial about what they ought to be thinking about for the future.



Norman Bendroth assembles a dozen chapter authors, each with special expertise in some area of church transition, to help wise churches that want to address their needed changes.

There are numerous applications in each chapter that could be applied to any church transition, so reader would do well to read more than the chapters that specifically draw them to this book. Nevertheless, specific moments of change include when a pastor leaves, when a church recognizes it is time to change strategies, when a church is willing to confront its own culture of dysfunction, when a church dies, and unique situations in immigrant and African-American churches.

There is ample analytical material, including looking at the context of church life today and a theological basis for transitional ministry. Lengthy end notes, bibliography and index will help serious scholars who want to dig further. In fact, *Transitional Ministry Today* is a textbook for a doctoral seminar at Dallas Baptist University.

The strength of the book, however, is the gift of being extremely practical. In every instance, it provides practical definitions of the basic issues, clear descriptions of the challenges that will be faced and tasks that must be accomplished to address each transition situation—usually from the chapter author's own ministry.

This book will remain close at hand to refer to again and again.

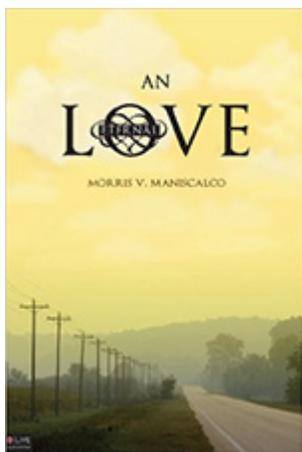
*Karl Fickling, Interim Church Services coordinator*

*Baptist General Convention of Texas*

*Dallas*

### ***An Eternal Love***

*By Morris V. Maniscalco (Tate Publishing Enterprises)*



Author Morris V. Maniscalco packs *An Eternal Love* with tender gifts for the heart. The story centers on a young man, Paul Manual. The events unfold as Paul begins a mission to rekindle the flame of Christianity in a small Mississippi town in 1990.

Maniscalco does an excellent job of giving life to his fictional characters. The author delves into tender issues—rape, prejudices, suicide, alcoholism and parenting. Through each experience, the story of salvation flows.

The addition of each character sprinkled throughout the story keeps the reader engaged from cover to cover. Maniscalco's characters clearly show broken lives can be restored if they accept Christ. Readers will laugh and cry as they turn the pages.

*An Eternal Love* invites each reader to examine his or her own relationship with Jesus.

*Bobbie Bomar-Brown*

*Estes Park, Colo.*