

CHRISTY
by
Catherine Marshall

When, in 1955, seven Russian journalists visited the United States, one of them claimed that he did not believe that Catherine Marshall existed. Having been so impressed with the story of her life, he thought she must be the creation of American propaganda.

Sara Catherine Wood was born in Johnson City, Virginia on September 27, 1914. In 1936, she married Peter Marshall, a Scottish minister, who later served for two years as chaplain of the United States Senate. After Peter's death in January, 1949, Catherine published a collection of his sermons. The collection, *Meet the Master, Mister Jones*, became a bestseller enabling Catherine Marshall to fulfill her desire to "make a contribution to my time and generation."

Her popular novel *Christy* was published in 1967. Modeled after her mother's experiences, it is the story of a young missionary, nineteen-year-old Christy Huddleston, who in 1912 journeys to Cutter Gap, Tennessee in the Great Smoky Mountains. She leaves her well-to-do family to teach in a one-room school house amid the poverty and squalor of the rough hewn mountain people. Christy comes to love and respect these fierce people as she struggles against their stubborn pride and dark superstitions.

Christy soon finds that this is not just a journey into the back hills of Tennessee, but a spiritual journey as well. Growing up in a loving Christian home, she never really examined her own faith. When that faith is challenged, she feels lost and confused. Helping to guide Christy is Miss Alice Henderson, a Quaker missionary, "tall, blond, patrician with that certain sparkle. Her basic beliefs had been as settled and sure as the nineteen-year-old Christy's had been unsure." With Miss Alice quietly pointing the way, Christy finds answers to her troubling questions.

Christy is a heart-warming Christian novel, filled with suspense, adventure, humor and words of wisdom. Even so, it is always a good idea to preview a book before your children read it. Some sensitive subjects are dealt with here. One suggestion is to read the book aloud in your family and edit it as you read so that your younger children can enjoy it to.

Experience a bit of Christy's world by trying some of the following activities:

1. Find out more about Catherine Marshall by reading her biography of Peter Marshall, *A Man Called Peter*.
2. Volunteer to teach a Sunday School class, home school group or some other class of children.
3. Interview someone who is active in an adult literacy program. Why do they do what they do? How do they teach? What are the rewards? Have they made a difference?
4. Research Quakerism. Who were the Quakers? What did they believe? Are there still Quakers today? Are their beliefs and practices the same?
5. Go to the library or local health food store and find books about herbal medicine. Learn some simple remedies.
6. Start an herb garden, maybe just a few pots in the window sill. Try cooking with fresh

herbs. Can you taste a difference?

7. While you are at the library, check out some books about mountain crafts and make something for your home or begin making Christmas gifts.
8. Learn to play the harmonica, recorder, dulcimer or autoharp.
9. Read Catherine Marshall's other novel, *Julia*.
10. If you live close enough, take a walk in the mountains and enjoy their beauty.
11. George Mueller is probably the best known "faith" missionary. Find out what Mr. Mueller's views were about asking for money to do God's work. Do you agree? Write a paper presenting your thoughts.
12. Research typhoid. Is it still a problem today?
13. If you are not currently studying Latin, start an introductory course. *Latina Christiana* or *The Latin Road to English Grammar* are good places to begin.
14. Study personal hygiene rules. Make a teaching booklet to share with a younger sibling or friend.
15. Do you know your family background? Interview members of your family to find out more about your heritage.
16. When questioned why Christianity was important to her, Christy had difficulty giving an answer. How would you answer? ("But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." I Peter 3:15)
17. Contrast the characters of David Grantland and Dr. Neil MacNeill. How did each character change in the book?
18. If possible, borrow a copy of *Christy* on DVD from your library. After reading the book, compare the two. Does the movie follow the book closely? How is it different? Do you think the characters were true to the book?
19. Did you like the book or the movie better? Why?
20. Conduct a survey to find out if people think that books are better than the movies made from them. Make a chart to show the results of your survey.