



Quaker Summer

Lisa Samson

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Sometimes you have to go a little bit crazy to discover the life you were meant to live.

Heather Curridge is coming unhinged. And people are starting to notice. What's wrong with a woman who has everything--a mansion on a lake, a loving son, a heart-surgeon husband--yet still feels miserable inside?

When Heather spends the summer with two ancient Quaker sisters and a crusty nun running a downtown homeless shelter, she finds herself at a crossroads. Life turns upside down for Heather in a *Quaker Summer*.

“One of the most powerful voices in Christian fiction, Samson delivers ...a staggering examination of the Christian conscience.” —*Publishers Weekly*

Quaker Summer Details

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Author : Lisa Samson

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Holly says

What I liked:

I liked the overall concept of the plot and main character (Heather). Heather is a wife to a cardiac surgeon. They have a son and she is a stay at home mom. They have plenty of money, which is mostly spent on crap they don't need. She spends money to buy STUFF as a way to fill a void she seems to have in life. After a lifetime of trying to fill that void, she realizes she can't do it with material possessions or social status.

What I disliked:

The constant conversations she had with everyone else about the problems in her mind. It seemed like every few pages she had the exact conversation with her friends or husband or son. I got sick of that. If I were the main character's friend in this book, I would avoid her at all costs because she would annoy the hell out of me.

Judith says

Didn't know I was picking up a book of searching Christian fiction, but the timing was perfect as I was on a similar journey. Library BOOK, BUT THINK I'LL BUY A COPY OF MY OWN.

Linda says

Heather seems to have it all. A great husband, a loving son, and all the stuff she can fit into her big house. However it isn't enough. Heather feels she has much to answer for, including bullying behavior as a young person. She also realizes that she does not want to continue down her current path of consumerism. Heather needs to find a new way and, with the help of 3 new friends, her loving family, and several others, she does. Christian fiction at its best.

Mary Davis says

I almost never give a 5 star rating even if I really enjoyed the book. But this one deserves it. Mostly I read for entertainment, but this book went beyond that, right into speaking deeply and causing change.

Kirsten says

This book was voted novel of the year by Women of Faith. The message of the book is great, especially since

we live in such a materialistic society where people believe that the objects that they own are what define them as a person. This novel opens both your heart and mind as to how it really should be. Although I didn't find the writing to be great (definitely not to be categorized as novel of the year), the message was. Overall, it was a good read.

Anneliese says

This fascinated me, because it is an evangelical story written with a very modern day problem type of angle, a real 'third world problem' kind of story. Heather is unhappy—and she doesn't know why, but everything she tries to do to make her happy again doesn't work. She buys things, volunteers at the 'rich people school' with other unhappy people, and can't find satisfaction in anything.

When a kangaroo wanders across her path, and she coats the inside of her car with chocolate cake, she realizes that it's time to make a change. After spending a few weeks with the sisters, she understands what has been missing in her life—and works to make the change, and help others see the same thing.

Jessica says

I give this book 3.75 stars, although I can't bring myself to round up to the four-star rating. First of all, 401 pages was WAY too long. The story could have effectively been told in 300. Secondly, I think part of my let-down is because it was one of Publishers Weekly's Top Books of 2007 and the Women of Faith Novel of the Year that same year, so I totally expected it to be phenomenal. While I enjoyed the ending immensely, the rest went in spurts ranging from sweet to dragging.

Overall, it was a nice story of finding faith, embracing diversity, and the American cliche of discovering what's truly important in life. The story drives home the inner battle of being able to accept that a life of less is more, putting material possessions aside in exchange for simplicity, and a love of God.

I have already bought two more of Samson's books, so I will give them a fair shot before making a final determination as to whether to keep reading her works.

Amanda Peiffer says

A book about finding purpose and restoration, this novel shows how pacifism can look in lives well lived. Inspiring without being preachy. I loved it.

Valerie (Val's Vicinity) says

Heather Curridge has it all: A great family, ritzy lake-front house, possessions aplenty, and enough money to buy more "things" whenever she wants. Her husband is a surgeon, her son goes to a private school. This is the perfect life, what many people aspire to have but never achieve. Heather loves her stuff, she knows she is fortunate...but then why is she feeling so discontent? Shouldn't she be content with her pampered life? And why have the sins of her childhood started to haunt her?

Many people have said this book is life-changing, and I can certainly see how it could be. It did cause me to look around at my possessions, and it effectively and truthfully gets the message across that "things" can't and won't fulfill us....and that is a message we often need reminding of. I did find the story kind of slow in spots, especially in the beginning, but it did pick up. Overall, this is a fairly interesting/entertaining book, with the added bonus of a good message!

Melodie Roschman says

I want to start by saying that this book has a lot of good messages, and I agree with almost everything that it says. Social justice, peace, and care for the poor and downtrodden are at the heart of the gospel, and after having avoided Christian fiction for years (after reading a lot of it in high school), I'm glad that a successful Christian novelist is critiquing the prosperity gospel, middle-class satisfaction, and smugness of the evangelical Christian Right.

That being said, while this book works well as a sermon, it doesn't work at all as a novel. None of these people feel at all real; they're plot-serving cliches at worst, and two-dimensional at best. The most vibrant characters in the novel are the two elderly sisters, and even they are too wise, too perfect in their ability to dish out a pithy opinion or impossibly sage Bible-based advice at the drop of a hat. The protagonist especially didn't seem like a real person at all, with her folksy expressions, on-the-nose explanations of her thoughts and feelings, and weird asides (why all the little jabs at feminism and liberals?) It's possible that I, a 24-year-old liberal graduate student, am too far removed from the main characters in this book for them to ring true to life. And yet - everyone felt like they were introduced to teach a lesson, to illustrate a point. I read a lot of novels about people with viewpoints far different from my own, and yet they still feel like *people.* Heather Curridge feels more like the character equivalent of a faux-wood Live, Laugh, Love sign.

There were moments when the writing was effective, when I felt myself wanting to learn more or delve more into a scene. But for the most part, the book didn't know when to linger and when to move on. Promising scenes and conversations were abruptly cut short in favor of another lunch, another phone call with Heather's indistinguishable lady friends (all of whom dispensed perfect wisdom). Other conversations and symbols were dwelt upon far longer than they should have been - Heather would identify a symbol, and then explain what it meant, relate it to a couple events happening at the moment, and then reinforce what it meant to her. That much explanation greatly weakens writing's power.

Revisiting a Christian novel for the first time in a long time, I am struck by Christian art's fear of subtlety. Because Christian art is often conceived not primarily as a project in and of itself, but rather as a vehicle to reach people, creators - whether they're filmmakers, novelists, or musicians - are afraid of people missing the point. Instead of trusting the reader/viewer to understand what they're saying, they make themselves painfully, explicitly, anvil-droppingly clear. The result, unfortunately, is that the messages can be alienating; as a reader you can feel talked down to, like you set out to read a story and were tricked into going to a lecture instead.

All that being said, however, this book's message is a very good one, and if there's someone in your life who eagerly consumes Christian fiction, this would be a good entry in the genre to add to their reading list.

Stacy says

Wow, I can see why this book was Christianity Today's 2008 Novel of the Year. This book took me a while to get through, but not because of the content, but other things going on (relative in hospital, company at our house, etc). I think I would have flown through this book if I had my "normal" time to read.

It is taking me a while to digest this book. I don't think I can give it a review that will do it justice. I enjoyed it. I found it choppy in writing style, but riveting. I found it challenging. Thought-provoking. A recommended read, to be sure.

Jan Stone says

An okay read--maybe I'm at the wrong life stage to fully enjoy it.

Robyn Schlichter says

It was a good story but took nearly 250 pages to actually get really into it and then it was just the last 60 pages or so. I can see why some might like the story line of someone figuring out how to live for Jesus in our modern society of gotta have more. Just didn't capture me til almost the end.

Roxenne Smith says

I made myself finish this book, though I nearly gave up on it several times. I certainly would have abandoned it if I hadn't been sequestered in a mountain cabin with nothing else to read. The main character of this story struggles to "be good" and "live like Jesus." Her self reflections take her back to the mean things she did in high school and she is now determined to redeem herself. She goes on an incredible (as in not believable) journey to find and ask forgiveness of the high school classmate she bullied. This journey involves traveling to a far-away state, finding a wilderness guide, taking a two day canoe trip, camping overnight, and overcoming the dread of having to pee in the woods. And then, if this isn't silly enough, there is the big shoot out at the homeless shelter where she volunteers. There are a lot of characters in this book who I can barely relate to, including the main character.

This book won a "Women of Faith" award for best fiction a couple of years ago, so I'm either out of step or there were lean pickings that year.

Joanne says

Heather has everything, and she's not happy. She knows she should be happy -- she compulsively buys name brand everything, she's got a great family, lives in a great neighborhood -- but she isn't.

For most of the book I thought Heather needed to get over herself and go do something useful. She eventually came to that conclusion herself. What I did enjoy was her and her supporting characters'

description of how God does not work in the ways we expect, and sometimes when we are most troubled that's when he's most active. That rings true to me.
