

Reconnecting the Dots for a New Picture of Harry

By Margaret Carbaugh

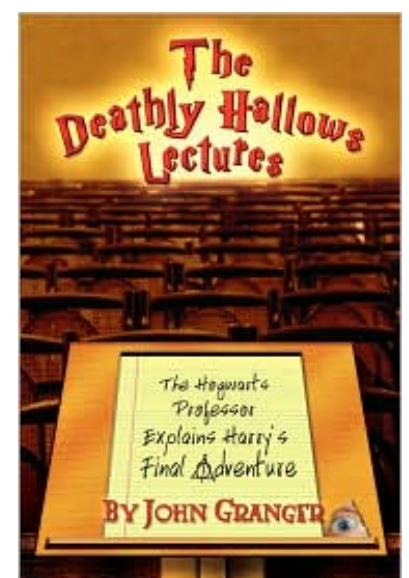
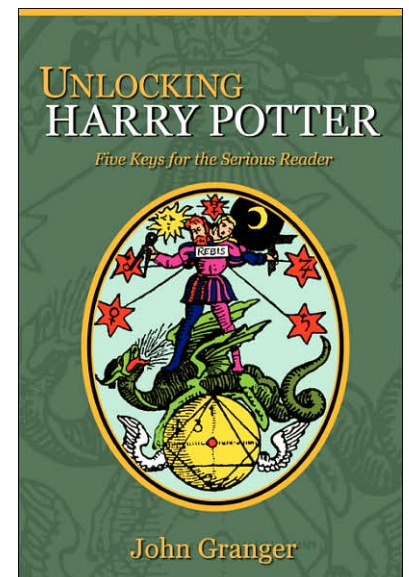
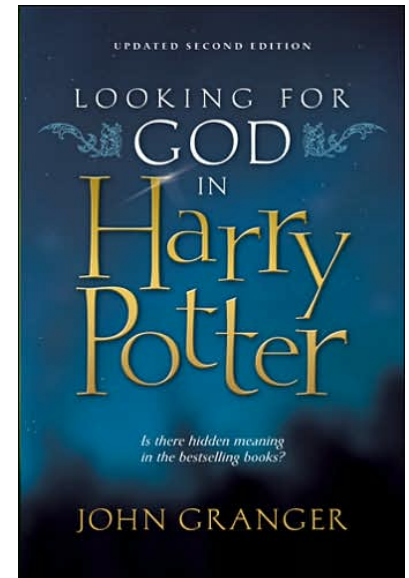
“We live life forward but understand it backward.” This quote explains how I came to understand the Harry Potter series, not just as literature, but as Christian literature in the tradition of C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien, author of the *Lord of the Ring* series.

When the first Harry Potter books came out, I did not get it. Furious at J.K. Rowling for likening herself to C.S. Lewis, I felt that *The Sorcerer’s Stone* depicted an a-thiestic, amoral universe because it lacked the central unifying character of an Aslan. “If these books are like the Narnia series, where is God,” I demanded.

I wanted to keep criticizing Rowling so I read each new book as it came out. Along the way, I quit being so critical and started scratching my head. “Could there be something here that I am missing,” I asked. About a year ago, I found the answer when I read *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*. As soon as I turned the last page, I went back to my bookshelf and got books 1 to 6 down.

With notebook in hand, I began retracing my steps through Harry’s seven years at Hogwarts. I noted clues about the characters, plot, themes, and imagery, just as I had been taught to do in classes on medieval literature and Shakespeare. I also took the time to read several scholarly books on the series by John Granger (no relationship to Hermione). Within two weeks, I had re-connected the dots in a new way and had a completely different picture of Harry Potter and J.K. Rowling.

Thanks to John Granger’s incredibly insightful books, I understand that the boy who didn’t die is the literary heir of other Christian heroes, including an orphan named Arthur, who pulled a sword out of a stone and was mentored by a wizard named Merlin. Finally, I believe that Harry is the “heir” of the “potter” just as the four Pevinses children are the sons of Adam and the daughters of Eve. As a result of writing this series, Rowling is also the heir of Lewis and Tolkien and all the other great Christian writers before her. Ω



I’d love to have a discussion with anyone who is interested in the Christian themes and literary heritage of the Harry Potter series. If you want to know more, check out these books from our library.

- *Looking for God in Harry Potter*
- *Unlocking Harry Potter*
- *The Deathly Hallows Lecture*

We also have five of the first six movies in the library. These are in the young adult section. Why not check them out and watch them with your children before you see *The Deathly Hallows*.