

# 2024 State of Christian Retailing

Beyond The Shelves



This report draws on data reported to The Parable Group by nearly 200 U.S. Christian retailers, analyzed to make the Christian retail channel smarter and stronger:

- *\$84.4 MILLION in sales*
- *2.26 MILLION consumer receipts*
- *NATIONAL survey results*





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# Thriving Beyond the Shelves

In the dynamic world of Christian retail, 2023 stands as a testament to strength, innovation, and purposeful evolution. The challenges of yesteryear didn't break us; they propelled us into a future where adaptability isn't just a buzzword but a guiding light.

Beyond the shelves, Christian retail is alive with newfound energy. The agility that once saved the day now thrusts us into a retail landscape defined by digital prowess, evolving customer expectations, and a steadfast commitment to purpose-driven service.

This year's State of Christian Retail report isn't your run-of-the-mill data dump. It's a genuine narrative of triumph, unraveling the intricacies of 2023. Join us in witnessing the convergence of retail strength and innovation—where retailers are turning hurdles into stepping stones to a brighter, more adaptive future.

Consider this report your roadmap through the Christian retail landscape. Uncover 2023's numbers, decode trends, and get a glimpse of what's shaping the aisles. It's not just information; it's your playbook for the year ahead.

## Findings including:

- In-depth analysis of year-end sales
- Cross-channel bestsellers comparisons
- A front-row seat to product category trends
- Snapshots of retailer outlook

**Gear up for a thriving 2024. The journey starts right here.**





# Trends, Triumphs & Takeaways

In a landmark year for Christian retailers, the pages of 2023 unfold a story of strength, adaptability, and unyielding dedication.

Here's a look at some of the biggest takeaways from 2023:





# 1. Grit and Grind

In 2023, Christian retailers exemplified an unwavering commitment to fortify their store's vitality and impact. With tenacity and determination, they employed a spectrum of strategies, ranging from targeted customer outreach and retention to recruiting top-tier staff, elevating customer service, boosting sales, and sustaining robust cash flow.

Survey outcomes disclose that 74% actively engaged in promoting their stores on social media; 60% adjusted their inventory mix, and 43% devoted more personal time to the sales floor. Additionally, over half of retailers employed marketing through catalogs, emails, and websites.

Furthermore, more than a third of stores invested in transformative interior changes, including remodels, new fixtures, lighting enhancements, and layout updates. One retailer shared, "We have been able to do some upgrades to the store. Got new carpet for the sales floor space and got all air conditioning units running."

**“** *We changed the layout of the store with new bookshelves and also currently finishing a small expansion of the store”*

**Joel Evans, *JC's Christian Book Store***


**“** *We rebranded and painted the front of our store....same name just a new look. It's so nice and contemporary.”*

**Merv Stoltzfus, *Gospel Book Store***

## 2. Sales Success

In a remarkable turn of events, Christian stores defied market expectations in 2023, witnessing a substantial 8% increase in sales compared to 2022. This impressive growth stood in stark contrast to the broader U.S. book sales, which saw a 2.6% decline in 2023 from the previous year, as reported by outlets contributing to Circana BookScan™. This divergence highlighted the robust performance of Christian stores in the face of a challenging market.

Strategic inventory management, introduction of new product lines, and adept pricing strategies contributed to this stellar growth. One retailer expressed joy, stating, "2023 was a strong year for us and the best in the history of our store," setting an optimistic tone for continued momentum in 2024.

 19% UP so a greater reach and impact into the community!"


**Danny Vera, Christ-Centered Life Store, Inc.**

 We broke sales records all 12 months."


**Brian Culbertson, Blessings Christian Bookstore**

 Had another record-breaking year of sales. We had our 3rd largest sales day in December in our 40 years of business."


**Donna McCollough, Dove Christian Supply**

 Sales were up so we needed more staff. Our increase this year is going to be about 20% for the year. Honestly, our customers are just so glad that we are still around, we just open the doors, provide good selection and good customer service in a clean and inviting environment for them to love their shopping experience."

**Vickie Geist, Cedar Springs Christian Store**

 We increased sales and new customer counts since changing marketing groups."

**Joel Evans, JC's Christian Book Store**

 We were up 9%, and best year ever for us. 20% increase for Christmas."

**Bill Sharp, Living Room Bookstore**



### 3. Vendor Challenges

Survey results brought to light vendor health concerns, with 65% of retailers expressing unease about the stability of their vendor and publishing partnerships. These challenges were diverse, spanning disruptions from warehouse shortages impacting timely deliveries to intricate complications arising from system changeovers.

Throughout the year, retailers voiced frustrations including vendors cutting benefits like free freight and discounts, inventory acquisition difficulties, supply chain disruptions, and challenges with Christmas counter cards. Additionally, the complexities were heightened by the impacts of inflation, rising shipping costs, and wholesale pricing hikes.

Amid these challenges, retailers echoed the importance of vendors adapting to dynamic market shifts. There was a resounding call for vendors to provide relevant and timely products, addressing the evolving needs of consumers.

“*...if our vendors stay healthy then I feel good about the next year regarding our business.*”

**Darrel Holcombe, Sanctuary Christian Books and Gifts**





## 4 ● Personality Wins

Christian retailers, recognizing the power of their unique qualities, strategically harnessed their personalities to secure a local edge. By crafting inspirational atmospheres and offering personalized services, they embraced their roles as trusted advisors, providing guidance on book recommendations to thoughtful gifts.

With anecdotes ranging from language learning initiatives to integrating pets into promotions, hosting live music events, and providing special services like Bible imprinting, laser engraving, gift-wrapping, and in-store Bible studies, retailers successfully positioned their stores as vibrant community hubs.

“ We have a Community Board in our store and post events for local churches and their people who support our store.”

**Deborah Cretaro, Living Word Parable Christian Store**

“ We were voted Best Gift Store in our local newspaper.”

**Laura Eiford, Rayann's**

“ We have always offered free gift wrap (gift bags), and we've had people come from a few hours away for Bible imprinting... We also became a UPS Access point a couple of years ago. It has helped bring in people that would never step foot in our store otherwise, but a LOT of them stay to shop or look around. It's been an excellent way to introduce new people to the store.”

**Bethany Martin, Faith & Life, Inc.**

“ We saw a strong increase in sales in the fourth quarter, and much of this was attributable to moving to a new location. It created a lot of buzz in our community and word of mouth was incredible.”

**Lori Bowdoin, Blessings, A Christian Store**

“ I think it is the great personal service that keeps people coming back. Yes, we do Bible imprinting and gift wrap (both for a small charge). We have a friendly, helpful staff and continually get 5-star reviews on Google.”

**Donna Baker, Dightman's Bible Book Center**



# 5.

## It Takes a Good Team

A resounding theme in 2023 was the acknowledgment of the collective strength of teams. Retailers underscored the criticality of recruiting and training top-notch employees capable of delivering exceptional customer service. However, the year posed challenges for some in finding quality workers, while others thrived.



*We had a huge increase in volunteers to want to work in our store (we are no profit and volunteer run) and our Christmas sales were increased by at least 25%.”*

**Kristina Jager, *Encouraging Word Christian Books & Gifts***



*We hired two bilingual staff members.”*

**Darrel Holcombe, *Sanctuary Christian Books and Gifts***



*We trained a couple new people to laser engrave to broaden the availability. Every employee imprints Bibles.”*

**Teresa Bruce, *The Salt Cellar***



*...we were able to hire someone full-time for the first time and have the store fully staffed all year so that we could come and go as needed—that's the freedom that we want as business owners!”*

**Ken Locklin, *Goodrubby Christian Bookstore***

## 6. The Work is Worth It

As retailers reflected on their journey, a unanimous sentiment echoed—the work is undeniably worth it. From a profound sense of calling to the impact on local communities, retailers found purpose and fulfillment in their daily endeavors.

From the joy derived from daily connections to the fulfillment of making a lasting difference, the commitment to glorifying God through their services and products stood as a testament to the enduring spirit of Christian retail.



“...God shows me weekly why I’m doing this and affirms the call.”  
**Sherry Woods, *The Printed Word***

“After 35 years of doing this (28 years with FCS), I still love what I do and look forward each day to going to the store.”  
**Bill Harman, *Connection Christian Store***

“I am hopeful that we will continue to make an impact on our community for a long time to come... I’m grateful for the support of our customers, both old and new, and the encouragement they bring to us each time they come through the door.”

**Bethany Martin, *Faith & Life, Inc.***

“I have worked as an employee for 11 years and was given the option to buy the business. I love it. People love and support us and tell us how thankful they are that we are still around.”

**Carlie Nelson, *The Solid Rock***



# Analysis of 2023 Christian Retail Sales

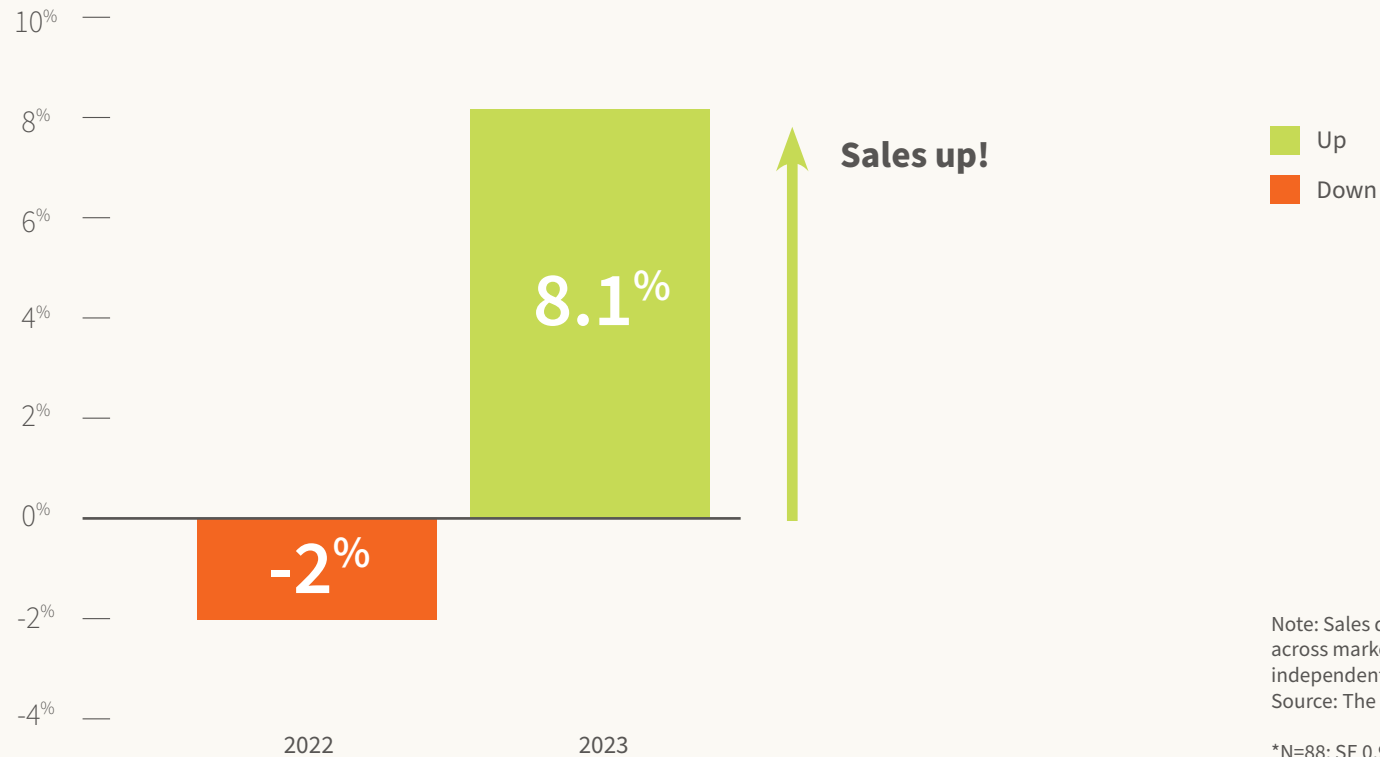
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In recent years, Point of Sale (POS) sales have depicted a dynamic narrative: 2020 faced disruptions, 2021 emerged as a banner year with noteworthy double-digit increases, and 2022 saw a modest dip by 2 points. 2023 revealed an impressive 8% surge over the preceding year. This upswing not only signals a rebound but also reaffirms the vitality of the Christian retail landscape.





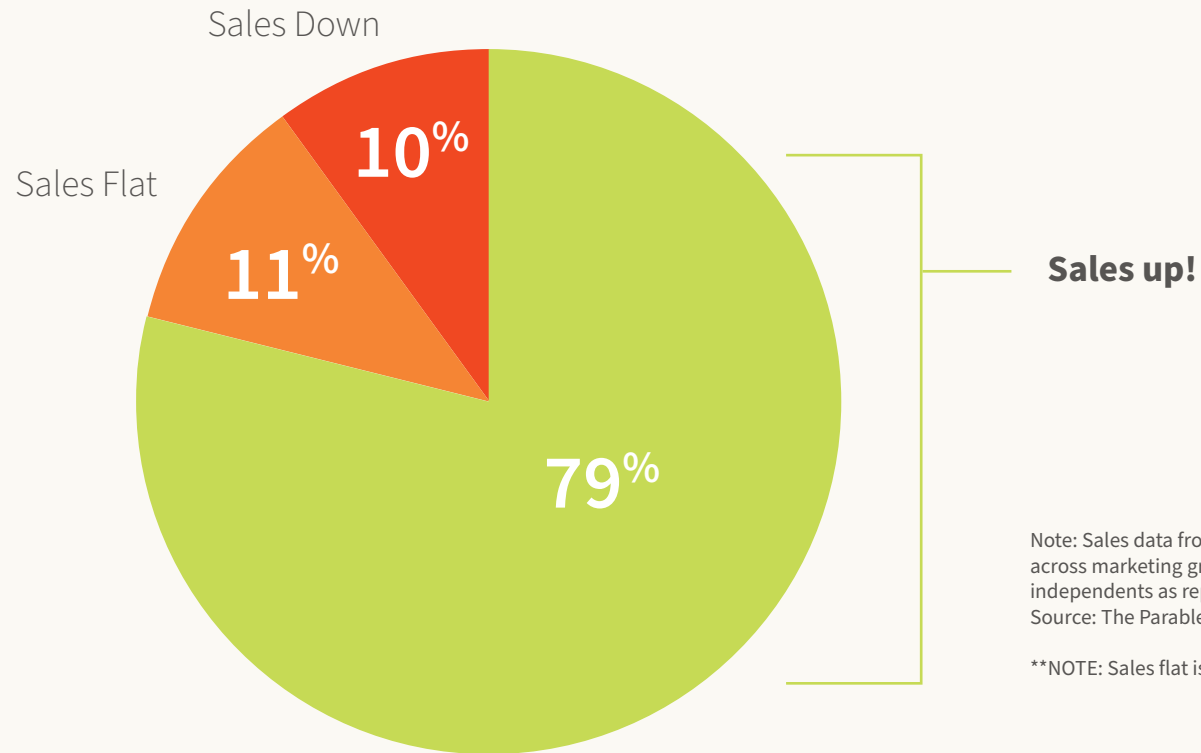
## Year-Over-Year Same-Store Sales Comparison (Based on total sales reported to ParableConnect)



**Sales up 8.1%** over 2022!

Christian retail handily out-performed the U.S. print market which was -2.6% in 2023 against 2022, according to Circana BookScan™.

## Stores with Sales Increases 2023 vs 2022 (Based on total sales reported to ParableConnect)



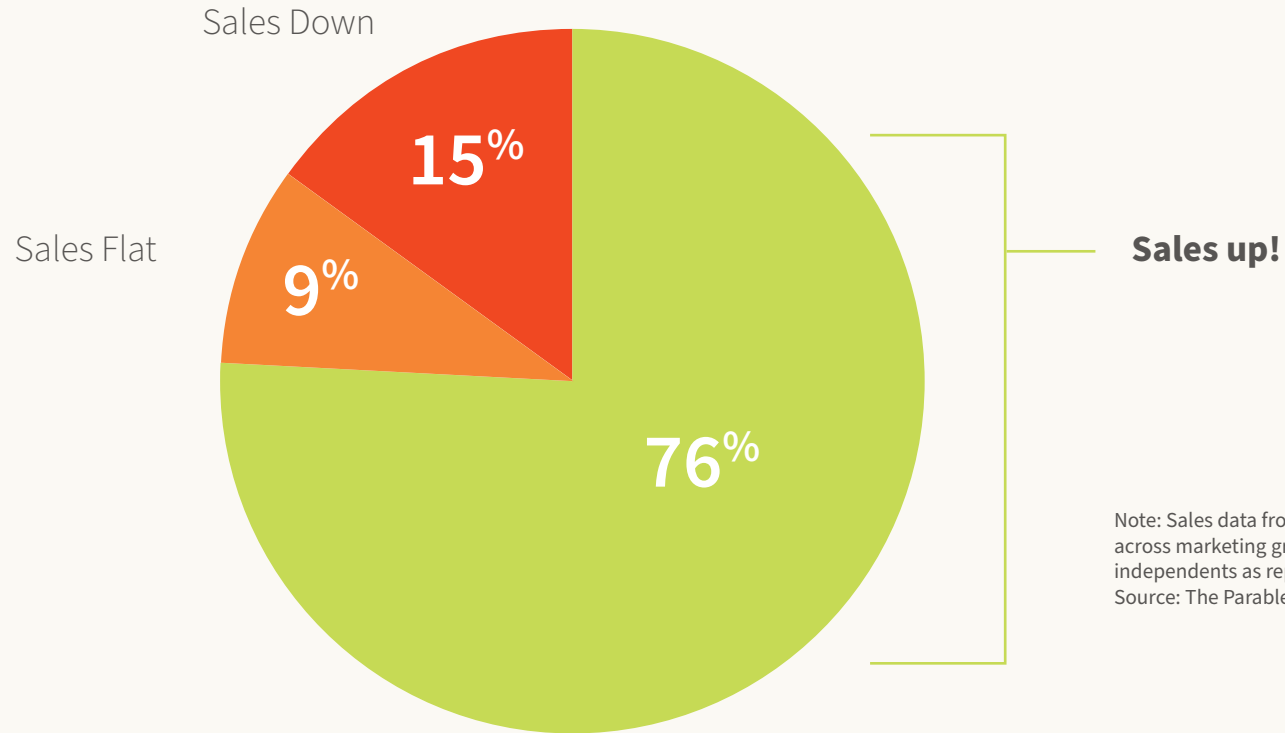
Note: Sales data from U.S. Christian retailers across marketing groups, church stores, and other independents as reported to ParableConnect. Source: The Parable Group, Jan. 5, 2024.

\*\*NOTE: Sales flat is -2% to 2% change YOY

**79%** of stores had a sales increase!

This was a nice surprise given that U.S. consumer confidence is pretty low amid economic uncertainty.

**Stores with Sales Increases 2023 vs 2019** (Based on total sales reported to ParableConnect)



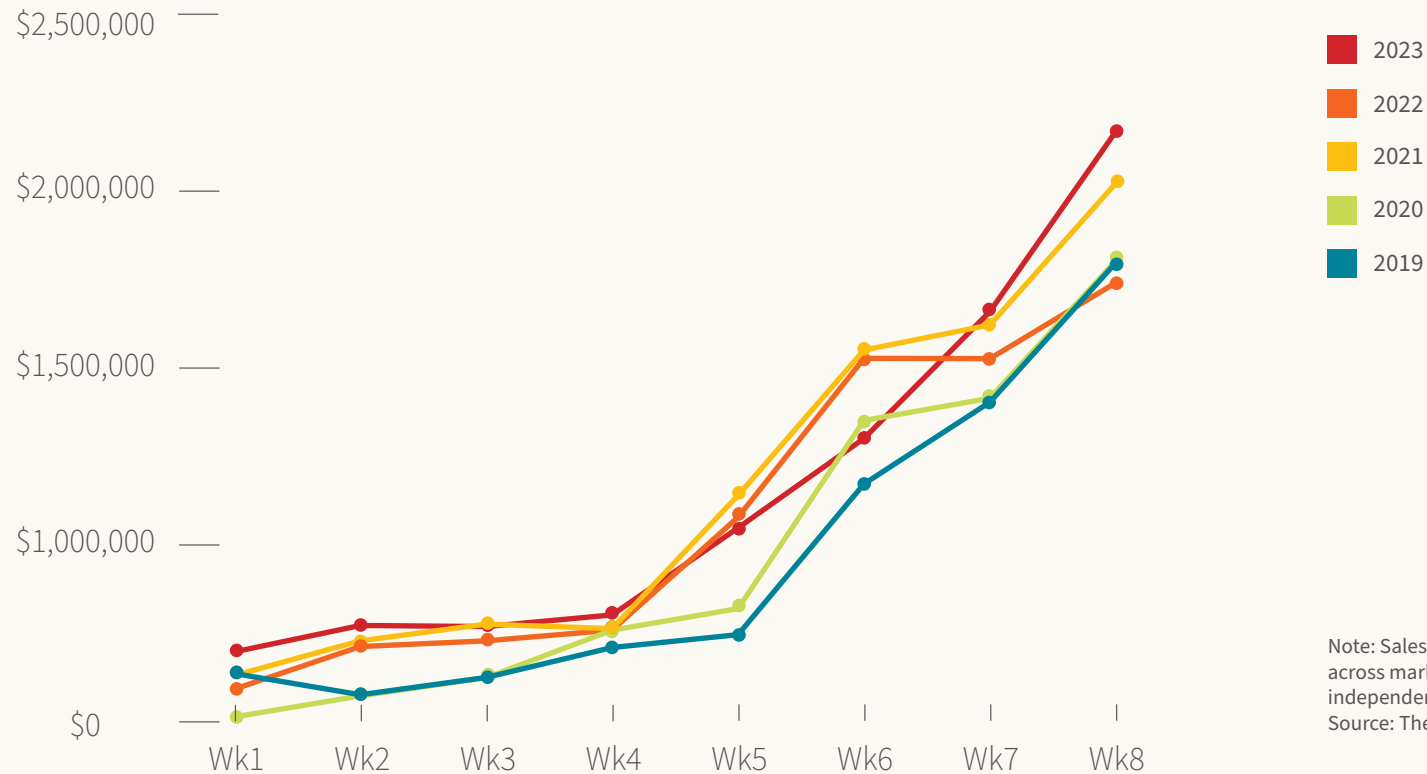
Note: Sales data from U.S. Christian retailers across marketing groups, church stores, and other independents as reported to ParableConnect. Source: The Parable Group, Jan. 5, 2024.

**76%** of stores had a sales increase over 2019.

More importantly, sales increased **20.9%** from 2019—indicating a strong sales trajectory post-pandemic.

## 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 to 2023 Christmas Same-Store Sales Comparison

(Based on total sales reported to ParableConnect)



Note: Sales data from U.S. Christian retailers across marketing groups, church stores, and other independents as reported to ParableConnect.  
Source: The Parable Group, Jan. 5, 2024.

**The Christmas season finished stronger than expected.**  
Sales surged the last week before Christmas as consumers shopped right up to the last minute.



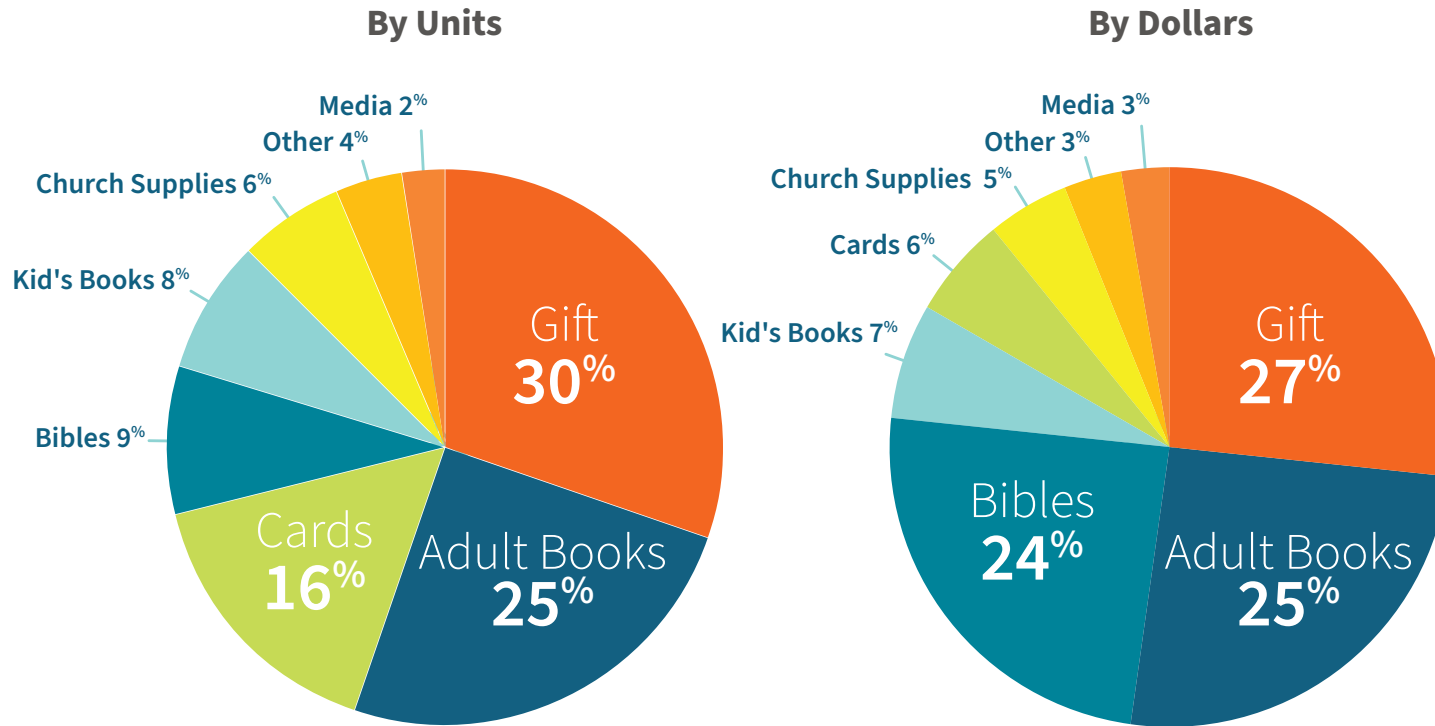
# Leading trends in product categories



Curious about what's shaping the market? Let's take a closer look at category trends from U.S. Christian retailers across marketing groups, church stores, and other independents.



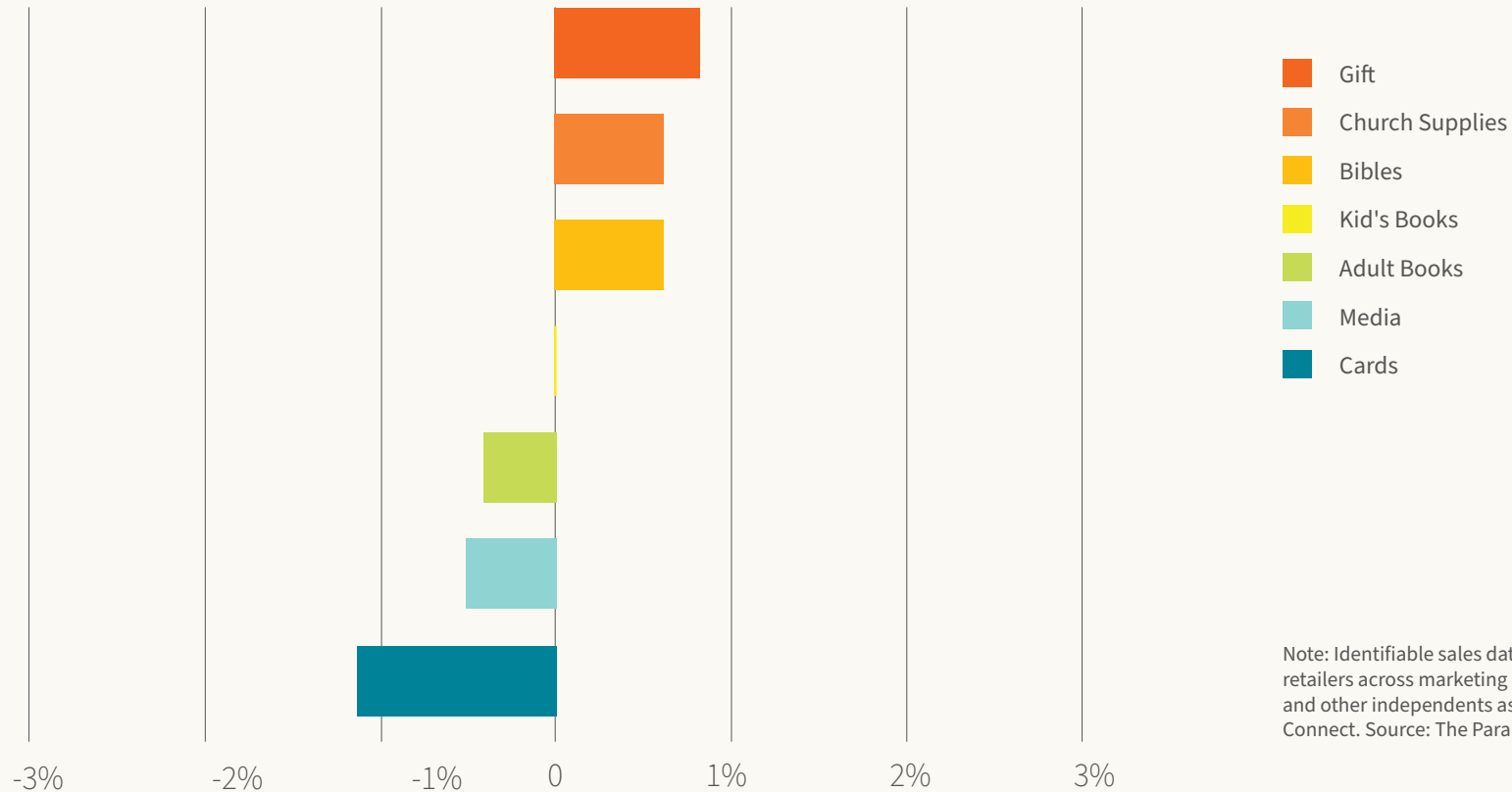
## 2023 Market Share (Christian Retail)



Note: Identifiable sales data from U.S. Christian retailers across marketing groups, church stores, and other independents as reported to ParableConnect. Source: The Parable Group, Jan. 5, 2024.

**Gifts** are a sizable portion of sales; slightly outpacing **Adult Books and Bibles**.

## 2023 Market Share Changes (By Units)

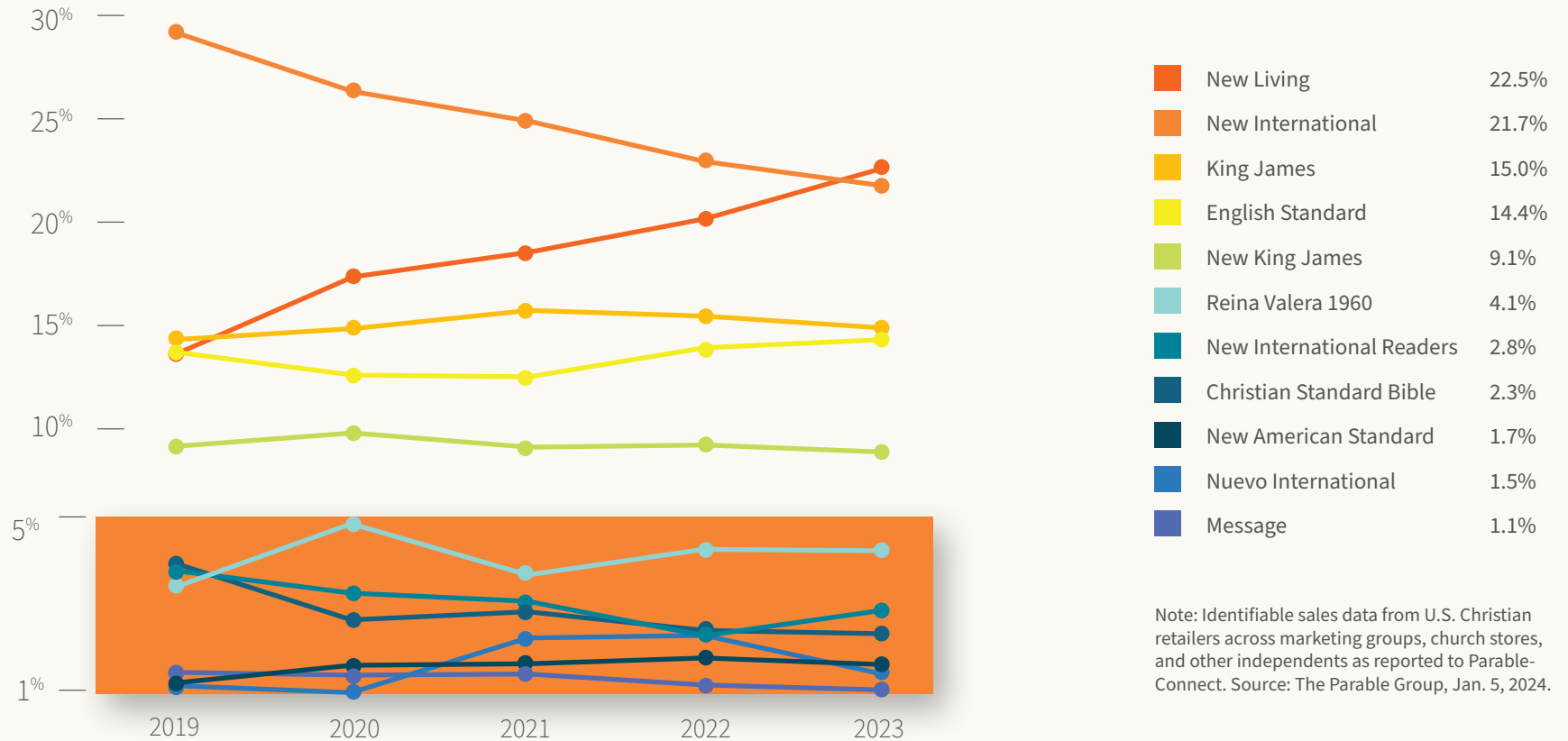


Note: Identifiable sales data from U.S. Christian retailers across marketing groups, church stores, and other independents as reported to Parable-Connect. Source: The Parable Group, Jan. 5, 2024.

**Gifts, Bibles, and Church Supplies** showed a slight increase, while **Cards** showed the greatest decrease.

The fourth quarter is a pivotal period for greeting cards, yet numerous retailers encountered challenges with vendor shortages, impacting sales.

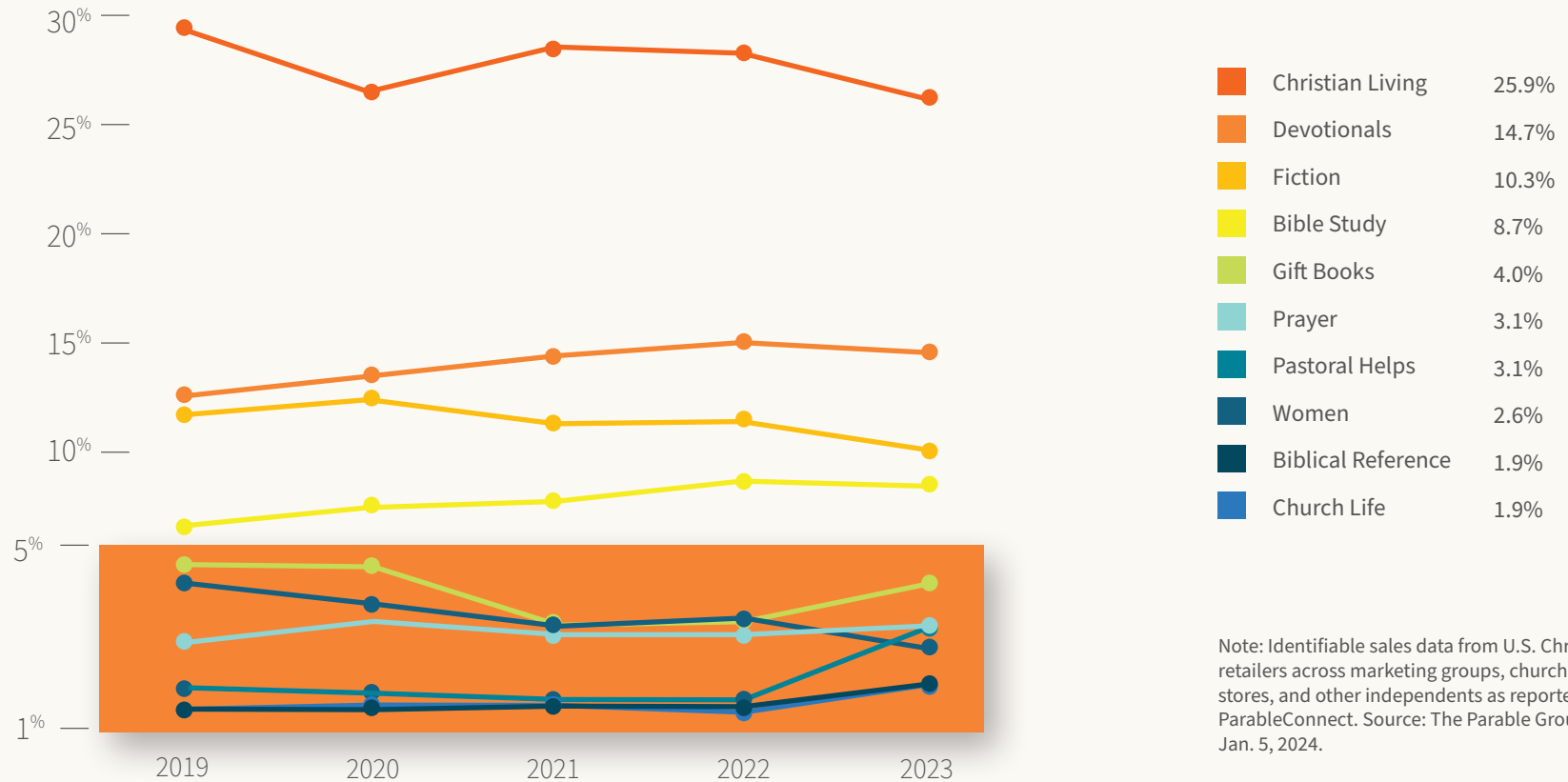
## 2023 Bible Translation Market Share (By Units)



**NLT outpaced NIV as the top seller.** The increase in NLT popularity points to the growth of Filament sales.



## 2023 Top Adult Book Category Market Share by Units (Christian Retail)



Note: Identifiable sales data from U.S. Christian retailers across marketing groups, church stores, and other independents as reported to ParableConnect. Source: The Parable Group, Jan. 5, 2024.

**Christian Living and Devotionals**, while top sellers, have flattened.

**Pastoral Helps, Biblical Reference, Gift Books and Church Life**, all increased in 2023—yet remain a smaller portion of sales.

## 2023 Top Fiction Authors

1. Wanda E. Brunstetter
2. Colleen Coble
3. Francine Rivers
4. Karen Kingsbury
5. Tracie Peterson
6. Amy Clipston
7. Lynette Eason
8. Charles Martin
9. Joel C. Rosenberg
10. Denise Hunter

## 2023 Top Non-Fiction Authors

1. Sarah Young
2. Max Lucado
3. David Jeremiah
4. Lysa TerKeurst
5. June Hunt
6. Jack Countryman
7. J. Vernon McGee
8. Joyce Meyer
9. Tony Evans
10. Priscilla Shirer

Note: Identifiable sales data from U.S. Christian retailers across marketing groups, church stores, and other independents as reported to ParableConnect. Source: The Parable Group, Jan. 5, 2024.

# Comparisons of bestsellers across channels























Which books were standouts in 2023? Let's explore Christian Retail bestsellers and sift through Circana BookScan™ bestsellers to unveil the differences between Christian and mainstream bookstores.

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*Note: All stores that report to ParableConnect immediately gain the title of "New York Times and BookScan reporting store." In 2023, 2.5 million units, accounting for almost \$42 million in sales were reported to NYT and BookScan on behalf of Christian retailers.*



1		The Great Disappearance David Jeremiah	Thomas Nelson	11		NLT Thinline Reference Bible, Filament, Leatherlike, Rustic Brown	Tyndale
2		When You Pray Various	Lifeway	12		The Action Bible Sergio Cariello	David C Cook
3		Jesus Calling Sarah Young	Thomas Nelson	13		Is God Real? Lee Strobel	Zondervan
4		The Beginner's Bible	Zondervan	14		Indescribable Activity Book for Kids Louie Giglio	Thomas Nelson
5		The Jesus Storybook Bible Sally Lloyd-Jones	Zondervan	15		Unoffendable Brant Hansen	Thomas Nelson
6		Letter to the American Church Eric Metaxas	Salem Books	16		Jesus Listens Sarah Young	Thomas Nelson
7		The Chosen: Season 3 [DVD]	Angel Studios	17		Good Boundaries and Goodbyes Lysa TerKeurst	Thomas Nelson
8		You're Going to Make It Lysa TerKeurst	Thomas Nelson	18		KJV Standard Lesson Commentary, Large Print	David C Cook
9		Jesus Revolution [DVD]	Capitol Christian	19		A Child's First Bible Kenneth N. Taylor	Tyndale
10		God Never Gives Up on You Max Lucado	Thomas Nelson	20		Times of Refreshing: Beside Still Waters [CD] Lucid Collection	The Parable Group

# Top 20 Products of 2023

(Christian Retail)

Note: Sales data from U.S. Christian retailers across marketing groups, church stores, and other independents as reported to ParableConnect. This list is comprised of books, Bibles, music, and DVDs Source: The Parable Group, Jan. 5, 2024.



# Channel Comparison: Bestselling Books

## Top 20 Religion Books of 2023 (Circana BookScan™)

RANK	TITLE	AUTHOR	PUBLISHER
1	<i>The 5 Love Languages</i>	Gary Chapman	Moody
2	<i>The Great Disappearance</i>	David Jeremiah	Thomas Nelson
3	<i>Jesus Calling</i>	Sarah Young	Thomas Nelson
4	<i>The Action Bible</i>	Sergio Cariello	David C Cook
5	<i>Baby Steps Millionaires</i>	Dave Ramsey	Ramsey Press
6	<i>Good Boundaries and Goodbyes</i>	Lysa Terkeurst	Thomas Nelson
7	<i>My First Read and Learn Bible</i>	American Bible Society	Scholastic Books
8	<i>The Total Money Makeover</i>	Dave Ramsey	Thomas Nelson
9	<i>The Bible In 52 Weeks</i>	Kimberly D. Moore	Rockridge Press
10	<i>You're Going to Make It</i>	Lysa Terkeurst	Thomas Nelson
11	<i>Forgiving What You Can't Forget</i>	Lysa Terkeurst	Thomas Nelson
12	<i>The Return of The Gods</i>	Jonathan Cahn	Charisma
13	<i>The Christmas Story</i>	Jane Werner Watson	Golden Books
14	<i>Mere Christianity</i>	C. S. Lewis	Harpercollins
15	<i>Jesus Listens</i>	Sarah Young	Thomas Nelson
16	<i>Get Out of Your Head</i>	Jennie Allen	Penguin Random House
17	<i>The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry</i>	John Mark Comer	Penguin Random House
18	<i>The Awe of God</i>	John Bevere	Thomas Nelson
19	<i>New Morning Mercies</i>	Paul David Tripp	Crossway Books
20	<i>The Complete Illustrated Children's Bible</i>	Janice Emerson	Harvest House

Note: Sales data from all retailers as reported to Circana BookScan™, for 2023. Source: Circana BookScan™.

## Top 20 Books of 2023 (Christian Retail)

RANK	TITLE	AUTHOR	PUBLISHER
1	<i>The Great Disappearance</i>	David Jeremiah	Thomas Nelson
2	<i>When You Pray</i>	Various	Lifeway
3	<i>Jesus Calling</i>	Sarah Young	Thomas Nelson
4	<i>The Beginner's Bible</i>		Zondervan
5	<i>The Jesus Storybook Bible</i>	Sally Lloyd-Jones	Zondervan
6	<i>Letter to the American Church</i>	Eric Metaxas	Salem Books
7	<i>You're Going to Make It</i>	Lysa TerKeurst	Thomas Nelson
8	<i>God Never Gives Up on You</i>	Max Lucado	Thomas Nelson
9	<i>The Action Bible</i>	Sergio Cariello	David C Cook
10	<i>Is God Real?</i>	Lee Strobel	Zondervan
11	<i>Indescribable Activity Book for Kids</i>	Louie Giglio	Thomas Nelson
12	<i>Unoffendable</i>	Brant Hansen	Thomas Nelson
13	<i>Jesus Listens</i>	Sarah Young	Thomas Nelson
14	<i>Good Boundaries and Goodbyes</i>	Lysa TerKeurst	Thomas Nelson
15	<i>KJV Standard Lesson Commentary Large Print</i>		David C Cook
16	<i>A Child's First Bible</i>	Kenneth N. Taylor	Tyndale
17	<i>The 5 Love Languages</i>	Gary Chapman	Moody
18	<i>Jesus Calling Deluxe Edition</i>	Sarah Young	Thomas Nelson
19	<i>Experiencing God Bible Study</i>	Various	Lifeway
20	<i>Jesus Listens--For Advent and Christmas</i>	Sarah Young	Thomas Nelson

Note: Identifiable sales data from U.S. Christian retailers across marketing groups, church stores, and other independents as reported to ParableConnect. Source: The Parable Group, Jan. 5, 2024.

## Comparison of Top 20 Bestselling Books

Top 20 Religion Books (Circana BookScan™ vs. Christian Retail)

### New Releases are discovered at Christian Retail

**50%** Fifty percent of titles on Christian Retail Top 20 Books are new releases

**15%** Only fifteen percent of Circana Top 20 Religion Books are new releases

**45%** Forty-five percent of Circana Top 20 Religion Books are repeats from 2022

**“** Diving into the differences between mainstream bestsellers and Christian retail favorites is always interesting. Walk into your typical bookstore, and you'll spot the usual suspects in the top 20—familiar titles and timeless classics. Now, swing by a Christian retail spot, and you'll notice a fresh vibe with a bunch of just-released hits. It's like a cool discovery hub for new books! This quirky dynamic not only tells us what readers are into but also opens up exciting possibilities for growth in Christian retail spaces.”

**Randy Ross, Director of Christian Retail Marketing, The Parable Group**

## Top 20 Kids Products of 2023

RANK	TITLE	AUTHOR	PUBLISHER
1	<i>The Beginner's Bible, Hardcover</i>		Zondervan
2	<i>The Jesus Storybook Bible</i>	Sally Lloyd-Jones	Zondervan
3	<i>The Action Bible</i>	Sergio Cariello	David C Cook
4	<i>Indescribable Activity Book for Kids</i>	Louie Giglio	Thomas Nelson
5	<i>A Child's First Bible</i>	Kenneth N. Taylor	Tyndale
6	<i>Beginner's Bible, Teal Leathersoft</i>		Zondervan
7	<i>The Complete Illustrated Children's Bible</i>		Harvest House
8	<i>Great and Small Prayers for Babies</i>	Pamela Kennedy	B & H
9	<i>Bedtime Prayers for Little Ones</i>	Max Lucado	Thomas Nelson
10	<i>My Favorite Lift-The-Flap Bible Stories</i>		Thomas Nelson
11	<i>The Beginner's Bible: A Christmas Celebration Sticker and Activity Book</i>		Zondervan
12	<i>Indescribable</i>	Louie Giglio	Thomas Nelson
13	<i>The Dead Sea Squirrels 6-Pack Books 1-6</i>	Mike Nawrocki	Tyndale
14	<i>I Can Read My Illustrated Bible: For Beginning Readers, Level 1</i>	Peter Francis	Zondervan
15	<i>I'm So Glad You Were Born</i>	Ainsley Earhardt	Zondervan
16	<i>Great and Small Bible Animals</i>		B & H
17	<i>Just in Case You Ever Wonder</i>	Max Lucado	Thomas Nelson
18	<i>The Beginner's Bible, Gift Edition</i>		Zondervan
19	<i>Jesus Calling Advent and Christmas Prayers</i>	Sarah Young	Thomas Nelson
20	<i>Great and Small Easter</i>	Pamela Kennedy	B & H

Note: Identifiable sales data from U.S. Christian retailers across marketing groups, church stores, and other independents as reported to ParableConnect. Source: The Parable Group, Jan. 5, 2024.

## Christian Retail Top 20 Bibles of 2023

RANK	TITLE	PUBLISHER
1	<i>NLT Thinline Reference Bible, Filament, LeatherLike, Rustic Brown</i>	Tyndale
2	<i>NIV Thinline Bible, Bonded Leather, Black</i>	Zondervan
3	<i>NLT Premium Value Thinline Bible, Filament, LeatherLike, Dark Brown Cross</i>	Tyndale
4	<i>NIV Adventure Bible, Hardcover</i>	Zondervan
5	<i>NIV Compact Bible, Leathersoft, Burgundy</i>	Zondervan
6	<i>NIV The Story, Hardcover</i>	Zondervan
7	<i>NIV Value Thinline Bible, Leathersoft, Brown</i>	Zondervan
8	<i>NLT Personal Size Giant Print Bible, Filament, LeatherLike, Rustic Brown</i>	Tyndale
9	<i>NLT Premium Value Thinline Bible, Filament, LeatherLike, Bouquet Teal</i>	Tyndale
10	<i>NLT Premium Gift Bible</i>	Tyndale
11	<i>NIV Life Application Study Bible, Personal Size, Leathersoft, Gray/Teal</i>	Zondervan
12	<i>KJV Large Print Personal Size Reference Bible, Black LeatherTouch</i>	B & H
13	<i>NLT Thinline Reference Bible, Filament, LeatherLike, Floral Leaf Teal</i>	Tyndale
14	<i>NIV Compact Bible, Leathersoft, Brown</i>	Zondervan
15	<i>NirV Adventure Bible for Early Readers, Hardcover</i>	Zondervan
16	<i>NIV Thinline Bible, Bonded Leather, Navy</i>	Zondervan
17	<i>NLT Student Life Application Study Bible, Filament, LeatherLike, Charcoal Gray Striped</i>	Tyndale
18	<i>NLT Large Print Premium Value Thinline Bible, Filament, LeatherLike, Brown Celtic Cross</i>	Tyndale
19	<i>NIV Adventure Bible, Leathersoft, Pink</i>	Zondervan
20	<i>NLT Premium Value Compact Bible, Filament, LeatherLike, Dark Brown Framed Cross</i>	Tyndale

Note: Identifiable sales data from U.S. Christian retailers across marketing groups, church stores, and other independents as reported to ParableConnect. Source: The Parable Group, Jan. 5, 2024.



## Christian Retail Top 20 Media of 2023

RANK	TITLE	ARTIST	PUBLISHER
1	<i>The Chosen: Season 3 DVD</i>		Angel Studios
2	<i>Jesus Revolution DVD</i>		Lionsgate
3	<i>Times of Refreshing: Beside Still Waters CD</i>	Lucid Collection	The Parable Group
4	<i>The Chosen: Season 1 DVD</i>		Angel Studios
5	<i>The Chosen: Season 2 DVD</i>		Angel Studios
6	<i>Lauren Daigle CD</i>	Lauren Daigle	New Day
7	<i>Lifemark DVD</i>		Mill Creek Entertainment
8	<i>Times of Refreshing: Peace on Earth CD</i>		The Parable Group
9	<i>My Jesus CD</i>	Anne Wilson	Capitol Christian
10	<i>Believe for It (Live) CD</i>	Cece Winans	New Day
11	<i>Life After Death CD</i>	TobyMac	Capitol Christian
12	<i>The Blind DVD</i>		Mill Creek Entertainment
13	<i>Left Behind: Rise of the Antichrist DVD</i>		Trinity Creative
14	<i>Always Only Jesus CD</i>	Mercy Me	New Day
15	<i>Sound of Freedom DVD</i>		Angel Studios
16	<i>Always CD</i>	Chris Tomlin	Capitol Christian
17	<i>Hundred Highways CD</i>	Zach Williams	Provident
18	<i>My Story Your Glory CD</i>	Matthew West	Provident
19	<i>My Chains Are Gone CD</i>	Reba McEntire	Capitol Christian
20	<i>Jesus Changed My Life CD</i>	Katy Nichole	Capitol Christian

Note: Identifiable sales data from U.S. Christian retailers across marketing groups, church stores, and other independents as reported to ParableConnect. Source: The Parable Group, Jan. 5, 2024.





# Christian Retailer Survey Results

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In January 2024, we conducted a survey of Christian bookstores to gain valuable perspectives on the Christian retail channel. Step into the world of Christian retail as we bring you the voices of 89 retailers, sharing their perspectives on the highlights of 2023 and their outlook for the year ahead.



# Answering the Call: Nurturing Faith & Community

Survey findings unveiled four overarching themes that drive Christian retailers in their steadfast commitment to retail ministry:

## 1. ● Ministry and Calling

Retailers resonate with a profound sense of ministry and calling, viewing their role as fulfilling a divine purpose by providing Christian products and resources to their communities.

## 3. ● Passion for the Industry

Retailers express a genuine love for the Christian retail industry, coupled with a passion for sharing the Word of God. Their joy and fulfillment stem from contributing to the Kingdom through their work.

## 2. ● Community Service

Many retailers emphasize their commitment to meeting spiritual needs and being a source of encouragement within their communities by providing a physical space for Christians to connect and share the Gospel without judgment.

## 4. ● Faithful Stewardship

Retailers express a reliance on God for guidance, provision, and affirmation in their ministry. The enduring service is attributed to a deep faith and trust in God's plan for their businesses.

## Survey Says!

### My primary reason for continuing my Christian retail ministry is...

“ We are a ministry...and as long as God calls us, we will answer the call and keep pressing forward.”

“ I LOVE God and Christian Retailing!

“ I love what we do, and every day I see the connections of the impact we have on our community...”

“ I love it. The impact of a good book on a person's life is life changing.”

“ God is always showing us that we are relevant to the community.”

“ It's a calling. We pray our work glorifies God in our community and beyond.”

“ To be a light in the community by providing products to help others grow closer to Jesus.”

“ I love it and I feel like it's the best way I can contribute to God's kingdom.”

“ To continue to impact people's lives for Jesus and help them in their walk of Faith.”

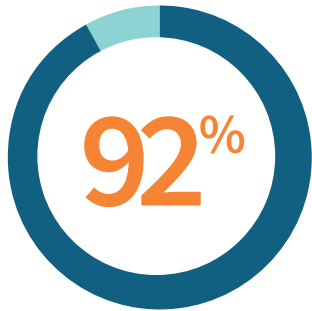
“ I have seen people come to the Lord through it...”

“ We honor God by providing amazing customer service, a place for Christians to connect, and a safe place to share the Gospel without judgment.”

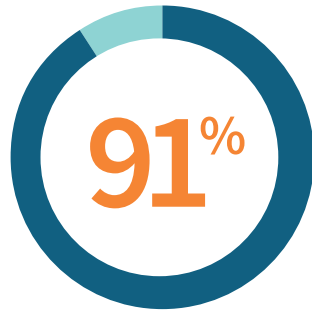
“ Share the gospel and hope!”



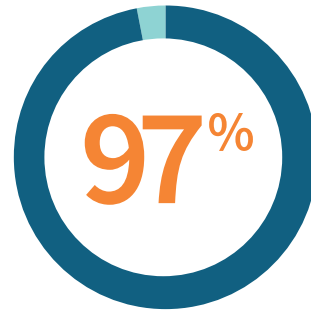
## Key takeaways from retailer survey



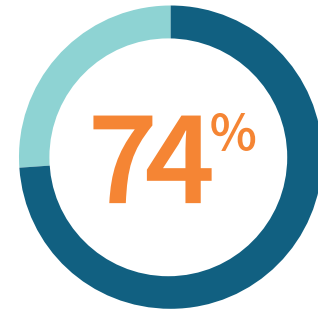
answered "Healthy, strong future" or "Steady—we will carry on" when asked about their feeling towards the future. Compared to 83% of the survey responders last year.



of survey responders answered "Strongly Agree" or "Agree" when asked if their customers supported their store in surprising and gratifying ways throughout 2023. Compared to 84% of the survey responders last year.

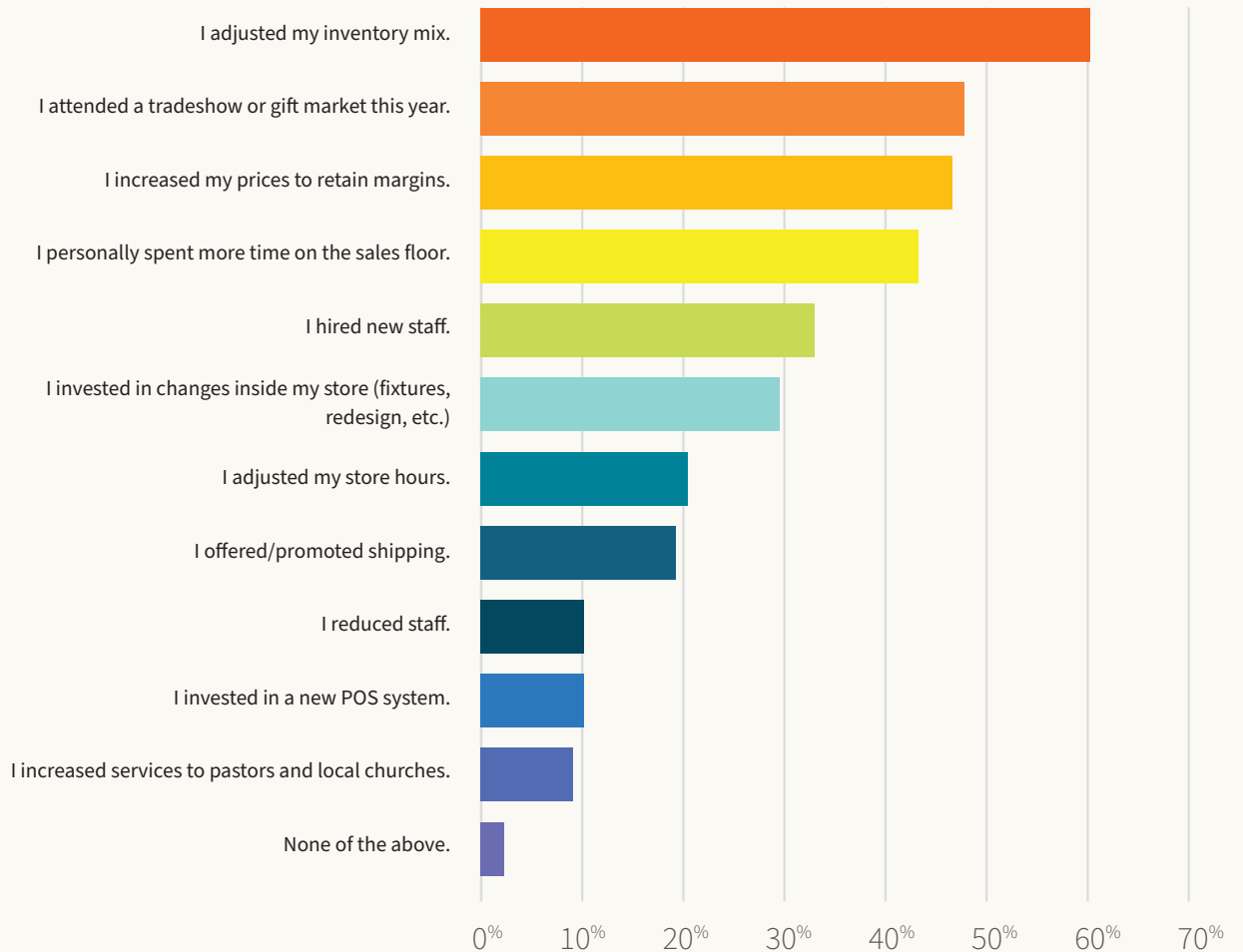


answered that they adapted their Christian retail ministry to combat challenges in 2023. Only 3% responded that they did not make any changes to their business in 2023.

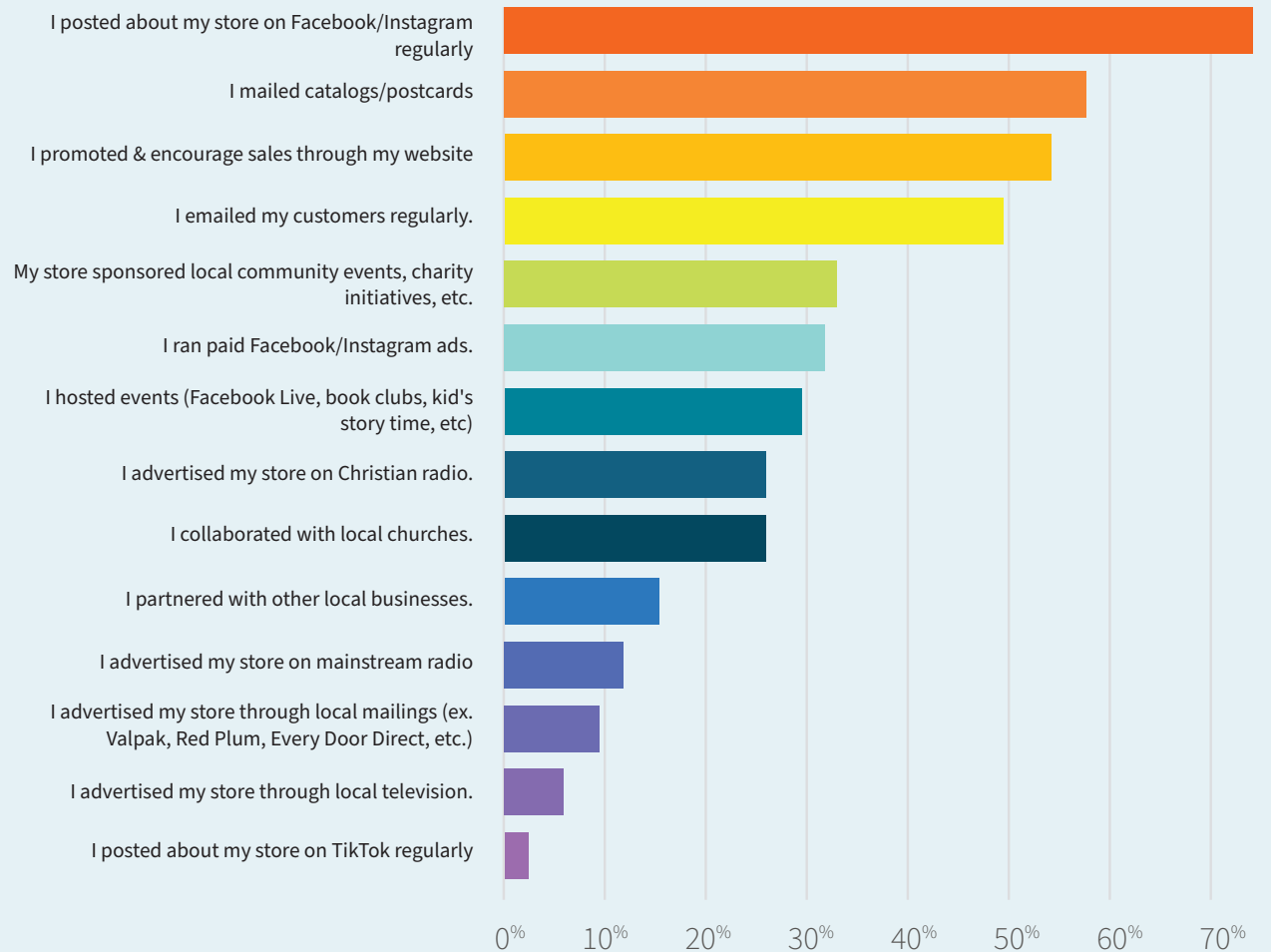


answered that they posted about their store on Facebook/Instagram regularly. Social media was the most commonly used marketing method.

# Q: How did you adjust and adapt your business in 2023?



# Q: What marketing efforts did you employ in 2023?



# Q: What was the most exciting thing that happened for your business this year?

*“ Had a well-known pastor recommend us on his Instagram page.”*

*“ We moved to a new, larger location!”*

*“ Increased local and regional traffic.”*

*“ Bible Sales were up 18%.”*

*“ 45k increased revenue was nice to see.”*

*“ Continued increases in total store sales & especially Bible sales.”*

*“ We finally had a year-end increase after experiencing some health trials and keeping a watchful eye on inventory-timely returns and keeping better track of the details.”*

*“ Celebrated 50 years in business.”*

*“ More customers/churches began to shop more with us.”*

*“ Christmas season was awesome!”*

*“ A solid year with a good financial outlook for next!”*

*“ We were up over 20% in December.”*



# Q: What was the most frustrating thing that affected your business this year?

Summary of survey responses

## Operational Challenges

In 2023, Christian retailers faced hurdles in acquiring inventory, managing supply chain issues, and adapting to changes in vendors' and distributors' businesses, leading to increased costs and freight concerns.

## Workforce Management

The constant challenge of finding and retaining quality staff adds complexity to day-to-day operations, especially during slower summer periods.

## Financial Struggles

Rising inflation, excessive price increases, escalating shipping and wholesale costs, along with rent hikes, created significant financial pressures for Christian retailers.

## External Influences

Unresponsive landlords, property damage from rain, construction disruptions, and fierce competition from online giants collectively present external challenges that Christian retailers navigated.

# Q: How did you leverage your store's uniqueness this year?

## Summary of survey responses

**Bible Imprinting:** Retailers stressed Bible imprinting's significance as a major customer attractor and profit booster. Some innovatively expanded this service, training staff, adjusting prices, and offering on-the-spot imprinting.

**Personalization:** Leveraging laser machines, retailers excelled in offering personalized gifts and engraving services, enhancing the overall shopping experience for their clientele.

**Gift Wrapping:** Several retailers utilized free gift wrapping, considering it an added customer value and integrating it with their store's brand identity.

**Events:** Both in-store and external events, such as book signings and live music, were key strategies to create a distinctive experience, fostering customer engagement.

**Social Media Presence:** Retailers acknowledged the vital role of a robust social media presence, emphasizing regular updates, promotions, and online customer interaction.

**Adaptability and Expansion:** Retailers highlighted their adaptability, with changes in location, expanded services, and embracing new trends, including larger spaces, rearranged fixtures, and innovative marketing approaches.

**Language Skills:** Learning new languages, such as Spanish, was cited as a unique effort to better cater to a growing customer base and enhance service.

**Customer Service:** Exceptional customer service, featuring personal touches like prayer, complimentary coffee, and even involving pets in promotions, emerged as a consistent theme.

# Retailer Outlook for 2024

*“I’m expecting a good year. If it’s anything like 2023 it will be good.”*

*“The calendar is not favorable for sales: early Easter, late Thanksgiving, and Christmas in the middle of the week. The calendar is a concern.”*

*“This year may prove to be one that will give us an even greater reason to be here.”*

*“We continue to be cautiously optimistic and look ahead with excitement to see how God will be at work in and through us in the year ahead.”*

*“We are poised for growth and figuring out how we can hit 32% growth to reach our goal revenue for 2024!”*

*“We are so positive about the growth of our store and the direction we are going.”*

*“Prayers are appreciated for decision-making in the business and as I face serious health challenges.”*

*“I trust that God will continue to grow and guide us.”*

*“I see my biggest challenge as staffing to allow for sufficient time for planning, promotions, and execution of goals.”*

*“Just praying things will continue to go well!”*

*“...concerned about the economy this year but trying to stay agile and keep cash flow positive”*

*“I’m blessed and believing for God’s help this year, no matter what comes our way.”*

## Industry Support for Bookstores

“It is wonderful to see that retail bookstores are healthy and on the rise! Customers love buying at bookstores because of the personal connection. Bookstores have a huge opportunity to create an experience that Amazon or online shopping can't replicate.”

**Ryan Yoder**, Trade Sales Account Manager, David C. Cook

“We are so grateful for the partnership that we have with Christian Retailers...in getting our great books into people's hands. This partnership is integral to our publishing and distribution ministry, and we are thankful and prayerful for each of you as you impact lives for eternity.”

**Geoff Dennis**, VP of Sales, The Good Book

“The Christian Retail independent channel is evident in our commitment to that channel. Christian independents serve as a vital platform for promoting and distributing faith-based literature, fostering community engagement, and contributing to the overall vitality of the Christian Bookselling industry.”

**Shawn LeBar**, Director of Sales, CBA, HarperCollins Christian

“Our Christian retail partners have been an integral part of our Bible sales increases this past year. The support we have seen for our Filament Bible line has been amazing and we thank them for seeing the potential in the life-changing content the Filament App adds to the Bible reading experience. We could not have seen these increases without the Christian retail channel—and not just for Bibles! A Tyndale title does not see success or a long-tail sales history without the Christian Retail channel. When Christian retailers get behind a title, we not only see success at the launch but continued sales years afterward. We all need to value and support these stores! They're a place people can trust, fellowship, talk to a trusted source, get a recommendation, and see the products in person. We applaud these retailers for their resilience and heart for ministry.”

**Cheryl Kerwin**, Sales Channel Director, Tyndale House Publishers



# Event Opportunities in 2024

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## Attend Industry tradeshow!

- CPE Christian Product Expo Winter; Charleston, SC; Feb. 11-13, 2024; visit [cpeshow.com](http://cpeshow.com) to register
- CPE Christian Product Expo Summer; Fort Wayne, IN; Aug. 4-6, 2024; visit [cpeshow.com](http://cpeshow.com) to register

## Attend Gift Markets!

- Winter Las Vegas Gift Market; Jan. 28–Feb 1, 2024; visit [lasvegasmarket.com](http://lasvegasmarket.com) to register
- Summer Atlanta Gift Market; July 16–22, 2024; visit [atlantamarket.com](http://atlantamarket.com) to register
- Summer Las Vegas Gift Market; July 28–Aug 1, 2024; visit [lasvegasmarket.com](http://lasvegasmarket.com) to register



## Attend a Gather and Grow webinar!

- 2024 State of Christian Retail Report; Feb. 20, 2024; visit [parablegroup.com/gather-grow-webinar-series](http://parablegroup.com/gather-grow-webinar-series) to register

## Data sources

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Circana Bookscan™ 2023 Book Sales Data

2023 Christian Retail Industry Sales Data. 200 stores reporting to ParableConnect.

“Christian Retailers Survey.” Survey. Jan. 2024.

## For more information about this report:

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