

2017 Reads List

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Happy New Year to all. Here is an abbreviated reads list for 2017.

Please send me titles you benefited from and/or enjoyed recently.

Thank you! And May you the Father through the Spirit grow you in union with Christ this Year!

I hope you find something in here new and helpful for you. Enjoy!
Scott

Sacred Fire: A Vision for a Deeper Human and Christian Maturity Ronald Rolheiser
This book is profoundly insightful *and* profoundly irritating. Rolhieser has wonderful insight into key traits of human maturity. Some of these insights were very timely for my own growth. At the same time, he absolutely slaughters what little of the Scripture he refers to and as a result there is much stress put on oneself to make this transformation happen. In the end his markers of maturity are vey helpful though the means to that maturity leaves me wanting. I can do nothing without Jesus. I am responsible for my choices and actions. But I am not on my own in this process. As much as I wanted to not like the book, I found it used by the Spirit. There is far too little available about the path toward an elder in the faith. Rolhieser provides some keen insight into some aspects of this discussion. Are you asking God and yourself what it means to be a father or mother of the faith one day?

Evangelical, Sacramental and Pentecostal Gordon T. smith
Each of these branches of the church have strengths and liabilities. In this short book, Smith identifies the essential markers of each - Word, Liturgy/Eucharist, and Spirit-dependency. Likely most would agree with what Smith states, but few church leaders will be willing to change practice at the church worship level to live into these truths. As a result local churches risk failing at being the church gathered in Biblical terms. This ought cause pause. Smith has written numerous books I have found extremely clarifying on varied subjects from spiritual formation, to the Lord's Supper, to this topic at hand.

Liturgical Theology: The Church as Worshipping Community Simon Chan
Honestly, I am still absorbing this book. It is deeper Ecclesiology waters and has me thinking long about the typical Sunday experience in the Evangelical church. Chan argues that the ontology of the church is a gathered, worshipping community making a normative response to the revelation of the Triune God in Christ. From there he describes the normative practice(s) of the church gathered from biblical, theological, and historical references. He pokes some serious holes in the typical Evangelical/Free church Sunday experience. Chan's work is leaving a clarifying impression on me - though I am not sure if I agree with all of what he argues. Further, t is always refreshing to read authors of non-North American culture.

Death by Living: Life is Meant to Be Spent N. D. Wilson

Wilson is not your typical writer - he is lyrical, poetic, creative. Sometimes his creativity became a barrier for me getting his message, other times he literally brought tears to my eyes. He seeks to remind us that we are dying and that cannot be avoided. How do we live well in that reality?

As Kingfishers Catch Fire Eugene Peterson

This is reportedly Peterson's final book he will publish. It is a collection of sermons from his years as a pastor. It has the usual Peterson flair and verbiage that grants fresh perspective on familiar biblical concepts. This is an enjoyable, reflective read.

Praying with the Church: Following Jesus Daily, Hourly, Today Scot McKnight

McKnight gives an overview of the prayer patterns and rhythms of the church through history with helpful resources and even some how to's. I found the book simple and helpful to strengthen daily prayer practices.

The Road Back to Yourself Ian Morgan Cron and Suzanne Stabile

This is a fresh look at the controversial personality paradigm of the enneagram. The first chapter will have you laughing, maybe even out loud. Following chapters look at the 9 types. This is a fresher look and much less cumbersome than Rohr's massive tome. The book is selling well and those I have spoken to have conveyed how helpful it has been to understand themselves and others better.

The Way of the Lamb The Way of the Dragon Jamin Goggin and Kyle Strobel

I read and reread some of the chapters of this book. Though it is not the best written book I've read this year, the subject is essential for us to read. What was most beneficial are the elder saints that were interviewed for each chapter: James Houston, Eugene Peterson, Jean Vanier, Marva Dawn, John Perkins and J. I. Packer. Their insights to the subjects that the modern church is dealing with ought give one pause - especially local church pastors. A worthy read - not quick like, but confessional like.

Write Your Own Book David Sluka

I have contributed to numerous writing projects but it was time to get a book done myself. Sluka is a wonderful mentor/coach whether you want to go the traditional route or self-publishing. I learned a lot and was given a great road map to move me from concept to completion. A description of the book I published this year is below.

The Uninvited Companion: God's Shaping us in His Love through Life's Adversities by Scott E. Shaum

Yes, I read the book I wrote - too many times in editing....A brief description:
As paradoxical as it seems, God in his wisdom has designed the human soul to require sufferings of various kinds in the redemptive process. "Why?" is a normal human response to such realities. God is gracious to give us at times some insight into the hard realities of life.

Still much mystery abounds as God offers us something more substantial than mere cerebral knowledge. He desires to give Himself to us. Thus, "How?" is a wiser question to dwell upon.

How is God inviting us to walk well with Him and others in the midst of life's pains?

The Uninvited Companion reflects upon the shaping work of a loving Father through life's hardships. As we allow him to show us how to respond well to Him during seasons of adversity, He draws us deeper into His love, life and wisdom. Our sufferings have deep, transformative impact on us. We become carriers of God's loving presence to others in their adversities.

This is an essential topic for caregivers as an identified marker of resiliency is a applied theology of suffering.

What's more, caregivers may increasingly be called upon to personally suffer as they provide care for workers in volatile regions.

Some Biographies and Fiction:

Under the Scarlet Sky Mark Sullivan This is the best non-fiction I read this year, by far. An amazing story set in Northern Italy during WW II. The writer researched it so well that all names, dates and places are accurate based on a young Milanese's life through the Nazi occupation. It is a wartime setting, so know that there will be inhumane acts of violence in the storyline.

The Fool of New York City Michael O'Brien

O'Brien is my favorite Christian novelist. This is a delightful story of a broken man's life and his impact on another man living with amnesia. Billy is a literal giant, physically towering over others and living hand-to-mouth. Yet his simple influence is profound. It is a sweet story of redemption.

The Voyage of Alpha Century Michael O'Brien

This is O'Brien's first venture into Sci-Fi and it was certainly out there. A massive tome at 776 pages it has its bright spots but gets a little too far out for me. Probably my least favorite of all his works.

Hero of the Empire. Candice Mallard A Biography on Winston Churchill's military exploits in Southern Africa. I generally like Mallard's works - well research and very readable.

George Washington's Secret Six - An interesting read on Washington's successful spy ring.