

READ, READ, READ; YOUR SOUL DEPENDS ON IT!

*Do your best to come to me soon... and bring... the books...
(II Timothy 4:9,13).*

For Paul, life without his books was unbearable. So he frantically wrote to Timothy, "Come quickly... and bring my books!" What about *you*? Are you reading? What are you reading? For 20 centuries, Christians have read not just the Bible, but anything that would warm the heart, challenge the mind, and feed the soul. It is simply impossible to imagine Christian discipleship apart from books.

Recently, a diverse group of Christians (Richard Foster, Dallas Willard and others) put together a reading list of what they believe are the 25 most significant spiritual classics in history. These books have shaped the church and beyond that the world. Some of these titles and authors representing different traditions of the global church will be familiar. Others will not. Why not make it a life goal to work your way through this list? Don't get hung up over the books that were chosen or the ones that weren't. Rather, learn from it! And if you read something with which you disagree... good! Keep the kernel and throw out the chaff. That is what good reading is all about. Read with breadth, depth and discernment. Here's the list.¹ Bon appétit.

1. *On the Incarnation* by St. Athanasius.
2. *The Confessions* by St. Augustine.
3. *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*.
4. *The Rule of St. Benedict* by St. Benedict.
5. *The Divine Comedy* by Dante Alighieri.
6. *The Cloud of Unknowing* by an unknown author.
7. *Revelations of Divine Love* by Julian of Norwich.
8. *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas a Kempis.
9. *The Philokalia*.
10. *Institutes of the Christian Religion* by John Calvin.
11. *The Interior Castle* by St. Teresa of Avila.
12. *Dark Night of the Soul* by St. John of the Cross.
13. *Pensées* by Blaise Pascal.
14. *The Pilgrim's Progress* by John Bunyan.
15. *The Practice of the Presence of God* by Brother Lawrence.
16. *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life* by William Law.
17. *The Way of a Pilgrim* by an unknown author.
18. *The Brothers Karamazov* by Fyodor Dostoevsky.
19. *Orthodoxy* by G. K. Chesterton.
20. *The Poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins*.
21. *The Cost of Discipleship* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer.
22. *A Testament of Devotion* by Thomas R. Kelly.
23. *The Seven Storey Mountain* by Thomas Merton.
24. *Mere Christianity* by C. S. Lewis.
25. *The Return of the Prodigal Son* by Henri J. M. Nouwen.

Pastor Stan

¹ *25 Books Every Christian Should Read: A Guide to the Essential Spiritual Classics* (Revore, Harper Collins, 2011).