

Ten Favorite Books of 2018

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I love reading books. I did not always like reading, but since I picked up reading again for fun in college, I have continuously read since. Solomon said, “there is no end to making many books” and he was right (Eccl. 12:12). This list does not imply endorsement to everything in these books or to everything the authors believe or practice. The books mentioned in this post are listed because they were helpful to me in some way throughout the year. The books are not listed in any particular order of importance or significance, they’re just mentioned at random with a note of what I appreciated in each of them. Hopefully, you will find something here that will help you as you read and grow.

[Make Your Bed: Little Things That Can Change Your Life... And Maybe Your World](#) by William McRaven

This book was one I read in January. The book is made up of short accounts told by McRaven as he connects life lessons he learned throughout his naval career with principles for daily living. McRaven wants readers to know that a lot can be accomplished in life

through persistence and commitment to the fundamentals. This book is suitable for encouragement and helping to build resolve when one would rather give up. McRaven shows that success is attained not by doing something extraordinary but by being faithfully committed to the ordinary day in and day out.

Reset: Living a Grace-Paced Life in a Burnout Culture **by David Murray**

I try to read a book or two on burn-out every year and this year Murray's book was helpful to me. Murray argues that those in ministry must not get pulled into our rat race culture that refuses to allow margin in our lives for rest. This book will help readers to see the need to build in breaks and moments of rest. Murray makes the point that sooner or later one's body will give way if not properly treated. This book helped me to see that if I'm too busy to rest, then I'm simply too busy. I need to be reminded that I can only do so much and when I neglect my rest I will do less than my best work.

The Old Testament is Dying: A Diagnosis and Recommended Treatment by Brent Strawn

Some would call this book a scholarly work, I'm not sure it is. However, Strawn's book focuses on the need to appreciate and recover respect for the Old Testament. He makes the point that if a lack of knowledge of the Old Testament is leading to its death, the New Testament cannot be far behind. Strawn highlights Marcion (a heretic from the 2nd century) and his disdain for the Old Testament and how many Bible students today have followed in his steps perhaps unknowingly. Most Christians readily claim to know the New Testament better than they know the Old Testament, yet how well does one *really* understand the New Testament if he does not know the Old Testament (Rom. 15:4)? Strawn does not only lament the fact that the Old Testament is dying; he provides instruction for how we can retrieve awe and respect for it through studying it, teaching from it, and following the model of Deuteronomy 6:6-9.

When Breath Becomes Air by Paul Kalanithi

This book is not related directly to biblical studies, but I believe biblical principles abound throughout it. Kalanithi is a neurosurgeon diagnosed with terminal cancer at the age of thirty-six. He takes readers on a journey as he writes of his struggles, his fear, conversations with his wife as life nears the end, and shares some thoughts with his newborn daughter. Kalanithi helps one to see the brevity of life and the need to appreciate the things God has

given and made the most of each moment.

Knowing God by J.I. Packer

I know I'm late to the party on this one, Packer's book has long been lauded as a great book on the study of God. Packer's book did cause me to think of how I view God and challenge me to allow scripture to shape my view of God and not the other way around. Packer's Calvinism creeps throughout the pages of the book, which is frustrating. This book is still worthy of your time because many times Christians fail to contemplate the greatness of God and what that means about how we should approach him, Packer helps with this.

205 Virginia Avenue: Memories of Home by Steve Higginbotham

This is a book of childhood memories from Steve's adolescent years. This book was pleasant to read as Steve told not only funny stories but also connected lessons he learned from these events. The more the pages turned, the more I felt like I knew Steve and his family. This book shows the importance of building a strong family bond and making home a place that children will cherish and make good memories. Steve's parents loved the Lord and His church and instilled the same love in him, and his siblings while also having fun. Steve does not portray their family as perfect but as a Christian family striving to glorify God and enjoy each other's company. I enjoyed each story in this book. To get a copy, contact Steve and get a copy of this book ASAP.

Thinking Right about Salvation by Ben Giselbach

No, this book is not on the list just because it is a product of PlainSimpleFaith. Ben has added to his "You Are A Theologian" series and challenges readers to think correctly about salvation. We need more good writing in the Lord's church, and I believe Ben is helping with this series of books. While most of the religious world is in error about how one is saved, this book helps one to rightly divide the truth and notice the false doctrine taught elsewhere. This book is a welcomed companion to one's study of salvation. Read this book with your Bible open and then share it with someone who needs to know the truth about salvation.

Reading for Preaching by Cornelius Plantinga Jr

If you want to know why preachers should read then read this book. Plantinga illustrates why preachers should read widely and how it helps one connect through illustrations, stories, etc. The Bible is filled with illustrations of its own, but when the preacher reads good books he can also find other helpful material to connect with his listeners, Paul did this often in his preaching. Plantinga encourages preachers to read the classics, poetry, and biographies and allow it to deepen one's vocabulary and imagination to better connect to a diverse audience.

Fools Talk: Recovering the Art of Christian Persuasion by Os Guinness

This is a book on apologetics and shows why we need to be ready to give a defense but also do so in a wise and productive way. Guinness does not provide a step by step formula but instead encourages us not to be silent in a world that wants to silence Christians. Guinness reminds us that we are all apologists now and must stand ready to defend the faith we profess.

The Bible

I love reading books, but my favorite book is the Bible. I know what you're thinking, "you're a preacher—of course you'd put the Bible on this list." As a Christian, the Bible should be my favorite book, but it is tempting to read more books about the Bible than to actually read the Bible itself. I have a friend who said to me, "if we really love the Bible and believe it's from God we should not read anything more than we read the Bible," and I think he's right (Psa. 1:1-2; Acts 17:11). The Bible is on the list not simply because "it should be" but because it challenged, informed, and convicted me this year more than these others. The Bible is the only book on this list that also read me as I read it (2 Tim. 3:16-17; Heb. 4:12).

Honorable Mentions

- [The Seminarian: Martin Luther King Jr Comes of Age](#) by Patrick Parr
- [The Prodigal Prophet: Jonah and the Mystery of God's Mercy](#) by Tim Keller
- [Preaching Christ in All of Scripture](#) by Edmund P. Clowney
- [Who is Like The Lord? Exploring the Attributes of God](#) by Dewayne Bryant
- [Between the World and Me](#) by Ta-Nehisi Coates

Hope this list helps. If you know of any good books, let me know in the comments below. I

hope you'll read some of these in 2019. Again, just because a book makes this list does not mean I agree with everything in it, with the exception being the Bible. If you can only read one book every day, read the Bible.