

Articles and Sermons :: Chip's Top Ten Books**Chip's Top Ten Books - posted by Giggles (), on: 2010/5/18 0:58**

-Dynamics of Spiritual Life: An Evangelical Theology of Renewal by Richard F. Lovelace. Intersity Press (September 1979).

This book was one of the first books that I read that broadened my view of sanctification and the sanctified life. Lovelace revealed to me that my sanctification is part of a larger, grander scheme than just my private, personal spirituality. Dynamics reaches back into Church history and outlines the spirit's work through men and events, culminating in a premise for renewal that is bigger than "I."

-The American Hour: A Time of Reckoning and the Once and Future Role of Faith by Os Guinness. Free Press (May 30, 1993)

This book put my faith under judgment: does my faith lead to transforming the culture that surrounds me, or does it add to the culture's corruption? Guinness pinned me against the wall of my self-centeredness and privatized faith and challenged me on how well my faith interacts, reacts, and enlightens my time, my moment in history—and how well my faith is open to God's work of revival and renewal.

-Jesus and the Old Testament by R. T. France. Regent College Publishing (Reprint, 1992).

More than anything, this book revealed that my hermeneutical method would be well informed and molded if I patterned it after the only truly revealed hermeneutic the church has, that is, Jesus' life, teachings, and especially His use of Old Testament Scripture. If one wonders who gave the New Testament writers their hermeneutic principles, who taught them how to use, interpret, and apply Old Testament revelation—it was Jesus. This book is pretty academic, but worth it for the serious student of the Word. I encourage young pastors-in-training in college to ask that an independent course (yes, for credit) be set up to cover this book. Anyone who enters the pulpit or even a church bible study as its leader should wade through this book if for one reason, to be better equipped to interpret the New Testament documents by learning—seeing how Jesus himself interpreted the Old Testament. Well worth the struggle through the academic writing style.

-The Gravedigger File: Papers on the Subversion of the Modern Church by Os Guinness. Intersity Press (July 1983).

I read this book about once a year—have done so for the last twenty or so. Guinness here put me on guard as to how much my faith is modified by my culture rather than the other way around. Written somewhat like CS Lewis' The Screwtape Letters, Guinness gives us subversive letters and communiqués from the enemy Directorate to an underling charged with keeping a person away from Christ, the Church, and the truth. It is a great conspiracy story—and way too true to real life (the life of the church). Fairly easy reading and only pennies a copy from Amazon used books.

-Called and Committed: World Changing Discipleship by David Watson. Shaw (March 7, 2000).

Discipleship is not just about memorizing verses, praying with a prayer partner, or participating in every church event scheduled by your church leadership. Watson pointed me toward true life-affecting discipleship—both rare and shunned by modern Christians. No other book headed me into the dangerous lifestyle of discipleship as Called and Committed. You can get this book used for pennies, but it is priceless. Watson's book is an easy read, practical, and a good review of Jesus' call to follow Him, pick up one's cross and die.

-The Naked Public Square: Religion and Democracy in America by Richard John Neuhaus. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. (May 1996)

This book put my faith to the test: Can I be in the world, but not of it? Neuhaus' "naked public square" refers to the public spaces in American life, which are naked or empty because religion and religious values have been systematically excluded from the public arena and from determination of public policy. Though Neuhaus does not fault specifically the evangelical community, he does work through how, we, too, have abandoned the public square and have, by our habits and interaction—and non-interaction—with those in the public square had contributed to its nakedness (i.e., the anti-religious tendency of those in the public and its religious vacuum). This book should be given to every politician—does anyone have a few hundred thousand dollars so we can do that? Get the book and learn how you can clothe the naked public square.

-The Origin of Paul's Gospel. Wipf & Stock Publishers (April 2007)

To begin to truly grasp Paul's theology and how he understood the Gospel, one should understand his conversion to Christianity. This is imperative for a thorough understanding of Paul's writings in the New Testament. Kim's original book, *The Origin of Paul's Gospel*, was foundational in that it gave me a basis to understand Paul's use of terms and descriptions of the work of Jesus Christ. Hard stuff, though. Kim's book was foundational for me because it showed me (convincingly) that Paul's Damascus road event shaped his theology, Christian faith, and writings. I wish there was something like this on the lay-level (Ah, a future book project for me!), but there isn't to date. So, with this one, start with Kim's summaries and then read the chapter. This will help. For further reading, make sure you include Kim's more recent *Paul and the New Perspective: Second Thoughts on the Origin of Paul's Gospel* (Eerdmans, November 2001). Kim's book helped form my own exegetical method, because the book helped me to see how Paul developed his. Additionally, the closest book that is slightly less intimidating, but on a similar foundational level, is Richard Gaffin's book, *Resurrection and Redemption: A Study in Paul's Soteriology* (P&R Press, 1993). And for a good study on a foundational level for understanding the work of Christ as portrayed in the Gospels, read Kim's "The Son of Man" as the Son of God (Eerdmans, 1985). I know these extra books will make the list add up to more than my Top 10, but all of them are linked together because they will assist the reader that is willing to work at reading them to develop a very good biblical foundation for thinking about the Gospel. Well, worth the difficult reading, for those who are willing.

-Problem of the Wineskins: Church Renewal in a Technological Age by Howard A. Snyder. Intervarsity Press (June 1975)

When I was a young minister-in-training, I actually got in trouble for reading this book—and for passing it on to others. It was radical then and it's radical now. I handed these books out to everyone willing to read it back in my Bible College days. In fact, a church board member of one of the first churches I belonged to in the 80's carried one of the copies I handed out into a board meeting only to be greeted by the Pastor, "You've been hanging around Chip again, haven't you?" Worth reading again. It will help you think about church and how much our church structure hinders or helps us from carrying out kingdom objectives. Snyder will challenge you to think "out of the box" with regard to your faith, church-life, and community.

-Idols for Destruction: The Conflict of Christian Faith and American Culture by Herbert Schlossberg. Crossway Books (July 1993).

A bit heady, but worth it. Schlossberg writes as a Christian and systematically goes through the 20th century influences on Western thought and compares them with a traditional Judeo-Christian worldview. This is a thinking book (so be prepared) and will cause you to think past your "in the box" notions about our faith. As the author quotes, "He who marries the spirit of an age, soon finds himself a widower."

-Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching by Walter C. Kaiser. Baker Book House (July 1998)

If you only buy or read one book on how to study the Bible or how to prepare sermons or how to do the work of exegeting a text, this is it. This is the one! No other book helped me to become better at studying the Bible and preaching. Should be required reading for all pastors, missionaries, and anyone who stands before others and says, "This is what the Bible says" and "This is what God says." If I had a million dollars, I'd buy a copy for every pastor in America. Don't hesitate—get it, read it, learn it, and do it!