

# Building a Core Library

## 50 Recommended Books

*Jeffrey D. Breshears*

The following books are recommended for Christians who want to build a substantive core library that includes some of the best works in five key areas: (1) The Bible and Biblical Studies; (2) Christian History; (3) Christian Apologetics; (4) Cultural Apologetics and Contemporary Issues; and (5) Christian Spiritual Formation and Discipleship. All are highly recommended, as is the general order in which they are listed under each heading.

### 1. The Bible and Bibliology

- [ ] **Henry H. Halley, *Halley's Bible Handbook with the New International Version* (Deluxe Edition, 2007)**

A wealth of information on the historical background, culture and geographical setting for each book of the Bible, including significant archaeological findings related to the narratives. This version is 1,050 pages and features full-color maps, photographs and illustrations, and is an ideal aid for in-depth Bible study.

- [ ] **Trent C. Butler, Chad Brand, Charles Draper, and Archie England, eds., *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (2003)**

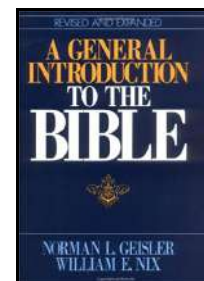
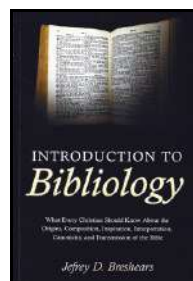
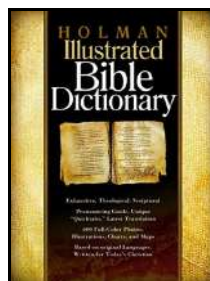
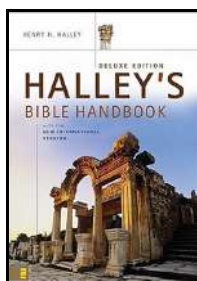
A comprehensive and in-depth 1700-page dictionary featuring hundreds of Bible-related terms and topics with more than 700 full-color graphics and other aids.

- [ ] **Jeffrey D. Breshears, *Introduction to Bibliology: What Every Christian Should Know About the Origins, Composition, Inspiration, Interpretation, Canonization, and Transmission of the Bible* (2017)**

A concise but substantive single-volume study of the foundational issues in bibliology, the central theme of which is the issue of why it is reasonable to believe the Bible was supernaturally-inspired. Combining history, philosophy, theology and apologetics, this truly is background material on the Bible that all knowledgeable and thoughtful Christians engaged in serious Bible study need to know.

- [ ] **Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible* (Revised and Expanded, 1968, 1986)**

A valuable general overview that provides extensive research and insight into four key areas of bibliology: (1) the divine inspiration of Scripture; (2) the canonization process; (3) the transmission of the Bible through the centuries, and (4) ancient and modern translations of the Bible. The central theme focuses on the question, "Is the Bible of today a faithful representation of the text as originally written by the authors of the Old and New Testaments?"



## 2. Christian History

- [ ] **J. D. Douglass, ed., *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Revised Edition, 1974)**

A comprehensive dictionary of the significant names, issues and events in Christian history from the first century to the 1970s.

- [ ] **Paul Maier, *Josephus: The Essential Works* (1988, 1994)**

An abridged and highly-readable translation of the writings of the Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus, whose history of Israel and the Jews covers 2,000 years from the time of Abraham through the Zealot Revolt and destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. Maier's text is supplemented by beautiful full-color photographs.

- [ ] **Paul Maier, *Eusebius: The Church History* (1999)**

An abridged and highly-readable translation of the writings of the early Christian historian, Eusebius, whose works cover the first 300 years of Christian history from the early church through the reign of Constantine (337 A.D.). Maier's text is supplemented by beautiful full-color photographs.

- [ ] **Everett Ferguson, *Church History, Volume One: From Christ to the Pre-Reformation* (2005, 2013).**

Beginning with an overview of both Greco-Roman and Jewish cultures in the time of Christ, this volume presents a substantive treatment of the most significant people, issues and events in Christian history from the time of Christ to the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

- [ ] **John D. Woodbridge and Frank A. James III, *Church History, Volume Two: From Pre-Reformation to the Present Day* (2013)**

A substantive treatment of the most significant people, issues and events in Christian history from the Renaissance and the Age of Discovery through the Reformation Era into to the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

- [ ] **Ivor J. Davidson, *The Birth of the Church: From Jesus to Constantine, A. D. 30-312. The Baker History of the Church, Volume I* (2004)**

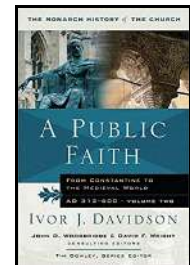
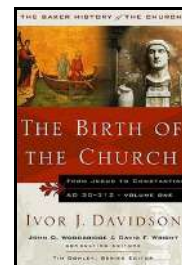
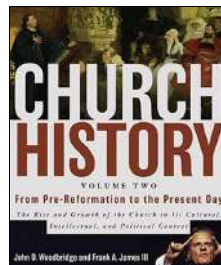
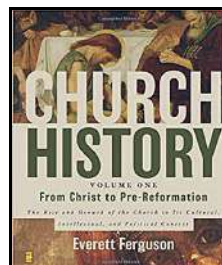
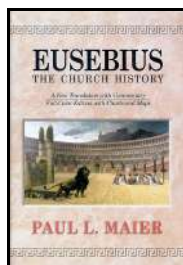
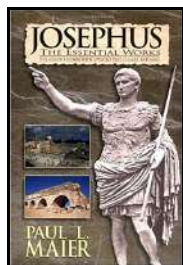
One of the best single-volume histories of the early church and Volume I in the 6-volume Baker History of the Church. Written by a world-renowned scholar in the field, *The Birth of the Church* provides an overview of the major people, issues and events in the first 300 years of church history.

- [ ] **Ivor J. Davidson, *A Public Faith: From Constantine to the Medieval World, A. D. 312-600. The Baker History of the Church, Volume II* (2005)**

An excellent single-volume history of Christianity from the time of Constantine through the fall of the Western Roman Empire and into the early medieval era, and Volume II in the 6-volume Baker History of the Church. Written by a world-renowned scholar in the field, *A Public Faith* provides a detailed overview of the major people, issues and events during this 300 year period in church history.

- [ ] **Rudolph W. Heinze, *Reform and Conflict: From the Medieval World to the Wars of Religion, 1350-1648. The Baker History of the Church, Volume IV* (2005)**

An excellent single-volume history of the late medieval and Reformation eras, and Volume IV in the 6-volume Baker History of the Church. Written by a world-renowned scholar in the field, *Reform and Conflict* provides a detailed overview of the major people, issues and events in this critical and transformative period in church history.



[ ] **Meic Pearse, *The Age of Reason: From the Wars of Religion to the French Revolution, 1570-1789. The Baker History of the Church, Volume V (2006)***

An excellent single-volume history of European Christianity from the late Reformation era through the *Age of Enlightenment*, culminating in the French Revolution of 1789. Written by a world-renowned scholar in the field, *The Reason* is Volume V in the 6-volume Baker History of the Church, and it provides a detailed overview of the major people, issues and events in this period of church history.

[ ] **Henry Bettensen and Chris Maunder, *Documents of the Christian Church* (Third Edition, 1943, 1999)**

The essential primary documents in Christian history, including the earliest versions of the Apostles' Creed, excerpts from the early church fathers, Constantine's conversion, major papal edicts, key documents related to the Protestant Reformation, proclamations of the Council of Trent, the Westminster Confession of Faith, and much more.

### 3. Christian Apologetics

[ ] **Norman L. Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (1999)**

The most comprehensive compendium and reference book on Christian apologetics, covering the major relevant themes, issues, events and people, including key atheists, skeptics, and leaders in major non-Christian religions and cults.

[ ] **Josh McDowell and Don Stewart, *Handbook of Today's Religions* (1983)**

With major sections on cults, the Occult, non-Christian religions, and "secular religions," this is one of the best reference volumes available for information on major non-Christian philosophies, religions and spiritualities. Contents include Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Scientology, Transcendental Meditation, parapsychology, ghosts and demons, witchcraft, Marxism, secular humanism, etc.

[ ] **G. K. Chesterton, *The Everlasting Man* (1925)**

The first great Christian apologetic of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in which Chesterton explores the realms of anthropology, history, mythology and comparative religion to support his contention that Jesus Christ and the Christian faith are unique. Chesterton, a Catholic Christian and a journalist, was one of the great Christian humanist scholars and social thinkers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. C. S. Lewis called *The Everlasting Man* "the best popular apologetic I know" – reason enough to feature it in a select list of "Fifty Recommended Books."

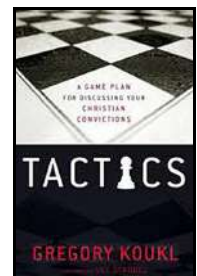
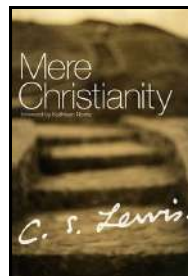
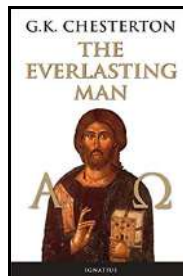
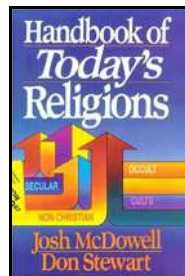
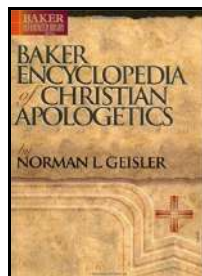
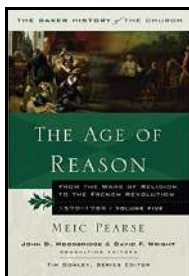
[ ] **C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (1952)**

A modern classic and perhaps the most influential and beloved Christian book of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, *Mere Christianity* is an informal primer in Christian apologetics and basic theology that was originally delivered as a series of BBC radio addresses from 1942-44.

[ ] **Gregory Koukl, *Tactics: A Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions* (2009)**

A practical guide for Christians who want to share their faith comfortably, skillfully and effectively in the midst of a society and culture that is increasingly hostile to the Gospel message. Endorsements by notable Christian apologists make the case.

- William Lane Craig: "Greg Koukl is a master tactician.... Mastering his tactics will make you a more effective ambassador for Christ."
- J. P. Moreland: "It is not enough to know *why* you believe... it is also crucial to know *how* to communicate those beliefs.... *Tactics* shows precisely how to do that."
- Sean McDowell: "Tactics will revolutionize your conversations with non-Christians."
- Han Hanegraaff: "Greg Koukl's *Tactics*... should be required training for all Christians and churches."



[ ] **James Sire, *The Universe Next Door* (Fifth Edition, 1976, 2009)**

Using the major tenets of basic Christian Theism as a standard of evaluation, Sire offers a substantive and insightful analysis of alternative worldviews – deism, atheistic naturalism, nihilism, existentialism, postmodernism, Eastern pantheism, and the New Age – and demonstrates how they all fail as rational and plausible alternatives to a biblical worldview. Now in its Fifth Edition, this has been one of the most practical and influential books in Christian apologetics for more than 30 years and is indispensable for all who desire to share their faith effectively in our pluralistic society.

[ ] **Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict* (1999)**

An anthology of Christian apologetics presented in annotated outline form, this has been the most popular apologetics sourcebook for evangelical Christians since the publication of volume one of this compilation in the early 1970s. *New Evidence That Demands a Verdict* is expanded and updated, and contains a wealth of information. Although McDowell’s presentations are occasionally too selective and ignore complicating factors, this remains a valuable source for a general overview of apologetics.

[ ] **William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith* (Third Edition, 1984, 2008)**

Written primarily as a textbook for seminary level courses on Christian apologetics, *Reasonable Faith* is a substantive treatment of many key areas including the relationship between faith and reason, the existence of God, the nature and mission of Christ, the evidence for the physical bodily resurrection of Christ, issues related to historical knowledge and miracles, and the evangelistic applications of apologetics. A Craig Writes, “It is my earnest hope that God will use this material to help equip a new generation of intelligent, articulate Christians who are filled with the Spirit and burdened to see the Great Commission fulfilled.

[ ] **Lee Strobel, *The Case for Faith* (2000)**

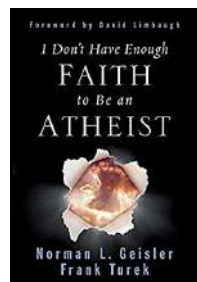
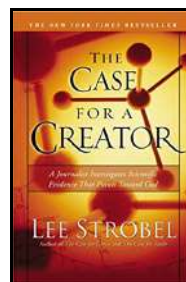
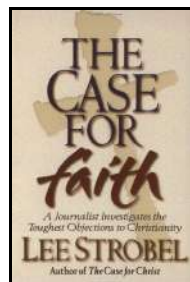
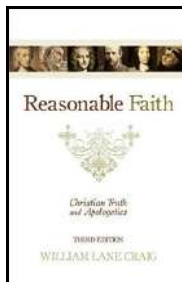
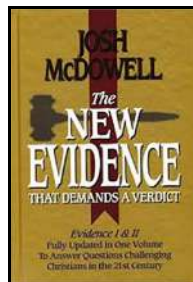
A basic primer in Christian apologetics that addresses some of most relevant and controversial issues related to the Christian faith such as the problem of evil and suffering, miracles, Christian exclusivity, science and evolution, Hell, and the violence and oppression in Christian history.

[ ] **Lee Strobel, *The Case for a Creator* (2004)**

Like *The Case for Faith* and *The Case for Christ* (see below), this is a basic primer written for a general audience – but nonetheless valuable as an introduction to the remarkable scientific evidence for the existence of an eternal, transcendent, infinite and omnipotent Creator God as revealed in the Bible. Chapters include the correlation between science and Christian faith, a critique of Darwinian evolutionary theory, the cosmological evidence for God, the evidence from biochemistry, and the contributions of modern Intelligent Design (I.D.) theory.

[ ] **Norman L. Geisler and Frank Turek, *I Don’t Have Enough Faith to be an Atheist* (2004)**

Faith is required for anything we believe, whether it is Christianity or atheism or any other philosophy or religion. The question then becomes: Which belief system is most plausible considering the evidence (including historical and scientific facts), logic and reason? Furthermore, which belief system provides the most satisfactory answers regarding the perennial issues of life: Origins (where did I come from?), Identity (who am I?), Meaning (why am I here?), Morality (how should I live?), and Destiny (Where am I going when I die?). As so many former skeptics have discovered, the evidence for the Christian faith is overwhelming while the atheist position rests on wishful thinking, avoidance of the truth, and blind faith. Josh McDowell concludes: “If you’re still a skeptic after reading [this book], then I suspect you’re living in denial.”



[ ] **Antony Flew, *There Is a God: How the World's Most Notorious Atheist Changed His Mind* (2007)**

Antony Flew, one of the 20<sup>th</sup> century's most influential atheist philosophers, was also committed to the Socratic principle of "follow the evidence wherever it may lead." After a lifetime of constant inquiry, Flew concluded that the evidence based on Intelligent Design leads conclusively to God. This is a compelling read, bolstered by a powerful Appendix essay by Roy Abraham Varghese critiquing the "New Atheist" apologists such as Richard Dawkins and Sam Harris.

[ ] **Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ* (1998)**

One of the most popular apologetics books of the past 20 years, this is a valuable primer in the basic issues and controversies related to the historical Jesus and the reliability of the New Testament gospels, featuring interviews with some of the leading evangelical scholars in the field.

[ ] **J. Warner Wallace, *Cold-Case Christianity: A Homicide Detective Investigates the Claims of the Gospels* (2013)**

According to Wallace, "I wrote *Cold-Case Christianity* because the historic truth claims of Christianity are under attack from every direction. If ever there was a time to study the case for the eyewitness reliability of the gospels, the time is now." Greg Koukl, author of *Tactics*, writes that "*Cold Case Christianity* is simply the most clever and compelling defense I've ever read for the reliability of the New Testament record. Case closed."

[ ] **Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Real Jesus: The Misguided Quest For the Historical Jesus and the Truth of the Traditional Gospels* (1995)**

One of the best books on the controversy over the "historical Jesus" and a damning indictment of the pseudo-scholarly Jesus Seminar. Johnson, a professor at Emory University's Candler School of Theology, argues that the Jesus of history cannot be separated from the Christ of faith as presented in the New Testament. Ultimately, however, the "real" Jesus can best be found not through exhaustive historical research but in a life-changing personal encounter with the living and active Christ.

[ ] **Timothy Paul Jones, *Misquoting Truth: A Guide to the Fallacies of Bart Ehrman's Misquoting Jesus* (2007)**

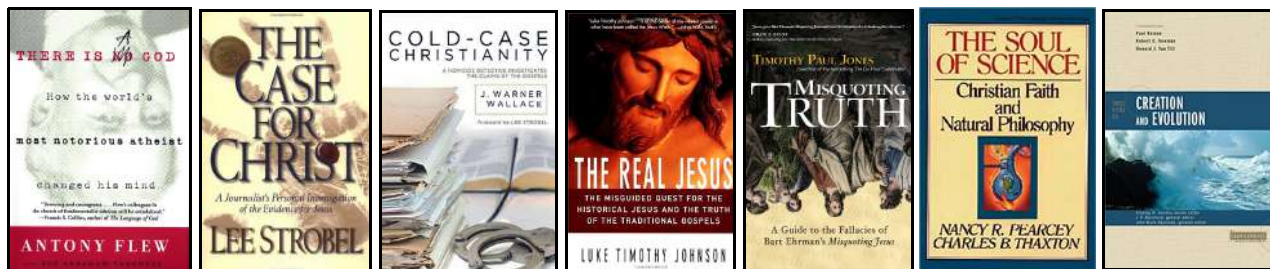
A detailed rebuttal of the fallacies in Bart Ehrman's influential book, *Misquoting Jesus: The Story of Who Changed the Bible and Why* (2005). Ehrman, the author of several best-selling revisionist critiques of the Bible and early Christianity, contends that the Bible is not historically reliable, and the biblical texts have been so corrupted in the transmission process over the centuries that modern readers cannot possibly know that the authors originally wrote.

[ ] **Nancy R. Pearcey and Charles B. Thaxton, *The Soul of Science: Christian Faith and Natural Philosophy* (1994)**

A devastating critique of the modern myth that science and Christianity are incompatible, this book should be required reading for all thinking Christians, Christian leaders, philosophers and scientists. The authors make a compelling case that modern science depended upon the Judeo-Christian worldview and was an outgrowth of it. Nancy Pearcey studied under Francis Schaeffer and is one of the leading cultural apologists of the past 30 years, while Charles Thaxton was one of the early theoreticians associated with Intelligent Design (I.D.) theory.

[ ] **J. P. Moreland and John Mark Reynolds, *Three Views on Creation and Evolution* (1999)**

An excellent source for an introduction to the three views that Christians hold regarding creation and evolution: Young Earth Creationism (YEC), Old Earth Progressive (or Special) Creationism (OEP), and Theistic Evolution (TE). Advocates for each position state their case, after which their arguments are critiqued by a panel of scientists, philosophers and theologians.



## 4. Cultural Apologetics

### [ ] C. S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man* (1944)

Influenced by G. K. Chesterton's *The Everlasting Man*, Lewis' *The Abolition of Man* is an astute analysis of the philosophical and moral decline of the West. As such, the book functions as a primer for everything else Lewis wrote on the state of Western civilization and culture, including politics. At the same time Hitler and Stalin were terrorizing humanity, modernist philosophers such as A. J. Ayer and Bertrand Russell were promoting moral relativism – origins of what would become the fad of Postmodernism. Lewis begins with a basic *a priori* premise – the ancient Chinese concept of the *Tao* (*Dao* – “The Way”) – which is the basis for natural law theory. Once we eliminate moral absolutes, we abolish man as a moral being and a creature made in the image of God. The result is that the law of the jungle prevails – might makes right and civilization degenerates into the survival of the fittest. In this culture war, science, technology and philosophy are exploited by sinister political forces.

### [ ] J. Budziszewski, *What We Can't Not Know* (2003)

In the Preface, J. Budziszewski writes: “This book is about the lost world of common truths – about what we all really know about right and wrong.... If you truly reject the truths I say we ‘can’t not know,’ I do consider you desperately confused.” As the author of several books on Natural Law and the personal and social consequences of violating God’s moral standards, and having gone through stages of atheism and nihilism in his own search for truth, Budziszewski understands the philosophical and personal effects of moral relativism. As emphasized by the apostle Paul in Romans 1-2, these are universal moral and ethical truths that all humanity senses to be right because these truths is innate to having been made in the *Imago Dei* – the Image of God. This book is a must-read for anyone attempting to make sense of the culture war in America today.

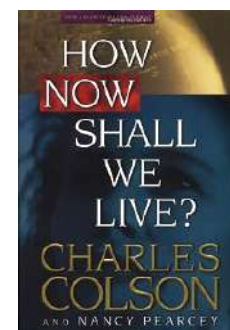
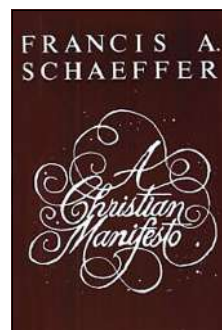
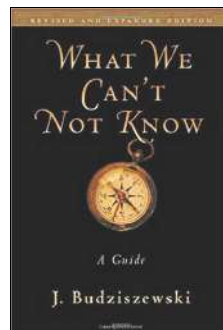
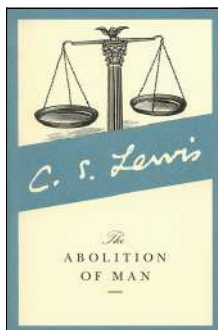
### [ ] Francis A. Schaeffer, *A Christian Manifesto* (1981)

Francis Schaeffer is regarded as the progenitor of modern cultural apologetics, and *A Christian Manifesto* was his last major book and the culmination of his prodigious scholarly career that included significant works such as *The God Who Is There* (1968), *Escape from Reason* (1968), *He Is There and He Is Not Silent* (1972), *How Should We Then Live? The Rise and Decline of Western Thought and Culture* (1976), and *Whatever Happened to the Human Race?* (1979). In *A Christian Manifesto* Schaeffer writes, “Something fundamental has changed. Law and government no longer provide a foundation of justice and morality but have become the means of licensing moral perversions of all kinds. Education has become the enemy of religious truth and values. And the media have provided the means for propagating the change.” While disavowing any intention to create a Christian theocracy, this book is a clarion call for Christians to get informed and engaged in the great cultural and moral struggles of our age so as “to change the course of history.”

### [ ] Charles Colson and Nancy Pearcey, *How Now Shall We Live?* (1999)

Intended as a sequel to Francis Schaeffer’s classic study in cultural apologetics, *How Should We Then Live?* (1976 – see above), this book presents a sweeping overview of the significant people, issues, ideas and events in Western civilization that shaped the dominant worldview of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. While lacking the historical breadth of Schaeffer’s work and written on a more popular level, Colson and Pearcey’s book is more substantive in terms of dealing with the four seminal issues of life:

- (1) Origins: Where did we come from?
- (2) The Fall: Why is the world – and everyone in it – so dysfunctional?
- (3) Redemption: What is the solution to the world’s problems? and
- (4) Restoration: How to live an integrated life of wholistic discipleship in the midst of our current society that is rapidly deteriorating under the influence of postmodern and neo-pagan influences.



[ ] **Nancy R. Pearcey, *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity* (2004)**

“Everyone is aware that American culture changed enormously during the twentieth century, but very few people understand how the change was brought about.” Pearcey’s *Total Truth* is a sweeping analysis of contemporary culture that challenges Christians to think clearly and consistently in accord with a biblical worldview, and then to apply Christian values and beliefs in the way we live our lives. For those who have read and absorbed James Sire’s *The Universe Next Door* (see above), *Total Truth* is the next step in terms of formulating a coherent, consistent and comprehensive Christian worldview.

[ ] **Dinesh D’Souza, *What’s So Great About Christianity* (2007)**

A cogent and engaging refutation of the major claims against Christianity by atheists and other skeptics, with a special focus on the uniqueness of the Christian faith, Christianity’s historical contributions to Western civilization, and some of the current scientific controversies.

[ ] **Paul C. Vitz, *Psychology As Religion: The Cult of Self-Worship* (1977)**

A thought-provoking critique of modern psychology and the “me” generation. Analyzing the popular and pervasive theories that espouse a secular humanistic worship of the self, Vitz argues that modern psychology has become a surrogate religion and is part of the problem of contemporary life rather than a solution to it. Nevertheless, when understood and applied properly, psychology can be a vital asset in terms of increased self-awareness and a spiritually healthy life. Vitz was a professor of psychology at New York University.

[ ] **Nancy R. Pearcey, *Love Thy Body: Hard Questions About Life and Sexuality* (2018)**

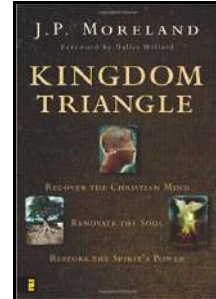
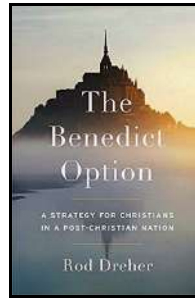
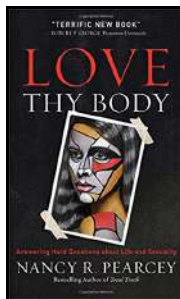
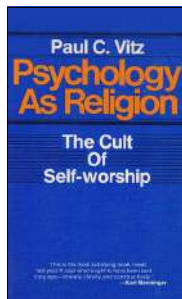
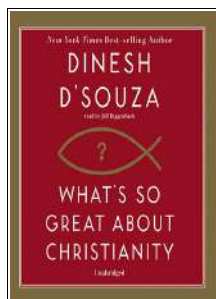
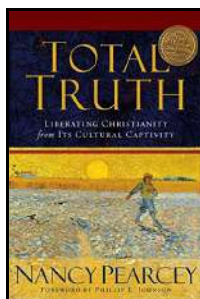
A straightforward critique of the dehumanizing worldview behind the sexual revolution. As Ryan T. Anderson of The Heritage Foundation notes, “Nancy Pearcey knows that at the heart of today’s ‘hot-button’ debates lies competing conceptions of the human person: Are we rational and free beings capable of knowing the truth, or are we meaningless cosmic dust, the result of blind material forces?” Are we made in the image of God, or are we merely highly-evolved animals and the products of random, impersonal and purposeless naturalistic processes? Chapters address many of the salient social issues of our time including free sex, abortion, homosexuality, gay marriage, and transgenderism,

[ ] **Rod Dreher, *The Benedict Option* (2017)**

This book was written “to wake up the church and to encourage it to act to strengthen itself, while there is still time.” According to Dreher, the culture war is over, the anti-Christian forces of the cultural left won decisively, and the old quasi-Christian consensus of the past has disintegrated under a constant barrage by secularists and social liberals who are determined to fundamentally transform America. As such, this is a clarion call for faithful and creative discipleship in the midst of a decaying culture. This thought-provoking book is written for that small minority of Christian visionaries and activists who are knowledgeable, discerning and wise, and who care enough to prepare for the radical changes that are forthcoming.

[ ] **J. P. Moreland, *The Kingdom Triangle: Recover the Christian Mind, Renovate the Soul, Restore the Spirit’s Power* (2007)**

In a society and culture corrupted by pervasive secular humanism, scientific naturalism and amoral postmodernism, Moreland offers the only viable solution for confronting the great spiritual, moral, social and political crises of our age. Our culture is disintegrating under a constant assault by insidious forces, and the lives and witness of many Christians are being devastated by non-Christian beliefs, values and priorities. The solution is to construct a “kingdom triangle” based on (1) the recovery of a wholistic Christian worldview, (2) the renovation of the heart and spiritual formation, and (3) the restoration of the power of the Holy Spirit at the center of the Christian life. As Moreland writes, “I want to foment a revolution of Evangelical life... for a revolution on behalf of the cause of Christ.”



## 5. Christian Spiritual Formation and Discipleship

### [ ] A. W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God* (1948)

As a theological conservative and a devotee of the traditional spiritual disciplines, Tozer was a rarity among modern evangelical Christians. In one of the great spiritual classics of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Tozer challenges Christians to go beyond mere doctrinal orthodoxy into the realm of intimate communion with the Spirit of God who resides within. Like the great spiritual mystics whom he admired and wrote about, Tozer lived in the presence of God and spoke with authority as a true prophet for his time.

### [ ] Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* (Twentieth Anniversary Edition, 1978, 1998)

This book has probably done more than any other to introduce modern evangelicals to the rich history of contemplative Christianity and the traditional spiritual disciplines of the Christian faith.

### [ ] Henri J. M. Nouwen, *The Way of the Heart* (1981)

With the death of Thomas Merton, Henri Nouwen emerged as the most influential advocate for the contemplative Christian tradition and lifestyle. This succinct but substantive introduction to the spirituality of the Desert Fathers focuses on three spiritual disciplines: solitude, silence, and prayer – the perfect antidote for our over-stimulated, materialistic and hedonistic society.

### [ ] Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God* (1997)

A masterful and practical approach to authentic Christian discipleship that integrates and applies Jesus' teachings into a comprehensive Christ-centered worldview and lifestyle in keeping with his command that we love God, love ourselves, and love others with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. In that regard, as in his other writings, Willard emphasizes the efficacy of the the traditional spiritual disciplines. As Richard Foster comments, "Clearly [Willard] has descended with the mind into the heart and from this place he touches us, both mind and heart."

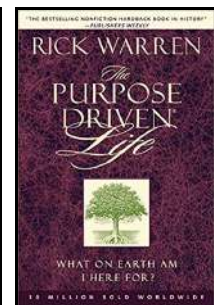
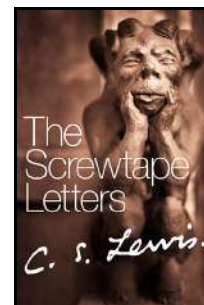
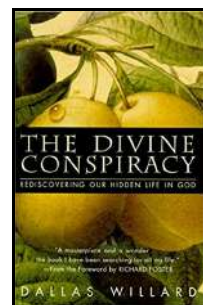
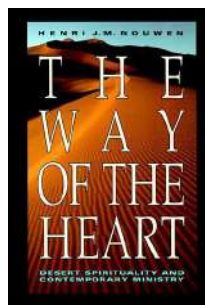
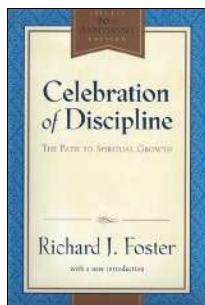
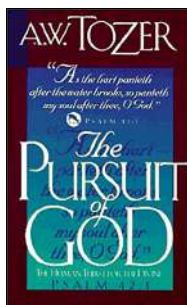
### [ ] C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* (1941)

An imaginative cosmic drama in which Lewis exposes the tangled web of demonic-inspired temptations and delusions that bind and confuse even the most dedicated and conscientious Christians. Lewis was a professor of Classical Literature at Oxford University for over 30 years and one of the 20<sup>th</sup> century's most popular Christian authors.

### [ ] Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life: What On Earth Am I Here For?* (2002)

"It's not about you. The purpose of your life is far greater than your own personal fulfillment, your peace of mind, or even your happiness.... If you want to know why you were placed on this planet, you must begin with God. You were born *by* his purpose and *for* his purpose." Thus, the starting point for understanding who we are and why we're here is the character and will of God.

Although sometimes disparaged as Christianity Lite, *The Purpose Driven Life* is a valuable book that challenges even the most mature Christian to soberly reassess his/her life and priorities. As a systematic guide to a 40-day spiritual journey, the book requires that we take stock our beliefs, our values, our desires, our motivations, our priorities, our lifestyle, and our commitment to God in order to clarify our unique mission in life and live a truly meaningful and purpose driven life.





[ ] **Philip Yancey, *Where Is God When It Hurts?* (1977, 1990)**

Is God actively involved in evil and suffering, or is he merely a passive by-stander? Why does so much of life seem to make no sense? Furthermore, how can Christians reach out to those who are suffering? Using Scripture and personal experiences, Yancey avoids trite and simplistic answers to the problem of evil and suffering while affirming that God is neither capricious nor unconcerned.

[ ] **John White, *The Golden Cow: Materialism in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Church* (1979)**

“In the first century Christ made a whip to drive the moneychangers out of the Temple... This book is about materialism in the church. Another Temple cleansing is needed. The church today is a prostitute that needs to be brought back.” In *The Golden Cow*, John White addresses an issue that most Christians (including most Christian leaders) avoid like the plague, and in the process he analyzes how many churches, evangelism ministries, “Christian businesses,” and “Christian fund-raisers” are caught up in the false values of our materialistic society. White was an author, a counselor, and a professor of psychiatry at the University of Manitoba. [Note: *The Golden Cow* is out of print, but copies are available through Amazon.com.]

[ ] **Ronald J. Sider, *Rich Christians In An Age of Hunger* (Revised and Updated, 1977, 2015)**

A revised edition from the original 1977 book, Sider’s book presents a challenge to all serious Christians to reevaluate their attitudes toward money, possessions, and their lifestyles in general. As such, *Rich Christians* is one of the most influential books on Christian social responsibility since Walter Rauschenbusch’s *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, published in 1913. Conservative Christians tend to blame poverty, crime, drug abuse and other social problems on personal sin and individual choices, while liberals typically focus on “corporate sin” – racism, sexism, and unjust political, economic and social structures. Conservatives will not agree with all of Sider’s points, but this book is nonetheless a valuable and convicting indictment of conventional American values and lifestyles.

