

2015 Pastor's Reading List

1. **FLYBOYS**, by James Bradley (the well-known author of **Flags of our Fathers** and is the son of one of the men who raised the flag on Iwo Jima) 2004. This book is an interesting read. It is written so that all will remember the pilots who fought and died in the Pacific during WWII. But specifically it is written to preserve the memories of 8 Flyboys (as they were called), namely, Warren Earl Vaughn, Jimmy Dye, Dick Woellhof, Grady York, Glenn Frazier, Floyd Hall, Marve Mershon, and an unidentified flyer (as he was classified by the War Department...later named in the book) who were shot down and killed and/or cannibalized on the island of Chichi Jima the next island north west of Iwo Jima. After being told of the story of these men the author felt that the truth needed to be told for the first time since they had been captured and killed. The research is wonderful and the facts are appalling, horrific and unsettling. He spoke to men who were there who got off the island like Bill Connell, the last American to leave the island alive...to George Bush who was shot down in the same area but was rescued by a U.S. submarine just before he was captured...to the actual Japanese captors and murderers on the island at the time. He gives a great history of the Japanese people and let's us look into the mind of these people so we can see how they were able to justify the things they did without condoning any of their atrocities. He doesn't spare the knowledge of our own acts of barbarism in this very barbaric war in the Pacific but he is not disrespectful to our troops. It was interesting reading this book at the same time I was reading **41**, a biography of George H.W. Bush written by his son George W. Bush. This is a disturbing book but one that anyone interested in history, especially WWII history, ought to read.
2. **41**, by George W. Bush (2014). A wonderful book written by a son who loves his father dearly, telling his father and the world of his pride and devotion to his father. He says in the forward that this will not be an objective book....how could it be...and yet from his unique perspective, having been President himself, this book shines. This is after all a book written by President George W. Bush, the 43rd President of the United States, about his father President George H.W. Bush the 41st President of the United States. George H.W. Bush was a true American statesmen and this is a great American story...one that will endure time. As the son espouses the attributes of the father he has watched and sought to emulate, we have a story also of the son, but through it all we see the man President George H.W. Bush. No matter what you think of

his politics (and after reading this book, I am re-thinking some of the harsh criticism I have made through the years about his policies) you see a man of integrity seeking to serve the people of this great nation sacrificially and yet never sacrificing his family. A must read!

3. **The Journal of Best Practices; A Memoir of Marriage, Asperger Syndrome and One Man's Quest to be a Better Husband**, by David Finch (2012). This was a very enjoyable read about the wide spectrum of the marital relationship...with a dose of Asperger syndrome thrown into the mix. This is truly one man's quest to be a better husband as he comes to understand this syndrome that had shaped his life from the time he was born and along the way he comes to realize that much of his problems are really normal. Relationship issues that most people struggle with inadequately but if committed can find their way through as he does. What makes this book interesting and not your typical book on how to have a better marriage is his diagnosis of Asperger's. Rather than using it as an excuse he uses it to improve. His desire to strengthen his family overshadows an obvious "handicap" that would have overwhelmed the average man...but that is the point...he is not average. It is a heartwarming and funny account of his continuing journey. If I have a criticism it is that there is an overabundance of profanity with the "F" word seemingly the word of choice. Call me a prude but I am not sure that it is totally necessary even in an attempt to be as truthful in recounting conversations as the author seems...maybe that is another thing he will improve on if it becomes an issue in his world.
4. **It Took Heroes- Part 1; A Calvary Chaplain's Memoir of Vietnam**, by Claude D. Newby (1998). This is a running account of Chaplain Newby's first deployment to Vietnam as what appears to be the first Latter Day Saints chaplain. The requirement had been that all chaplains need to be seminary trained, ordained and had a minimum of 2 years pastoral experience before being chosen...which was not a requirement in the LDS organization. This part also catalogues his journey in being approved which is interesting from a Christian's perspective as well as when he gets in the fact that he must compromise his faith in performing what was called General Christian Services along with Mormon service when possible. But he quickly settles in and finds his place as he enjoyed being embedded with the infantry units and was assigned to the newly formed Air-Calvary units in Vietnam and became loved by his men for his always being there for them. But these books (finishing up Part II, now) are not really about him but rather about the men who lived and

died that he served. As excellent account that keeps these men alive and remembered.

5. It Took Heroes- Part II; A Calvary Chaplains Memoir of Vietnam, by Chaplain Claude D. Newby (2000). This book is more of the same, but in his running account of a daily log, the reader also sees how the war changes after he goes stateside and then returns for a 2nd deployment 1½ years later. From 1969 through 1970 the world of war has changed to reflect a drawdown of troops and so apathy has begun to set in. There had been signs of “winning” the war when he left in 1967 but after the Nixon administration ordered the slow withdrawal of troops the war was lost...in mind and equipment. Being a chaplain under these circumstances became even more difficult. Chaplain Newby, a LDS chaplain, continued to do services for all faiths and continued to be embedded with his Calvary troopers as often as possible thus winning the respect of the grunts up to the commanding officers in the field. This part of his memoirs even more than his first one is dedicated to those who endured the darkest days of Vietnam.

6. Daily Meditations and Prayers, by John Bradford. (John Bradford, Prebendary [senior clergy in a large church] of St Paul's Cathedral in the 1500s. He was an English Reformer and martyr best remembered for his utterance, *'There but for the grace of God, goes John Bradford.'* He was martyred in 1555.) This little booklet, 30-45 pages or so depending upon source material, was written exclusively to offset the prayers that were put together by the Catholic priest for the people to pray during the day. It is a great tool to help a person to know how to pray and what to pray about. But it is not the prayers themselves that are the real gems of this book but the theological justification for the prayers that he gives before many of the prayers. Some of the best theology I have read in some time. This little book can be found in many places for free. The iBook can be downloaded from Monergism.com in their free iBooks list.

7. ALIENS in the PROMISED LAND: Why Minority Leadership Is Overlooked in White Christian Churches and Institutions, edited by Anthony B. Bradley (2013). Anthony Bradley is an associate professor of theology and ethics at King's College in New York City and a research fellow at

the Acton Institute in Grand Rapids, MI. He received his M.A. from Fordham University, his M.Div. from Covenant Theological Seminary, and his Ph.D. from Westminster Theological Seminary. This is a voice that the church will need to listen to and heed in the years ahead. This is a book of messages concerning the “diversity” of the Church today. Dr. Bradley has brought together scholars from diverse cultures within the church...black, Asian and Hispanic as well as Presbyterians (PCA), Pentecostals, Charismatics and Independents to share with the church of today advice on building relationships with minority denominations seeking to show the world that the gospel does in fact bring together peoples from all nations, tribes and languages. On one hand I agree with John Frame’s short assessment of this book, “*This is a terrific book...a game changer...If you are tired of the usual arguments about race, as I am, this book will wake you up with some new ideas.*” While, I agree with this assessment by and large, there is one thing that troubles me...which usually troubles me about such books like this one...we never seem to talk about the one thing...the elephant in the room, if you will, that is universally true of all believers of all nations, tribes and languages: the absolute doctrines put forth in the Bible like election, predestination, repentance and conversion, and the rest. I get that there has been pain and suffering through the years at the hand of white Christians...no I don’t get it...I’m white, I will never get “it”...and yet I am of the belief that it is hard to overcome some of these issues like raising up leadership when so many denominations can’t even agree on the basic doctrines of faith. While there are some good thoughts and the chapters written by Lance Lewis and Carl F. Ellis, Jr (2 other men you need to be acquainted with) which you need time to break down and fully ingest, there is not much that adds to the greater discussion...how can we find “reconciliation” or “racial solidarity”, if the basic biblical truths separate us as well? Also, included at the end of this book is probably the best document written by a Reformed denomination on the issue of race. The paper is entitled ***Racism and the Church: Overcoming the Idolatry***, written by commission of the Theology and Church Relations for the Lutheran Church- Missouri Synod (Feb. 1994).

8. AMERICAN SNIPER: THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF THE MOST LETHAL SNIPER IN U.S. MILITARY HISTORY, by CPO Chris Kyle with Scott McEwen and Jim DeFelice (2012). This book is about just what it says it is about...the Most Lethal Sniper in military history, and at the same time it is about so much more. This book catalogues Chris’ simple life in a north-central Texas town, from a modest family with strong values concerning God, family and country, to his being shaped into a warrior who fought to protect each of those values with every breath he had. This is a

“there and back again” story as well...because along the way, Chris loses himself in the mission to the exclusion of everything but the mission and his men even when he wasn’t on mission. This attitude of duty had the positive affect of his being able to protect literally hundreds of his military comrades from certain death, but on the negative side he almost lost himself and the family he loved to this sense of duty which became his only purpose to exist. This is a great read; especially with the movie now out since his tragic murder. The movie has a sense of dramatizing things that the man would not have wanted to be dramatized, the book on the other hand really gives you a more comprehensive view of the man and you come away even more so admiring this true American warrior, and hero for finding that life is more than the mission in front of you. A lesson that God graciously re-taught him before his murder.

9. ANCIENT CHRISTIAN WORSHIP: EARLY CHRISTIAN PRACTICES IN SOCIAL, HISTORICAL AND THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE, by Andrew B. McGowan (2014). Dr. McGowan is an

Anglican priest, and is dean of the Berkley Divinity School at Yale as well as being a professor of Anglican studies at Yale. (So this gives you some idea where his theological leaning might be...which unfortunately almost ruined the book for me. For any who might wish to question my concern all you have to do is simply go to chapter 2 where he analyses the use of banquets and the Eucharist, a discussion that reveals his deeply influenced Anglican/Catholic understanding which is opposition to what the Scriptures teach on this subject.) Interestingly enough, there seems to be no knowledge or acceptance of a covenantal formula to the entirety of Scripture or even a honoring of Scripture beyond and other resource. I would not recommend this read to anyone other than those who are thoroughly grounded in the faith practice. However, the research/scholarship concerning the social and historical practices that he highlights are definitely worth the using of the book for historical consideration of the early church.

10. THE HOBBIT PARTY: THE VISION OF FREEDOM THAT TOLKIEN GOT, AND THE WEST FORGOT, by Jonathan Witt and Jay W. Richards, (2014). One commentator on this book said this, *“Tolkien fans who read this book will never think about this great author the same way again.”* I highly concur with this assessment. When you are young you think about the fantasy and the wonder of a great place to lost in...but having read these books

later in life I came away with a perspective that Tolkien was saying a whole lot more than that there is a difference between good and evil or that good always triumph's. Of course, his books are fantasy but they are extremely profound since he fully understood the fallenness of men and how even the strongest stumble but because of the power in them will prevail, not on their own but, as a "fellowship". This book takes Tolkien's message to different levels...for we come to see a marvelous political, economic and ecological thinker whose insights may be even more profound and more needed today than they were in his day. He brings a balance of thought not just in the Shire but even in Mordor that clearly reflects not utopia but rather harmony with the realization that until the true King Returns we will suffer between the two "kingdoms". Tolkien's vision of freedom is what comes through in this book...a vision not unlike that of the founding fathers of this nation...though we as well could learn or re-learn what we have forgotten and this book could go a long way in that direction.

11. A TREATISE OF THE VOCATIONS, Or Callings of men, with the sorts and kinds of them, and the right use of them, by William Perkins (1605). Now to talk about a "how to" book. Obviously there was much concern about "calling" in the 17th Century...maybe as much concern as there is in the 21st Century, though they at least had a concept in their time to what the word meant. Mr. Perkins writes concerning the general call of all believers to glorify and enjoy God forever and the personal calling which God grants to each believer for a specific doing in bringing Him glory. He then breaks this down for the benefit of the family, the church and the society, if you will. Concerning the right uses of callings, he writes much so that we as men cannot say we do not know what God requires. He even speaks about the bringing to conclusion a personal call and the proper way to go about it. Calling is a topic that should be widely considered again in our day and this is the treatise to stimulate one's knowledge.

12. FORGED IN FAITH: HOW FAITH SHAPED THE BIRTH OF THE NATION 1607-1776, by Rod Gragg (2010). This is an extremely easy to read history book. For Christians this is easy to read because it is laced with the facts of how faith in the true God and Savior Jesus Christ shaped a nation literally. From its early beginnings to its founding documents, Christianity is the foundation of all the timeless documents and actions of our founding fathers... even those like Benjamin Franklin - who made it clear he wasn't a Christian - but at the same time understood the strength of the Christian worldview. We live in a day and age where many seek

to speak against this fact, but the foolishness of man really comes through with that attempt given the literally thousands of support writings that we have that explain how the Christian world and life view was the underpinning of our country in the early days. This book reads like a novel. It draws you in from the beginning and leaves you wanting more.

13. BY THE HAND OF PROVIDENCE: HOW FAITH SHAPED THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION, by Rod Gragg (2011). Another wonder to read by this author. People have said for years that history is boring. Well, here is the answer to that common complaint. This book goes one step further than the book **FORGED IN FAITH** which highlighted our nation's history from its founding until 1776. This book focuses on the faith of a nation during one of its most trying conflicts; the American Revolution. We see within these passages the calls of the Continental Congresses upon the newly formed nation to days of fasting and prayer for God to accept the nation's repentance from its sin as well as countless calls for days of thanksgiving in being in God's providence whether winning or losing the battle. The different prayers of Washington speaking clearly about the guidance and safety that God had granted to this new nation...thanking Him for prospering us even through some of the worst fighting and innumerable sacrifices that we as a nation were called upon to make for this "just" cause. This is such an inspirational book. One I highly recommend.

14. PRACTICAL RELIGION, BY Horatius Bonar (1808-1889). This book is written by an evangelist. Born in Edinburgh, Scotland, he studied at Edinburgh University. Early on, he allied himself with three of the most spiritual men of his day: Thomas Chalmers, William C. Burns and Robert Murray McCheyne. He was brother to the more well-known Andrew Bonar, and with him defended D. L. Moody's evangelistic ministry in Scotland. As a young pastor, he earnestly preached in villages and farmhouses throughout his district. He saw evangelism in a different light from his contemporaries. *"We think if we can but get men converted, it does not much matter how. Our whole anxiety is, not 'How shall we secure the glory of Jehovah?' but 'How shall we multiply conversions?'"* To Bonar, Christ had to come first. This book is his Magnus Opus, if you will, calling lost sinners to Christ and then discipling them in the faith. An excellent overview and teaching tool if you have read some of his other works and are aware of his Reformed leanings.

15. A DISCOURSE ON MEEKNESS AND QUIETNESS OF THE SPIRIT, By Matthew Henry. Leave it to the old guys to do such a work as this. This book is on the topic of meekness, a topic of which I have never read anything similar. I found it to be deeply meaningful and devotional. The thoughts are encouraging, Scriptural, true, and wonderful.. almost brand new...but then they are as old as the Bible. I really enjoyed this book; a subject I have not seen a lot written about. Matthew Henry's writing style is always thought provoking and meditative. It was both instructive and encouraging to me. Since the Lord Jesus Christ himself said that the meek shall inherit the earth it is a good idea to find out just what it means to be 'meek.' Humility is the soil in which the other virtues grow and meekness is one of the first seeds that should be sown if you want to grow in biblical righteousness. Highly recommended.

16. DID GOD REALLY SAY? *Affirming the Truthfulness and Trustworthiness of Scripture*, edited by David B. Garner (2012). David Garner is an Associate professor of Systematic Theology at Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia. He has comprised some of the best minds of today to speak to this important issue of the truthfulness and trustworthiness of the Scriptures. This topic seems to show up on a regular basis in history and it has come full circle again. The church needs to know how to make an apology for this most important topic. To that end, Dr. Garner has compiled articles from K. Scott Oliphint, Michael D. Williams, Michael J. Kruger, Robert W. Yarbrough, Vern S. Poythress, John Frame and himself. This small book (approx.. 160 pages) is a powerful reminder of the arguments against and the clear case for the complete truthfulness and trustworthiness of the Bible. It is interesting that most writers would rather use the terms truthfulness and trustworthy rather than the terms inerrant and infallible...no one denied their usefulness but felt that we need to use words that are clearer in this day and age. This is a good book to read after you read Kevin De Young's book, **TAKING GOD AT HIS WORD: Why the Bible is Knowable, Necessary, and Enough, and What that means for you and me.** Possibly the only weakness in this work is the article by John Frame because he spends way too much time defending N.T. Wright who holds to a different view on justification than the Bible allows. A great read...a bit academic in some places... but a great read none the less.

17. Refuge: How “Hospital Church” Ministry Can Change Your Church Forever, by Dr. James M. Reeves, (2010). This was another book that was

given to me to peruse. This book is an interesting one. Given the author's obvious Baptist theology after a few statements in the beginning that were contradictory in nature, he levels out to speak about a concept that is obviously a passion of his, and one that is "mostly" biblical in nature. I say mostly, because this church model has the church being known as a hospital, primarily, and while that should be one of the church's characteristics; the church's primary purpose is to worship the triune God. That is how we are to be defined...as a worshiping people. Having said that, this book is a challenge to us church folk. A challenge to the very fiber of what each of us think church is to be. He speaks clearly of how wounded we all are in this fallen life and how those wounds need to be healed before we can be a worshiping people. The guiding principle for the book and the ministry is this, "*Spiritual health cannot truly take root if there is not emotional health.*" I disagree with the conclusion of this premise. We are a wounded people, called to suffer in this life and as such we rejoice and worship with our wounds for those wounds strengthen us and grow us into a holy people. He would not disagree with the assessment I just gave...just chooses to emphasize the healing before...rather than "healing" through. But his emphasis throughout the book on seeking to make the church a "safe" place is extremely commendable and must be constantly evaluated by church leadership. Though I have to wonder if a line from the **Lion, Witch and the Wardrobe** is not appropriate here. When speaking of Aslan it was said, "*Oh he isn't safe...but he is good!*" Sometimes I think we forget that.

18. THE LORD'S PRAYER, by Thomas Watson. Thomas Watson presents both the glory and simplicity of Christ's lesson on prayer in all its fullness...seriously... in **ALL** its fullest. It can never be said of Watson that he is unclear, for he always absolutely overturns every possible stone in his desire and attempt to clarify this prayer that the Lord taught His disciples. Watson develops the ideas behind each phrase of the prayer with the best interpreter of Christ's words, Scripture itself. Often praised for his particularly lengthy treatment of the second petition, "thy kingdom come", I found the exposition of "Hallowed be thy name" the most compelling to my faith. This work changed my view of prayer, proving the motivation of prayer needed not to be my own desires, but the glory of God. This emphasis can be found first in Jesus and then in Cyprian's thesis on the Lord's Supper... It is so simple and yet we have a tendency to overlook what we have been created to do, even in our prayer life... or maybe, especially in our prayers.

19. THE BLOOD OF CHRIST, by Horatius Bonar. A 19th Century revivalist and a Calvinist all wrapped up in one zealous Scottish pastor and poet. In this little booklet he tells why the blood of Christ spilled for His elect matters, and he is also quick to warn unbelievers and skeptics of their true end without this blood upon them. For the believer, Bonar says, “...*that the blood is intended to set us in the place of the innocent; to bring us nigh to God just as if we had never been separated.*” For the unbeliever he says that “...*their uncovered sin cries out for God’s judgment.*” He pulls no punches in this short booklet because of his zealousness for the souls of men. This is an eye-opening book that many would do well to discover. And, by the way, it is a free e-book from Monergism.com.

20. GOD’S WAY OF PEACE: A BOOK FOR THE ANXIOUS, by Horatius Bonar. As you can tell I am reading a few of this great Calvinistic evangelist’s works. “Calvinistic evangelist” is not an oxymoron as can be seen by any who pick up pastor Bonar’s works. This is another of his small books (125 pages... plus or minus... depending upon formatting from e-version) that will aid in your understanding so well that it ought to be read multiple times in a life. Why do we not have peace with God? Well, there are many reasons but pastor Bonar’s basic presupposition is this: it is because our presuppositions about God are wrong. Secondly, he says the reason we cannot “find” peace with God is; “*Other difficulties arise out of confused ideas as to the proper order of truth. Misplaced truth is sometimes more injurious than actual error. In our statements of doctrine, we are to have regard to God’s order of things, as well as to the things themselves.*” Then in short form he goes on to tell us about God and us and the truths that we have such a great need to know so we can experience God’s peace promised to each His own. This book is also available for free in e-book form from Monergism.com.

21. THE SUPREMACY OF GOD IN PREACHING, by John Piper (2015). The voice who has spoken for the authenticity of Christianity for over 25 years has taken a former book published in 1990 and revised and expanded it to include thoughts from his 33 years of pastoring at Bethlehem Baptist Church. He has spoken boldly and clearly for all this time whether from the pulpit or the podium of the importance of glorifying God through biblical preaching, and he continues with this revision to do so now from the perspective of looking back over the time of pastoral ministry God had called him to. In his preface, he gives the definition for preaching that has guided his calling all these years, “*Preaching is worshiping over the Word of God...the text of*

Scripture...with explanation and exultation.” And he adds to that definition these words a little later on for clarification, “*True preaching is not the opinion of a mere man. It is the faithful exposition of God’s Word. So in a phrase, preaching is **expository exultation***”. Throughout this book the underlining goal is to convince the preacher of the flock's need for God. In his words, yet again, “*Our people are starving for God.*” While he is often called the Spurgeon of the 21st Century, he actually speaks of Johnathan Edwards as his mentor, and friend from whom he has derived much of his passion for the glory of God, and through whom he caught the desire to preach. This one phrase of Edwards has shaped his ministry for over 33 years: “*The enjoyment of God is the only happiness with which our souls can be satisfied.*” And his desire is in this book that this would prompt and encourage and challenge the preachers of God’s Word today.

22. THE CHURCH OF CHRIST, by James Bannerman, outlined and abridged with study questions by Ryan M. McGraw (1868, 2015). I purchased this thinking this would be like a Readers Digest version of Bannerman’s to me with the same title (over 1000 pages, 2 volumes). But what it actually is, is an outline with study questions set up like a teaching guide for the church. However, in order to teach this material it would be important to have the two volume set of Bannerman’s work as a reference otherwise you wouldn’t be able to get at the gist of the material that Bannerman wanted to relate to the Church of Christ. Both of these are important and necessary works in anyone’s study of the church in God’s economy. This will become a helpful tool for the church.

23. WAGONTONGUE, BY Elmer Kelton (1972). This novel is interesting for how he portrays the relationship between blacks and white in the post-civil war era of the time. Some of the best cowboys of the day had been former slaves as with the character Isaac Jefford of our story. Isaac was a proud man who could do anything in the cow camp as good or better than anyone else...but he did have a bit of a chip on his shoulder. He knew there was a difference between blacks and whites and usually he didn’t overstep that custom as he would take his meals on the wagon tongue away from the circle of cowboys...but every once in a while, just like all men he would cough up a bit of pride that would expose one of his failing of thinking he had something to prove. One day a tall lanky cowboy joins the crew that doesn’t know Isaac and doesn’t like the fact that there is a former slave working there and they butt heads from the beginning to the end...in what

would be almost comical if the issue of race wasn't so explosive. Mutual respect rules the day, but it is a long road to get there. Elmer Kelton reveals to us much about human nature; how much all men are alike and how we often wish to blame color when it is pride and arrogance that is actually the enemy.

24. THE EVERLASTING RIGHTEOUSNESS; OR, HOW SHALL MEN BE JUST WITH GOD?, by Horatius Bonar (1872). Yet another booklet by Bonar to clear up some of the weaknesses in teaching of his day. Bonar does what many have had a hard time doing speaking clearly about the imputed righteousness of Christ in such a clear fashion as to not miss the Bible's true meaning. He delineates the main arguments and each point attached to it so that those who are justified come away with the biblical conviction of their justification by faith alone through Christ alone. He speaks to the objections of the Arminian and the "Romanist" throughout but most clearly to the Christian so that we are left without a doubt in the finished work of our Substitute, Jesus Christ. He spends the first third of the book breaking down the doctrine of substitutionary atonement into all its parts (first time I have seen this so clearly done). Then he takes the next third to talk about Christ's righteousness imputed to us and then finishes it off with the benefits of the justification for the believer. (Plus or minus 165 pages)

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25. THE CHRISTLIKE HUSBAND, by William Gouge (1575-1653...a Puritan minister who served for 45 years at St. Ann Blackfriars in London and was a member of the Westminster Assembly. He and his wife Elizabeth had 13 children.) This booklet is a reprint of one section from the original *Of Domestic Duties* by William Gouge, and has been carefully modernized by Scott Brown and Joel Beeke. I found this online: *"Have you ever wished that someone would really flesh out the practical implications of a husband's Christ-like love for his wife? In this updated classic on the family, William Gouge does just that. He shows us the necessity of affectionate authority, humble gentleness, patient correcting, kind conduct, provision, and sincere and steady love in a husband's relationship with his wife. Read this to be convicted and challenged to a greater depth in your marriage."* If you have ever wanted to understand the true teaching on marriage as taught by the Reformers and the Puritans you will find no better treatise than this. Some of the illustrations and teachings of this pastor would wrinkle the sensibilities of "modern" women and some men as well. And, without knowing something of the day and age from which he

speaks, recognizing that the information here was actually a good and freeing thing for women of that time, some would actually be offended. But he begins his treatise with this thought towards the husband from I Peter 3: 7, he quotes, “...**he must dwell with her (his wife) according to knowledge.**” Then he says to the husband with this as the background, “*The higher his position is, the more knowledge he ought to have how to walk worthy of it.*” And he makes the point that there is no higher position than being a husband for a man, if God calls the man to marriage. As I said before, many will consider this very Victorian or even Edwardian in its approach to the husband wife relationship and it is the thinking that affirmed the positive parts of those positions to be sure. However, one thing we need in this day and age is for men to be men...to use their authority wisely, to be intentional and to lead correctly something that far too many have given away today. An excellent read and an excellent reminder of God’s expectations for husbands...and not that long...(186 pages or so). This is also free from Monergism.com.

26. TRUE VIRTUE, by Jonathan Edwards. The summary of this dissertation is that the highest virtue is love (“The General nature of true virtue is love”, p.85), which he describes as unconditional love towards God, and then proceeding from this virtue, the true virtue of love of neighbor. It's a rather difficult read, and unlike a lot of sermons which have a flow in argument or repeat their points over and over, and wrap up with a conclusion, Edwards seems in this treatise to make multiple stabs at various points with little flow...unlike that first part of this dissertation on the glory of God, *The End for Which God Created the World*. After reading this I realized that this was perhaps one of the best things I have ever read on love and virtue... causing me to ponder things way beyond what is normal for me to consider. I loved this as well; “*Have you ever been happy for God because He is so happy? A benevolent propensity of heart is exercised, not only in seeking to promote the happiness of the being towards whom it is exercised, but also in rejoicing in his happiness.*” See what I mean about getting you to think about things you might not even consider. One last point has to do with the final judgment in a booklet (115 plus or minus pages) on True Virtue: His description is so helpful in describing the sinfulness of man and the total justice of that final judgment, so that “*their consciences will approve the dreadful sentence of the judge against them.*” Certainly covering the A to Z of virtue/love.

27. MERCIFUL: The Opportunity and Challenge of Discipling the Poor out of Poverty, by Randy Nabors (2015). A subtitle for this book beyond what I have given above is, *Helping in Ways that really help-and give hope*. Randy, the pastor emeritus of New City Fellowship in Chattanooga, TN.(a PCA church in the inner-city of Chattanooga) has seen poverty up close and personal having lived it himself and his story is recounted here in the pages of this text. But this book is not about him-it is about the mercy of God, how it moved this young man from anger to mercy to be a beacon of hope used by God for the poor, and a teacher of hope to the Church to remind us of our responsibility to the poor. This is Randy's magnum opus on the life God has called him to and what he has taught through the years so the church can remember that we are mandated with these truths; mercy and justice extends to the poor in our midst. This is a book for deacons (one that I will give to the men who soon may be elected to this post in our church) and a book for all that seek *to do justice, to love kindness/mercy and to walk humbly with your God*. In other words, to seek to live and work as God prescribes for us to do. I have been moved by Randy's story and even more moved by his recommendations for God's church. His big ideas may be too grand for many churches but the principles, the desire and the opportunity to do something big for God's glory is set before all churches big or little and what he has to say, based in God's own Word, can and should be implemented for the church to be well-rounded and truly healthy and truly God honoring.

28. St. Andrew's Expository Commentary on Acts: You Will Be My Witnesses to the End of the Earth, by R.C. Sproul (2010). Yet another sermon series that has been put into the devotion commentary series entitled the St. Andrew's Expository Commentary Series. R.C.'s style is not always conducive to the way the average person thinks, but this commentary and all the rest of them, reminds me of what caused me to be drawn to this book: what it means to be a witness (read martyr) for God in the 21st Century. His style here draws the reader to want to know more of God and how we can be His witnesses right where we are and wherever He takes us. Going through this again I was moved by things that I usually miss...all the "coincidences" that show God's hand in moving Paul along in his journey to Rome...where God had told him he was to go. As I journaled through the book of Acts I saw things I had never seen before then I would read this commentary and be moved to see others had the same "eye-sight" as mine...that is seeing through the lenses of the Holy Spirit. Endorsing a commentary series as a devotional may seem like lunacy but in this case this book is a wonderful devotional read.

29. Journal of a Trapper: A Hunter's Rambles Among the Wild Regions of the Rocky Mountains, 1834-1843, by Osborne Russell, edited by Aubrey L. Haines. (1914, 1921, 1955 and continuously since).

Through the years I have been delighted by reading these kinds of journals. My first was called **The Exploring Expedition to the Rocky Mountains** by John Charles Fremont. It was so good that years later when I visited places in which he spoke his descriptions were still true. After that I was mesmerized by journal titles like; **Letters of the Lewis and Clark Expedition; The Journals of the Expedition Under the Command of Captains Lewis and Clark, Vol. 1 and 2; The Log of a Cowboy:** A narrative of the Old Trail Days, by Andy Adams; and most fondly, **Journal of a Mountain Man - James Clyman**, by James Clyman, edited by Linda Hasselstrom. This journal does not rise to the same level as these others however. A hunter's rambles better explains this volume than anything else. While there are moments of clarity in his writings...mostly they truly ramble from one days events to the next. Along the way though you do get to see that this boy (he was 16 when he left his home in Maine to become a trapper) was very well educated academically as well as by the hard knocks life of a trapper. When he writes ..not rambles... his association with the language arts and his association with the Holy scriptures come forth and at the end of the book when you read his letters you would not think that this was in anywhere a simple hunter/trapper for they are as eloquent as those written by John Adams to his wife Abigail. So worth reading to be sure...but stacked up with the ones listed above...not really. Though I am glad to have read it if for nothing more than to remember this soul into posterity.

30. Longing for HOME: A JOURNEY THROUGH THE PSALMS OF ASCENT, by J. Stephen Yuille (Shepherd Press, 2015). A most comforting and helpful devotional look at the Psalms of Ascent and their usefulness for us today, as we struggle and rejoice in the midst of this harsh fallen world - in which we live longing for the day when we too will be called home or made new as we enter into the new heavens and the new earth. The Spirit works through these Psalms allowing us to see ourselves and our experiences and circumstances there... in God's Word... so that we can see we are not alone in this...God knows and God cares by revealing to us His character and ours as well. If I have any complaints about this book, it would be one...the print size and boldness are too small and too light for my old eyes.

31. THE SILMARILLION: THE MYTHS AND LEGENDS OF MIDDLE-EARTH, BY J.R.R. TOLKIEN, EDITED BY CHRISTOPHER TOLKIEN. I picked this book up to re-read because my family

purchased for me a hardback version of the Lord of the Rings and so before reading that I thought I ought to read this and the Hobbit again. Interesting how in this book it is always evident who is in charge. While evil may seemingly be in charge of the hearts of men, Elves and Dwarves, there is One who has a plan and that plan unfolds just as it is supposed to never leaving Middle-earth without a presence of his. Iluvatar, the god of this story by Tolkien, imitates His take on the One true God. Iluvatar has a plan to redeem Middle-earth and that plan continues through the ages unhindered by any other power - though through the eyes of men, elves and dwarves it seems so long that all creation forgets. But even into the 3rd age, Iluvatar raises up Wizards that come from him to aid his creation against the foes that would seek to undue his work and his plan. But when the King returns it is only then that there is peace in the lands of Middle-earth.

32. THE HOBBIT by J.R.R. Tolkien. Re-reading this book again I am struck by the things we have lost in our culture through the years...hospitality towards strangers, for that matter hospitality towards those we know and love. It is hard for us to put ourselves out for others...and to have someone drop in is just considered rude. And yet it wasn't that long ago that when people came by you made them welcome because that was what hospitable people do. We are a people who are offended far too easily, and yet there was a time when it was an offense to not invite someone into your home and to feed them and give them drink. It was an expected courtesy that defined a civilized people and when it wasn't done then the people were rightly offended. As I re-read these books I am amazed at what we have lost. They are worth re-reading regularly to remind us of our former ways...ways that God has made clear that we are to keep up or in this case renew...like hospitality.

33. AMERICAN GUN: A HISTORY OF THE U.S. IN TEN FIREARMS, by Chris Kyle with William Doyle. At the time of his tragic death in February 2013, former Navy SEAL Chris Kyle, the top sniper in U.S. military history, was writing a remarkable book that retold American history through the lens of a hand-selected list of firearms. *"Perhaps more than any other nation in the world, the history of the United States has been shaped by the gun. Firearms secured the first Europeans' hold on the continent, opened the frontier, helped win our independence, settled the West, kept law and order, and defeated tyranny across the world."* Drawing on his unmatched firearms knowledge and combat experience, Kyle carefully chose ten guns to help tell his story: the American

long rifle, Spencer repeater, Colt .45 revolver, Winchester rifle, Springfield 1903 rifle, Thompson sub-machine gun, 1911 pistol, M1 Garand, .38 Special police revolver, and the M-16 rifle platform Kyle himself used as a SEAL. Through them, he revisits thrilling turning points in American history, including the single sniper shot that turned the tide of the Revolutionary War, the firearms designs that proved decisive at Gettysburg, the "gun that won the West," and the weapons that gave U.S. soldiers an edge in the world wars and beyond. A book that was finished after his death but a book of history well told and well remembered.

34. THE BENEFIT OF CHRIST CRUCIFIED, by Don Benedetto (1544 A.D.). This little booklet (125 pages or so) was one of the most popular books of the Italian Reformation with between 40 to 80,000 copies printed between 1541-1548. Few remain today because most copies were burned by the Roman catholic Church since it had been placed on the prohibited list of the Church during the Inquisition. Don Benedetto (1503-1570) was a disciple of the Spanish reformer Juan de Valdes (1498-1541) and a good friend of Peter Martyr Vermigli (1499-1562). If you are unfamiliar with these Reformers it would be good to look them up and recognize them for their contribution to the growth of God's church. This booklet spoke of the sin and misery that man had fallen into by the Fall and that the forgiveness of our sins, our justification, and all our salvation depended upon Christ alone. It is this last part that got the book placed on the prohibited list. He highlights for us the benefits of the crucified Christ, many of which we need to be reminded of day by day for our own good and for God's glory. Chapter V. How the Christian man apparels or clothes himself with Christ is especially helpful as we consider how to live day by day.

35. CONSOLATIONS FROM CHRIST'S IMPUTED

RIGHTEOUSNESS, by Thomas Brooks (written in the mid to late 1600's). Once again, I pick up a book by this wonderful author and preacher. If you have never read his works I would almost envy you the joy of reading him for the first time. This is an author that every Christian should pick up from time to time. This doctrine of the imputed righteousness of Christ is a doctrine often treated as one as difficult as the Trinity. But in this series of modified sermons, Brooks clarifies the benefits of this doctrine for the daily man and how it adds to our assurance of faith when we clearly understand the magnificent work of God on our behalf. He gives a great defense of the doctrine of justification through Christ's imputed righteousness, and then gives what I find to be the best

explanation of why this doctrine should not be left on a scholar's shelf. In the second section of this book, he tells us of the 9 consolations (read: benefits/comfort) of this imputed righteousness, namely: it satisfies the justice of God, it takes away all unrighteousness, it presents us perfectly righteous, it will answer all our fears, it is our best title (as one who has been imputed with Christ's righteousness Christ is our life, our joy, our comfort, our crown, our confidence, our heaven, our all), it is the only true basis/foundation for a believer to build upon, it is our highest reason to rejoice, it will serve to comfort us from falling away, and it will give us the greatest boldness at the judgment. Great stuff. I love this from the author, *"There is not the pardon of the least sin, nor the least degree of grace, nor the last drop of mercy, but cost Christ dear: for He must die, and He must be made a sacrifice, and He must be accursed, that pardon may be thine, and grace thine, and mercy thine! And oh, how should this draw out thy heart to rejoice and triumph on Christ Jesus!"*

36. YOUR SANCTIFICATION, by Charles H. Spurgeon. This book was put together from a series of sermons preached by him through the years, talking about the believer's sanctification. Once again, he speaks of the benefits of our sanctification and how that should affect our daily lives just like the author's above. When people say that the preachers of old speak above them they obviously have not read a variety of Reformed preachers since most seek to make the Scriptures clear in their preaching. The perspicuity (clarity) of Scripture was important to them because they knew that the common man needed hope and comfort along with sound scholarship, but communicated in a way that brought Christ to them where they/we are. Spurgeon, of course, is one of these kinds of preachers/teachers and this series of sermons clarifies this doctrine of sanctification once again in ways that helps his hearers and readers through the ages understand the reality of our sanctification for our own good and for God's glory. He begins by defining the term in all its biblical understandings and how these definitions are beneficial to us as we consider God's on-going work in His children. This is a great companion read to the last two books that I have reviewed here before. With this knowledge he commands, *"Up, man, up! Thy heritage is not here among the dragons and the owls. Up! Thou art one of God's eagles, born for brighter light than the earth could bear—light that would blind the blear-eyed sons of men if they were not once to get a veiled glimpse of it. Thou, a twice-born man, one of the imperial family, one that shall sit upon a throne with Christ as surely as Christ sits there, what are thou at to be moaning and groaning? Wipe thy eyes and smooth thy brow, and in the strength of the Eternal go thy life-battle!"*

37. BIBLICAL ELDERS AND DEACONS, by Nehemiah Coxe (1681). Coxe was the son of the Particular Baptist leader Benjamin Coxe in England. He came to faith and joined the Bedford church which had been made famous by John Bunyan. Particular Baptists were 5 point Calvinists and held exclusively to the doctrine of Particular atonement at a time when other Baptist churches were downplaying these doctrines' importance. This author is particularly noted for his treatise in 1677 that was written as a refutation against *the Heresies and Gross Errors* that the West County evangelist Thomas Collier taught in that day. Many in the reformed community considered this refutation to one of the most powerful expressions of the Reformed doctrine to date. Later he also served as an editor of the London Baptist Confession of Faith. In this book he gives a clear biblical exposition concerning these 2 offices that many of the day felt best captured the biblical scriptures surrounding these offices of the New Testament. He took as his main text for this treatise Titus 1:5, and building upon this text he goes to many other texts to build his case for these most important offices for the health and growth of God's church. When considering the characteristics of these offices his explanations are clear, precise and succinct. To the deacon, first, he says, "*To the deacon, there are four things that I shall recommend to you as necessary in the discharge of the trust which is committed to you, namely, faithfulness, compassion, prudence, and diligence.*" And then he goes on to explain each of these four in a most helpful and enlightening way. To the elder he cites many things with this being just one gem among many, "*Let your care be to deal with the souls and consciences of men, as knowing that it is the salvation of souls that you are to labor after, a care of souls that is committed to you, and an account of them that you must make to God.*" In this book he also deals with the responsibility of the congregation toward these offices as well. I find it refreshing that these men of old did not worry about telling their congregations how they should treat the "gifts" of God for the church.

38. LEGACY OF FAITH: FROM WOMEN OF THE BIBLE TO WOMEN OF TODAY, by Linda Brownback (2002). This is an excellent read for both men and women. The author covers more than just your typical Bible woman. She even covers women the likes of Dinah, Delilah, Gomer and Sapphira to name a few. The doctrines that she mines from these events surrounding these women are doctrines that today's women need to have in their lives. Men would do well to read this book as well as it is important for us to catch a glimpse of how God works through all His children and what can be learned from the victories and sinfulness of each. These histories highlight a true Legacy of Faith that all, but especially today's woman could learn from as we see God's character reflected in each of these histories. A perfect group study book that some of our women are going through right now.

39. A TREATISE OF RULING ELDERS AND DEACONS: UNDERSTANDING THEIR OFFICES AND DUTY, by James Guthrie (est. 1658). Rev. Guthrie is a Scottish pastor and martyr that all Christians should get to know. His assessment of these offices ought to be read and realized historically the time of such urgency that comes in these words. However, no matter the times the urgency always exists for the leaders of the church have been given a calling and a task to follow the Lord in all things and to instruct and hold God's people to the standard to which God Himself has set. This book does a good job in getting that point across even for today's generation. Guthrie was given the name "Sickerfoot" meaning Sure of Foot...which spoke of his absolute assurance concerning his Rock. He was one of many who signed The National Covenant which in doing pretty much insured his death on the gallows. He helped write a pamphlet entitled *The Causes of the Lord's Wrath Against Scotland* which was the principle pretext for his condemnation and eventual execution. This book is a wonderful tool in helping men even of today understand the depth of commitment that is required for leaders in God's church...one that I will eventually hope we will go through as a group.

40. HUMANS OF NEW YORK, by Brandon Stanton (2013). As the front cover jacket reads, "*In 2010 photographer Brandon Stanton set out on an ambitious project: to singlehandedly create a photographic census of New York City.*" This is an amazing photo essay by a very creative man. Through his lenses we see the real...the honest...the intimate images of people on the streets of NYC. I especially enjoyed his take on the different elderly he encountered. They are pictures that are fresh and vibrant and bold. They show a people who are resilient, rebellious, and yet reveling in the life that is the city. While I have no real inclination to go to NYC...this type of photojournalism which includes quotes and anecdotes has shown me that life of the city in a different way. An appreciation for a people who many might consider an enigma...but a people with a life and vibrancy we could all use a bit of. This is not the usual book that I recommend but it is a wonderful and powerful photo essay that will aid the expansion of our understanding of peoples in general.

41. THE LORD OF THE RINGS, THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION (2004), by J.R.R. Tolkien. I read this the first time after the first movie came out in 2001. The version I read I have come to discover was not an authorized version and as such there were many aspect of the original story that had been left out. So reading this

authorized version was like watching and extended version of the movie but only better. It seems that literally dozens of people have “stolen” this work through the years republishing it with many details missing and giving no royalties to the Tolkien family. There are only a handful of authorized versions which even in themselves do not capture the original writings some of which have gotten lost in printing according to the introductions of the 50th Anniversary edition. This fullness of story has been a delight to read once again...I have been able to see clearer the story and intent of its author seeking to remind people and cultures of things we have lost along the way...important things like basic civilities and hospitality...just 2 among many that have been wrestled from us by the “Dark Powers” in the world. Tolkien obviously believed in the depravity of men, but he also saw the worth of men who are guided by a higher principle and how worthy they are to follow and imitate. A good reminder even for us today. This is definitely a book for the ages...as Jerram Barrs has said and ought to be read regularly.

42. THE ART OF PROPHECYING, by William Perkins (1558-1602). Of all the books I have read on preaching this has to be the most concise and full of helpful information. As an example the book includes a one to two line synopsis of every book of the Bible. (And people say these folks weren’t as well educated as us). And along with that he gives a complete grammar that has no comparison with any writer today helping the preacher to know the grammar of the Bible so that the preacher can interpret the Scriptures correctly. So much packed into this little book or 100 or so pages makes this a powerful resource that all new preachers should use and all of us old guys ought to refer to from time to time.

43. FADING WARRIORS: TWI-LIGHT REMINISCENCES FROM WORLD WAR II, by Lee Estes (2005). This is a great book that has accomplished what it set out to do...tell the stories of many men who never had told their stories before. Mr. Estes has put together a very wide assortment of reminiscence from many who are no longer with us...so he has preserved for all time these stories of men who didn’t make the newspapers or have books written about them until now. These men who represent that thousands who never made it back to tell their stories have told their stories here some long and some short. It is good for younger generations to hear these stories so that we are aware of the cost of our freedoms and so that we remember the ones who willingly paid that price in one way or another. Hidden in the pages of this book are gems to be mined. **Fading Warriors** provides some insight into things no other WW II publication reveals including the answer to one of the

lingering mysteries of WWII; where Herman Goering obtained the cyanide pill he took to commit suicide. Enlisted man and officer each tell their stories providing colorful and unique perspectives on their time in WWII and Korea. This book can only be found in print from the author and at the Chennault Aviation and Military Museum in Monroe, LA. (A fine little museum that everyone seeking information especially about the Flying Tigers needs to visit.)

44. HOW TO GROW IN GRACE, by Archibald Alexander (1772-1851). This is a short (50 or so pages) treatise about an interesting topic that I think we mostly take for granted. In his own words, "*When there is no growth there is no life.*" The church today is so set on easy grace, that we do not stress often enough the exercise of our faith with the desire to grow in grace. This little booklet is wrapped around a simple but complex verse from II Peter 3 that states, "***But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.***" This growth is to be a lifelong pursuit...carried on by us with earnest and by the Lord in our continual sanctification. For to be stagnant in life is to die. Growth in grace brings about life no matter our circumstance or situation. I love this quote from Jonathan Edwards that he quotes at the end of the book, "*The more faithful (I am) in studying the Bible, the more prosperous in spiritual things.*" Quick read but oh so full of things to contemplate and to grow with.

45. WORDS TO WINNERS OF SOULS, by Horatius Bonar (1850's, reprint 1995). Yet another in the many works of Bonar. This work is written specifically for preachers who are seeking to proclaim the Gospel well. So as such he piles on every conceivable sin that we could be and probably are committing to tell us that we are not as we should be...interesting enough, is that, those who are seeking such authenticity and clarity in their proclamation are usually the ones that know that already otherwise they wouldn't be seeking to honor God the way they do. A point that he overlooks in this slim volume. Having made that slight rebuke of him, it is helpful to note that he lived during the 19th Century where there was a lot of "formality" in the clergy...which is a proper way of saying that there were many "hirelings" in the ministry. Men who sought the position and the prestige and sought to tell their hearers what those hearers wanted to hear so that he might keep their positions. (See Judges 18; John 10:11-12). Now it is obvious that his work being so old is actually very contemporary given the numbers within the clergy today that act the exact same way. Bonar names with great candor and force, what he calls "ministerial defects." That is, those areas of pastoral ministry

which are most vital, but most neglected. One has the sense that if he were to walk into the offices of most pastors today--he would reveal his Scottish blood and take a board to even the best pastor's backside. In chapter 4, one of the most moving and inspiring (and humiliating) chapters I have ever read, Bonar quotes from the *Scottish Ministerial Confession of 1651*. This is, in short, a corporate confession of the varied (and detailed) sins of the ministers of the Church of Scotland. This alone is worth the book. It is telling, convicting (in the truest sense of the word), and I think, exemplary. In the end he calls upon all true proclaimers of the word to be ready, by making ready in repentance and our profession, to stand up to those "hirelings" who are tearing down the witness of true ministry but more importantly destroy the honor of God.

46. THE CHILDREN OF HURIN, by J.R.R. Tolkien (edited by Christopher Tolkien, 2007). This book is a literary tragedy in the full sense of the word. Hurin is a great hero among men during the Second Age of Middle-earth. A leader of leaders given his kingdom by the Elves as a descendant of the great Beren. This story is related in a more condensed form in **The Silmarillion**. Parents so full of hope and promise and giftedness but also filled with pride and self-centeredness languishes from one place after another seeking contentment only to have it dashed at every "port". At different times in his life he achieves great success and power only to lose it because of his own pridefulness. He is even provided great counselors along the way but in the end will only listen to his own heart which has the curse of Morgoth upon it. As with all men sin is a tragedy that cannot be shaken by our will or word. Sins such as pridefulness can look very valiant and good in their applications but they will show themselves for what they are if they are never tempered with true godly wisdom. And around Turin, the son of Hurin, much devastation lived...to the point that Turin marries his own sister Nienor, unaware and the curse is brought to its fullness when Turin and Nienor learn the truth. It is a must to read the introduction of this book especially if you have not read **The Silmarillion** because Christopher prepares the reader well for what is ahead. This is also helpful information for those of us who have read **The Silmarillion**.