

“On My Shelf...” w/ Dave Roberts (#3)

Our God is a writing God, therefore he chose to communicate through the written language. Our church is a reading church, therefore we read God’s will from his written word. *This is an inescapable fact, that God’s people have always been and forever will be people of the Book.* And, of course, there are many books available in our day – through various medium such as print and digital – inconceivable as such would’ve been before the printing press, but there is really only one book that we need to know. And that’s the *holy* one: the Bible.

Unfortunately, there is a growing poverty of Bible reading in the church (not to mention the world) today. But that’s not to say there isn’t a hunger for it – no, people are hungrier than ever. It’s just that some don’t know it, or don’t realize where they can satiate it; and so, instead, we have many who walk about spiritually emaciated for lack of the living water and bread of life – Christ Jesus who is the Word in the flesh. And it’s in this state that some will seek for nourishment in the wrong places. Daniel Webster once said, “If religious books are not widely circulated among the masses in this country, I do not know what is going to become of us a nation. If truth be not diffused, error will be; if God and His Word are not known and received, the devil and his works will gain the ascendancy; if the evangelical volume does not reach every hamlet, the pages of a corrupt and licentious literature will.”

But let me tell you about some other reading that could potentially be a game changer for you, reading that could profoundly change your perspective, enlighten your mind, motivate you towards maturity and development and, ultimately, enhance your walk with the Lord. God not only gave us the Bible so that we would come to know him better, but being the Giver of every good and perfect gift, he has also talented many people in this world to convey their individual thoughts – thoughts that have the power to change and impact your life. John Piper has a great perspective on this.

“There are bad reasons to turn to other writers besides the Bible. And there are good ones. One of the bad reasons we turn to other writers is that we find the Bible tame and tasteless. It is anything but tame and tasteless. One of the good reasons we turn to other writers besides the Bible is that we savor the taste of God not only in the Bible, but also in the way others savor Him. The best writers intensify our taste for the Bible, and especially for God Himself”
(from the introduction of *Taste and See*).

Through their books, we should allow these talented writers to take us on a journey to know God better. I know that I’m not the only person who has benefitted personally from the writings of godly people – *many of the leaders here at the Brownsburg Church of Christ have too!* So what I want to do in these bulletin articles is to periodically ask one of our leaders “Hey, what’s on your bookshelf?” In other words, what books have had the most profound effect on your life and why? Last time we discovered *Thailer Jimerson’s* top 5 (read it on our website).

We’re going to continue our series with **Dave Roberts** in this article. Here’s his top 5:

1. *How Good is Good Enough?* (2003; Andy Stanley).

This was quite an impactful book for Dave because it captures the essence of “salvation by grace through faith.” In this book, Stanley seeks to confront the notion that “all good people get to heaven,” and how the gospel actually teaches that we’re all NOT good and that it took the *only* good man – Jesus of Nazareth – to die as our substitute for us to be forgiven completely. And even then, no matter how hard we try, we’ll never be “good enough” by ourselves because what makes one truly “good enough” is the goodness of Christ.

2. *What’s So Amazing About Grace?* (1998; Philip Yancey).

This volume did a lot to shape Dave’s early understanding of the biblical concept of grace. Yancey provides in this book an in-depth explanation of grace and, especially, how to understand it from a “street level.” He gives far-ranging examples, too, of what grace might look like functionally in the life of a believer, from receiving to granting it to those around us – even our enemies.

3. *Mere Christianity* (1952; C.S. Lewis).

This was also on Thailer’s list of top fives. Dave was immensely impacted by this book, as have most Christians. The inception of this book came from a series of talks Lewis provided on the BBC around the time of WWII. It addresses many evidences for the faith. In this book, Lewis reasons with the unbeliever about faith in Christ and, also, he shows all Christians how to communicate intelligibly the Christian faith.

4. *The Case for Faith* (2000; Lee Strobel).

Most anybody who is familiar with Strobel’s unbiased, journalistic writing would recommend any of his books (with most titles beginning with “The Case for...”). He put evidences on the map at a time when many were questioning the foundations of the Christian faith. Strobel, previously an atheist, came to faith after investigating the Christian claims in hopes of disproving his wife’s faith. For this reason, Dave – along with many others – appreciate Strobel’s books.

5. *Toxic Faith: Experiencing Healing from Painful Spiritual Abuse* (2001; Stephen Arterburn).

Sadly, many professing Christian leaders have used the power found in the Word and in the church to abuse disciples of Christ. We hear varied stories of this abuse of power all the time. In this book, Arterburn draws the necessary distinction of true faith from mere

religiosity and the addiction so many have with a shallow faith in churchianity instead of Christ himself. In many ways, this taught Dave the necessary lesson of persuading with the love of Christ (2Co.5.14) instead of manipulating with fear and anger.

Henry David Thoreau once wrote something that has never left me: “Read the best books first, or you may not have the chance to read them at all.” So much wisdom for our lives can be gleaned from those who have gone on before, and we miss out on a lot of life’s lessons when we fail to sit at the feet of these wise men and women and the thoughts they’ve shared. Either way, the good news is that we’ll gain wisdom; life has a way of knocking some sense into us (usually). But the better news is that you can learn from the mistakes of others – without making them yourself! But, again, it might take a little reading – and a little reading, as Thoreau said, might take a little time. Are we willing?

Let me put it this way. The average person can read 300 words per minute. Conveniently, the average novel has around 300 words per page. So, we’re at a minute for every page. This means that if you commit to spending only 15 minutes a day reading, and then only five days per week, you’ll be able to read around 3,900 pages! That’s like 20 average size novels or three to four large detailed works on any subject. Fifteen minutes a day? That’s doable.

We hope you found this article encouraging and that maybe you might think to pick up some books – like Dave’s - that would help you in your journey towards a better relationship with Christ, and a better you.

What’s on *your* shelf?