

## “On My Shelf...” w/ Thailer Jimerson (#2)

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 *Josh Webber’s* top 5 (check it out on our website).

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

1. *Don't Waste Your Life* (2003; John Piper).

This easily takes number one on my list because it has like no other book taught me what it really means to live for Christ. That it's not merely giving God Sundays, putting something in the collection plate, trying to avoid cursing, and being a good law-abiding citizen – *but so much more*; it's making Jesus Christ the center of your universe and his glory your all-encompassing passion in every facet of daily living. From this book I learned the phrase of my life: "*Only one life, 'twill soon be past, only what's done for Christ will last*" (C.T. Studd).

2. *The Prodigal God* (2008; Timothy Keller).

This book introduced me to my favorite author of all time: Timothy Keller. It won't be long until I've read all his books – and not one of them have been mediocre. In this book, he taught me the eye-opening lesson that we're sinners not only for the bad we do, but even for the *good that we do for the wrong reasons*. That righteousness itself can be just as selfish and sinful and therefore result in a phariseism of sorts. All of his books are great, truly; and his book on marriage saved mine.

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

Does this one even need a description? It ought to be on every ~~Christian's~~ person's book shelf. When people think of Clive Staples Lewis, they usually remember the childhood stories of Narnia, but Lewis was *the* Christian apologist of his day. He knew how to reason with the unbeliever about faith in Christ and he knew how to communicate intelligibly the act of faith. This book was crucial for developing a strong foundation for my faith in Christ and has won me over to Lewis' writings forever.

4. *The Cost of Discipleship* (1937; Dietrich Bonhoeffer).

Originally published under the simple title of *Discipleship* (*Nachfolge* in German), this book details Bonhoeffer's view on what exactly it means to be a true Christ follower. He wrote this during the Second World War, at a crucial time when his church was standing on the fence about the tyranny of Adolf Hitler. Not only did he call his people with weighty conviction to forsake the "cheap grace" being offered in lukewarm churches, but he lived that message of "costly grace," eventually being executed by the Nazi's for his zeal against their corruption. He showed what it meant to live as a disciple.

5. *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (2008; N.T. Wright).

This book introduced me to now another favorite author of mine: Professor N.T. Wright (who, I like to joke, much of the time gets the New Testament right). I've come over the years to respect much of what Wright has to say on the New Testament, and I trust him to lead me through an accurate representation of the culture in which the first century Christians lived. In this book, he shows by many proofs that he has the resurrection pinned and shows how such an understanding can be revolutionary for our lives. I recommend all of his writings – especially his series *Christian Origins and the Question of God*.

Admittedly, it seems wrong to be confined to such a small choice; but I chose these to give a good representation of my favorite authors. Honorable mentions are: Francis Chan's *Crazy Love*, Thomas a' Kempis' *The Imitation of Christ*, and Andy Stanley's *7 Practices of Effective Ministry*.

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 mine - that would help you in your journey towards a better relationship with Christ, and a better you.

What's on *your* shelf?