

Canadian Anglican Cursillo

**A BEGINNING LIST OF READING FOR
SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT**



INTRODUCTION

This list merely scratches the surface of the good literature that is available. Since there is never enough time to read everything one would like, it is important to try to choose the best, and to weed out books that may sound good on the surface but are not Scripturally sound. In this list we attempt to present a sampling of a wide variety of authors from varied Christian spiritual traditions. It is a good idea to try to balance your reading, including some "hot-off-the-press" titles, but also including spiritual classics and "golden oldies," as well as biographies and autobiographies. A suggestion: for every current book written by someone in our culture that you read, try to read one by someone living in another culture or time other than our own. **And of course, don't forget the most important of all books - The Bible.**

While you should be able to find most of these books in a good bookstore, a few are out of print, but well worth looking for in used book shops.

BOOKS RELATED PRIMARILY TO "PIETY"

St. Augustine, *The Confessions of St Augustine.*

St. Augustine lived from 354 to 430 in Rome, where he came under the influence of the philosophy of Plato. After a long inner struggle, he renounced his earlier philosophical beliefs and became a Christian. He then returned to Africa where he formed a religious community. Perhaps no one except St. Paul has been so widely read for so long. In his *Confessions*, he traces his own intellectual and spiritual pilgrimage to Christ.

William Barclay, *A Plain Man Looks at the Lord's Prayer* (Collins, 1964) Barclay is a brilliant and penetrating teacher, who makes profound insights understandable and simple.

Jerry Bridges, *The Practice of Godliness.*

(Navpress, 1983)

Practical guidelines for deepening our devotion to God and seeking the Holy Spirit's work in developing his fruit in our lives.

Frances Dorff, *Simply Soul Stirring: Writing as a Meditative Practice* (Paulist Press)

This book encourages and teaches how to write a spiritual journal, and demonstrates how writing gives us important spiritual lessons.

Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path of Spiritual Growth.* (Harper Collins, 1978)

The best one-volume introduction, covering the "inward disciplines" of meditation, prayer, fasting and study, the "outward disciplines" of sim-

plicity, solitude, submission, and service, and the "corporate disciplines" of confession, worship, guidance and celebration. Written in an easy-to-digest style. The extensive footnotes also provide a good list of books for further reading. [Another excellent book by Foster is *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home.*]

Hannah Harnard, *Hind's Feet on High Places.* (Tyndale 1975)

An allegory dramatizing the journey each of us must take before we can live in "high places."

Joyce Huggett, *The Joy of Listening to God* (InterVarsity Press, 1986)

Drawing on examples from her own life, Joyce shows us how we can quiet ourselves and prepare to hear God speak in his multicolored ways.

This book is for those whose attention is turned to the One who calls us to a deeper journey into prayer.

Morton Kelsey, *Adventure Inward: Christian Growth Through Personal Journal Writing.*

(Augsburg, 1980)

Practical insights on how to keep a journal and use it for spiritual growth.

Morton Kelsey, *The Other Side of Silence: A Guide to Christian Meditation.*

An excellent book on a rarely covered topic.

Thomas a Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*

Thomas a Kempis was a fifteenth century monk whose life was filled with a genuine devotion to Christ. This book is a devotional masterpiece for Christians everywhere.

Peter Kreeft, *Prayer: The Great Conversation.*

(Servant Books, 1985) Prayer - a duty, a burden? Or an exciting adventure, an inexhaustible joy, a conversation with God - the source of wisdom and strength? In ten imaginative dialogues, Kreeft communicates a vision of prayer as a profound conversation with God and the most important thing in your life.

Brother Lawrence, *The Practice of the Presence of God.*

There are many translations of the work of this 17th century monk who shows us how to "trust God once and for all and abandon ourselves to Him alone." A good modern translation is by E.M. Blaiklock, Chair of Classics, University of New Zealand.

Madeleine L'Engle, *Circle of Quiet.* (Harper Collins 1992)

Madeleine is an American Episcopalian who is writer-in-residence at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York. In this book she shares her inner life, shaped primarily from materials in her journals.

Thomas Merton, *Contemplative Prayer.* (Image, 1971)

A thoughtful journey into the meaning of meditation.

Henri Nouwen, *Making All Things New: An Invitation to the Spiritual Life.*

This is just one of the slim books by Nouwen which challenges the reader to a deeper relationship with Christ. [Look also for *With Open Hands*, *Reaching Out* and *The Wounded Healer.*]

Henri Nouwen, *The Return of the Prodigal Son* (Doubleday, 1994)

A personal meditation and reflection on the three dimensions of the parable - the younger son, the elder son and the father. Issues the challenge to love as the father and be loved as the son, as well as examining the themes of homecoming, affirmation and reconciliation.

Joyce Rupp, *May I Have This Dance?* (Ave Maria Press, 1992)

This book is organized on a monthly basis and explores 12 major themes, each one followed by prayer suggestions which include litanies, creative writing, guided meditations, and ideas for reflective thinking and journaling. [Other books by Joyce Rupp include *Praying Our Goodbyes*, *Fresh Bread*, and *The Cup of Our Life.*]

BOOKS RELATED PRIMARILY TO "STUDY"

William Barclay, *A Plain Man Looks at the Apostles' Creed* (Collins, 1967) Again Barclay brings his intellectual skills into making the complex easy to digest.

Ross Clifford, *Leading Lawyers' Case for the Resurrection*, (Canadian Institute for Law, Theology and Public Policy, 1996) An excellent presentation of the case for the truthfulness of Christianity.

Richard Foster, *Streams of Living Water* (HarperCollins, 1998)
An examination of the six dimensions of faith and practice that define Christian tradition. Each tradition is examined from the standpoint of an historical figure, a contemporary figure, and the practices of study, retreat, service and community.

Nicky Gumbel, *Questions of Life* (Cook Publishing 1993)
The promoter of Alpha defends the basic issues of the Gospel.

Peter Kreeft, *Christianity for Modern Pagans*. (Ignatius, 1993)
This book is in the form of "notes" from class lectures on the writing of Blaise Pascal, a seventeenth century scientist, whose collection of "sayings" (*Pensees*) related to the Christian faith, has great relevance for today. [Recommendation: Read everything by Peter Kreeft that you can get your hands on.]

Peter Kreeft, *Yes or No? Straight Answers to Tough Questions About Christianity*. (Servant Books, 1984)

Written in a question - answer style reminiscent of Socratic dialogue.

Peter Kreeft, *You Can Understand the Old Testament* (Twin Circle Publishing, 1990) A clear road map focusing on the core message of each book and its relevance for today. "A lively, entertaining, and intelligent approach, stimulating and full of surprises."

Peter Kreeft, *Your Questions, God's Answers*. (Ignatius, 1994)
Scriptural answers to common and important questions about the meaning of life, our identity, overcoming failure and temptation, the mystery of God's love, and much more. God's answers to the deepest needs of people of all ages and times.

George Macdonald, *Getting to Know Jesus*.
Fresh glimpses into the life of Jesus by a writer of whom C.S. Lewis said: "I know hardly any other writer who seems closer, or more continually close, to the Spirit of Christ himself."

Alister McGrath, *'I Believe': Exploring the Apostles' Creed*. (Intervarsity Press, 1977) An exploration of the basics of the Christian faith as affirmed by the church around the world through the centuries. Discussion questions for individual and group study.

J.W. Montgomery, *How Do We Know There Is a God: And Other Questions Inappropriate for Polite Society*. (Bethany, 1973) Help in preparing one to give a "reason for the faith that is in us.". Originally prepared for the Christian pavilion at Expo 67 in Montreal.

J. I. Packer, *Knowing God*. (Crossway Books, 1994). Formerly published as *Growing in Christ*. A resource book on the basics of Christian belief, using the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments.

N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and The People of God* (Tortess Press, 1992) Major New Testament scholar and now Bishop of Durham and contributor to the Windsor Report, Wright deals with the basic thrust of Jesus' message and rebuts modern skeptical groups such as the Jesus Seminar.

Francis Schaeffer, *True Spirituality*. (Tyndale, 1971)

Discusses basic considerations of the Christian life, with particular reference to freedom from the bonds of sin and the results of the bonds of sin. [Look also for other books by Schaeffer, an American missionary to Europe; this is one of his best.]

Ray Stedman, *Jesus Teaches on Prayer*.

An exposition of Jesus teachings on prayer.

Meir Tamari, *With All Your Possessions: Jewish Ethics and Economic Life*. (Macmillan, 1987)

An outstanding Jewish critique of consumer-driven societies and individuals.

David Watson, *Jesus Then and Now*. (Lion, 1983)

What is it about Jesus that is so relevant today?

Philip Yancey, *The Jesus I Never Knew*. (Zondervan Publishing House, 1995) Philip Yancey begins by reflecting on the Jesus of his childhood - a Jesus associated with "Kool-Aid and sugar cookies and gold stars for good attendance" and follows himself until, when in university he sees Jesus as "the God who lay down on the dissecting table." This book explores the Jesus who invites Yancey to "examine me, test me. You decide." What emerges in this thoughtful and thought-filled

book as it examines every phase of the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus is a Lord I never knew but One whom I now call friend and brother. This book should be on everyone's reading list!

Philip Yancey, *What's So Amazing About Grace?* (Zondervan Publishing House, 1997) Yancey explores in new and insightful ways the word which comes easily to our lips but which most of us cannot explain other than the Catechism definition - GRACE? Yancey asks what is grace and what's so amazing about it? Through the use of literature, personal experience and a wondrous imagination, Yancey invites us to answer the question for ourselves. Once you have read this, you will never think of Grace in the same way again.

Philip Yancey, *Disappointment With God* (Zondervan Publishing House, 1997) Once again, Philip Yancey invites us to enter questions we think about in the darkest corners of our lives but have never asked of either God or ourselves! He poses three basic questions: Is God Unfair? Is God Silent? Is God Hidden?, questions asked of him by Richard, a disillusioned seminary friend of his. This pithy volume gives new insights into the nature and character of God.

BOOKS RELATED PRIMARILY TO "ACTION"

Myron Augsburger, *Faith for a Secular World.*
(Word, 1968)

An American Mennonite's thoughtful and stimulating reflections on "life in the marketplace."

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*
(Touchstone, 1995)

A compelling account of the nature of the Christian life in the world with no punches held back about the radical demands of Christ.

John Bowen, *Evangelism for "Normal" People*
(Augsburg Press, 2002)

A professor at Wycliffe College, Toronto, Bowen makes evangelism seem less scary for Canadian churchgoers.

Joan Chittister, *Wisdom Distilled From the Daily: Living the Rule of St Benedict Today.*
(Harper and Row, 1990)

The tenets of Benedictine spirituality are remarkably similar to the Cursillo "tripod" of piety, study, and action. This book by a modern Benedictine Sister brings a wealth of practical wisdom in how to live the life of piety, study and action in our modern world. [This book would fit equally well under "piety" and "study."]

Max DePree, *Leadership is an Art.* (Doubleday, 1989)

Written by the CEO of Herman Miller Furniture, this small book is filled with wisdom about leadership in today's world, based on the Christian understanding of leadership as servanthood. [Look also for the sequels, *Leadership Jazz*, and *Leading without Power.*]

Gloria Gaither, *Because He Lives: The Power of the Resurrection Principle in the Daily Life.*
(Revell, 1977)

By one-half of the talented music writing and singing couple, Bill and Gloria Gaither. A personal chronicle of how the author came to realize God's plan for humanity, how that plan applied to her, and how it could work in her life.

Brian Griffiths, *Morality and the Marketplace.*
(Hodder, 1982)

For people in business struggling to relate their faith to their work environment.

Madeleine L'Engle, *The Irrational Season.*
(HarperCollins, 1977)

Madeleine talks about her life as a professional woman, wife, mother and grandmother in the context of her faith. Her open sharing of her times of closeness to God, along with her times of doubt and uncertainty, strike responsive chords in her readers.

Madeleine L'Engle, *Walking on Water: Reflections on Faith and Art.* (Harold Shaw Publishers, 1980)

As the author describes her life as a Christian and as an artist, we realize that we too are called to be co-creators with God. [Look for other titles by this author, including *And It Was Good* (reflections on **Genesis**), and *Two-Part Invention: The Story of a Marriage* (reflections on marriage written shortly after the death of her husband from cancer.)

C.S. Lewis, *Present Concerns.*

A selection of brief essays presenting a Christian's perspective on issues facing us today. [Note: Look for many other titles by C.S. Lewis, including *The Problem of Pain*, *Christian Reflections*, *The Screwtape Letters*, *The Great Divorce*, *Fern Seeds and Elephants*, *Pilgrim's Regress.*]

Max Lucado, *Just Like Jesus* (Word, 1998) A new look at ten attributes of Jesus and His relationship to God and the people He met and worked among. In each case, the author provides examples of Jesus "in action." A modern example of a similar situation and practical help on how each of us can emulate Jesus in our environments.

Gordon MacDonald, *Ordering Your Private World* (Oliver-Nelson)

Practical suggestions for keeping your priorities straight in a world that too often becomes a “rat-race”

Elizabeth O'Connor, *The New Community*. (Harper Collins, 1976)

A portrait of life together in Christian community in a large metropolitan city. [Also look for *Call to Commitment* and *Journey Inward, Journey Outward*].

Francis Schaeffer, *No Little People*. (InterVarsity Press, 1974)

Sixteen sermons based on Schaeffer's experience of living in a Christian community (L'Abri Fellowship) in the Swiss Alps.

Edith Schaeffer, *Hidden Art* (Tyndale, 1972) A personal sharing of the ways one woman has found to live out her life in Christ in the "ordinary" events of daily life. [Other books by Edith include *Common Sense Christian Living*, and *The Life of Prayer*.]

William Wilberforce, *Real Christianity*.

Discusses the role of the Christian in public service. Written by a nineteenth century British politician who was instrumental in the demise of the British slave trade.

COMPENDIUMS AND DAILY READINGS

C.E. Cowman, *Streams in the Desert*.
Daily devotional readings.

Richard Foster and James Bryan Smith, editors, *Devotional Classics*. (Harper Collins, 1990)

This wonderful compendium introduces the reader to a wide variety of classical Christian works, by providing a brief (less than a page) biographical sketch of the author, a two to three page excerpt from one of his writings, a short related Bible passage, several questions for reflection (suitable for individuals or groups) and suggested exercises related to the subject. Finally, it provides details of other works by the same author.

George Macdonald, *Diary of an Old Soul*
(Augsburg, 1975)
366 short devotional poems for reflection, one for each day of the year.

P. Ofstedal, ed. *Daily Readings from Spiritual Classics*. (Augsburg, 1990) The best anthology in print. In the format of one-page per day, with a short (one paragraph or less) excerpt from a variety of classical Christian authors, followed by a one-page meditation based on the excerpt, and a short prayer. (Also contains an excellent bibliography for further reading.)

David Watson, *Through the Year with David Watson*. (Hodder, 1982) Daily devotional readings.

BIOGRAPHIES AND AUTOBIOGRAPHIES

William Barclay, *Spiritual Autobiography*
(Erdmann's, 1975)

With warmth and humour Barclay reflects on his career and those who have influenced him.

C.S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy*.
One man's autobiography of his pilgrimage from atheism to Christianity.

Catherine Marshall, *Beyond Ourselves*
(McGraw-Hill, 1961) A spiritual autobiography of an extraordinary woman, full of wisdom and truth. (Other titles by Catherine include *Mr. Jones*, *Meet the Master*, and *To Live Again*.)

David Watson, *You are My God*. (Hodder 1983)
The autobiography of a British Anglican priest writing out of the context of the Charismatic movement.

FICTION

Fiction written from a Christian world-view can often bring new insights, as well as enjoyment.

Susan Howatch

Starting with *Glittering Images* (1987) and for now ending with *The Heartbreaker* (2003), Howatch has written a gripping fiction series that is sympathetic to clergy and issues in the Church of England from the 1930's to the present.

Steven Lawhead, *Dream Thief*. (Crossway, 1983)

Science fiction grounded in the Christian world view. Probably the best science fiction written by a Christian since C.S. Lewis. [Also look for his *Empyrium* series, and the *Song of Albion*.]

Madeleine L'Engle, *A Wrinkle in Time*.

This is the first of L'Engle's fantasy trilogy, which won a Newberry Award. Written for older children and teens, these stories are equally fun for adults, and carry deep messages of truth. Also look for her series on "*The Austin Family*," and many other fictional works both for teens and adults.

C.S. Lewis, *The Chronicles of Narnia*. (7 volumes)

These are children's stories, but are every bit as good reading for "big children." In fact, they get better with every reading.

C.S. Lewis, *Out of the Silent Planet, Pere-landra, and That Hideous Strength*.

This classic science fiction trilogy is as fresh today as when it was written. **George Macdonald, *The Fisherman's Lady*.** (Bethany House)

This is just one of many novels by George Macdonald, who was C.S. Lewis' favorite author. Many of Macdonald's stories are set in the Scottish highlands. Using the genre of well-crafted story, Macdonald brings to the readers' heart deep spiritual truths. His works have been edited to make the original Scottish brogue easier for the modern reader. The best editing has been done by Michael Phillips, published by Bethany House. Macdonald has also written some wonderful children's stories, including *At the Back of the North Wind*, and *The Princess and the Goblin*.

Michael Phillips. *The Stonewyck Trilogy* and *The Stonewyck Legacy*. (Bethany House) After Michael completed his editing of Macdonald's works, he began writing his own stories, many of them in a style very similar to Macdonald's. [Other series to look for include *The Russians, Secret of the Rose, and Secrets of Heather sleigh Hall*].

Dorothy Sayers, *The Nine Tailors*

This is just one of Sayer's Lord Peter Wimsey detective stories. Does for detective stories what C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien did with fantasy stories. Sayers was a contemporary of C.S. Lewis.

Bodie Thoene, *Key To Zion Series* and *Zion Covenant Series*. (Bethany House) Excellent stories preceding and following World War II, looking at those events from the Jewish perspective.