

Scott E. Shaum 2023 Reads List

Happy Christmastide (until January 5), Epiphany (January 6), and a happy New Year Everyone.

Herein is my reads list for 2023. It is the usual smattering of all kinds of stuff.

PLEASE PLEASE, send me your favorite reads of any genre from recent months.

Remember, the Father's eyes are upon you, Jesus is with you and the Spirit is in your midst. Follow him. And read more!

Feel free to share this list with others.

Peace
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9th Day of Christmas 2024
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THEOLOGY

The Story of Creeds and Confessions: Tracing the Development of the Christian Faith by Donald Fairbairn and Ryan Reeves

This is a large book. Fairborn covers the history up to the Reformation, Reeves from the Reformation onward. Lots of church history in here, from the angle of creeds and confessions being written and developed and what was driving those efforts historically. Well written.

Worship by Faith Alone: Thomas Cranmer, the Book of Common Prayer, and Reformation Liturgy by Zac Hicks

This is definitely in the Nerd category and I deeply enjoyed it. Hicks main argument is that Thomas Cranmer structured the liturgy in the BCP (Book of Common Prayer) around the core tenant of *sola fide* (faith alone). Amongst all the resources Cranmer utilized to write the Anglican liturgy, he wanted "not I, but Christ" to shine forth. Thus he often massively rewrote ancient Latin liturgies, lopping off huge sections as needed, if the material did not meet these criteria. The end is a prayer book, with its morning and evening offices and Sunday Eucharist service, laced with the gospel grammar that God always initiates and we always respond to his grace. That is why I love the Anglican liturgy. It reorients me around our Triune God and His gospel in a beautiful way.

DISCIPLESHIP IN THE WAY OF JESUS AND SPIRITUAL FORMATION TITLES

Beholding: Deepening our Experience in God by Strahan Coleman

The author is a New Zealander (his first name is pronounce like "con"). He has been through some deeply difficult health challenges. It was in these years of deep hardship God drew the author to himself and taught him much on communion. This book is not the best written, yet it has many keen insights worthy of pondering. There is an excellent, compelling, far ranging interview of the author by John Mark Comer on the Rule of Life podcast (Feb 20 2023). I highly recommend listening to this interview.

Praying Like Monks Living like Fools Tyler Statton

At times a basic book on prayer, other sections of real brilliance. This work is an encouraging read to stimulate one's faith and prayer life. Worth a read if you are looking for an engaging read on prayer.

Reimagining the Ignatian Examen Mark E Thibodeaux

This is a brilliant conceived work. Thibodeaux is a Jesuit monk who has written numerous books. *Examen* is a simple practice of reviewing your day seeking to discern when and where you were present and attentive to God's presence and activity. Regular practiced, it will hone your discernment, attentiveness and responsiveness to God. He is everywhere all the time up to good. In this book, the author provides 34 different ways of reflecting on a day or even larger chunks of time. This book has been a significant gift to me in the past months. **I highly recommend it.**

The Impact of God Father Ian Matthew

The author does a brilliant job of taking St. John of the Cross's (SJC) work and grounding it in a gospel orientation - that is, God's initiative from first to last. Thus the title. So often SJC's writings are presented as how I have to do better to be able to move toward God. This title grounds the fact that God is always lovingly working toward us and we respond in ways that join him in his work. **There are sections that are utterly masterful and deeply encouraging.**

The Psychology of the Fruit of the Spirit

This is a fairly dense work - a bit wordy at times. I would not recommend it to all. Yet, that beings said, I immensely benefitted from it. I loved how the author brought psychology, research, and terms to the topic - extremely helpful and insightful. The groupings of the fruits into three brand categories was also helpful. Two particularly helpful concepts for me were "ego depletion" and the importance of the narrative we script for ourselves. **This is a great read for anyone wanting to delve into this topic deeper. One of my favorite books of the year.**

Art and Prayer: The Beauty of Turning to God by Timothy Verdon

This book has amazing art work in it - from all through church history. The art is beautiful. The commentary, a bit laborious at times, inspiring at other times.

Discovering God through the Arts: How we can Grow Closer to God by Appreciating Beauty and Creativity by Terry Glaspey

This was a helpful read on the topic of being more open and aware to beauty and God's work in our lives through it. I have numerous dog-eared pages I have returned to. This is a great book for the topic of art and beauty.

LEADERSHIP TITLES

Lifelong Leadership: Woven Together through Mentoring Communities Mary Kate Morse

This book looks closely at the leaders mentoring cohorts that Leighton Ford began many years ago. The author was one of his mentorees. She describes the methods and means of creating such gatherings. Very practical.

Love Works Joel Manby

The BI leadership team read this together. Our collective response is: so-so. Some good points. But I would not spend the time on it. Especially disillusioning is that despite all the rah rah on love in relationships, the end of the book is about his divorce!! Ugh.

GENERAL PERSONAL GROWTH TITLES

From Strength to Strength: Finding success, Happiness, and Deep Purpose in the Second Half of Life by Arthur Brooks

I saw this book when it first came out and dismissed it as a “self-help” title. In May, a colleague approached me to read and discuss it together. His spiritual director has recommended it to him. Oh, really? This turned out to be a very encouraging read for me. I learned that Brooks is a devout Christ follower (Catholic) and indeed Scripture is found throughout the book (though there are numerous Buddhist and Hindu references as well. If you can work your way around that, there is good stuff in here). The Spirit used this book to help me get unstuck in an area I need to be dislodged from. It was clearly one of those divide appointment type of things, so it may not have any such impact on you. Still, this is an engaging read, well written, full of research (from a sociologist angle). **I really enjoyed it and gained great help from it.** You can hear an interview of the author on The Trinity Forum podcast (May 15, 2023).

Humilitas, John Dickson

I read this in preparation for a talk I gave at MHM conference. It was full of pithy stories and examples. Some who referred this book to me found it very significant to them. It was an easy read, some good insights. May not be my first go to on the topic.

NOVELS, POETRY, LITERATURE

Death comes to the Archbishop, Willa Cather

An amazing piece of literature about Catholic priests in the SW of US and N Mexico set in the mid-1850's. There are poignant settings of personal sacrifice, deep pastoral concern and abuse of power and neglect - the human stuff of real people in harsh environs seeking to establish the church.

The Medieval Mind of C. S. Lewis: How Great Books Shaped a Great Mind, Jason Baxter
Gosh there are entire sections of human history and literature I know absolutely nothing about. Lewis' mind was brilliant. And he read expansively. All the stories we love, all the books that have so deeply impacted us from the hand, heart and mind of CS Lewis were deeply influenced by medieval authors. This is a fascinating look at what shaped Lewis in literature. **If you are a Lewis fan, this is a fun read.**

The Hermits of Big Sur, Paula Huston

This is a true story of a group of monks who moved from Italy to the California coast to begin a monastery. Interesting history, well researched.

By the Rivers of Babylon, Michael O'Brien

O'Brien is one of my favorite authors. I think I have read all of his novels. He has a keen imagination. This is part one of a two novel series on the life of Ezekiel. The book paints a vivid picture of what the fall of Jerusalem, the long march of prisoners from Israel to Babylon and the early years of life there would have looked like. It really fills in details of our Bible narrative in a helpful way. It is largely extra-biblical, but gives us a glimpse of what Ezekiel's early formation could have looked like. If you have not read O'Brien, read *Father Elijah*. I have read that book maybe 6-7 times.