

Scott E. Shaum's 2024 Reads List

Happy New Year friends!

I am having an interesting experience the past couple of years with books. Books have always been a major source of personal growth. However, at this stage of life I am asking different questions than I was 20 years ago. I am finding it hard to find compelling books that are pressing into the third third of life type dynamics. Is God inviting me to a different way of learning than mere books? Hmmm. I ponder that and I read on. The consequences is that this year's list is shorter than norm. I am re-reading many titles.

PLEASE, send me some of you favorite reads of late. I am especially on the hunt for beautiful literature and novels if you have them. Thanks!

Feel free to pass this along with no need to ask. Enjoy!

Scott E Shaum

Advent 2024

Something I have never done before, ever, I begin with a commentary set....Easily the most influential books I read in 2024:

The Fourfold Gospel: A Formational Commentary on Matthew, Mark, Luke and John Volumes 1-3 (Volume 4 yet to be released) John DelHousaye.

I picked these up at a conference in January. What a providential gift. I probably would not have done so except they were at a lower price (about 60% off) than what they are online - they are super pricey (Kindle is much cheaper, but these are worth having in print). The key in the title is "formational." These commentaries are academic for sure. DelHousaye utilizes resources from 12 different domains. It is staggering what resources he accesses to bring insights to the text. What I truly love, though, are his spiritual formation insights liberally scattered throughout. Brilliant stuff. Whatever gospel passage I was reading that morning, I read his commentary on that passage. So much depth and insight. Alas, Volume 4 covers triumphal entry onward. I'll be eager to snap that up when it is released (I suspect 2025 or 2026). I am grateful for the author's spirit he brings to the text. Brilliantly conceived. I've never seen another commentary like it. Reportedly, he spent 12 years in the writing of these. I can see why.

Emmanuel Promise: Discovering the Security of a Life held by God Summer Joy Gross

This book had significant influence on me this year. Part of that was how SJG explained Attachment Theory and dynamics in the first half of the book. It gave me yet another layer of insight into myself and my personal history. The Spirit used it in healing ways for me. Grateful. The second half of the book addresses how to grow in what is

clinically referred to as Earned Secure Attachment. Many of the practices she encourages are well known and covered in many other books. But she looks at them from this subject's angle in a unique way. Anything that helps us mature emotionally and relationally is essential friends. I highly recommend this book. It is well written.

Slow Productivity: The Lost Art of Accomplishment Without Burnout Cal Newport

I read Newport's *Deep Work* last year. He is very much in the self-help genre but I like the issues he is trying to address. We are fragmented by technology and over-extension. Our work is less creative, sharp and impactful. Newport pushes the envelope to being singularly focused in life efforts and specific projects. He is very practical and I find affirming to what the Spirit has been drawing me towards regarding where I give my life to which means having to say "no" to much so as to be able to say "yes" to the right opportunities. He is a good writer, lots of engaging stories, and many helpful suggestions on how to move forward.

Reversing Entropy: Poems Luci Shaw

She is a marvel. She is 95 and still publishing 1-2 books per year of well crafted poems. If you have not listened to her being interviewed, find a podcast from the past couple of years and listen intently. She has it - Joy!

The Birds Audubon Missed Kenn Kaufmann

I am a birder. I have other bird books I read or referred to this year. I won't bore you with those. This is a history book of sorts. Kenn Kaufmann is an artist and author amongst other things. His artwork is stunning. This is a fresh look at Audubon and other of his contemporaries as they sought to master the bird species of the new nation of the US in the 1800's. I had no idea Audubon was such a dishonest guy. Wow, what an ego. As a birder, it is fascinating to read what Kaufmann describes were the bird identification challenges back then. They had no binoculars. No cameras. Only a gun. There are bird families that remain notorious difficult to master today with all our optics and for these guys back then, it was a puzzle they struggled to sort out. Fun, easy read. Some full color art work included. (Probably a good library loaner).

Spirit and Sacrament: An Invitation to Eucharistic Worship Andrew Wilson

Written by a British charismatic Anglican. How's that for a twist. The author looks at charismatic elements of worship and sacramental/liturgical elements and how they are complimentary. If this intrigues you, there are some good nuggets in here. I've read many books over the decades of spiritual gifts and charismatic worship. I still found this book refreshing and engaging.

Seeking God: Finding Another Kind of Life with St Ignatius and Dallas Willard

Trevor Hudson Hudson looks at Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises and weaves in some of Willard's teachings to describe how the Spirit seeks to deepen us in Christ. Interesting read. A little slow in spots. I know that others have found this an extremely helpful book. I commend it to your consideration.

Van Gogh Has A Broken Heart: What Art Teaches us About Wonder and Struggle

Russ Ramsey

Ramsey wrote a book a couple of years ago called *Rembrandt is in the Wind*. It was a fun read - a mix of history, biography, art lessons, and spiritual reflection. Well written. Unique. This title is in the same format. Easy to read and enjoyable. The theme of this title is how struggle and loss impacts us in creativity and beauty.

Vessels of Love: Prayers and Poems For the Later Years of Life Joyce Rupp

I've not read all of this one yet. I am reading it slowly. Some of the early entries are brilliant. I am so grateful when elder saints put to words what they have learned, seen, heard and are struggling with. It's like having an interpreter and guide to new vistas of life. A gift.

Slow Down Be Here Now: More Nature Stories to Make You Stop, And Be Amazed at the Tiniest Things Laura Brand

A kids book! Hey child of the Father, this is worth looking into. Lovely art work.

Books I am regularly re-reading and have at my side constantly for deeper reflection. By my estimation, except for Stairs which is very vocational specific, these are must reads.

- **The Impact of God** Ian Matthews
- **Care of the Soul** Jean Stairs (if you are a pastor and/or spiritual director, this is great stuff)
- **Father Elijah: An Apocalypse** (novel) Michael O'Brien I'm on reread #5...
- **Way of the Dragon or the Way of the Lamb** Kyle Strobel and Jamin Goggin
- Poetry - Mary Oliver, Lucy Shaw, many others

Some books from past years that are well worth your time. Read them!

With Skye Jethani

The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry John Mark Comer

Delighting in the Trinity Michael Reeves

Embracing Contemplation Kyle Strobel and John Coe

The Contemplative Response Ian Cowley

Formed for the Glory of God Kyle Strobel

The Psychology of the Fruit of the Spirit Zoltan Dornyei (this is a bit technical and it is brilliant. He weaves some solid psychology into good theology. Best book on the topic of the fruit of the Spirit I have ever read).