

Beloved,

I am so excited and encouraged about what this summer may hold. While we have encouraged many of our groups to take some time off – a time a rest, we are encouraging each individual and family to continue to look at ways to be UP, IN, and OUT. These three dimensions (up, in, and out) are the keys to our discipleship summit. We are to invest into our *up*-ward relationship with God, *into* close community of other believers, and *out* into the broken world.

For most, our schedules are all over the place during the summer and it is hard to stay connected to a group and a regular meeting, but to help each of us to keep growing, I've been asking for recommended readings from the congregation. The response was a great spectrum holding lots of different thoughts and disciplines. They may encourage, they may help, they may even challenge. If you read any of these suggested books and make an effort to respond to any revelation received you will grow. We respond by living into the principles or sharing it.

I would also recommend that you don't read any of these alone. Find someone to read it with you or ask the person that recommended the book to discuss it with you at some point. While getting a small group of 6-12 people together every week through the summer is near impossible, grabbing lunch or coffee or even going for a walk with someone to discuss some of the thoughts and revelations received from a book you've read is super easy and powerful! Even if you can't find anyone else to read it with ask someone to listen as you process it. Both of you will gain much from the conversation.

I hope you will venture to give one of these books a read and can find a companion with whom you can discuss it.

Marriage & Family

- *Love and Respect* by Dr. Emerson Eggerichs
 - Discover the single greatest secret to a successful marriage! Touted as a classic among marriage books, *Love & Respect* reveals why spouses react negatively to each other and how they can deal with conflict quickly, easily and biblically. Cracking the communication code between husband and wife involves understanding one thing: that unconditional respect is as powerful for him as unconditional love is for her...When either of these needs isn't met, things get crazy. This book was based on over three decades of counseling, as well as scientific and biblical research by Dr. Emerson Eggerichs and his wife, Sarah. If you want to feel peace, closeness, value, and to experience marriage the way God intended, this book will help you get there.
 - The message is simple, revolutionary and works!
 - Recommended by Rhonda Atkinson

Children's Books:

- Bible Force: The First Heroes Devotional
 - Recommended by Evan Snyder

- He said he recommended “because it is good.”
 - It has excellent and exciting pictures and keeps a comic book style while also having great devotional content.
- What Should Darla Do? By Ganit and Adir Levy
 - This book gives children lessons in making powerful decisions that will impact the rest of their day.
 - Recommended by Zoe Snyder
- I am a Rainbow by Dolly Parton
 - It helps kids recognize their emotions, understand they are a regular part of life but that they don’t have to stay stuck in their emotions.
 - Recommended by Evan Snyder
- There’s a Hole in the Log on the Bottom of the Lake by Loren Long
 - Recommended by Zoe Snyder
 - I shared it because it is really fun!
- The Book with No Pictures by B.J. Novak
 - Teaches that not just the pictures but the words of a book are important and can be powerful.
 - Recommended by Evan Snyder

Meaning & Purpose

- *Man's Search for Meaning* by Viktor Frankl
 - As a Nazi death camp survivor, Frankl studied why some people lived and others didn’t. He discovered that those with a “why” to live found meaning in suffering and were able to live through the horrors.
 - Recommended by John Schaffer.

Prayer and Spiritual Warfare

- *Fervent: A Woman's Battle Plan to Serious, Specific and Strategic Prayer* by Priscilla Shirer
 - Was written after the author Priscilla Shirer experienced spiritual warfare while acting in the lead role in “War Room”, and how she used warfare tactics from the movie and her knowledge of God, scripture, and prayer to not only defend against the attacks of the devil but to move to the offensive.
 - “You have an enemy... and he’s dead set on destroying all you hold dear and keeping you from experiencing abundant life in Christ. What’s more, his approach to disrupting your life and discrediting your faith isn’t general or generic, not a one-size-fits-all. It’s specific.

Personalized. Targeted.

So this book is your chance to strike back. With prayer. With a weapon that really works. Each chapter will guide you in crafting prayer strategies that hit the enemy where it hurts, letting him know you're on to him and that you won't back down. Because with every new strategy you build, you're turning the fiercest battles of life into precise strikes against him and his handiwork, each one infused with the power of God's Spirit."

- Recommended by Jocelyn and Pastor J.P. Snyder

- *The Screwtape Letters* by C.S. Lewis
 - Screwtape is a demon who, through a series of letters, instructs his nephew, Wormwood, on how to obtain the soul of a novice Christian (referred to as Wormwood's "patient"). In their world, God is the enemy and the devil is Our Father. The book addresses the struggle between good and evil and the subtle ways Satan attempts to influence the lives of Christians. Lewis' keen wit is on display throughout and I found it to be thought provoking and highly entertaining.
 - Recommended by Rick Hannon.

Practices of Personal Transformation

- *Atomic Habits: An Easy & Proven Way to Build Good Habits & Break Bad Ones*
 - Mark Manson calls it "A supremely practical and useful book. James Clear distills the most fundamental information about habit formation, so you can accomplish more by focusing on less."
 - The video in this link gives a fantastic synopsis of the book. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dyliijbw_aQ
 - Recommended by Abe Schaffer. Seconded by Pastor J.P.

- *Experiencing God* by Henry Blackaby & Claude King; (1994)
 - This book provides information regarding how to live the full adventure of knowing and doing the will of God.
 - Recommended by Scott Stine

- *The Art of Letting Go: Living the Wisdom of Saint Francis* by Richard Rohr
 - Only available as an audio book
 - We often think of saints as rare individuals whose gifts far exceed our own, and St. Francis is no exception. But for Fr. Richard Rohr, a prolific author and renowned speaker, the life and teachings of this beloved figure offer an authentic spirituality we can all embody.

On the *Art of Letting Go*, Fr. Rohr gives us a six session learning course that explores: the surprising richness we discover by simplifying our lives - without taking a vow of poverty; liberation from our self-limiting biases and certitudes; contemplation and action, two key steps toward communing more deeply with the Divine, and more.

- Recommended by Pastor JP
 - “My favorite book/course of the year.”

Life Grounded in God

- *Oswald Chambers - Abandon to God: The Life Story of the Author of “My Utmost for His Highest”* by David McCasland.
 - “I read this book this winter and it was an eye opener of the kind of living for God that I've never personally seen nor understood was actually possible. It shows in intriguing detail a living example of what it looks like to live life fully devoted to and fully mastered by God even in uncertainties, difficulties, sadness, loss, no money, no home, war, illness... everything we fear. Truly relying on God for every next thing, Chambers did not worry nor become anxious nor second-guess but simply took each concern and each matter needing decision to God in prayer, completely trusting. And he kept going for God, even past the point of exhaustion, of self and of possible resources save for God Himself; wholly giving himself to the God whom he so revered and adored. This unique man really did live his utmost for the Lord's highest and in highlighting Chambers' life story in such detail, McCasland showed his readers how to do the same.”
 - Recommended by Emily Ulman.

Comparing Religions

- *The Bible Among the Myths* by John N. Oswalt
 - Sixty years ago, most biblical scholars maintained that Israel's religion was unique—that it stood in marked contrast to the faiths of its ancient Near Eastern neighbors. Nowadays, it is widely argued that Israel's religion mirrors that of other West Semitic societies. What accounts for this radical change, and what are its implications for our understanding of the Old Testament? Dr. John N. Oswalt says the root of this new attitude lies in Western society's hostility to the idea of revelation, which presupposes a reality that transcends the world of the senses, asserting the existence of a realm humans cannot control. While not advocating a “the Bible says it, and I believe it, and that settles it” point of view, Oswalt asserts convincingly that while other ancient literatures all see reality in essentially the same terms, the Bible differs radically on all the main points. *The Bible Among the Myths* supplies a necessary corrective to those who reject the Old Testament's testimony about a transcendent God who breaks into time and space and reveals himself in and through human activity.
 - Recommended by Molly Winters who wrote, “I liked this book because it compares the Bible to other ancient literatures and explains how it is different from them.”
- *Seeking Allah finding Jesus* by Nabeel Qureshi

- **Nabeel Qureshi describes his dramatic journey from Islam to Christianity in this expanded edition with new bonus content and reflections.**
- Providing an intimate view into a loving Muslim home, Qureshi shares how he developed a passion for Islam before discovering, almost against his will, evidence that Jesus rose from the dead and claimed to be God. Unable to deny the arguments but not wanting to deny his family, Qureshi struggled with an inner turmoil that will challenge Christians, Muslims, and all those who are interested in two of the world's greatest religions and the quest for truth. Qureshi, with great courage and intimacy - wrote this book with three major purposes in mind:
 - To tear down walls between two of the world's major religions by giving non-Muslim listeners an insider's perspective into a Muslim's heart and mind.
 - To equip the listener with facts and knowledge, showing the strength of the case for the gospel contrasted with the case for Islam.
 - To portray the immense inner struggle of Muslims grappling with the gospel, including all the sacrifices and doubts that rise up along the way.

Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus is more than the memoir of a man's pursuit of answers to the most important issues of life and faith. Ultimately, it's the story about the transformative grace and mercy of the one true God.
- Recommended by Pastor J.P.

Perspectives on debated questions in the Christian Faith:

- *Another Gospel?: A Lifelong Christian Seeks Truth in Response to Progressive Christianity* by Alisa Childers
 - *Another Gospel* recounts the author's spiritual journey when confronted by beliefs contrary to the orthodox historical Christianity in which she had been raised and now lived as an adult. To her credit she seeks answers through rigorous study of the Bible and other Christian texts that have undergirded the historical Christian faith. This book is quite "readable" and expounds on questions all Christians must confront and answer today.
 - Recommended by Brenda Stine
- *Velvet Elvis* by Rob Bell
 - In *Velvet Elvis*, Bell invites readers to wrestle with their faith, and offers a radical new perspective on Jesus, the church, and Christianity today. We know there's something more. We sense it, we feel it, and we want it. But how do we find it a spirituality that stands up to the questions of an honest, searching mind 'This book is for those who need a fresh take on Jesus and what it means for us to live the kind of life he teaches us to live,' writes Rob Bell.
 - Recommended by Maureen Stoneman

- *God and the Transgender Debate: What Does the Bible Actually Say About Gender Identity* by Andrew T. Walker.
 - Andrew T. Walker's *God and the Transgender Debate*, offers an honest and clear representation of the Word of God, while lovingly exploring a real struggle that people face today. A struggle that does not have to end in despair and rejection, but a promise of hope and redemption that can be found in Christ and should be seen through the lives of his followers....
Walker explores how we as a society have gotten to where we are at today, as well as helps to define pertinent terms related to the transgender debate. He outlines what the Bible says regarding humanity and gender, focusing on the Creator/creature relationship and how God has defined His creation. This is expounded upon as Walker looks at what Jesus both said and did as he debated issues and interacted with people, and in all of it being love.
 - Recommended by Brenda Stine.
- *Unclobber* by Colby Martin
 - *Unclobber* is a spiritual defense of homosexuality.
 - Churches in America are experiencing an unprecedented fracturing due to their belief and attitude toward the LGBTQ community. Armed with only six passages in the Bible--often known as the "clobber passages"--the traditional Christian position has been one that stands against the full inclusion of our LGBTQ brothers and sisters. *Unclobber* reexamines each of those frequently quoted passages of Scripture, alternating with author Colby Martin's own story of being fired from an evangelical megachurch when they discovered his stance on sexuality.
Unclobber reexamines what the Bible says (and does not say) about homosexuality in such a way that breathes fresh life into outdated and inaccurate assumptions and interpretations.
 - Recommended by Maureen Stoneman
- *Finding God in the Waves* by Mike McHargue
 - Mike McHargue writes about how his faith unraveled while an active member of a conservative Southern Baptist Church. He said that searching scriptures in the midst of his crisis didn't help him and he silently became an atheist while trying to maintain his Christian life. In-so-doing, he was ripping at the seams. He sided with science and what he could reason, yet "God", he said, "moved miraculously in my life, and I came back to the fold of the faithful."
He continued to say what brought him back to faith, "was science – studying neuroscience and cosmology and discovering a God who was as mysterious as quantum physics and as intimately near as the neurons of my own brain."
Finding God in the Waves is all about Mike's journey. It encourages the exploration of non-believers; it gives grace and space for struggling believers to grab hold of their faith and more intimately know God; and it helps the faithful

believers better understand the concepts that make the Christian faith so slippery for some.

Faith and Politics/Cultural Pressures

- *Kingdoms in Conflict* by Charles Colson (1987)
 - This book provides an excellent understanding of the conflict between the secular world view and the Christian world view and their common existence in culture and government in the world and particularly in the U.S.A.
 - Recommended by Scott Stine
- *Live Not By Lies: A Manual for Christian Dissidents* by Rod Dreher
 - *Live Not By Lies* is a sometimes difficult (not difficult to read but eye opening), but ultimately helpful, encouraging read for Christians hoping to live faithful lives in an extremely tumultuous period of our national and cultural history. Part One describes “soft totalitarianism” as a part of our present day lives. Part Two instructs us in living truthfully by telling the inspiring stories of Christians who did just that under more difficult circumstances than we now face.
 - Recommended by Brenda Stine

Social Justice

- *Confronting Injustice without Compromising Truth* by Thaddeus J. Williams (2020)
 - 12 questions Christians should ask about social justice, written by an associate professor of systematic theology for the Talbot School of Theology at Biola University in La Miranda, CA.
 - Recommended by Scott Stine

Denominational Renewal

- *The Next Methodism: Theological, Social, and Missional Foundations for Global Methodism* with editors Kenneth J. Collins and Ryan N. Danker (2022)
 - This is a collection of 35 essays by scholars and church leaders which invites the reader to discover the vitality, richness, and sheer goodness of the broader Wesleyan tradition.
 - No matter which way the denomination goes these are components of the early Methodist movement that should be considered as the denomination finds its way into the future.
 - Recommended by Scott Stine

