

## MY TOP TEN....OK, MAYBE CLOSER TO TWENTY!

The suggestion has been made that I share with you an annotated list of some of the authors and books I reference periodically in sermons.

Inclusion does not mean I agree with everything in the book! Not being included doesn't necessarily mean I have not found an author or book helpful. It means I just didn't think of them right now! And as we get older that happens! So here goes:

- Henri Nouwen, Catholic priest, professor, author. Some of his books are being reprinted under different titles. While most of what he writes nourishes my soul, I have found the following particularly meaningful: With Open Hands (on prayer), The Way of the Heart, The Wounded Healer.
- Eugene Peterson, SPU grad, prophetic radical, long time pastor, best known as the source of The Message. For several summers I trekked up to Regent in Vancouver to listen to Peterson's teaching. An early favorite from Peterson: A Long Obedience in the Same Direction (on Psalms of Ascent) Under the Unpredictable Plant is about Jonah and about being faithful to our calling.
- Listening for the Heartbeat of God by Philip Newell is one treatment of Celtic spirituality, which has nourished FFMC's worship and music. Another valuable resource is Celtic Daily Prayer.
- Brian McLaren opened wide windows for me for several years. The book I found most compelling was A Generous Orthodoxy.
- N. T. Wright is an Anglican scholar, church leader and one of the English Evangelicals whose approach to God and life I find appealing and less burdened with American baggage. Try Simply Christian and Surprised by Hope.
- Richard Foster's Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home was and is an excellent treatment of the "what" and "how" of prayer.
- Scot McKnight is theologian and scholar, but also popular writer. Don't miss The Jesus Creed. The Blue Parakeet: Rethinking How You Read the Bible will stretch but benefit you.
- Dallas Willard is a Baptist, who sounds like a Wesleyan. Try his The Divine Conspiracy.
- Philip Yancey can be uneven but usually good. I recommend What's So Amazing About Grace?

- For more serious biblical backgrounds, I recommend Kenneth Bailey, who spent forty years living and researching in the Middle East. His latest is Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes.
- For oldies but goodies, try C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity and Reflections on the Psalms, J.B. Phillips, Your God is Too Small, and John Stott, Basic Christianity. Talk about “oldies,” see if you can find On the Incarnation, a 4<sup>th</sup> century classic by Athanasius.
- I got started with Thomas Cahill in How the Irish Saved Civilization. He’s written about other historical figures and eras including Gifts of the Jews.
- Two writers that help me look at the world from a bigger than American viewpoint are: Thomas Friedman, The World is Flat and Fareed Zakaria, The Post-American World.
- Since I confessed to being a mystery novel addict recently, here are my favorite authors in that genre: Agatha Christie, Dorothy Sayers, P.D. James, Peter Tremayne (Sister Fidelma mysteries) and C.J. Sansom (Matthew Shardlake mysteries). All of the above write well, not via some kind of formula.

That’s more than you wanted to know. But there are lots more books to read. I intend to keep amazon.com and Barnes and Noble busy!

I commend the old advice given, I think, in reference to reading the Bible: “Read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest.”

H. Mark Abbott, Pastor