

# Book Recommendations

Emmanuel Lutheran Church

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## Top Ten Books (Levels 1-12)

The reading order of these books should be done sequentially through level 4. These are foundational texts that serve to give faith the proper starting and return point. Levels 5-11 are all on the same level of difficulty but contain different areas of emphasis. Further, there are non-theological and secular texts on the list that all Christians should have some degree of familiarity. Crucial to your reading of these books is the warning that you do not supplant your daily reading of the Bible with books about the Bible or Christianity. These books are to be a help in reading the Scripture, and also help in how to proclaim the gospel message in all of its power. "Theology is like a map. Merely learning and thinking about the Christian doctrines, if you stop there, is less real and less exciting than the sort of thing my friend got in the desert (a personal experience of God). Doctrines are not God: they are only a kind of map. But that map is based on the experience of hundreds of people who really were in touch with God--experiences compared with which many thrills of pious feelings you and I are likely to get on our own are very elementary and very confused. And secondly if you want to get any further you must use the map."— C.S. Lewis.

There are two final points, perhaps warnings, you must always hearken back to when reading these books. First, the purpose of this quest is truth, not knowledge. "But knowledge puffs up" (1 Corinthians 8:1). Seek truth first and always. The genuine seeking of truth will always, although sometimes in a roundabout way, land you in the arms of Jesus Christ who is the truth incarnate (John 14:6). In this way you will keep gospel humility while learning much. Nothing is more odious to non-Christians than followers of Christ who are obnoxiously smart. Your goal must always be truth and humility, always in that particular order. Luckily for us, an authentic trust in Jesus Christ as your Savior bestows both qualities. However, watch out for Satan's most powerful weapon during your study: pride. "Whenever we find that our religious life is making us feel that we are good - above all, that we are better than someone else - I think we may be sure that we are being acted on, not by God, but by the devil." – CS Lewis

Second, consider your reading of these books a sort of adventure into a far country. It is going to be fun, but also confusing and, at times, a bit scary. As Tolkien wrote of Bilbo Baggins at the beginning of *The Hobbit*, "This is a story of how a

Baggins had an adventure, and found himself doing and saying things altogether unexpected...There are no safe paths in this part of the world. Remember, you are over the Edge of the Wild now, and in for all sorts of fun wherever you go.” So, enjoy this adventure, for it is an adventure that is rooted in a sure and certain future: eternal life with Jesus.

\*I read the books listed in levels 1-4 once a year. “It is a good rule, after reading a new book, never to allow yourself another new one till you have read an old one in between. If that is too much for you, you should at least read one old one to every three new ones.” – C.S. Lewis

### **Level 1**

1. Gerhard Forde, *On Being a Theologian of the Cross*
2. Gerhard Forde, *Where God Meets Man*
3. C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*
4. Gary Habermas and Michael Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus*
5. Martin Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535)
6. Josh and Sean McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*
7. Gerhard Forde and James Nestingen, *Free to Be*
8. James Nestingen, *Martin Luther: A Life*
9. Tim Keller, *The Reason for God*
10. Steven Paulson, *Lutheran Theology*

### **Level 2**

1. Gerhard Forde, *Theology is for Proclamation*
2. Martin Luther, *The Large Catechism*
3. St. Augustine, *The Confessions*
4. Tim Keller, *Making Sense of God*
5. Gary Habermas, *The Historical Jesus*
6. St. Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*
7. C.S. Lewis, *Miracles*

8. C.S. Lewis, *Screwtape Letters*
9. C.S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce*
10. Philip Comfort, *Essential Guide to Bible Versions*

### **Level 3**

1. Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*
2. Luc Ferry, *A Brief History of Thought*
3. Craig Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*
4. Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ*
5. Michael Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus*
6. Luuk Van de Weghe, *The Historical Tell*
7. Gerhard Forde, *The Law/Gospel Debate*
8. Elijah Hixson and Peter Gurry, *Myths and Mistakes in New Testament Textual Criticism*
9. Craig Blomberg, *Can We Still Believe the Bible?*
10. Soren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness Unto Death*

### **Level 4**

1. Gustav Wingren, *The Living Word*
2. Steven Paulson, *Luther's Outlaw God* vols.1-3.
3. Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*
4. Gary Habermas, *Risen Indeed*
5. Roy Harrisville, *Fracture*
6. Andrew Delbanco, *The Death of Satan*
7. Stephen Hicks, *Explaining Post-Modernism*
8. Craig Koester, *Revelation and the End of All Things*
9. Soren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*
10. Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity*

## Level 5

1. Larry Hurtado, *The Destroyer of the Gods*
2. Gerhard Forde, *Justification: A Matter of Death and Life*
3. Bo Giertz, *The Hammer of God*
4. Norman McClean, *Young Men and Fire*
5. Jurgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God*
6. Sigmund Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*
7. St. Augustine, *City of God*
8. Gary Habermas, *The Risen Jesus and Future Hope*
9. Antony Flew, *There is a God*
10. Anrdeas Kostenberger, *The Heresy of Orthodoxy*

## Level 6

1. Raymond Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, vols.1-2
2. Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*
3. Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*
4. David Beck and Michael Licona, *Raised on the Third Day*
5. N.T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*
6. Brant Pitre, *The Case for Jesus*
7. Tim Keller, *Prayer*
8. Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*
9. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*
10. Ernest Becker, *The Denial of Death*

## Level 7

1. William Craig. *The Son Rises. The Historical Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus.*
2. Robert Van Voorst, *Jesus Outside the New Testament*

3. Philip Comfort, *The Quest for the Original Text of the New Testament*
4. Flannery O'Connor, *Collected Works (Library of America)*
5. C.S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*
6. Eric Metaxas, *Bonhoeffer*
7. Benjamin Laird, *Creating the Canon*
8. John Meade and Peter Gurry, *Scribes and Scripture*
9. Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus: God and Man*
10. Larry Hurtado, *How on Earth Did Jesus Become God?*

### **Level 8**

1. Regin Prenter, *The Church's Faith*
2. Bruce Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*
3. Lydia McGrew, *Hidden in Plain View: Undesigned Coincidences in the Gospels/Acts*
4. John Bright, *A History of Israel*
5. Hugh Ross, *Why the Universe is the Way It is*
6. Eberhard Jungel, *Justification*
7. Soren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*
8. Gustav Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*
9. Hans Schwarz, *Christology*
10. Oscar Cullmann, *The Earliest Christian Confessions*

### **Level 9**

1. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics vol.1:1*
2. C.H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching*
3. Gerhard Ebeling, *The Nature of Faith*
4. Richard Swinburne, *The Existence of God*
5. Wayne House and Dennis Jowers, *Reasons for Our Hope*

6. Ernst Kasemann, *Perspectives on Paul*
7. Gene Veith, *Spirituality of the Cross*
8. Oswald Bayer, *Living by Faith*
9. Colin McGinn, *The Mysterious Flame*
10. Gerhard Von Rad, *The Message of the Prophet*

### **Level 10**

1. Martin Luther, *Lectures on Genesis vol.1-8* in Luther's Works
2. Hans J. Iwand, *The Righteousness of Faith According to Luther*
3. Alan Kirk, *Memory and the Jesus Tradition*
4. Birger Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript*
5. Raymond Brown, *The Virginal Conception and Bodily Resurrection of Jesus*
6. Clement of Rome, and Cyril C. Richardson. *Early Christian Fathers*
7. Jonathan Bernier, *Rethinking the Dates of the New Testament*
8. Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*
9. Chad Bird, *The Christ Key*
10. Martin Luther, *The Freedom of a Christian*

### **Level 11**

1. Frank Turek, *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist*
2. Martin Hengel, *From Jesus to Paul*
3. Ernest Hemingway, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*
4. Daniel Wallace, *Revisiting the Corruption of the New Testament*
5. Colin Roberts, *The Birth of the Codex*
6. Marianna Forde, *We Preach Christ Crucified: Sermons by Gerhard O. Forde*

7. Kenneth Bailey, *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes*
8. Sean McDowell, *The Fate of the Apostles*
9. Gerhard Forde, *Christ and the Christian Life*
10. Plato, *The Republic*

### **Level 12**

1. J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit & The Lord of the Rings*
2. C.S. Lewis, *The Chronicles of Narnia*
3. Christian Smith, *Atheist Overreach*
4. John Donne, *Holy Sonnets and Sermons*
5. John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress*
6. Jonathan Edwards, *Religious Affections*
7. Eric Gritsch, *The Wit of Martin Luther*
8. John Milton, *Paradise Lost*
9. Thomas Brooks, *Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices*
10. Oswald Bayer, *Martin Luther's Theology*

### **Appendix - Top 10 Daily Devotionals**

1. *For All the Saints*, American Lutheran Publicity Bureau
2. Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest*
3. Martin Luther, *Day by Day We Magnify Thee*
4. Martin Luther, *Faith Alone*
5. Billy Graham, *Peace for Each Day*
6. Tim Keller, *The Songs of Jesus*
7. Tim Keller, *God's Wisdom for Navigating Life*
8. C.S. Lewis, *A Year with C.S. Lewis*
9. Charles Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*

10. Martin Luther, *The Small Catechism* (read through daily for 1 year)