

Pastor Paul's Top 5 Book Recommendations

The Next Right Thing by Emily Freeman

There are several reasons why this book made my top 5 for this year. One, I love Freeman's style of writing. It is poetic and thoughtful, and she writes in a way that engages the heart. Two, she provides insightful, practical thoughts regarding God's call and next steps for the future in a way that encourages the reader who struggles with decision fatigue to abide in Christ while "following the arrows". I don't recommend this to be a quick read but rather, almost like a devotional, going through one chapter at a time, reading, praying and writing down thoughts in a journal.

Everything Sad is Untrue by Daniel Nayeri

This book reads like a stream of consciousness with no chapters, and at first, it might throw you off. But don't stop! Nayeri's creativity in his storytelling and his account of feeling displaced as a refugee and yearning for "home" are masterfully told. But perhaps more than anything else, I was moved by what sacrificial love for family will do, and how this both reflects God's sacrificial love for us and how one's faith in Christ compels us to love others.

The Intentional Father by Jon Tyson

As a father with two sons and one daughter, I was really challenged and inspired by this book. While Tyson's intent is more about the father's intentional discipleship with his son, I think principles and ideas can apply to all your kids. There are many specific examples that Tyson gives based on his intentional discipleship with his son that I have used or plan to use, tweaking it in a way that fits my personality and how my kids are wired. I was both convicted and challenged – convicted by the need for a more greater, prayerful and intentional discipleship (while my kids are still living in my home), and challenged to pray, dream, and engage in meaningful ways with my kids, to see Christ formed in them.

Praying the Bible by Donald S. Whitney

As a pastor, I talk to many people who struggle with their devotional life of reading the Bible and prayer. Our minds get easily distracted and we end up praying the same thing over and over again. We then grow discouraged as our personal time in the word and in prayer feel rote and stale. Whitney's book on Praying the Bible is immensely helpful and practical, as he encourages us to have God's word (in particular the Psalms) lead and shape our prayer. This has been a game changer for me, in my own prayer life, in our family devotions, and for our church staff as we pray the Psalms together at the beginning of every work week.

Once Upon a Wardrobe by Patti Callahan

Many know that I am a fan of CS Lewis. Callahan writes a beautiful and moving book (historical fiction) that weaves in a story about a boy who is terminally ill, and how he and his family are inspired and strengthened by the story of Aslan and the Chronicles of Narnia, which ultimately point them to the gospel. Reading this book made me imagine being there with CS Lewis as he interacts with this boy and his older sister who struggles with faith and doubt. The ending, without giving it away, is redemptive and satisfying. I would have some tissues on hand when you read!

Honorable Mentions

Hannah Coulter by Wendall Berry

I am an admirer of Wendall Berry's writings (Jayber Crow made my list last year), and this short book feels like a memoir and evokes nostalgia to a time of simplicity and community. It made me long for a life of beauty and goodness and peace, as well as more deeply appreciate my family and acknowledge my need for thick gospel community.

Can We Trust the Gospels? by Peter Williams

The crux of the Christian faith is Jesus Christ and his life, death and resurrection. In the Bible, this is primarily communicated to us through the 4 gospels in the New Testament. If you or someone you know wrestles with the credibility of the gospels (i.e. if Christ's miracles or the resurrection really occurred and if we can trust the accounts given to us), I would most certainly

recommend this book. It is not long or difficult to understand, and Williams provides some compelling and thoughtful arguments for why the gospel accounts can be trusted.

One final thought: by recommending these books, while the authors have a Christian lens and background, I am not endorsing all their theological views and perspectives (nor am I aware of them all!). Rather, my recommendation is based on the content of the book itself.

If you end up reading one of these books, let me know what you think, enjoy!

Pastor Paul



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