Books Westmont Loves

A list of favorite books that have influenced the Christian faith and thought of Westmont staff and faculty

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Jim Taylor
Mitchell Thomas
Tim Van Haitsma
David Vander Laan
Beth Whitcomb
Rachel Winslow
Jim Wright
Captivating: Unveiling the Mystery of a Woman’s Soul, John and Stasi Eldredge
There are many wonderful intellectual books out there, but knowing God involves the Spirit too. If you want a book that speaks to the heart and soul of a woman and her need for God to meet her deeply, personally and intimately, you will want to read this. It uses pop culture movies as a vehicle, not a substitute for scripture, as modern examples of how "story" is so important in how God reveals Himself to us and through us. There’s a great companion journal/workbook as well.

Wild at Heart: Discovering the Secret of a Man’s Soul, John Eldredge
This book uses a similar vehicle [to Captivating]. I’ve read Wild at Heart, and gained a huge amount of insight into understanding and appreciating the nature of a Godly man, and men friends tell me they’ve experienced the same about Godly women after reading Captivating.

The Practice of the Presence of God, Brother Lawrence
I love this book because though written by a lay brother in the 17th century, his example of developing an ongoing conversation with God, even in the midst of his washing the dishes in the monastery kitchen, encourages me to press on in the same pursuit. The lines of this short booklet are filled with deep devotion to his Savior to whom he owes everything and who is worthy of all his time and attention.

The Ten(der) Commandments, Ron Mehl
I love the way the author reframes the 10 commandments as a love letter from God. I have shared many chapters of this book with my children because I want them to understand that these commands are shared from the Father's heart, and He knows if we follow them, it will go well with us.

Of Widows and Meals: Communal Meals in the Book of Acts, Reta Halteman Finger
Halteman Finger emphasizes that women played an important leadership role in the shared meals of the early Jesus community. Because people ate with their social equals, these meals, begun by Jesus himself, broke down barriers between men and women, rich and poor, slave and free, and Jew and Gentile. Halteman Finger calls the church to (re)embrace this shared meal practice today as a way to embody the organic unity believers have in Jesus, and I second the call. Let's eat together!
The New Testament and the People of God, 
N.T. Wright
With the exception of my Ph.D. advisor, no one has been more influential in shaping the way I view the Bible. Wright argues that humans make sense of our world through larger stories or narratives, and that the big story of the Bible (which shapes how Christians view our world) is that the Creator God is committed to restoring all of creation. All of it. And the Creator God uses us, human creation, to participate in the restoration project. Now that’s something worth giving your life to!

Kirsten Burdick,  
Program Coordinator for The Martin Institute

Journaling as a Spiritual Practice, 
Helen Cepero
I've long been a person who enjoys journaling and using writing as a tool to connect with God. Journaling as a Spiritual Practice is full of creative exercises that helped me to explore new ways of journaling and opened up avenues for listening for God's voice. I'd recommend this book for anyone who enjoys journaling or anyone who would like to see what it's like to journal as a way of connecting with God.

Alister Chapman,  
Associate Professor of History

Call to Spiritual Reformation, 
D.A. Carson
This book will teach you how to pray for people's spiritual growth. If you want to move your prayers for others beyond "Lord, bless Pat," this will help.

Master Plan of Evangelism, 
Robert E. Coleman and Billy Graham
An evangelical classic. Coleman's argument is that the key to evangelism is nurturing other Christians. Coleman looks at how Jesus did that with his disciples.

Lament for a Son, 
Nicholas Wolterstorff
The journal Wolterstorff kept after his son died in a climbing accident. The best book on grief I have read. In particular, it will give you some idea of what to say and not to say when a friend is suffering.

Angela D'Amour,  
Director of Campus Life

The Hiding Place, 
Corrie ten Boom
It's the true story of a Christian Dutch woman's journey through a Nazi concentration camp for helping many Jewish friends. This selfless and inspiring narrative called me to greater faithfulness and trust in God's provision for each one of us.

Lisa De Boer,  
Professor of Art

Intellectual Appetite: A Theological Grammar, 
Paul Griffiths
Griffith's little book is a series of theological meditations on words
closely associated with learning. Griffiths' chapter on "gift" persuaded me to begin donating blood, even though I typically faint at the sight of a needle.

**Practicing our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People, Dorothy Bass**

This compilation of essays is a practical parallel to Griffiths' word list [in *Intellectual Appetite*], inviting us to learn to inhabit Christian virtues through our patterns of action.

**Middlemarch, George Elliot**

The novel has abundant virtues for anyone interested in the ethics and morality of teaching and learning. But the last couple lines of the novel are always near to my heart. "Her finely touched spirit had still its fine issues, though they were not widely visible. Her full nature, like that river of which Cyrus broke the strength, spent itself in channels which had no great name on the earth. But the effect of her being on those around her was incalculably diffusive: for the growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been, is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs."

**A Guide to Prayer for Ministers and Other Servants, Rueben P. Job and Norman Shawchuck**

*A Guide to Prayer* is a devotional aid that combines excerpts from a range of Christian classics with Biblical texts drawn from the lectionary. Each week is keyed to a specific theme. This structure allows for deeply personal reflection to be anchored in the communal practice of reading scripture together.

**Space for God: The Study and Practice of Prayer and Spirituality, Don Postema**

Don Postema was a student of Henri Nouwen and the pastor of my Christian Reformed church in Ann Arbor.

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**Neil Di Maggio, Director of Research**

**The Ragamuffin Gospel, Brennan Manning**

This spoke to me profoundly of God's Fatherly love and radical grace in a dark season of my life.

**Trustful Surrender to Divine Providence, Father Jean Baptiste Saint-Jure and Saint Claude de la Colombiere**

This little book has been life-changing to me in thinking about and embracing the way the Potter uses hardship, adversity, suffering, and inconvenience as part of His divine plan to mold us as his clay.

**Keith Erickson, Music Department Administrator**

**Discover Your Destiny: Making Right Choices in a World Full of Wrong, Cary Schmidt**

This book brought me a rejuvenating joy for the Lord when I read it.
several years back. The author went to my church at the time, so it was nice that I personally knew people in the book that he spoke about. I would recommend this book simply because it's an easy but fun read which challenges you to think about your life decisions. Being that this booklist is for graduating seniors, I think it might hit home on a few points as they discover where they are going, and what new goals they'll plan for post college. No matter where life leads us, always remember Proverbs 3:5-6.

**Michael Everest, Professor of Chemistry**

*Book of Common Prayer*

Although I was raised in a non-liturgical tradition, I have found the rites in this book to be amazingly deep and very helpful in directing my focus to God. I have particularly appreciated the rites for Daily Morning Prayer and Daily Evening Prayer.

*The Art of Prayer: An Orthodox Anthology, Igumen Chariton*

This book introduced me to two important aspects of prayer. The first is the Jesus Prayer: "Lord, Jesus Christ, have mercy on me, a sinner." Although this prayer is not a regular part of my prayer life, at certain times I have found it very helpful on meditating on the person of Christ, his work, and my condition. This book also introduced me to a beautiful definition of prayer: "standing before God with the mind in the heart." Authentic worship is neither merely cerebral, nor is it mindlessly ecstatic. This definition of prayer captures both.

*Plainsong Psalter, James Litton*

*Anglican Chant Psalter, Alec Wyton*

Frequently, arguments about church music can be described as one or more group insisting that the church adopt the sort of music they like to listen to outside of a religious context. I find that a refreshing third option is that music used for worship could be equally foreign to all of us: sacred, literally set apart for a religious purpose. These two books include several ways in which Psalms can be sung that will be immediately recognized as worshipful.

**Nancy Gilbert, Music Department Administrative Assistant**

*Plan B: Further Thoughts on Faith, Anne Lamott*

For any Christian who is one of God's more "difficult" children, Anne Lamott offers encouragement and humor by telling of her big mistakes and small victories, and relying on God's mercy and love through it all.

*Walking on Water, Madeleine L'Engle*

A must-read for any Christian artist. Artists are people who are built a little differently than others, and who march to the beat of their own drum. Madeleine L'Engle is a wonderful mentor to artists who may feel a little lost, or who are searching for deep poetic meaning in their spiritual lives. Mrs. L'Engle is one of my favorite artists and I recommend all of her books.
**Everyday Saints and Other Stories,**  
Archimandrite Tikhon  
This is a very charming book of anecdotes written by Archimandrite Tikhon, a Russian Orthodox monk. He was raised Atheist (due to the Soviet era) and found God by dabbling in dark arts - by dabbling he discovered that spiritual powers were indeed very real. The book is full of true stories concerning the power of the Holy Spirit in everyday life, humorous stories about the relationships between the monks, and the tenacity of the authorities of the monasteries in protecting their inhabitants from Soviet government. The book is wildly popular in the Orthodox community and reads very quickly indeed.

Lyndsay Grimm,  
Resident Director

**Good News for Anxious Christians:**  
10 Practical Things You Don't Have to Do,  
Phillip Cary  
This book has been particularly meaningful for me in my spiritual journey because Cary highlights significant truths of the gospel in a way that are both compelling and freeing. He carefully examines common Christian phrases and sayings that often make Christians anxious and reminds us of the freedom that is Christ because of what Christ has done, not what we need to do. Cary's approach as a college professor answering faith-related questions that college students ask leaves readers challenged by his perspective while being encouraged to think critically and weigh what he says with what Scripture says. It is worth reading and re-reading!

Andrea Gurney,  
Associate Professor of Psychology

**Out of Solitude,**  
Henri Nouwen  
Henri Nouwen is one of my favorites! As a priest who studied psychology, Nouwen claims that what is most personal is universal, and much of his writing focuses on the universal need to be known and to belong. *Out of Solitude* challenges us to live a life in community with compassion and care. As a clinical psychologist who has worked with individuals, couples, and families for the past 15 years, I have often pondered that if we lived as Nouwen challenges us to do, perhaps we’d have less incidences of anxiety and depression; may we all seek to live a life of compassionate action, centered and grounded in the solitude of knowing Christ.

Beth Horvath,  
Associate Professor of Biology

**Ecology at the Heart of Faith,**  
Denis Edwards  
I really appreciated this book; just resonated with me!

Michelle Hughes,  
Assistant Professor of Education

**A Grace Disguised: How the Soul Grows Through Loss,**  
Jerry L. Sittser  
A title I hold dear to my heart. My pastor recommended this book after my mother-in-law passed away from cancer in 2002. It is a powerful and honest examination of the stages and emotions
associated with grief. Reading the text challenged me to dive into the "messy" stages of grief discovering that others may grieve differently and at different times. My husband and I have shared numerous copies of the book with Christian and non-Christian friends that have suffered loss.

**Learning from the Stranger: Christian Faith and Cultural Diversity, David I. Smith**
I read David I. Smith's *Learning from the Stranger: Christian Faith and Cultural Diversity* (2009) in graduate school at George Fox University. The text opened my eyes and heart to loving one's neighbor through a new lens. Smith challenged me to consider hospitality, discipleship, and compassion as I learned, and continue to learn, from and with others. Reading *Learning from the Stranger* informs my teaching and interactions with Westmont credential students, local schools, and K-12 students.

**Frances Iba, Academic Secretary, Communication Studies & Economics & Business**

**Spirituality and the Awakening Self, David Benner**
One of the most integrative, expansive books I've read.

**Centring Prayer and Inner Awakening, Cynthia Bourgeault**
This book was very important in demystifying and illuminating the benefits of contemplative prayer.

**The Way of Paradox: Spiritual Life as Taught by Meister Eckhart, Cyprian Smith**
I have never underlined so much! Poetic, deep and insightful, this book was a revelation on the brilliant theology of Eckhart.

**Wayne Iba, Professor of Computer Science**

**Life on the Vine: Cultivating the Fruit of the Spirit in Christian Community, Philip D. Kenneson**
For many years of my Christian walk, I did not understand the notion of identity, let alone what it meant to have my identity in Christ. This book gave me conceptual tools to think about identity and about what it means to bear the fruit of the Spirit. It also shed light on the fact that *formation* is happening all the time but that we should focus on which ways we are being formed and on who we are becoming as we are formed.

**Lauren Kelley, Outreach & Instruction Librarian**

**Amy Carmichael of Dohnavur: The Story of a Lover and Her Beloved, Frank Houghton**
Amy Carmichael's heartfelt devotion to her Lord and selfless giving of her whole life to provide for the needs of others, particularly children,
has inspired me enormously! I learned about her prayer life, which books gave her strength, and how she made decisions. With excerpts from letters and diaries, and featuring Carmichael's lovely poetry, this biography is perfect for reading in small sections for reflection.

**Spiritual Depression: Its Causes and Cure, D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones**

When I had hit an all-time low, my pastor gave me this book and it changed my life. Lloyd-Jones shows that if we walk around depressed and defeated, others will look at us and think, if that's what a Christian is like, I definitely don't want to be one! He explains how to talk to yourself rather than listen to yourself. The clear style in which this book is written serves to aid the cure it presents.

**Growing Your Faith By Giving It Away: Telling the Gospel Story with Grace and Passion, R. York Moore**

Written by InterVarsity's National Evangelist, I was impressed by the narrative of almost unbelievable, miraculous stories of people's lives changed by simply sharing the gospel. Balancing out the sensational, this book also explores failure and discouragement in spreading the good news. I love how this book shows how to practice and share God's love to all the different types of people around us.

**Dave King, Housing Director**

**Idols for Destruction: Christian Faith and Its Confrontation with American Society, Herbert Schlossberg**

I read excerpts during graduate school/seminary, but wonder if it is out of print. I am wanting to learn more about the influence of idols in my own life, and in the church today.

**Tom Knecht, Associate Professor of Political Science**

**Humility: The Beauty of Holiness, Andrew Murray**

A wonderful and challenging book that reminds us that our worth and value is found only in Christ.

**Cheri Larsen Hoeckley, Professor of English**

**Middlemarch, George Eliot**

*Middlemarch* is not for the noncommittal reader. However, it’s worth every minute any reader invests to experience Eliot’s provincial Victorian city come to life through her wide range of morally complicated characters who navigate both a web of local relationships and larger nineteenth-century cultural forces in an age of reform of all kinds.

**Selected Poems, Gerard Manley Hopkins**

In “Pied Beauty,” Hopkins gives “glory to God, for dappled things.” In each of the poems in his collection, the nineteenth-century Jesuit priest sees God from some equally surprising angle. His language is also often surprising in sound and in syntax.
Revelations of Divine Love,  
Julian of Norwich  
This is the only work we have from the fourteenth-century English mystic. Her visions of Christ offer some of Christianity’s most compelling accounts of God’s deep eternal love for all humans.

Interpreter of Maladies,  
Jhumpa Lahiri  
Though Lahiri has also written two novels—The Namesake and Lowland—that represent lives of the Indian diaspora in the United States, this early collection of her short stories still stands out for its richness of characterization, its generous sense of our abilities to find common ground across difference, and its often breath-takingly crafted prose.

In Memoriam A. H. H.,  
Alfred Tennyson  
Tennyson wrote this long poem over several years after hearing the news from abroad of the death of his closest college friend. The individual sections explore the multitude of responses suffered by one man grieving another. Along the way, Tennyson affirms the importance of asking questions to strengthening one’s faith, the possibilities of poetry for capturing the most complex human emotions, the centrality of devoted friendship to rigorous masculinity.

Celebration of Discipline,  
Richard Foster  
I have found throughout the course of my life that one of the biggest obstacles to growth in my relationship with God is my own busyness or failure to incorporate spiritual disciplines in my everyday tasks. Celebration of Discipline is an excellent book because Foster focuses on a different discipline per chapter, and explores both inner and outer disciplines. I like to reread this book during the holidays and focus on just one chapter a week, which allows space for me to practice each discipline for the week that follows. I never fail to learn something new upon rereading and practicing them each year. I recommend this book for anyone looking to discover God in new and deeper ways, and to get in a rhythm of daily practice of spiritual disciplines.

His Part and Ours:  
God’s Promises and Our Responsibilities in the Christian Life,  
J. Sidlow Baxter  
This is a study in the pronoun "My." God is my: shepherd, sufficiency, joy, etc. Baxter takes these Bible texts and brings them (and Jesus, in the bargain!) tenderly to our heart with many applications for our common concerns. The author is obviously and deeply in love with Jesus and after reading this tome, so will you be!
Melissa Lima, Residence Director

*Hannah's Child: A Theologian's Memoir*, Stanley Hauerwas
His honest and raw account of how he became a theologian is a humble reminder that everyone has struggles and areas to grow.

Cliff Lundberg, Vice President for External Relations

*The Will of God as a Way of Life: Finding and Following the Will of God*, Jerry Sittser
Illuminating to understand that finding God's direction for your life is more about the present than about the future.

*The Hole in our Gospel*, Rich Stearns
The critical importance of works to go with our faith.

Enrico Manlapig, Assistant Professor of Economics/Business

When I graduated from college, I was inspired by Cindy Jacob’s book on intercessory prayer, *Possessing the Gates of the Enemy*. It’s very passionate but also very practical. Rightly or wrongly, I felt like a Jedi-warrior of prayer, which was kind of cool.

*Let Your Life Speak*, Parker Palmer
This exquisite little book encouraged me to reflect on my life journey, skills, and mission when I was considering a major life change (to leave NYC to come to Westmont, actually!). Palmer opens with the poem “Ask me” by (Quaker) William Stafford, which summarizes his thesis so beautifully.

Jana Mayfield Mullen, Digitization and Instruction Librarian

*Witness*, Whittaker Chambers
A spiritual autobiography by a former atheist and Communist spy that taught the 14-year-old me how our political beliefs and religious worldviews are inextricably intertwined.

*Showings*, Julian of Norwich
Julian's visions of Christ's sufferings transformed my understanding of the role of the Eucharist in my walk with Jesus -- and opened me up to the beauty of medieval Christian mysticism.

*The Last Battle*, C. S. Lewis
*Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, J. K. Rowling
These two books have given me hope that there is a Heaven -- and that I actually want to go there!
Chris Milner,  
Associate Professor of Kinesiology

The Will of God as a Way of Life:  
Finding and Following the Will of God,  
Jerry Sittser
I use this book in my Senior Seminar class each spring. The students love it! Most of all, it provides assurance that whatever decisions we make are in God’s will if we remain faithful to him in our daily lives.

Andrew Mullen,  
Professor of Education

A Diary of Private Prayer,  
John Baillie
I’ve worked through the version from the 1930s for much of my life, but there’s a well-reviewed modern update (2014) which I would probably start with now. If your devotional life is dry, or non-existent, this provides a most helpful structure and if you’re like me—gets your mind off yourself for at least a brief moment!

Habits of the Heart:  
Individualism and Commitment in American Life,  
Robert Bellah and others
This is a “secular” book by a group of sociologists. At the age of 29, this convicted me strongly: I felt the authors could see right through me. Initiated a long process of self-examination and self-discovery, particularly the condition of American individualism that I had unknowingly succumbed to.

Yours, Jack: The Inspirational Letters of C. S. Lewis,  
Paul Ford
I hate to smuggle in yet another book by C. S. Lewis, but this is so well done, and it’s been extremely helpful, even after working through several other editions of much the same material. A selection of Lewis’s personal letters, extracting just the portions that provide spiritual guidance. Like so much of Lewis’s work, it’s worth re-reading at different points in your life journey.

The Great Divorce,  
C.S. Lewis
Short, pithy—you can read it in a single Sunday afternoon. Bears re-reading throughout one’s life. People get hung up on whether this is an accurate picture of Heaven and Hell—but that seems to miss the point for me, which largely concerns the Human condition, self-deception, and the Great Drama of Human Choice.

Till We Have Faces,  
C.S. Lewis
Almost anything by Lewis is worth reading, but this was his own personal favorite. Those looking for Narnia—or those who approach it that way in their reading—are bound to be confused. This calls for a completely different mindset. Maybe the single most important book in my life. Even if I were not a Christian or somehow ended up completely rejecting the faith, there is so much insight here about human psychology, about self-deception, about the nature of Love and human relationships. Read it with one or more discussion partner!
**The Mind of the Maker,**
*Dorothy L. Sayers*
Anything by Dorothy Sayers is worth reading, just to see a master wordsmith at work. (I haven’t read all of her plays—but the essays and letters and mystery novels, in that order, are all worthwhile investments). *The Mind of the Maker* is the first (and only) book that’s helped me to make sense of the doctrine of the Trinity. But also helpful to think about the creative process—part of our humanity, says Sayers, whether or not we’re engaged professionally in the so-called arts.

**When Life Goes Dark: Finding Hope in the Midst of Depression,**
*Richard Winter*
I’ve struggled with depression on and off essentially all my life, and this seemed a true godsend when I discovered (what I take to be) an earlier version of this—the author’s *The Roots of Sorrow*, which is now out of print. No magic answers, but it was a tremendous relief to discover that a Christian in the field of psychiatry understood where I was coming from.

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**Mark Nelson,**
Professor of Philosophy

**Book of Common Prayer**
A defining document of the Church of England (in which I was baptized and confirmed) and a masterpiece of Christian liturgy. Many of its “collects” (i.e., prayers assigned for particular days of the year or particular moments in the service) were written by Thomas Cranmer and display his gift for conveying matters of theological substance with humility and poetical simplicity.

**Hour by Hour**
Based on the *Book of Common Prayer* (see above), this provides an accessible and graceful framework for daily devotions at four times of day: Morning, Noon, Evening, and Compline.

**Surprised by Joy, The Weight of Glory, The Great Divorce, Mere Christianity and Screwtape Letters,**
*C.S. Lewis*
Even though these are not primarily devotional works, I have learned things from each of them that I come back to, time and again. For example, the following passage from *Surprised by Joy* has been important to me in my thought and practice about prayer:

“By a sheer mistake – and I still believe it to have been an honest mistake – in spiritual technique I had rendered my private practice of that religion a quite intolerable burden. Like everyone else I had been told as a child that one must not only say one’s prayers but think about what one was saying. Accordingly, when (at Oldie’s) I came to a serious belief, I tried to put this into practice. At first it seemed plain sailing. But soon the false conscience (St Paul’s “Law,” Herbert’s “prattler”) came into play. One had no sooner reached “Amen” than it whispered, “Yes. But are you sure you were really thinking about what you said?”; then, more subtly,
“Were you, for example, thinking about it as well as you did last night?” The answer, for reasons I did not then understand, was nearly always No. “Very well,” said the voice, “hadn’t you, then, better try it over again?” And one obeyed; but of course with no assurance that the second attempt would be any better.

To these nagging suggestions my reaction was, on the whole, the most foolish I could have adopted. I set myself a standard. No clause of my prayer was to be allowed to pass muster unless it was accompanied by what I called a “realization,” by which I meant a certain vividness of the imagination and the affections. My nightly task was to produce by sheer will power a phenomenon which will power could never produce, which was so ill-defined that I could never say with absolute confidence whether it had occurred, and which, even when it did occur, was of very mediocre spiritual value. If only someone had read to me old Walter Hilton’s warning that one must never in prayer strive to extort “by maistry” what God does not give. But no one did: and night after night, dizzy with desire for sleep and often in a kind of despair, I endeavored to pump up my “realizations.” The thing threatened to become an infinite regress. One began of course by prayer for good “realizations.” But had that preliminary prayer been “realized”? This question I think still had enough sense to dismiss; otherwise it might have been as difficult to begin my prayers as to end them.” (SBJ, p. 62)

This passage has long stuck with me, and has made a real difference in my spiritual life. As a young person, I sometimes worried that “real” Christians must frequently have intense feelings during prayer and worship, and that since I rarely have such feelings, I wasn’t a real Christian. This passage pointed up to me the danger of focusing too much on subjective experiences during worship.

**Luther’s Small Catechism,**
**Martin Luther**
Intended as a tool for teaching and learning, but like *Hour By Hour* (see above), it also provides a framework for morning and evening devotions. The evening prayer concludes with the instruction, “Now, go to sleep at once and in good cheer!”

**Myvy Ngo,**
Special Projects Coordinator, Campus Life Office

**A Spirituality of Living,**
**Henri Nouwen**
This book has helped me better understand what it looks like to live with discipline and to progress from solitude to community to ministry. The passage that has meant the most to me has been Nouwen’s description of what it means to live a life where God unwaveringly calls us His beloved and that "we cannot walk freely in this world" unless we are "claiming that voice as the deepest truth of our being."
Patricia Noormand, Art Department Administrative Assistant/Assistant to the Library Director

*Amen All By Myself!*
*Discovering God in Life’s Wilderness,*
*Sherwood Carthen*
The book acknowledges/teaches that isolation is sometimes a necessary part of one's faith walk.

*A Prayer for Owen Meany,*
*John Irving*
I recall that what I learned from that book was that God puts certain people on this planet and/or in one's life, to teach us something. The main character is so unusual, so good, and yet so deliberate, it is as if he had been 'delivered' to earth to teach lessons.

*Falling Into Place: A Memoir of Overcoming,*
*Hattie Kauffman*
The story is about a woman who becomes a Christian later in life. The theme is not particularly unique, but her upbringing is so unusual that, at times, it seems amazing that she survived into adulthood at all! The subplot is that she is going through a divorce. Part of the story is about how she has a mind-shift from relying on her husband to relying on God. For me, that was such a powerful reminder of how we should focus our lives.

Gregory Orfalea, Instructor of English

*Tattoos on the Heart,*
*Greg Boyle*
Have not read a better book about faith in action, in the most dire of circumstances, in a long time, if ever. My students love it.

*Traveling Mercies,*
*Anne Lamott*
A modern and lightly humored dark night of the soul, a faith life that hops, as she puts it, "from lily pad to lily pad."

Debra Quast, Director, Library & Information Services

*A Man Called Peter,*
*Catherine Marshall*
The story of Peter Marshall’s life influenced me to ask the Lord to be my Savior.

Caryn Reeder, Associate Professor of Religious Studies

*The Spiritual Meadow,*
*John Moschus*
When you're frustrated by the absence of water in a newly-dug well, or find it difficult to stay awake all night and day praying and fasting, or experience attack by lions/demons/other beasts, the living saints of the Byzantine churches of the eastern Mediterranean always give good advice. These stories and sayings of the desert mothers and fathers, church leaders, and ordinary Christians make me smile, challenge me to question what our world says we 'need', and inspire me to spiritual endurance and discipline.
**Jayber Crow: A Novel,**
*Wendell Berry*

Jayber Crow is the barber of Port William, a small Kentucky township, for the duration of the middle part of the 20th century. And in this story he observes the life and happenings of Port William with honesty and compassion, and demonstrates love with a persistence that nearly surpasses comprehension. This story unfolds beautifully and is beautifully written. It's not easy to forget.

**Gilead,**
*Marilynne Robinson*

This beautiful epistolary novel, in which an aging minister writes to his young son, captures the pain and beauty and disappointment and hope of "life on this earth." Through this work Robinson has helped me see more fully that Christ is indeed "before all things, and in him all things hold together." Selected quotation: "That is how life goes - we send our children into the wilderness. Some of them on the day they are born, it seems, for all the help we can give them. Some of them seem to be a kind of wilderness unto themselves. But there must be angels there, too, and springs of water. Even that wilderness, the very habitation of jackals, is the Lord's. I need to bear this in mind." pg. 119

**When Life Goes Dark: Finding Hope in the Midst of Depression,**
*Richard Winter*

Dr. Winter provides a helpful window into the realities of depression while at the same time communicating hope honestly and tenderly. He reminds us that Christ himself was a "man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief," so we know we have a compassionate and understanding God in the face of difficulties. And he reminds us that God, through the work of Christ, is making all things new, which means that though we groan and long for relief from our burdens, we also look forward to that day when there will be a feast of rich food on the mountain of the Lord, and no more tears, and no more sorrow. Selected quotation: "Perspective on what is happening is vital to our sense of hope and on our will to live. So much depression arises because of a loss of perspective. We lose sight of the big picture, and lose our hold on truth and reality. Without realistic hope, all is lost. And when we become depressed, a vicious cycle takes over and things then look worse because we are depressed. It is as if depression darkens the lens of our view of the world." pg. 215

**Godric,**
*Frederick Buechner*

It encouraged me in my faith because I read that a crusty old sinner could be transformed into a saint and be so humble about it he doesn't even know that is what has happened.

**Life of the Beloved,**
*Henri Nouwen*

I discovered this book during a season of depression and it grounded my faith when I was needing someone to hold a "candle of hope" on
my journey. Nouwen did that with his simple but profound description of how God took me (chose me), blessed me, walks with me through the breaking, then gives me away to others. It was what I needed to know at the time.

**Sarah Stanley**,  
Web Services & Instruction Librarian

**Celebration of Discipline, Richard Foster**  
Foster originally published this popular book in 1978, and it teaches readers about twelve spiritual disciplines including prayer, fasting, and meditation. This work introduced me to some of the classic authors of the Christian tradition and helped teach me that their thoughts and experiences could speak to the contemporary Christian experience.

**The Last Battle, C. S. Lewis**  
I’ve sometimes had difficulty mustering up enthusiasm for heaven because it all seems so mysterious and unknown. But this book, the final volume of Lewis’ *Chronicles of Narnia* series, has fostered a longing for it in me like little else. As beloved characters are joyously welcomed into the “the real Narnia,” I can’t help but get excited. As Lewis described it, heaven is the “Great Story, which no one on earth has read: which goes on forever: in which every chapter is better than the one before.”

**The Hiding Place, Corrie ten Boom**  
This book has been a friend my whole life. It is Corrie’s account of what happened to her in Nazi-occupied Holland during World War II as she and her family worked to hide Jews. I am captivated by the ten Boom family--the gentle wisdom of Corrie’s father, the grace of her sister, and her own vulnerability and bravery. It is also an account of God’s powerful presence in the midst of darkness.

**Prayer, Hans Urs Von Balthasar**  
This is a beautiful reflection on contemplative prayer by a Catholic priest and theologian. Von Balthasar’s language isn’t easy, but it is rich: “The vital thing is the living encounter with the God who speaks to us in his Word, whose eyes pierce and purify us ‘like a flame of fire’ (Rev 1:14), whose command summons us to new obedience, who each day instructs us as if until now we had learned nothing, whose power sends us out anew into the world upon our mission.”

**Carrie Stein**,  
Instructor of Chemistry

**Ender's Game, Orson Scott Card**  
It is a beautifully written book that was so ahead of its time even for science fiction when it was first published in the 80’s. It is not only an engaging story, but also thought provoking in terms of ethical responsibility in times of war or under threat of death. Card is Mormon and while not overtly spiritual, *Ender's Game* is clearly written from the perspective of someone pondering moral values and political ideals. I have read this book over a dozen times and I still
get something new and fresh out of it each time. It has helped me to understand the importance of a strong Christian faith when presented with potentially ethical or moral gray areas and how human connections can teach us so much about ourselves and our God.

Jim Taylor,
Professor of Philosophy

Invitation to Solitude and Silence:
Experiencing God's Transforming Presence,
Ruth Haley Barton
Though Barton's book is not a devotional classic yet, it was a winner of a 2005 Christianity Today book award. In it Barton explains the importance of practicing the disciplines of solitude, silence, and contemplative prayer in a way that is especially accessible to evangelical Protestant Christians.

Conformed to His Image:
Biblical and Practical Approaches to Spiritual Formation,
Kenneth Boa
Boa is a regular speaker at Westmont Martin Family Institute/Dallas Willard Center retreats. This book is a comprehensive survey of a wide range of approaches to Christian spiritual formation.

Letters by a Modern Mystic,
Frank Laubach
Frank Laubach was a missionary in the Philippines who not only shared the gospel but also became known as "The Apostle to the Illiterates." He developed the "Each one teach one" literacy program. But the book I am recommending is about his experiment to practice being conscious of the presence of God every waking minute.

A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life,
William Law
William Law was an Anglican priest who served as a spiritual director. This book is full of sound spiritual guidance, and it had a major impact on the English Evangelical Revival. John Wesley valued it greatly.

The Interior Castle,
Teresa of Avila
The Interior Castle is probably Saint Teresa of Avila's greatest and most influential devotional work. In it she describes the stages of growing union with God.

Mysticism: A Study of the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness,
Evelyn Underhill
The first book by Underhill is considered by many to be the definitive scholarly study of the nature and development of mysticism. Underhill provides a thorough and in depth explanation of the mystical life and draws on the experiences of the great Christian mystics in the process.
Mitchell Thomas, Associate Professor of Theatre Arts

_The Heart of Christianity,_ Marcus Borg
World-renowned Jesus scholar Marcus J. Borg shows how we can live passionately as Christians in today's world by practicing the vital elements of Christian faith.

_Walking on Water,_ Madeleine L'Engle
In this classic book, Madeleine L'Engle addresses the questions, What makes art Christian? What does it mean to be a Christian artist? What is the relationship between faith and art? Through L'Engle's beautiful and insightful essay, readers will find themselves called to what the author views as the prime tasks of an artist: to listen, to remain aware, and to respond to creation through one's own art.

_New Seeds of Contemplation,_ Thomas Merton
_New Seeds of Contemplation_ is one of Thomas Merton's most widely read and best-loved books. Christians and non-Christians alike have joined in praising it as a notable successor in the meditative tradition of St. John of the Cross, _The Cloud of Unknowing_, and the medieval mystics, while others have compared Merton's reflections with those of Thoreau. _New Seeds of Contemplation_ seeks to awaken the dormant inner depths of the spirit so long neglected by Western man, to nurture a deeply contemplative and mystical dimension in our lives. For Merton, "Every moment and every event of every man's life on earth plants something in his soul. For just as the wind carries thousands of winged seeds, so each moment brings with it germs of spiritual vitality that come to rest imperceptibly in the minds and wills of men. Most of these unnumbered seeds perish and are lost, because men are not prepared to receive them: for such seeds as these cannot spring up anywhere except in the soil of freedom, spontaneity and love."

Tim Van Haitsma, Assistant Professor of Kinesiology

_Screwtape Letters,_ C.S. Lewis
_The Screwtape Letters_ is C.S. Lewis at his humorous best as he describes a conversation between a senior devil and his nephew. This book can help see many of the temptations that may haunt a Christian and can help a Christian grow in his walk and avoid some of the temptations that can pull us away from God.

_The Case for a Creator,_ Lee Strobel
As a scientist, there are times where the evidence presented in books and class does not resonate with what the Bible says. At these times, it becomes easier to doubt the existence of a Creator. This book concisely explains several scenarios that make it more likely that a Creator truly exists. While it may be possible to argue about several of the scenarios and the science behind them, in the end, this book will help quiet those doubts about the lack of a Creator.
David Vander Laan,
Professor of Philosophy

The Divine Conspiracy,
Dallas Willard
Willard has a knack for making life as a student of Jesus look like plain common sense. For clear, wise encouragement in the way that Jesus taught, this book is hard to beat.

Creation Regained,
Albert Wolters
This book crystalized a lot of ideas for me when I was in college. I highly recommend it as a biblically-grounded framework for connecting the Big Picture to a practical, livable way of being in the world.

Beth Whitcomb,
Administrative Assistant, Disability Services & Theatre Arts

Redeeming Love,
Francine Rivers
While, I’m not particularly a fan of Christian fiction (anymore), this one escapes the overly edited tendencies and obvious preaching to write about a woman with a very sad past and how she struggles to get over it and believe in love and worthiness found in the sacrificial love of Christ, but not without falling many times in the process. The story of Gomer written in 19th Century genre.

The Hiding Place,
Corrie ten Boom
Incredibly meaningful, I could identify with her slant toward hatred for her oppressors meanwhile she was being taught by her sister's forgiveness over their oppressors and seeing how it changed both of them to God's glory.

One Thousand Gifts,
Ann Voskamp
Beautifully written, very philosophical and lyrical in its style. I found many passages overwhelmingly profound. She writes about the mundane and tragic events in day-to-day life and how God never wastes any of it, teaching us to learn to be grateful for all of it.

Night,
Elie Wiesel
Probably the most influential book I read in college. Even though it was mainly about the Holocaust, the lostness, the disbelief of the people struck a cord in me that we can be so determined to believe what we want to believe that we disregard evidence at great loss.

Rachel Winslow,
Assistant Professor of History

Peace Like a River,
Leif Enger
Quote from the book: "People fear miracles because they fear being changed--though ignoring them will change you also."
Jim Wright,
Acting Director, Mosher Center For Moral & Ethical Leadership

**Strange Virtues: Ethics in a Multicultural World, Bernard Adeney**
As I have spent most of my life living outside Britain, I am compelled daily to engage in living cross culturally. This book is quite the best treatment of this subject that I have ever read.

**Finally Comes the Poet, Walter Brueggemann**
Brueggemann is not only America's foremost living Old Testament scholar, but physically resembles my image of an OT prophet...and he writes like an angel. This book is poetic, prophetic and pastoral - genius.

**Lesslie Newbigin: Missionary Theologian: A Reader, Lesslie Newbigin and Paul Weston**
Bishop Lesslie was arguably the most influential writer on cross cultural mission in the 20th Century. His level of intellectual heft, pastoral concern and deep practical reflection are magisterial.