

## HJC RECOMMENDED READING LIST

*The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God* by Dallas Willard. The breadth and scope of this book is amazing. Willard has become one of my favorite authors because of the depth of his thinking, the weight of his life, and the power of his love for the Lord Jesus Christ. Be prepared to read and reread, think and rethink, and ultimately be challenged far beyond your present experience in Christ. *The Divine Conspiracy* covers everything from our entrance into a relationship with the Person of Jesus Christ to the Gospels of Sin-Management {as he calls them} which have distorted discipleship into nothing more than the fire insurance so many covet as their 'salvation,' but with no effect whatsoever on character, courage, or conviction. He discusses in detail what it looks like to follow Jesus into every arena of our lives, to literally live as He lived {which we are called to do}, and then traces our lives on out into the eternal glory for which we were made. He leaves almost no stone unturned. Truly a magnificent book. Not one meant for 'leisurely reading' nor lazy theology, but then nothing by Willard is; it is *rich*, however, rich indeed.

*The Return of the Prodigal Son* by Henri Nouwen. One of the most tender, touching, and beautiful books I have ever read. Nouwen plumbs the depth of Rembrandt's painting of *The Return of the Prodigal*, Rembrandt's life, family, artistry and career, and then the subject matter itself: Luke 15:11-32, what many have called 'the Gospel within the Gospel.' He deals with what it's like to be the younger son, the older son, and ultimately what it looks like to become the father, a man of immense compassion, incredible forgiveness, and amazing tender-heartedness. I highly recommend this.

*So You Don't Want To Go To Church Anymore* by Jake Colson. A relatively short book, just 178 pp., but thought provoking and revolutionary. A fictional story eerily familiar, in which an assistant pastor is wrongly fired from his position at a mega-church only to discover through the intervention of a man whom he suspects is the 1<sup>st</sup> century apostle John what real life in Jesus Christ looks like. That is, without all the unnecessary entanglements of the 'budgets, business-model, program' {racket} approach to God, to ministry and to each other. Will help you sort through some of the reasons you don't like many churches either. I do have to add, and not from an elitist viewpoint, that I *love* our church: who we are, what we stand for, how we worship, our passion in prayer and the way that we love one another. I believe God alone is glorified and not sharing His Throne with the worship of man.

*Blue Like Jazz* by Donald Miller. Irreverent, hilarious, and profoundly insightful.

*Searching For God Knows What*, my favorite book by Donald Miller. And one of my favorites by anybody, for that matter. In it he discusses and exposes the 'formulaic approach' to God vs. the entrance into an ever-deepening relationship with Jesus

Himself. I *love* this book, love it.

*Rich Mullins: An Arrow Pointing To Heaven* by James Bryan Smith. A biography {and spiritual-ography, if you will} of Christian artist Rich Mullins and the immense impact Jesus had on him and he, in turn, had on the world through his beautiful music and poignant, often starkly honest lyrics on faith in Jesus, love of God and man, Life, struggle, Eternity.

*Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire* by Jim Cymbala, pastor of Brooklyn Tabernacle. A wonderful little book that will challenge you, inspire you, and ignite within you a passion for prayer and a desire within your Family of Faith to call out with others to the Lord. Excellent. We also recommend *Fresh Faith*, which reads like a primer on resting in faith, on the power of God's promises. And *Fresh Power*, a paean of praise to the Holy Spirit, the Conqueror within us.

*Messy Spirituality* by Michael Yaconelli. An incredibly encouraging book for those of us broken and battered by the winds and waves of life, and honestly unashamed enough to admit it. A fierce call to embrace the uncompromising love of God and the inescapable grace of Jesus Christ in the midst of our mess.

*The Barbarian Way* by Erwin Raphael McManus. Are you a bureaucrat or a barbarian? This book will challenge you to become the latter and forsake the former. To the glory of the great King, the undomesticated Messiah, Jesus Christ. You'll love it.

*The Pursuit of God* by A.W. Tozer. Magnificent, really.

*Jesus Freaks II: Revolutionaries* by dc Talk. A modern version of Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*.

*The Journey of Desire* by John Eldredge. A beautiful book about loss, love, and the recovery of one's deepest passion, one's most restoring and transformative desire— for God alone. This is a book written after Eldredge lost his best friend and co-author Brent Curtis in a climbing accident. It has much to say on how the heart recovers, learns to live once again, opens up to love and beauty and mystery and trust and the whispers of the Spirit. All of this from a deeply spiritual, Scriptural perspective. Highly recommended.

*Wild at Heart* by John Eldredge. In my humble opinion, along with his follow up *The Way of the Wild Heart*, one of the best books ever written on the Masculine Journey

that every man must take, on the horrendous crisis of fatherlessness in our world, and how Jesus comes to heal, rescue and redeem the lives of His Warriors. Highly, highly recommended. Eldredge takes some complicated concepts, spiritually and psychologically, and boils them down— much the way Manning does in *Abba's Child*— to language, issues and ideas which we as men can readily comprehend.

*Waking the Dead* by John Eldredge. A magnificent book about the Four Streams of Christianity— Walking with God in conversational intimacy; Receiving the Spirit's Counsel; the Healing and Restoration Jesus brings to the brokenhearted; and the Warfare raging against these realities— and how the mighty Spirit of God works wonderfully through each.

Speaking of Brennan Manning, one of my favorite authors {and favorite people}, if you haven't read anything from Manning, a former Catholic priest turned wild-eyed evangelist, your spiritual reading is severely deficient. Where to begin?

How 'bout *The Ragamuffin Gospel*? In my personal and professional opinion, the best book ever written on grace— grace in salvation, grace in spirituality, grace in reality, grace in relationships. This book will lift your soul to the summit of God's grace and set you down in the rarified air of that long-neglected mountaintop. In Manning's own words he describes late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century Christianity like this, "We accept grace in theory, but deny it in practice." Indeed.

*Abba's Child* by Brennan Manning. A masterful book, filled with Manning's Celtic gift for turning a phrase and telling a story. In this book he brings the reader back to the only solid ground on which to stand our identities— that of a Beloved Son or Beautiful Daughter— as *Abba's Child*, loved deeply, faithfully, and eternally by the Father of mercies, the *Abba* of Jesus. Again, as I mentioned in my review of *Wild at Heart* by John Eldredge, Manning takes some very complicated spiritual and psychological issues and distills them down into language we can readily comprehend. A very powerful book on learning to trust in the Father's heart. Highly recommended.

*The Signature of Jesus* by Brennan Manning. A magnificent depiction of what it means to have our souls sealed in the blood of the Risen Lamb, our lives signed by the signature of Jesus. Manning is a wonderful writer, and this book is one of his best. With chapters like 'The Courage to Risk,' 'Grabbing Aholt of God,' and 'Lazarus Laughed,' how could you *not* love this book?

Another beautiful book of his is *The Wisdom of Tenderness: What Happens When God's Fierce Mercy Transforms Our Lives*. We've got to get away from this 20<sup>th</sup> century American ideal that control is strength and tenderness is weakness. {Might as well since we're in the 21<sup>st</sup>, right?} Jesus was the strongest and most tender man to ever walk the Earth, embodying the perfect Holy-Spirit-balance of grace and Truth, knowledge and power, love and strength.

To be fully formed men and women we have no other option but to follow in the footsteps of the Master and walk in the Way of Jesus.

I almost forgot {and I'm not sure how} this phenomenal book I've been reading for the past two months: *The Irresistible Revolution* by Shane Claiborne. Remember Nicholson's phrase in the courtroom of *A Few Good Men* ...“You can't handle the truth”? Well, that's a perfect description of what most of our comfort-conscious, consumerist, Westernized Christians are going to encounter when they read this book. Written with both great love and great urgency, the author {just a few years younger than I am} has a profound passion for God and a deep desire to see the Body of Christ wake from its slumbering apathy and become what God designed it to be: a Body of hope, of peace, and of love to the nations of this Earth and their broken and beleaguered people. This is a book that will seriously challenge your political views, your allegiance to a nation or kingdom over and above the Kingdom of God— a Kingdom Jesus said was “**not of this world**” {Jn. 18:36}— and your commitment to unrestrained capitalism and American consumerism. You are more than what you buy... and more than what you produce! **Free your soul from a consumerist mindset.**