

Influential Christian Literature

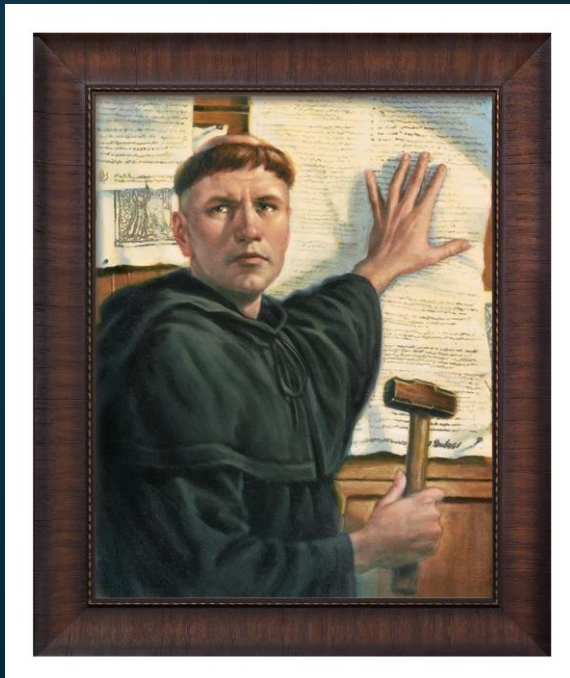
*Exploring Essential Works That Shaped
Christian Thought*

Wilbur Reid, summer of 2025

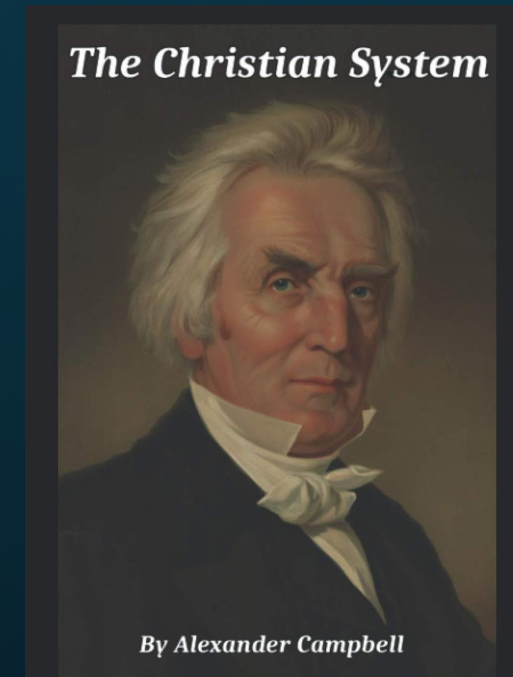
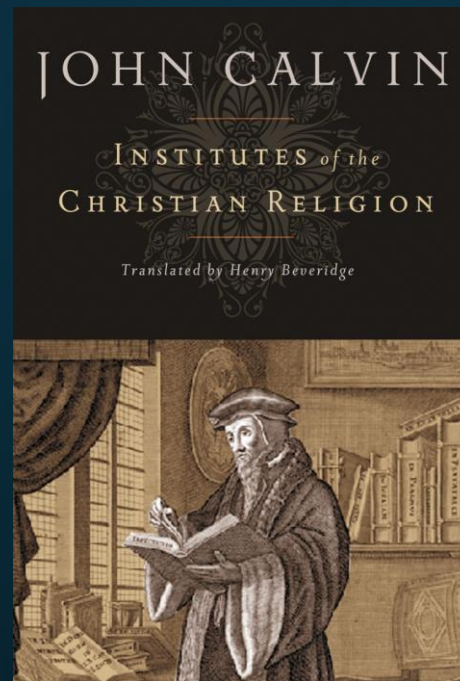


The Foundations of Faith

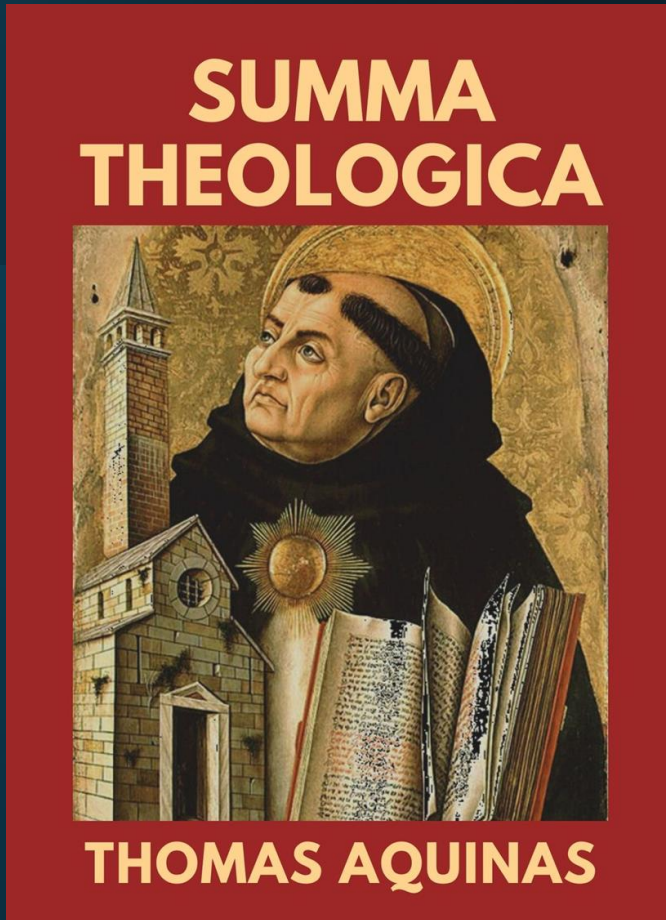
The Reformation's call back to Scripture laid the groundwork for returning to biblical simplicity.



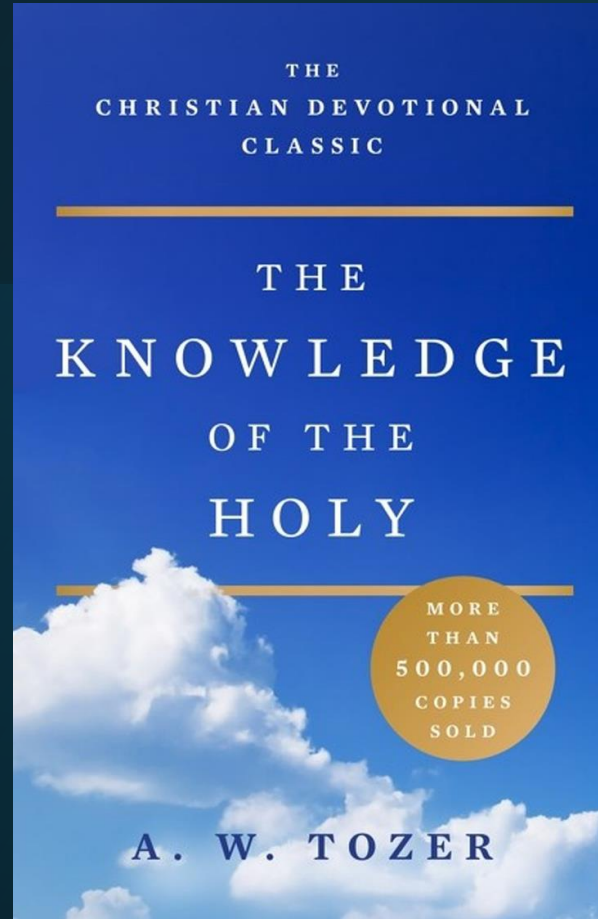
Martin Luther's 95 Theses



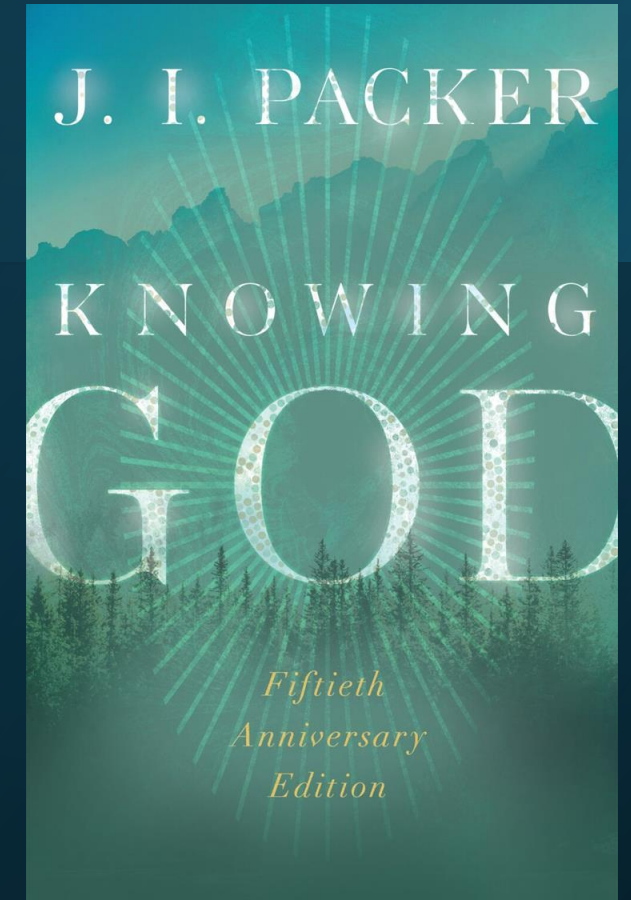
Knowing the character of God



Medieval, faith and reason



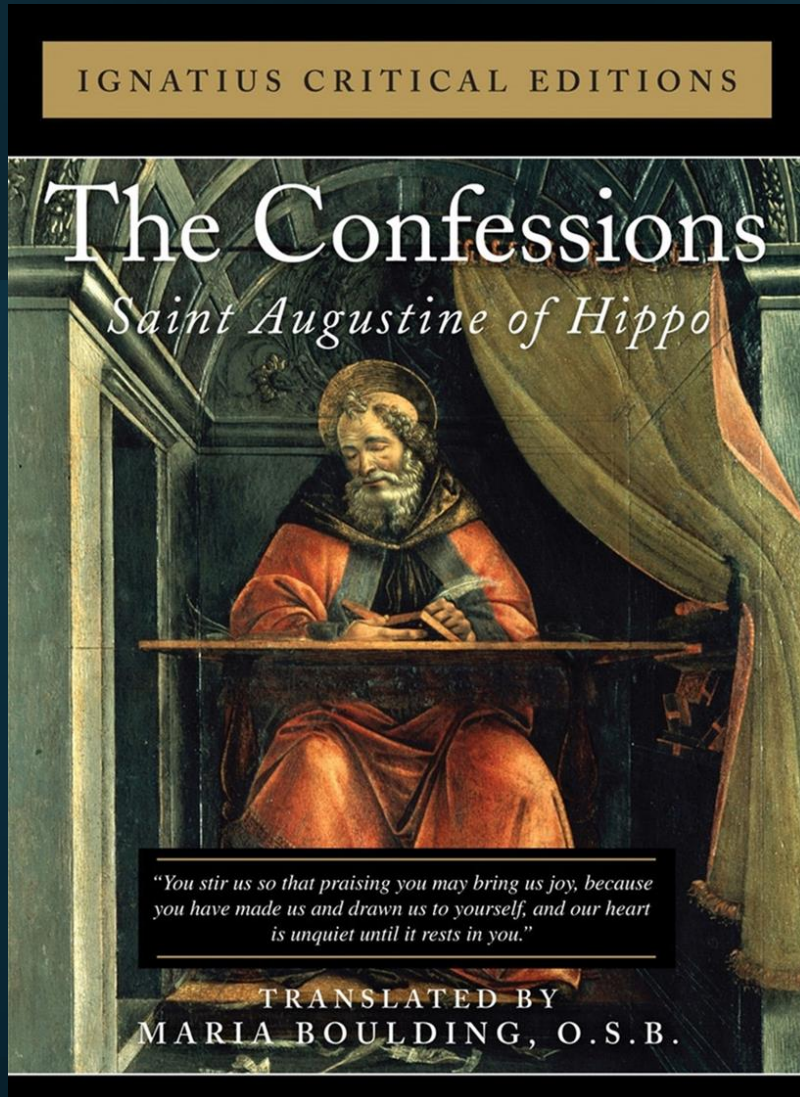
20th century, reverent awe



Modern, systematic clarity

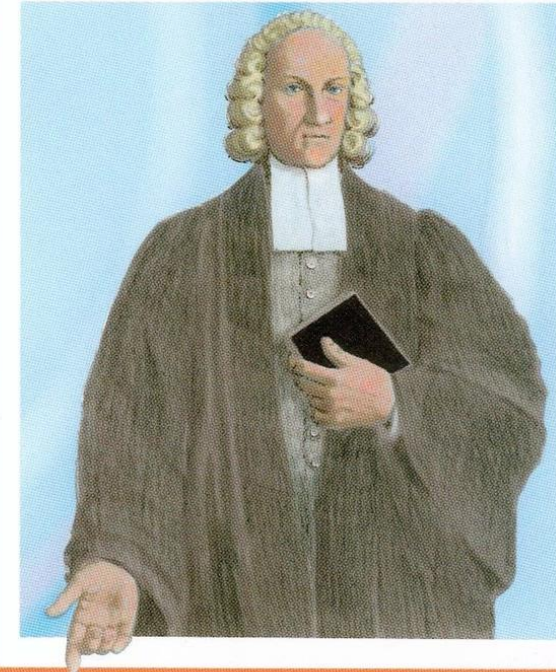
Common thread: Scripture as foundation for knowing God

The Journey of Conversion



THE RELIGIOUS AFFECTIONS

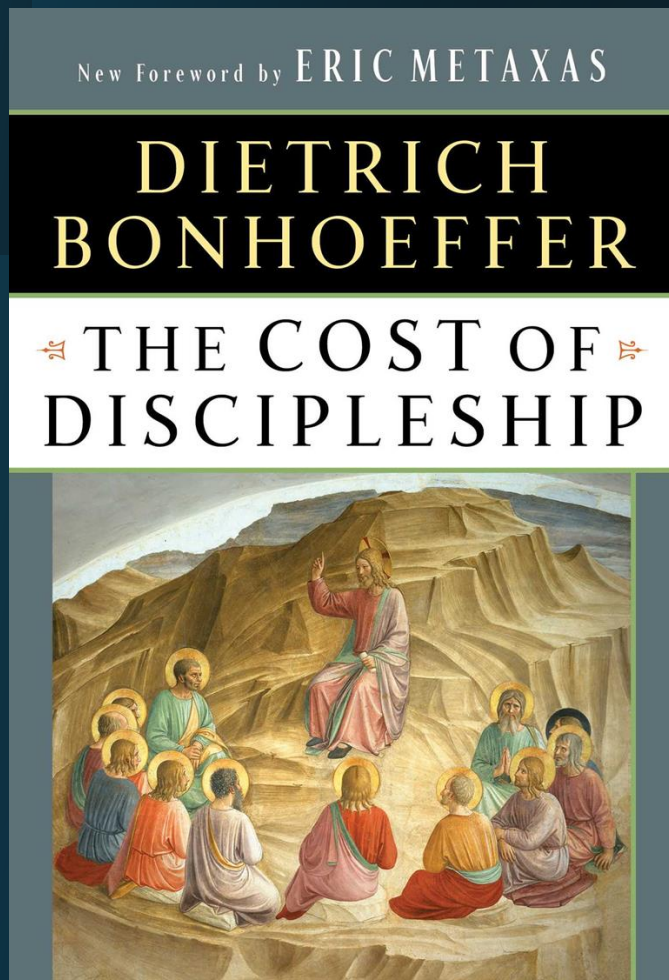
JONATHAN EDWARDS



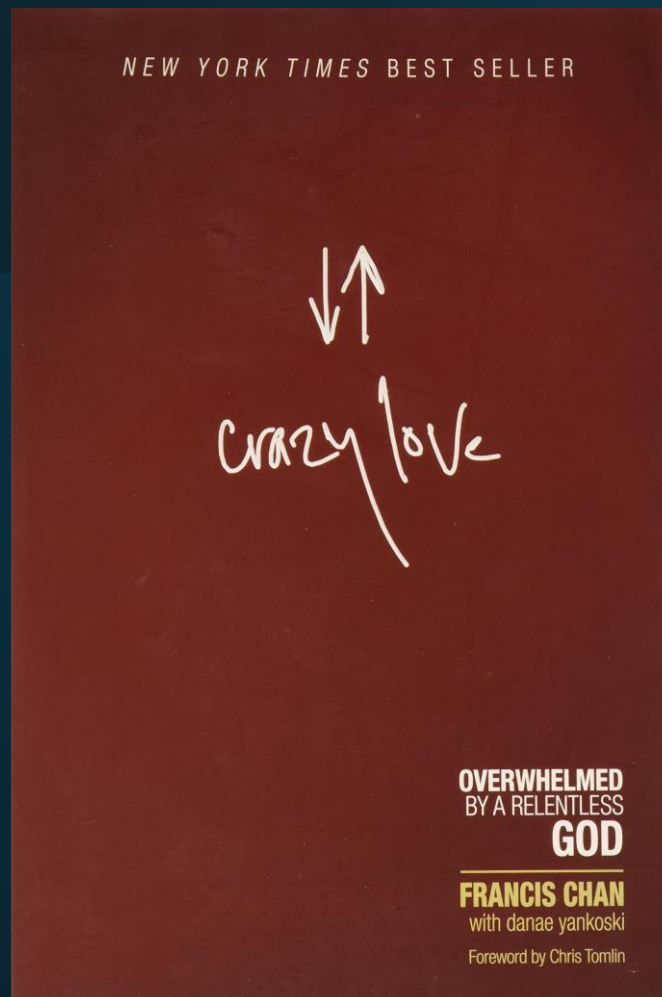
400

1746

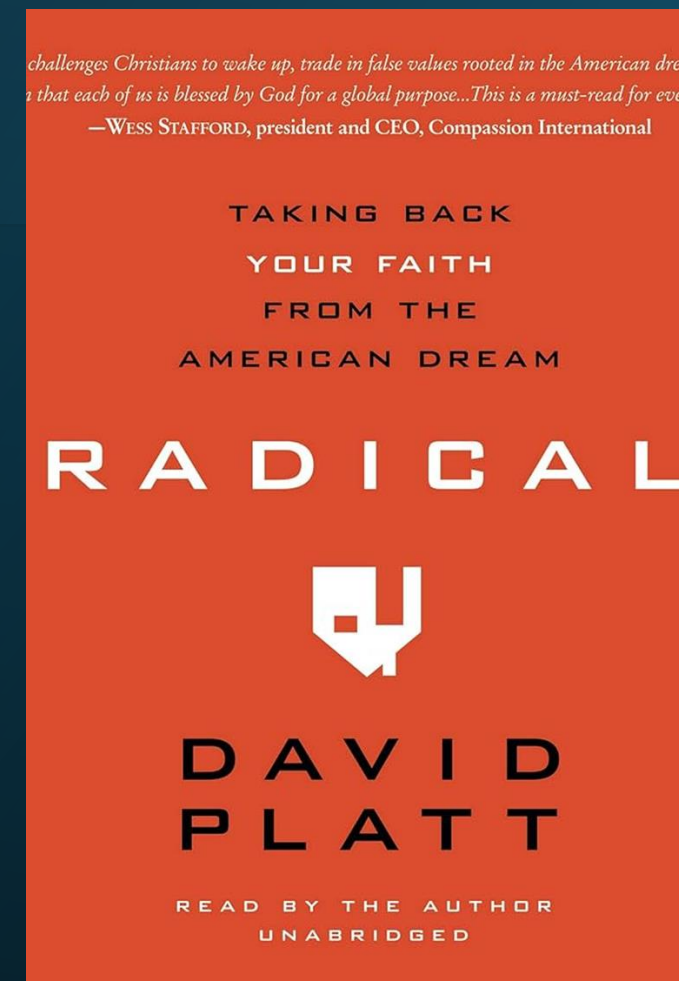
The Cost of True Discipleship



1937 (31 years old)

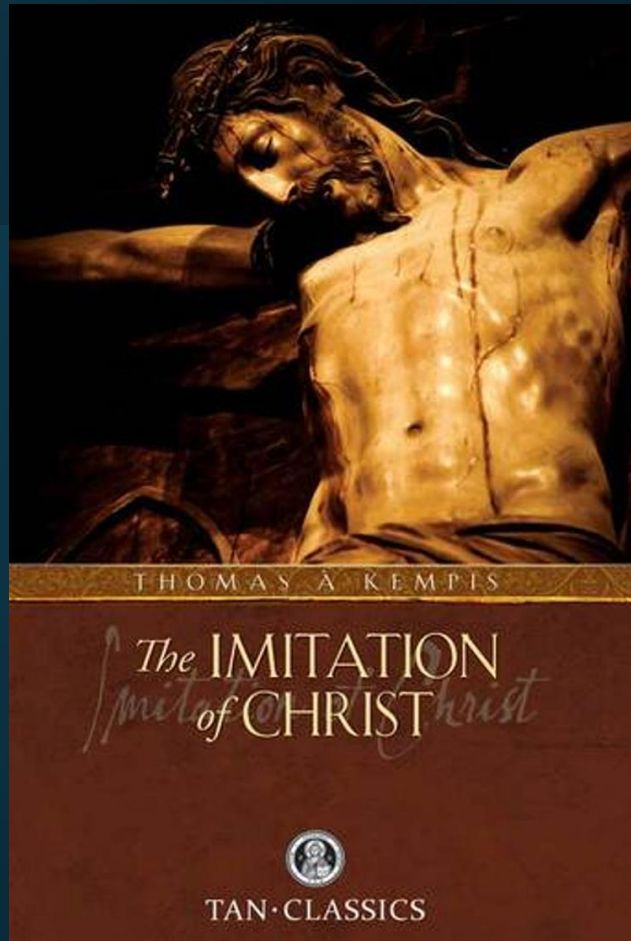


2008 (41 years old)

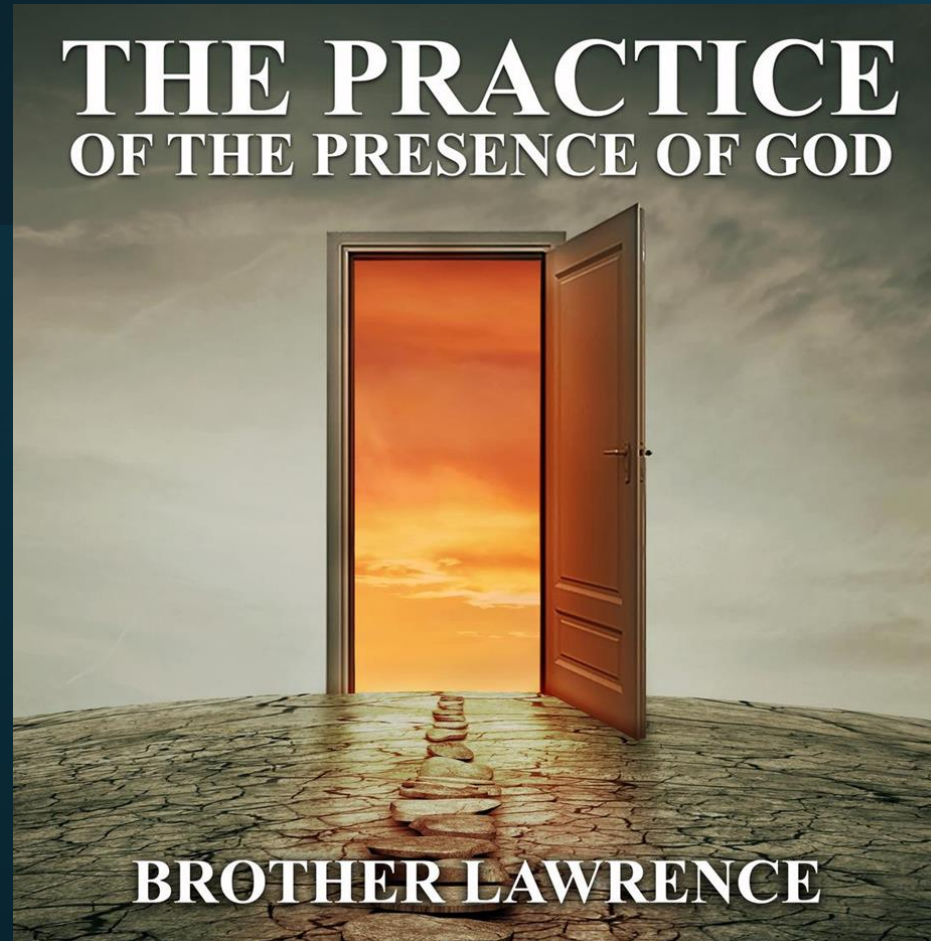


2010 (31 years old)

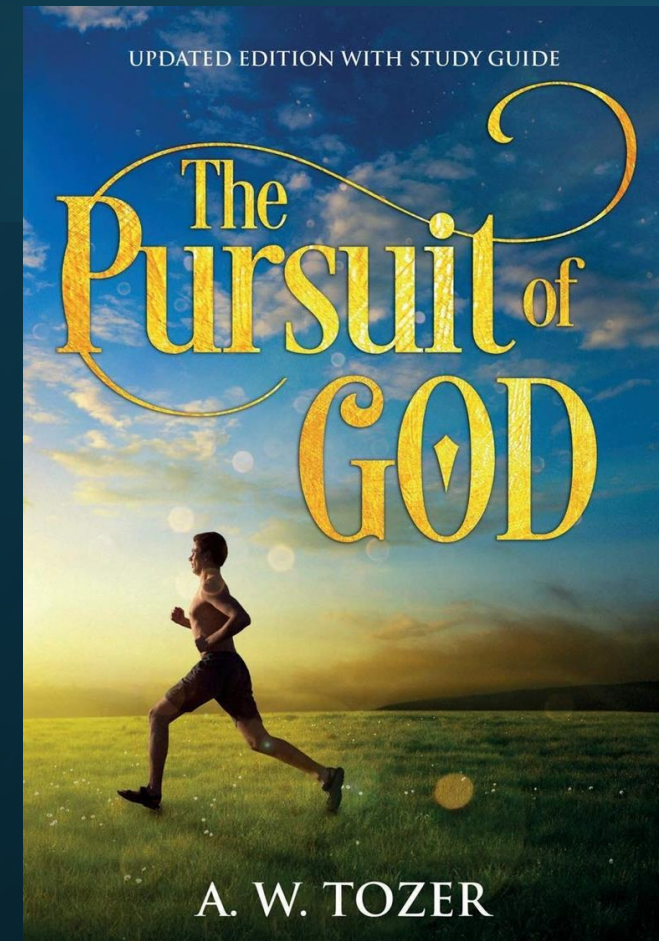
The Pursuit of God's Presence



1427

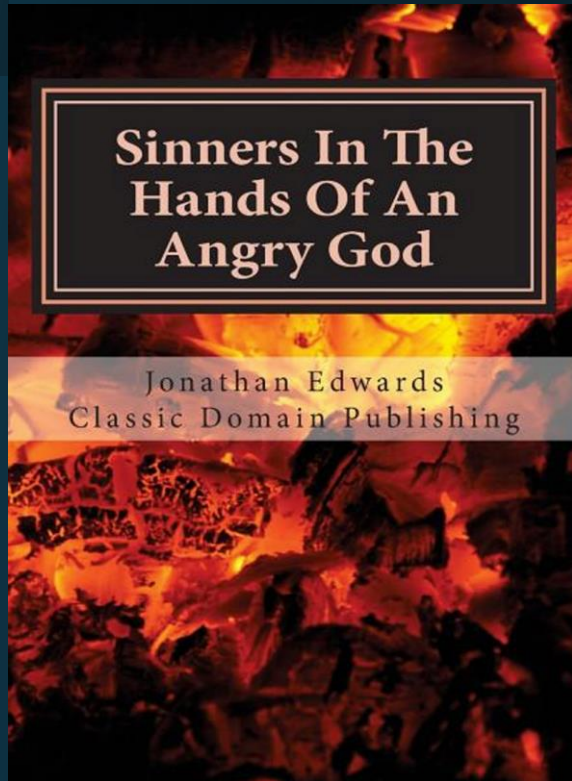


1692

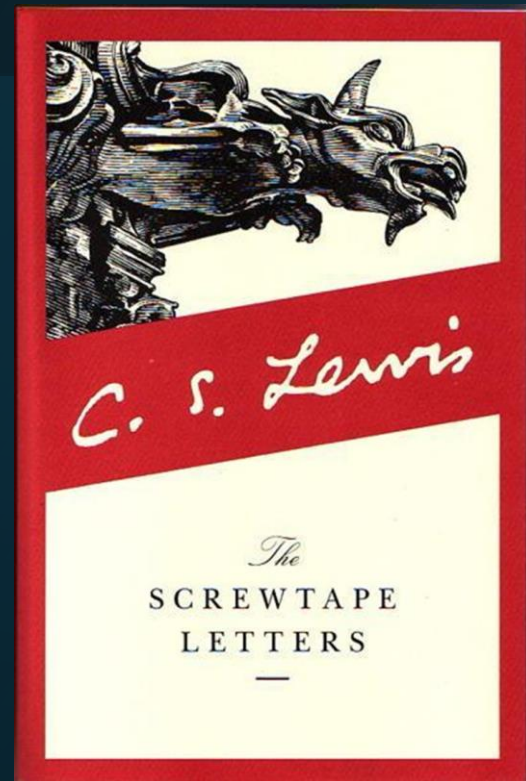


1948

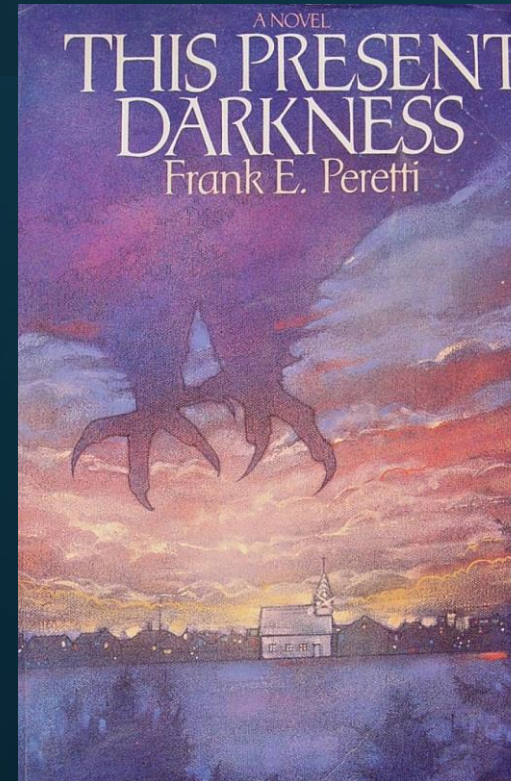
Spiritual Warfare



1741



1942

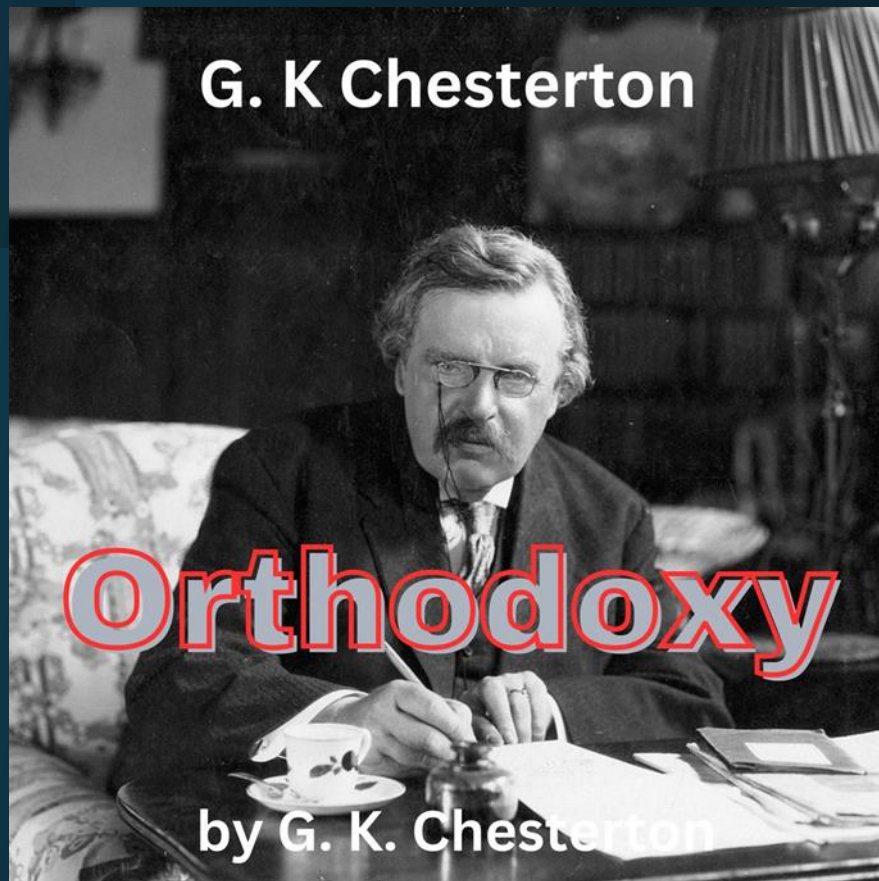


1986

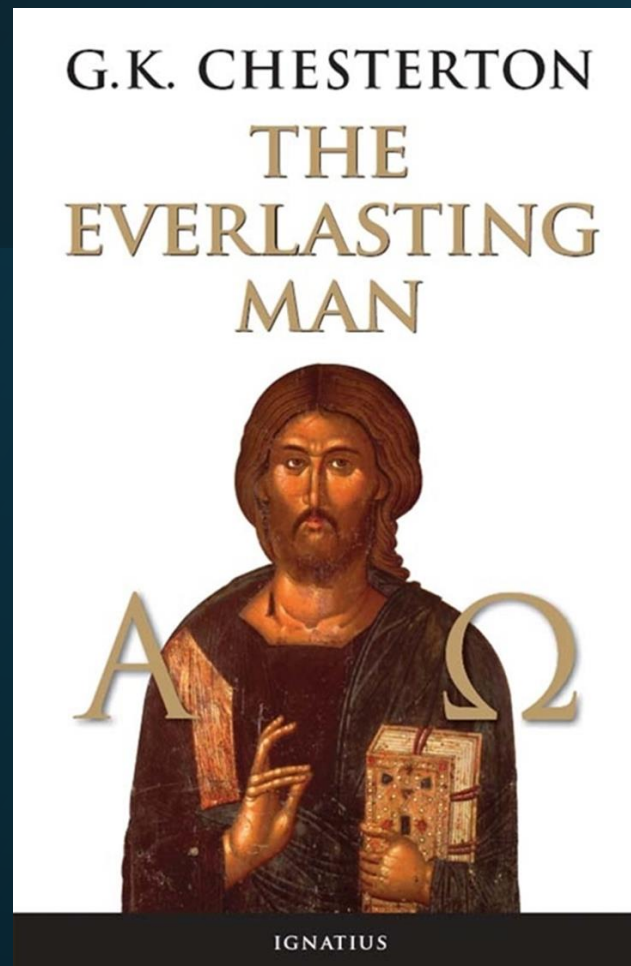


1995 - 2007

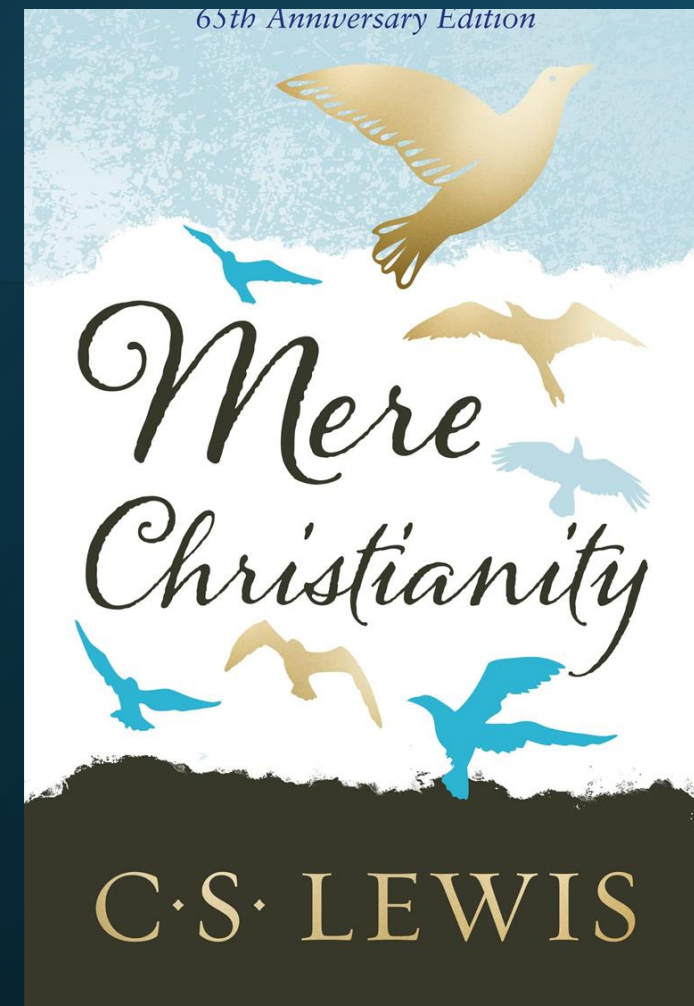
Defending the Faith



1908

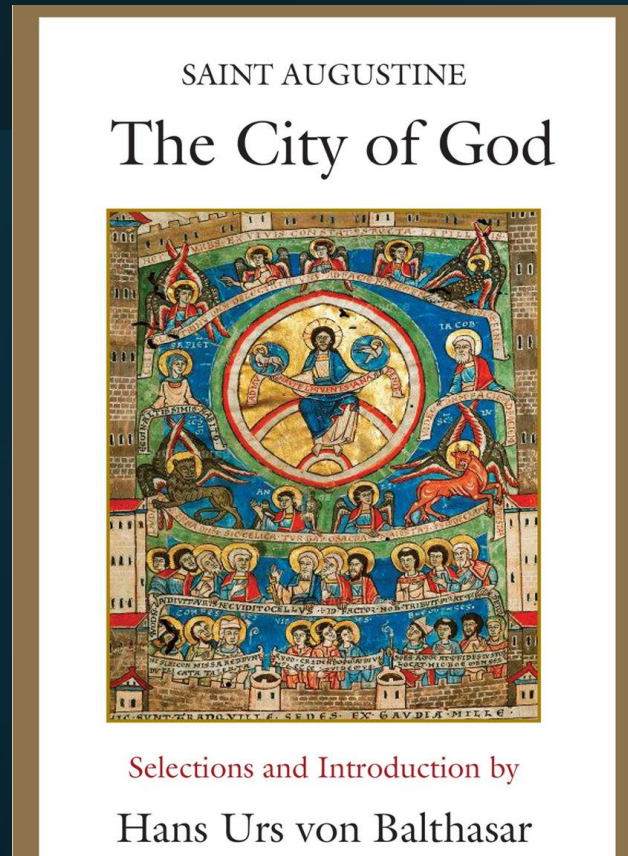


1925

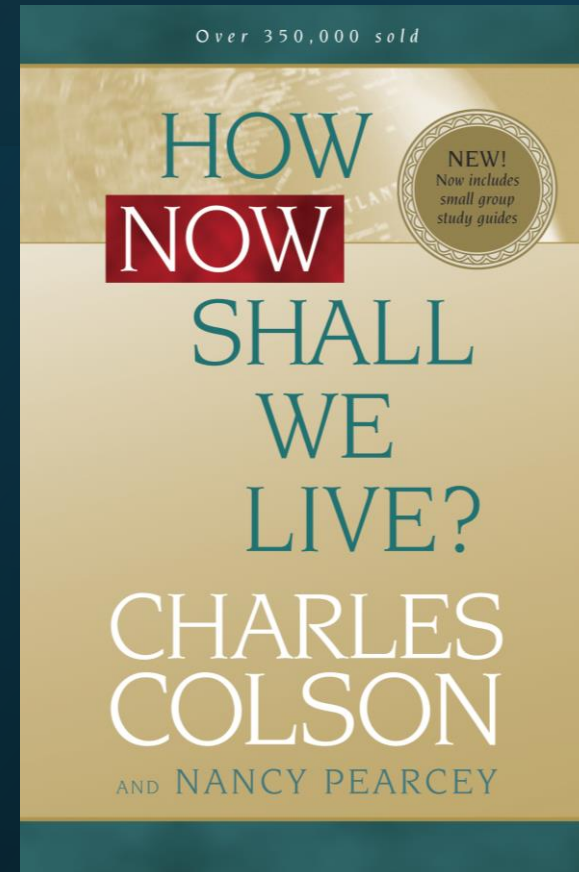


1952

The Christian Worldview and Society in Civilizational Crisis

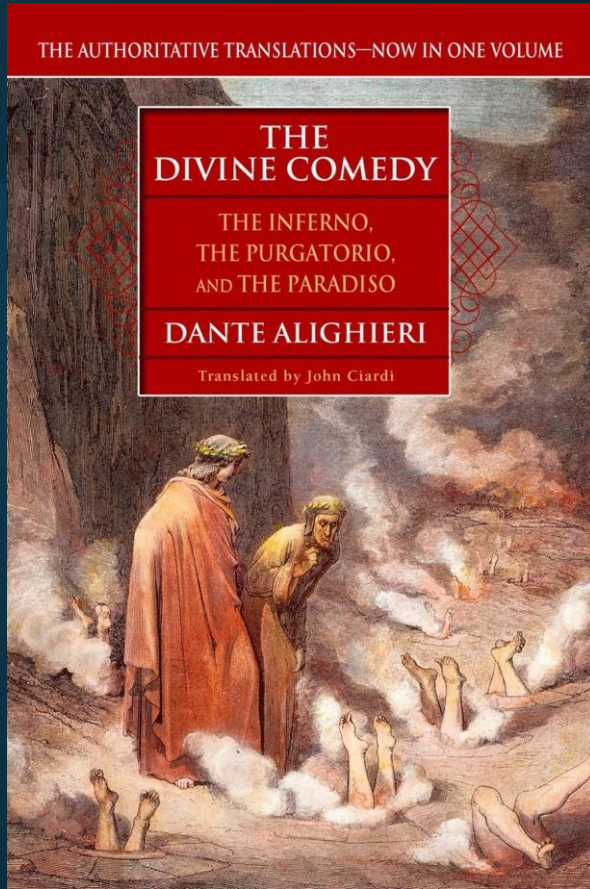


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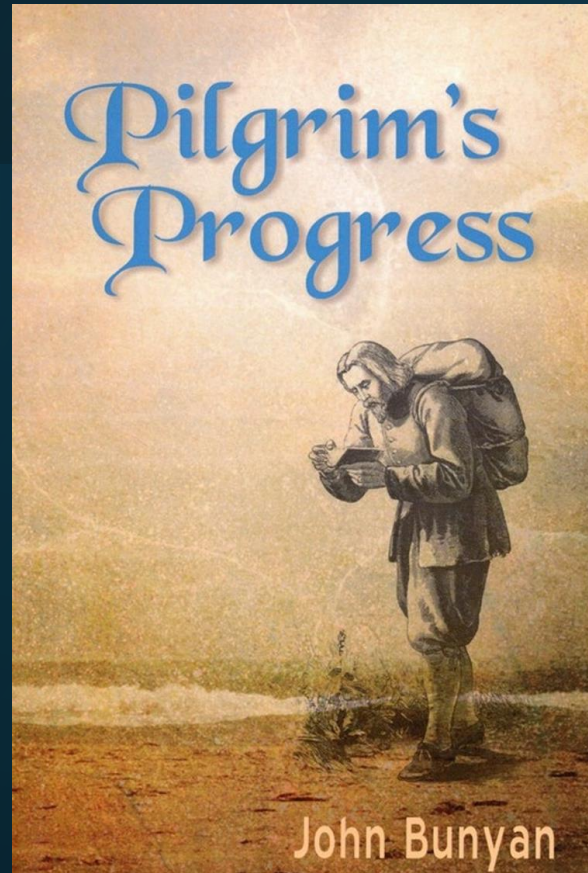


1999

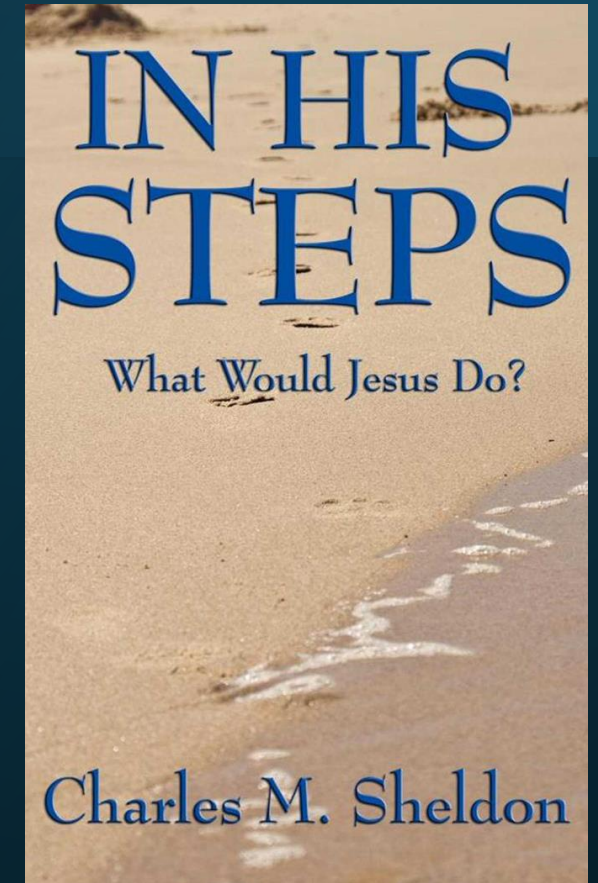
The Pilgrim's Journey



1320

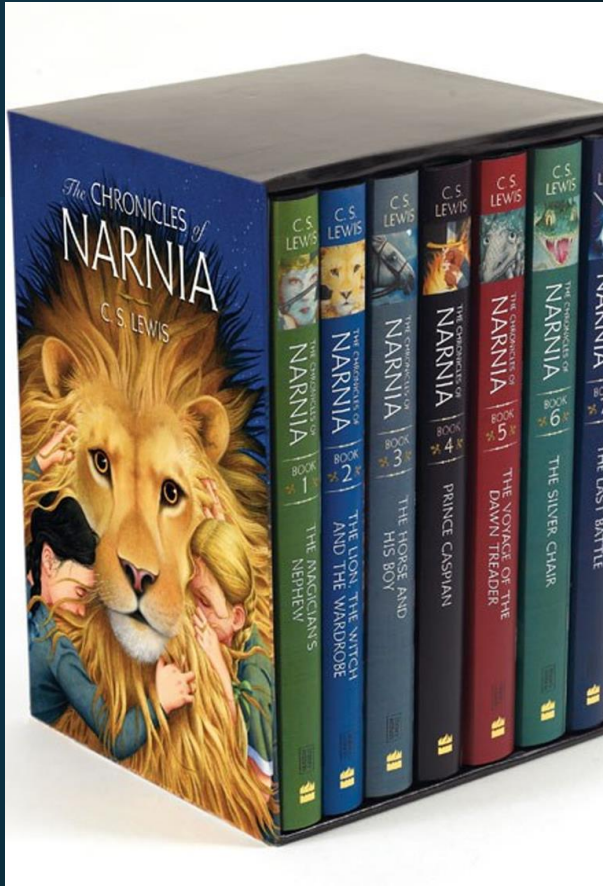


1678



1896

Faith, Reason, and Wonder



1950-1956



1954-1955



Read to learn
and answer
questions.

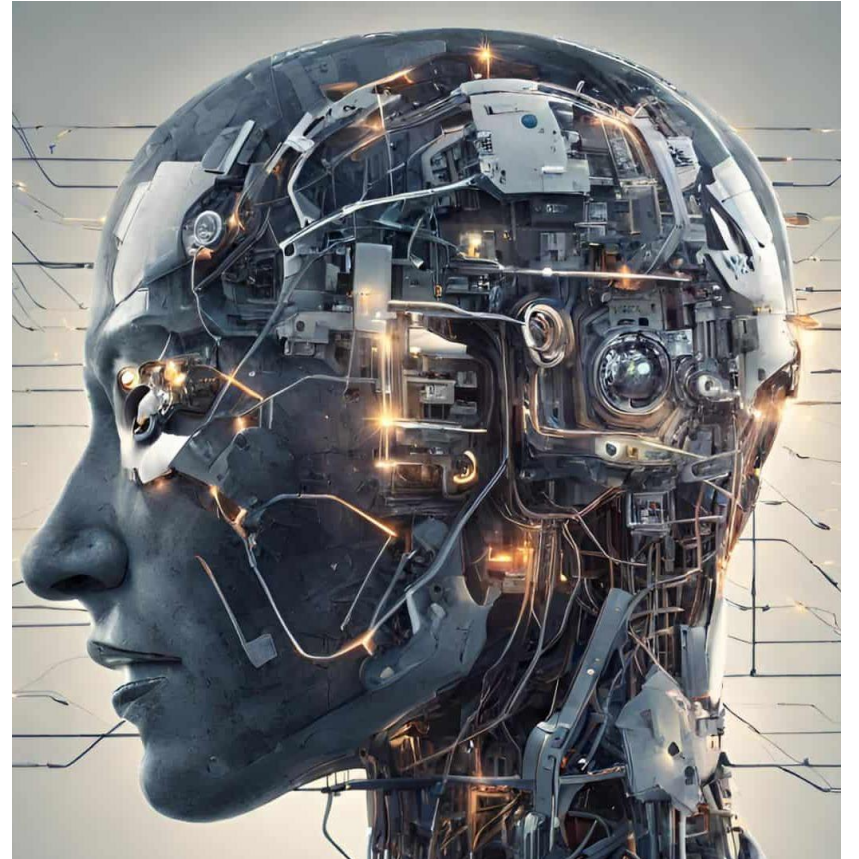


Ask Artificial Intelligence (AI): ***What is life's most important question?***

“All perspectives converge on a central theme:”

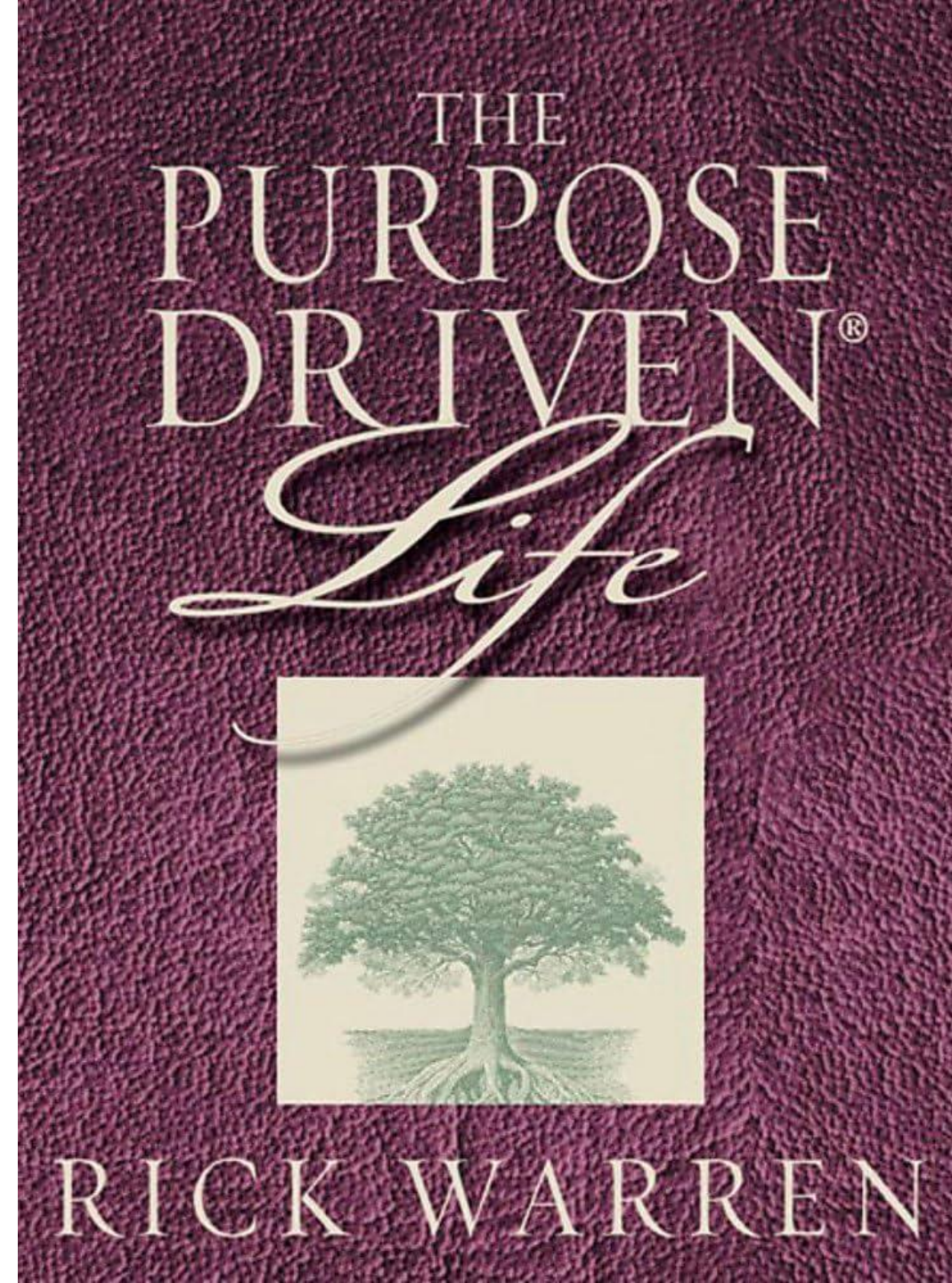
“What is my purpose?”

This question shapes how we spend our time, how we relate to others, and how we prepare for what lies beyond this life.



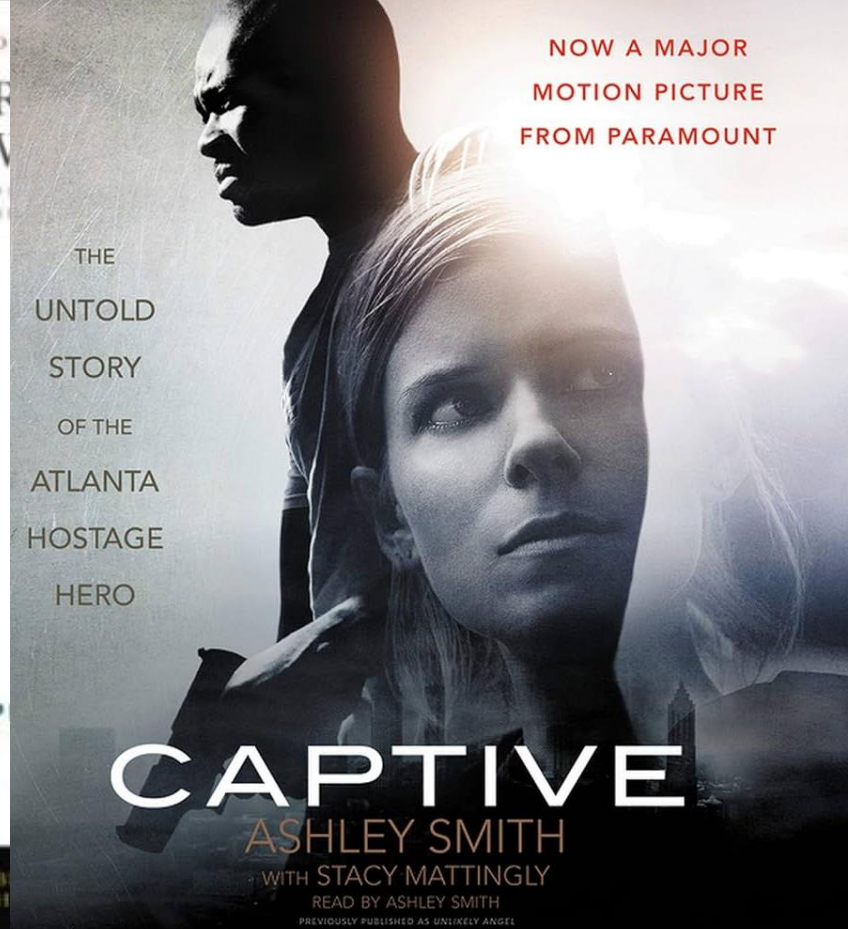
The Purpose Driven Life (2002)

- **Author:** Rick Warren
 - American pastor, Saddleback Church (CA)
- **Summary:** A 40-day spiritual journey exploring God's five purposes for human life: worship, fellowship, discipleship, ministry, and mission.
 - 50 million books sold, in 85 languages
 - #1 best seller, on NYT list for nearly 2 years
 - Barna survey of pastors and ministers: most influential book.
 - Captured 1600 years of Christian literature in simple, modern language
- **Quote:** "It's not about you. The purpose of your life is far greater than your own personal fulfillment."





Michael Phelps



The Office, Rhonda

In popular culture



Carrie Underwood

You have made us
for yourself, O Lord,
and our hearts are
restless until they
find their rest in you.

Augustine of Hippo
Confessions, AD 397



Worship: Made for God's pleasure

- John 4:23-24 - "Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth."
- Revelation 4:11 - "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being."



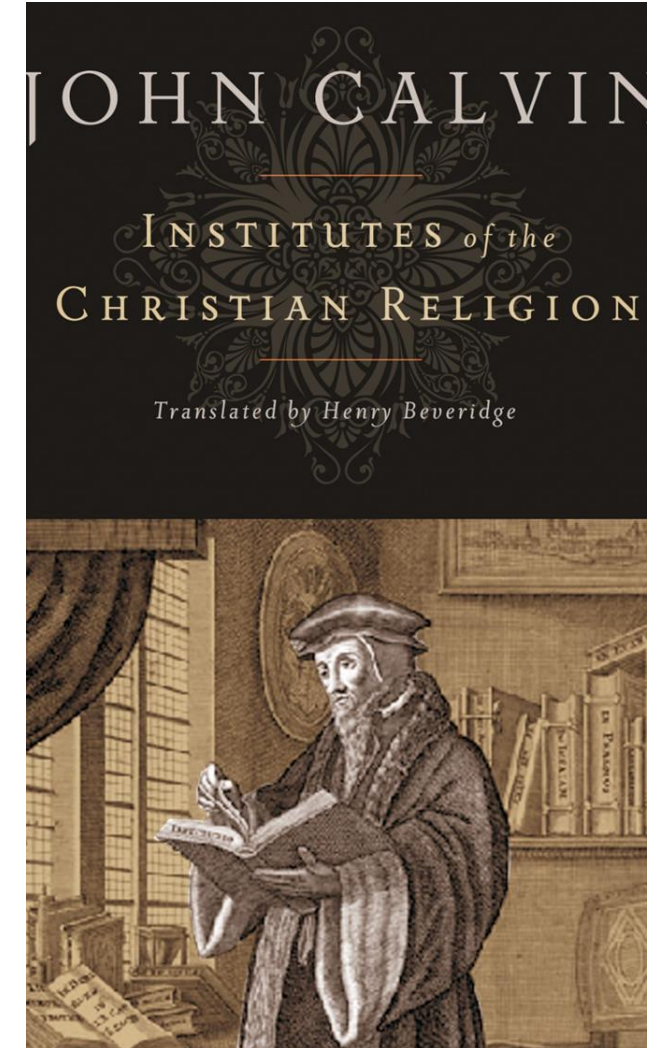
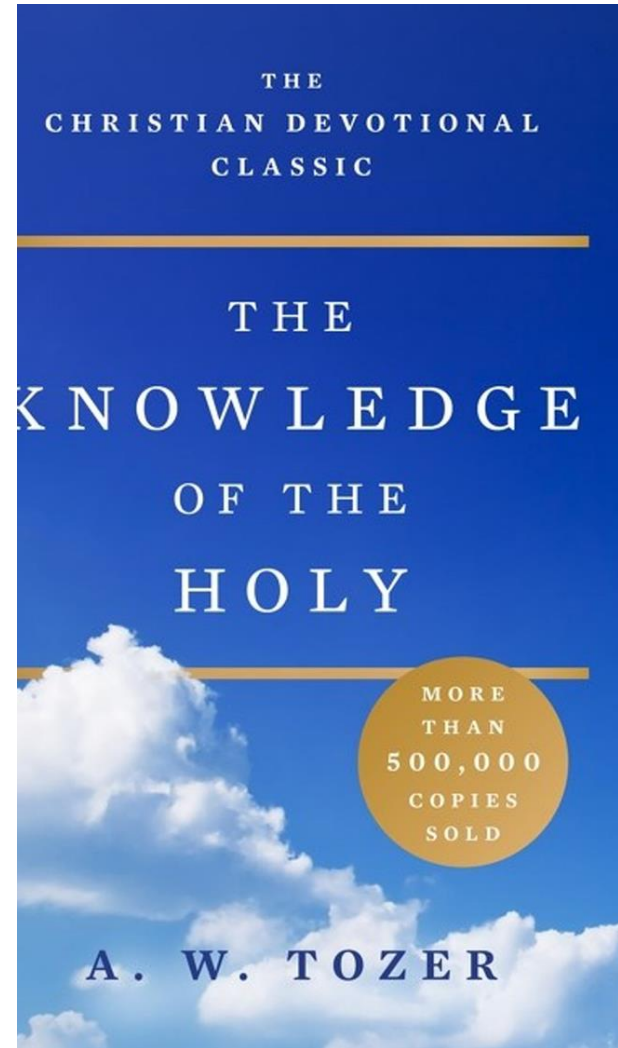
Worship:

“Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.”

- John Calvin, 1536

“We were made to worship.”

- A.W. Tozer, 1961



Fellowship: Formed for God's family

- Acts 2:42 - "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."
- Hebrews 10:24-25 – "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching."
- 1 John 1:3 - "We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ."



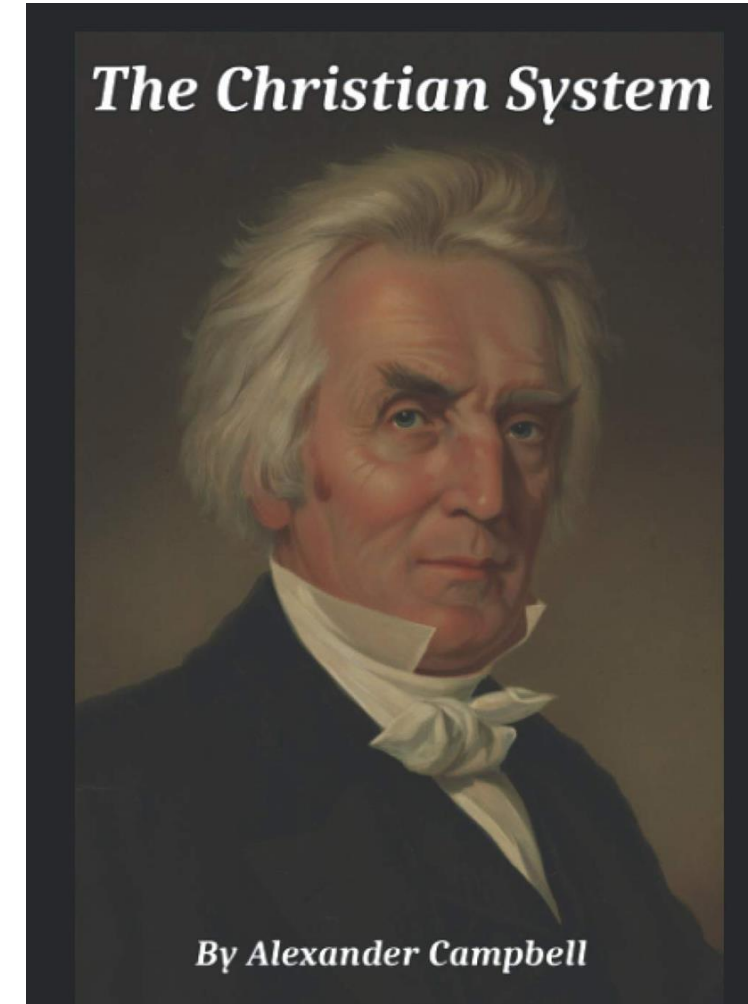
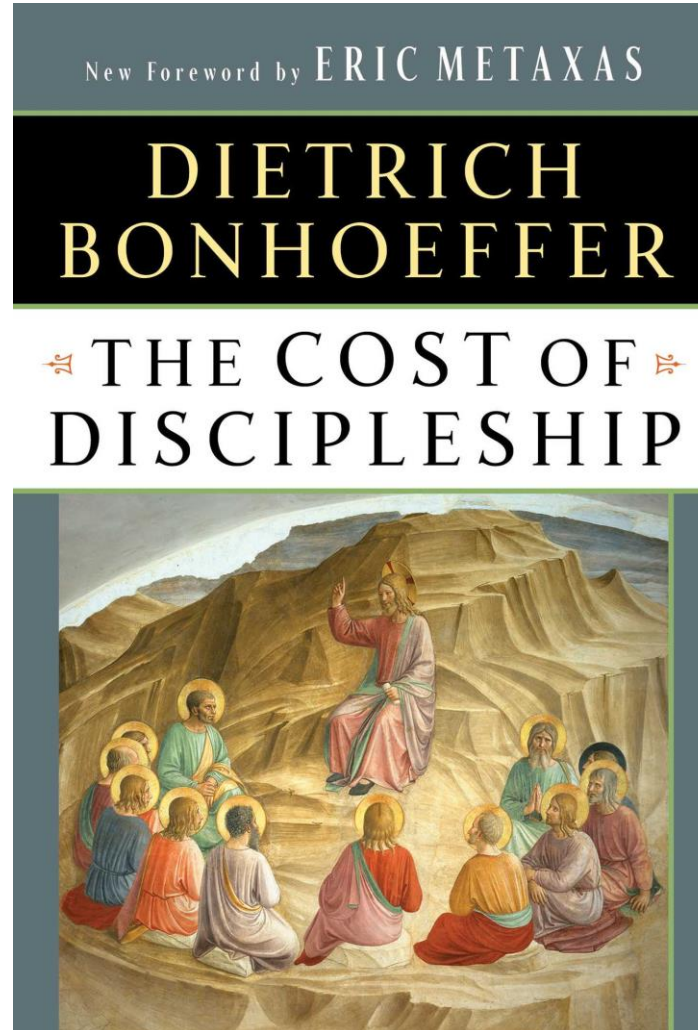
Fellowship:

"Christians are not perfect, but they are forgiven and called to live as family."

- Alexander Campbell, 1835

"The physical presence of other Christians is a source of incomparable joy and strength to the believer."

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer, 1937



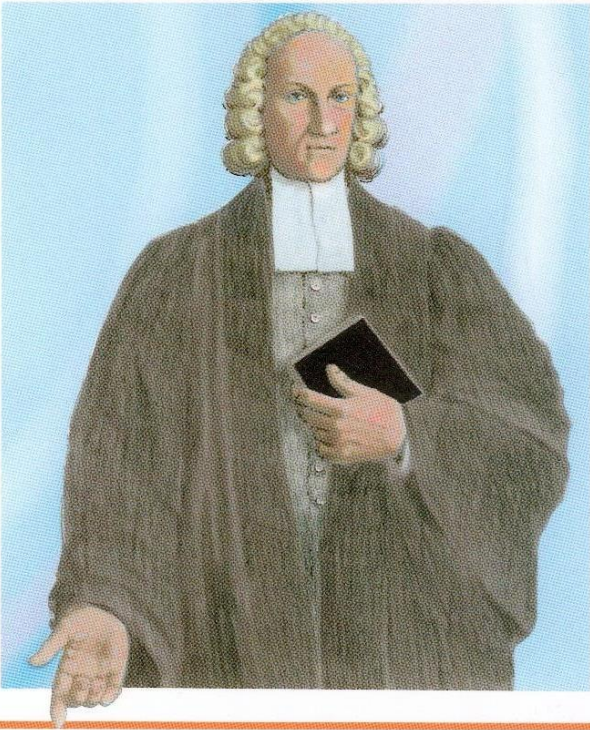
Discipleship: Created to become like Christ

- Romans 8:29 - "For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters."
- 2 Corinthians 3:18 - "And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit."
- Philippians 2:5 - "In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus."



THE RELIGIOUS AFFECTIONS

JONATHAN EDWARDS



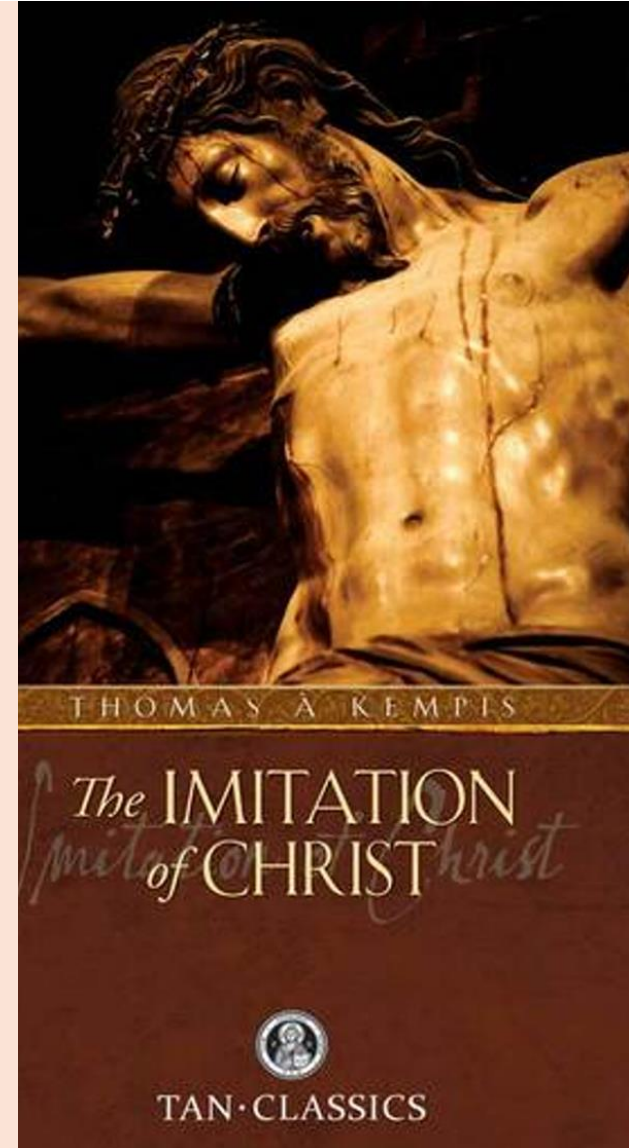
Discipleship:

“He who follows Me walks not in darkness.”

- Thomas à Kempis, 1427

True religion “in great part consists in holy affections” that conform us to Christ’s likeness.

- Jonathan Edwards, 1746



Ministry: Shaped for serving God

- 1 Peter 4:10 - "Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms."
- Ephesians 4:11-12 - And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,
- Galatians 5:13 - "You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love."



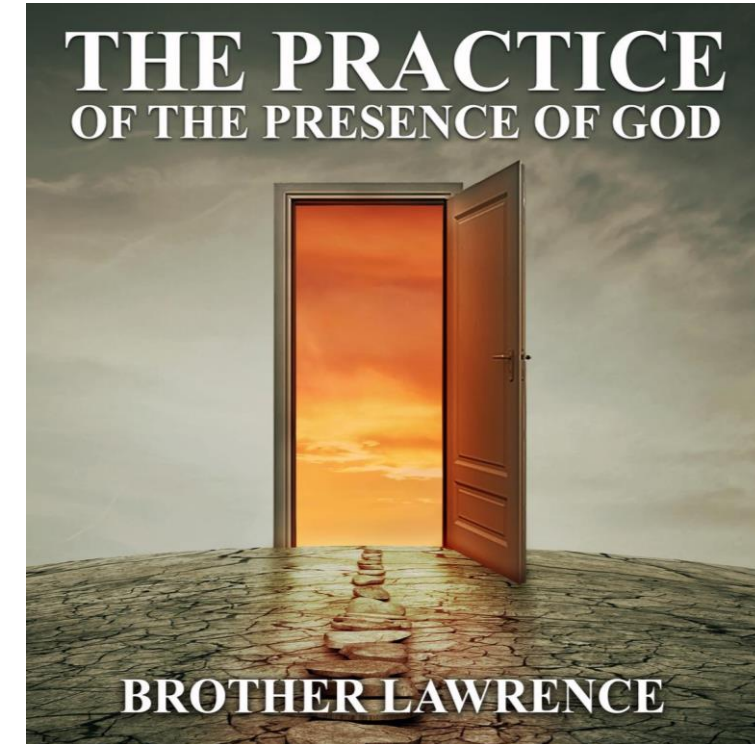
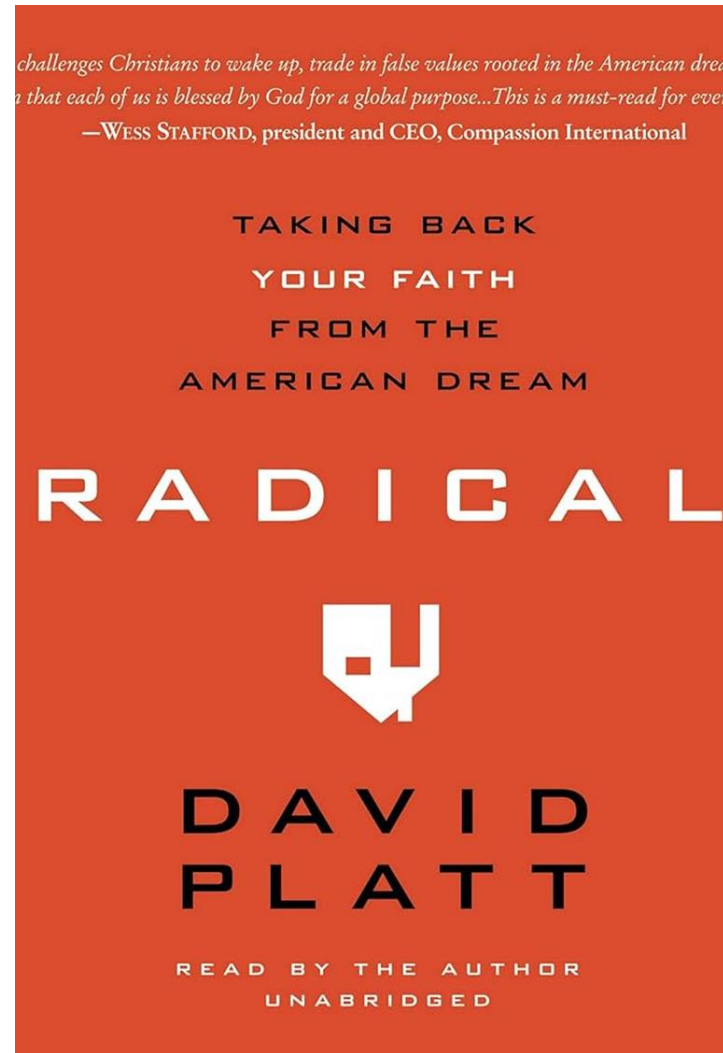
Ministry:

“We ought not to be weary of doing little things for the love of God, who regards not the greatness of the work but the love with which it is performed.”

- Brother Lawrence, 1692

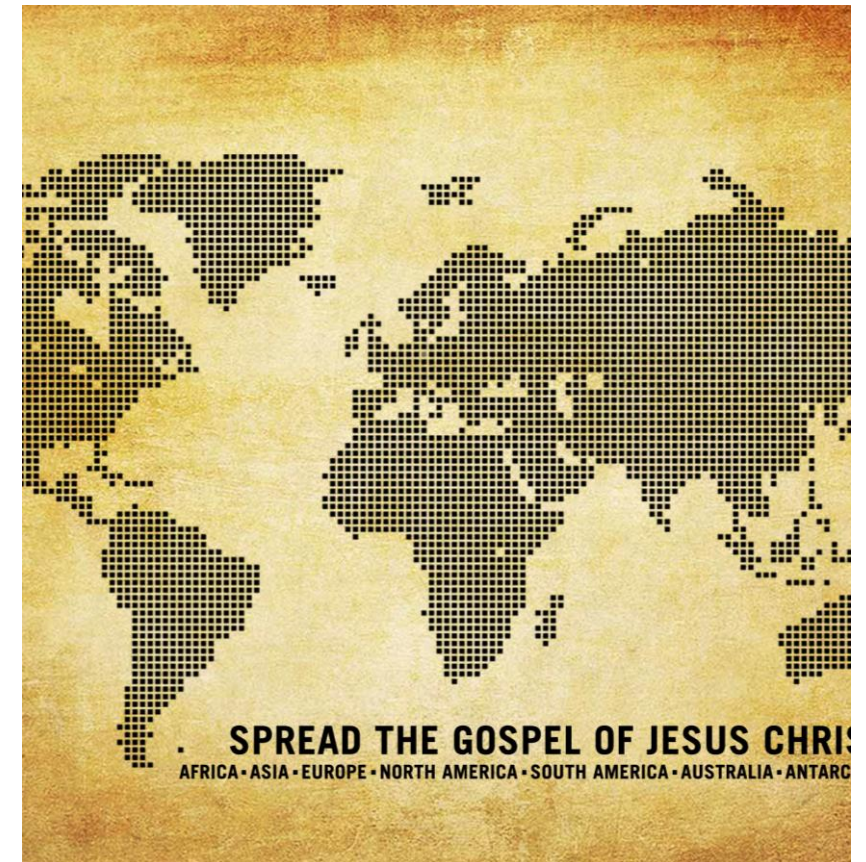
“God has created us to accomplish a radically global purpose with our lives: to go, to serve, to make disciples.”

- David Platt, 2010



Evangelism: Made for a mission

- Matthew 28:19-20 - "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."
- Acts 1:8 - "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."
- 2 Corinthians 5:20 - "We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God."



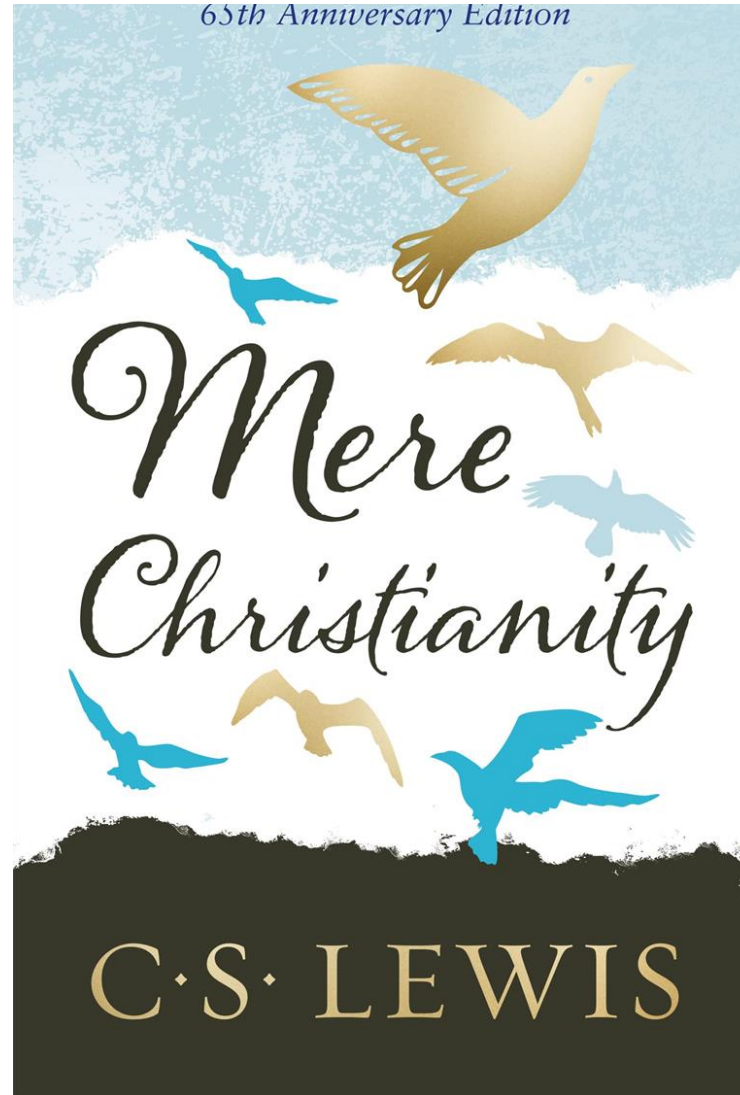
Mission:

“The true treasure of the church is the most holy gospel of the glory and grace of God.”

- Martin Luther, 1517

“The Church exists for nothing else but to draw men into Christ, to make them little Christs. If they are not doing that, all the cathedrals, clergy, missions, sermons, even the Bible itself, are simply a waste of time.”

- C.S. Lewis, 1952



What is our purpose?

- **Worship:** Made for God's pleasure
- **Fellowship:** Formed for God's family
- **Discipleship:** Created to become like Christ
- **Ministry:** Shaped for serving God
- **Evangelism:** Made for a mission

THE
PURPOSE
DRIVEN®
Life



RICK WARREN



Twelve Unifying Themes

1. The Foundation of Faith

What we believe and why

Luther, Calvin, Campbell

2. Knowing God's Character

His attributes and nature

Aquinas, Tozer, Packer

3. Authentic Conversion

What real faith looks like

Augustine, Edwards

4. The Cost of Discipleship

Following Christ isn't easy

Bonhoeffer, Chan, Platt

5. Pursuing God's Presence

Intimacy with the Divine

Kempis, Lawrence, Tozer

6. Spiritual Warfare

The battle for our souls

Lewis, Edwards, Peretti, LaHaye/Jenkins

7. Defending the Faith

Christianity makes sense

Chesterton, Lewis

8. Christian Worldview and Society

Faith and public life

Augustine, Chesterton, Colson

9. The Pilgrim's Journey

Life as movement toward God

Bunyan, Dante, Sheldon

10. Faith, Reason, and Wonder

Christianity appeals to the whole person

Tolkien, Lewis, Aquinas

11. Life's Purpose

Why are we here?

Warren, Misc others

Books,
ranked
by
reading
level

Rank	Title	Author	Reading Grade Level	Difficulty	
1	Summa Theologica	Thomas Aquinas	Graduate/16+	Most Difficult	★★★★★
	The City of God	Augustine	Graduate/16+	Most Difficult	★★★★★
	Institutes of the Christian Religion	John Calvin	Graduate/16+	Most Difficult	★★★★★
4	Divine Comedy	Dante Alighieri	College/14-16	Very Difficult	★★★★☆
	The Christian System	Alexander Campbell	College/14-16	Very Difficult	★★★★☆
	The Everlasting Man	G.K. Chesterton	College/14-16	Very Difficult	★★★★☆
7	Orthodoxy	G.K. Chesterton	College/13-15	Difficult	★★★☆☆
	Religious Affections	Jonathan Edwards	College/13-15	Difficult	★★★☆☆
9	Confessions	Augustine	College/12-14	Difficult	★★★☆☆
10	The Imitation of Christ	Thomas à Kempis	High School/11-13	Moderately Difficult	★★★☆☆
	Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God	Jonathan Edwards	High School/11-13	Moderately Difficult	★★★☆☆
12	The Pilgrim's Progress	John Bunyan	High School/10-12	Moderately Difficult	★★★☆☆
	Luther's 95 Theses	Martin Luther	High School/10-12	Moderately Difficult	★★★☆☆
14	How Now Shall We Live	Chuck Colson	High School/9-11	Moderate	★★☆☆☆
	Knowing God	J.I. Packer	High School/9-11	Moderate	★★☆☆☆
	The Knowledge of the Holy	A.W. Tozer	High School/9-11	Moderate	★★☆☆☆
	The Cost of Discipleship	Dietrich Bonhoeffer	High School/9-11	Moderate	★★☆☆☆
18	Mere Christianity	C.S. Lewis	High School/8-10	Moderate	★★☆☆☆
	The Screwtape Letters	C.S. Lewis	High School/8-10	Moderate	★★☆☆☆
	The Lord of the Rings	J.R.R. Tolkien	High School/8-10	Moderate	★★☆☆☆
21	The Pursuit of God	A.W. Tozer	Middle School/7-9	Moderately Easy	★★☆☆☆
	The Practice of the Presence of God	Brother Lawrence	Middle School/7-9	Moderately Easy	★★☆☆☆
23	Chronicles of Narnia	C.S. Lewis	Middle School/6-8	Easy	★☆☆☆☆
	Radical	David Platt	Middle School/6-8	Easy	★☆☆☆☆
	Crazy Love	Francis Chan	Middle School/6-8	Easy	★☆☆☆☆
	In His Steps	Charles Sheldon	Middle School/6-8	Easy	★☆☆☆☆
27	The Purpose Driven Life	Rick Warren	Elementary/5-7	Easiest	★☆☆☆☆

Great Christian Literature Course Schedule

Woodlawn Christian Church - Fellowship in Christ Class

Week	Date	Theme	Description	Texts		
1	July 13	The Foundation of Faith	Explore how the Reformation's call back to Scripture laid the groundwork for returning to biblical simplicity.	Luther's 95 Theses	Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion	Campbell's The Christian System
2	July 20	Knowing the Character of God	Discover God's attributes through three different eras showing He is both knowable and beyond full comprehension.	Tozer's The Knowledge of the Holy	Packer's Knowing God	Aquinas' Summa Theologica (selections)
3	July 27	The Journey of Conversion and Confession	Examine authentic spiritual experience from autobiography's father to America's greatest theologian.	Augustine's Confessions	Edwards' Religious Affections	
4	Aug. 3	The Cost of True Discipleship	Challenge comfortable Christianity through voices that demand everything in following Christ.	Bonhoeffer's The Cost of Discipleship	Platt's Radical	Chan's Crazy Love
5	Aug. 10	The Pursuit of God's Presence	Discover that God desires intimate fellowship with ordinary believers across three centuries of seeking.	Tozer's The Pursuit of God	Brother Lawrence's The Practice of the Presence of God	Thomas à Kempis' The Imitation of Christ
6	Aug. 24	The Reality of Spiritual Warfare	Explore the spiritual battle for human souls through wit and fire-and-brimstone warnings.	Lewis' The Screwtape Letters	Edwards' Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God	Peretti's This Present Darkness
7	Aug. 31	Defending the Faith	Witness the golden age of Christian apologetics demonstrating Christianity's intellectual credibility.	Chesterton's Orthodoxy	Chesterton's The Everlasting Man	Lewis' Mere Christianity
8	Sept. 7	The Christian Worldview and Society	Understand how Christians should engage the world through voices from Rome's fall to modernity's rise.	Augustine's The City of God	Chesterton's Orthodoxy (selections)	Colson's How Now Shall We Live
9	Sept. 14	The Pilgrim's Journey	Experience the Christian life as a journey toward God through cosmic vision, everyman allegory, and practical action.	Bunyan's The Pilgrim's Progress	Dante's Divine Comedy (selections)	Sheldon's In His Steps
10	Sept. 21	Faith, Reason, and Wonder	See how Christianity engages both mind and imagination through rational foundation and imaginative power.	Lewis' Chronicles of Narnia (selections)	Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings (selections)	
11	Sept. 28	Purpose and Meaning in Life	Compare contemporary approaches to purpose with insights from earlier authors on life's fundamental question.	Warren's The Purpose Driven Life	Synthesis of major themes	

The Meaning
of life is

42

Why am I here?

