

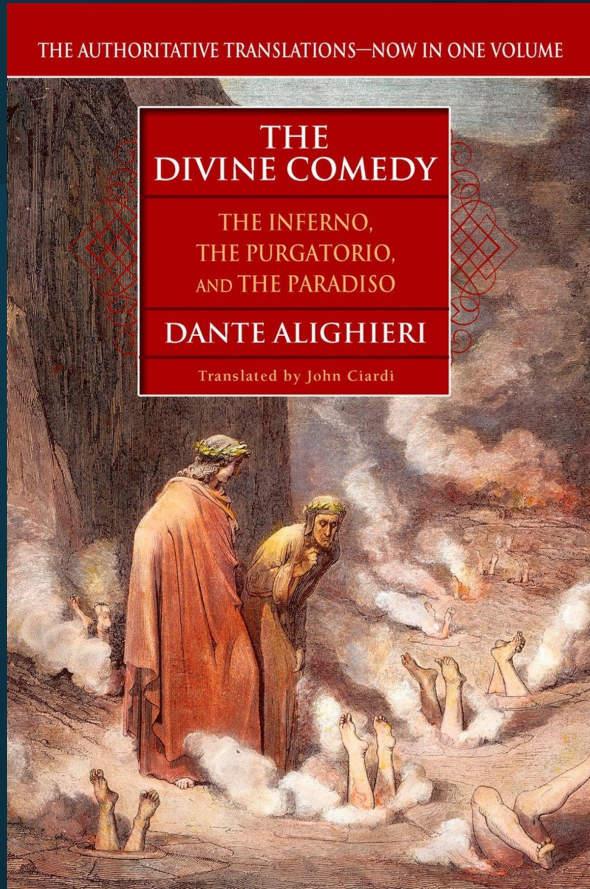
Influential Christian Literature

*Exploring Essential Works That Shaped
Christian Thought*

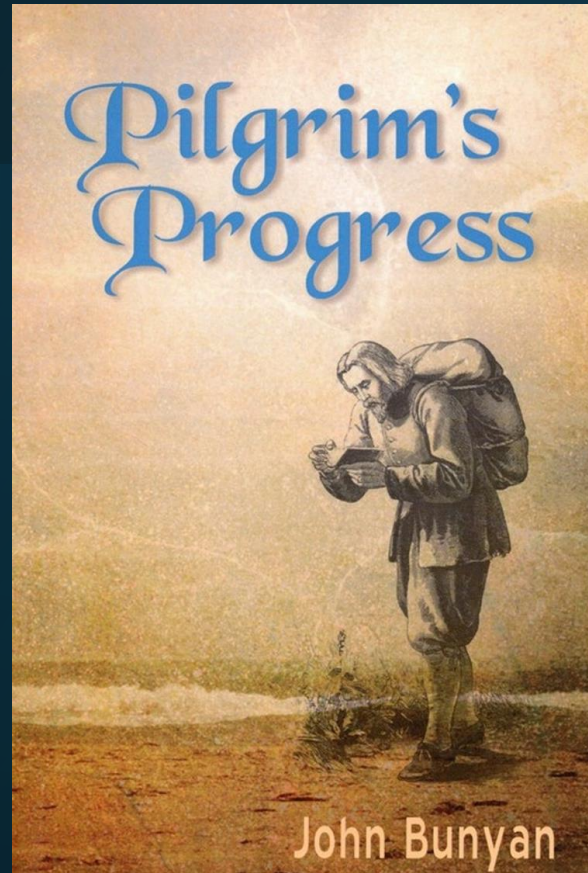
Wilbur Reid, summer of 2025



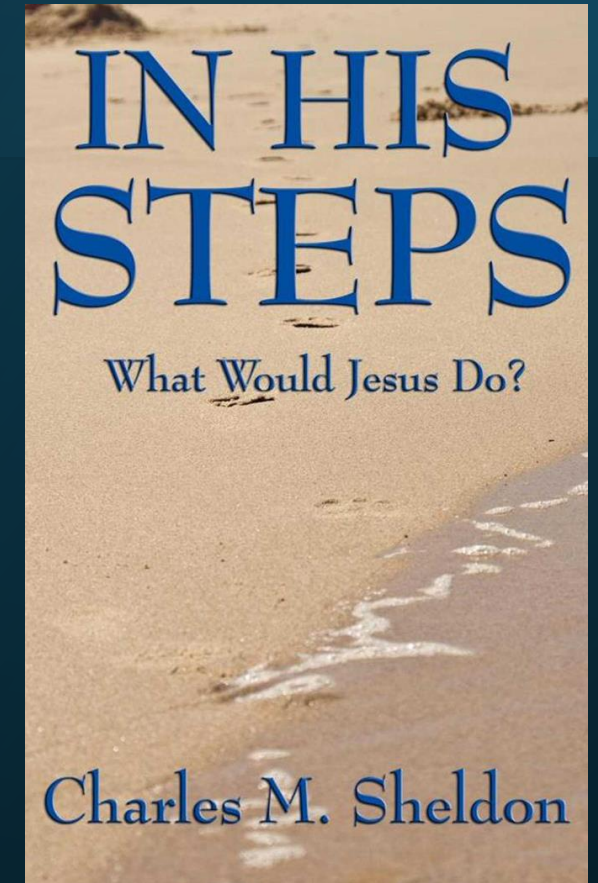
The Pilgrim's Journey



1320



1678



1896

Journeys in the Bible



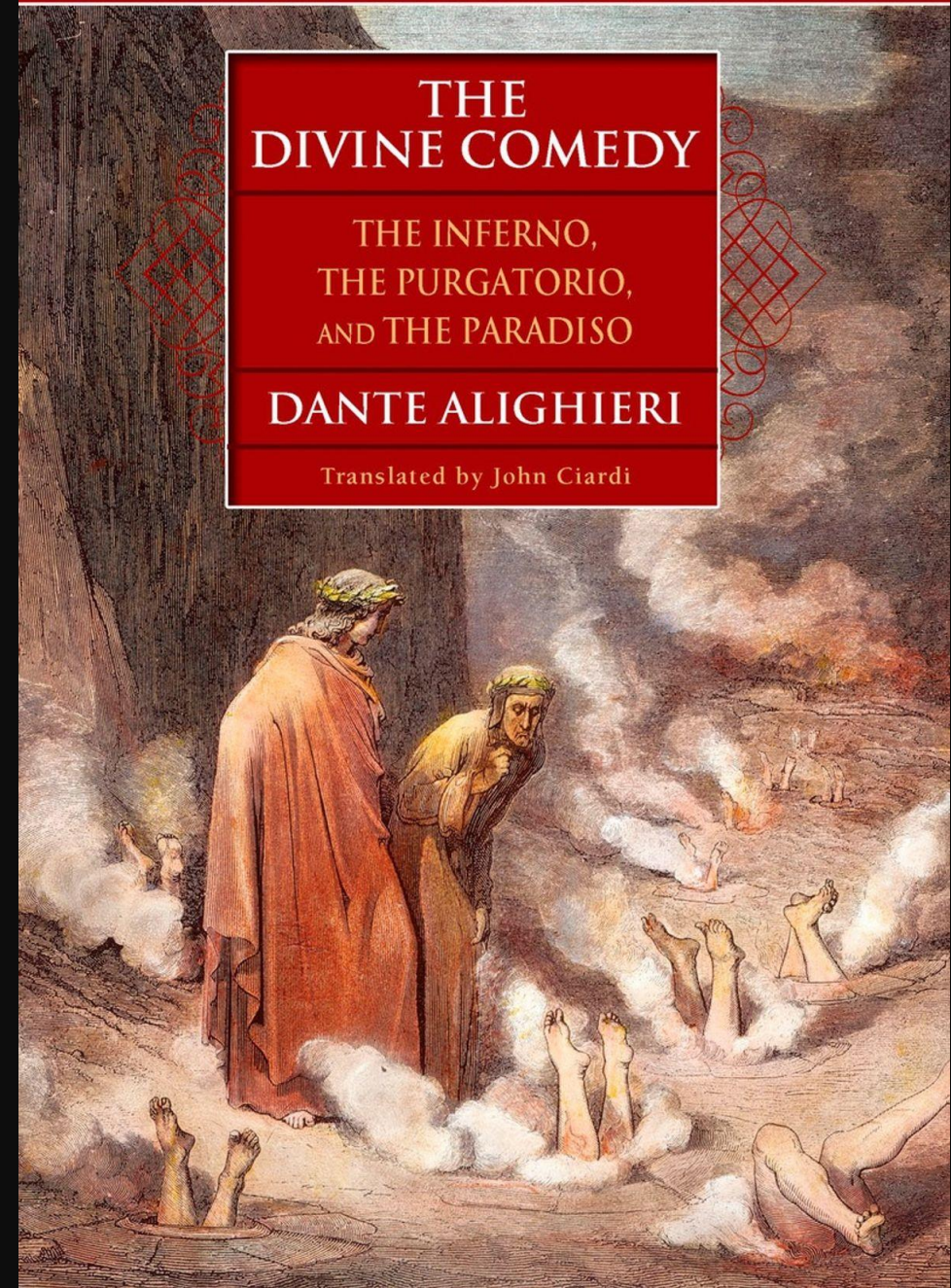
- Hebrews 11:13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.



The Divine Comedy (Inferno, Purgatorio, Paradiso, 1320)

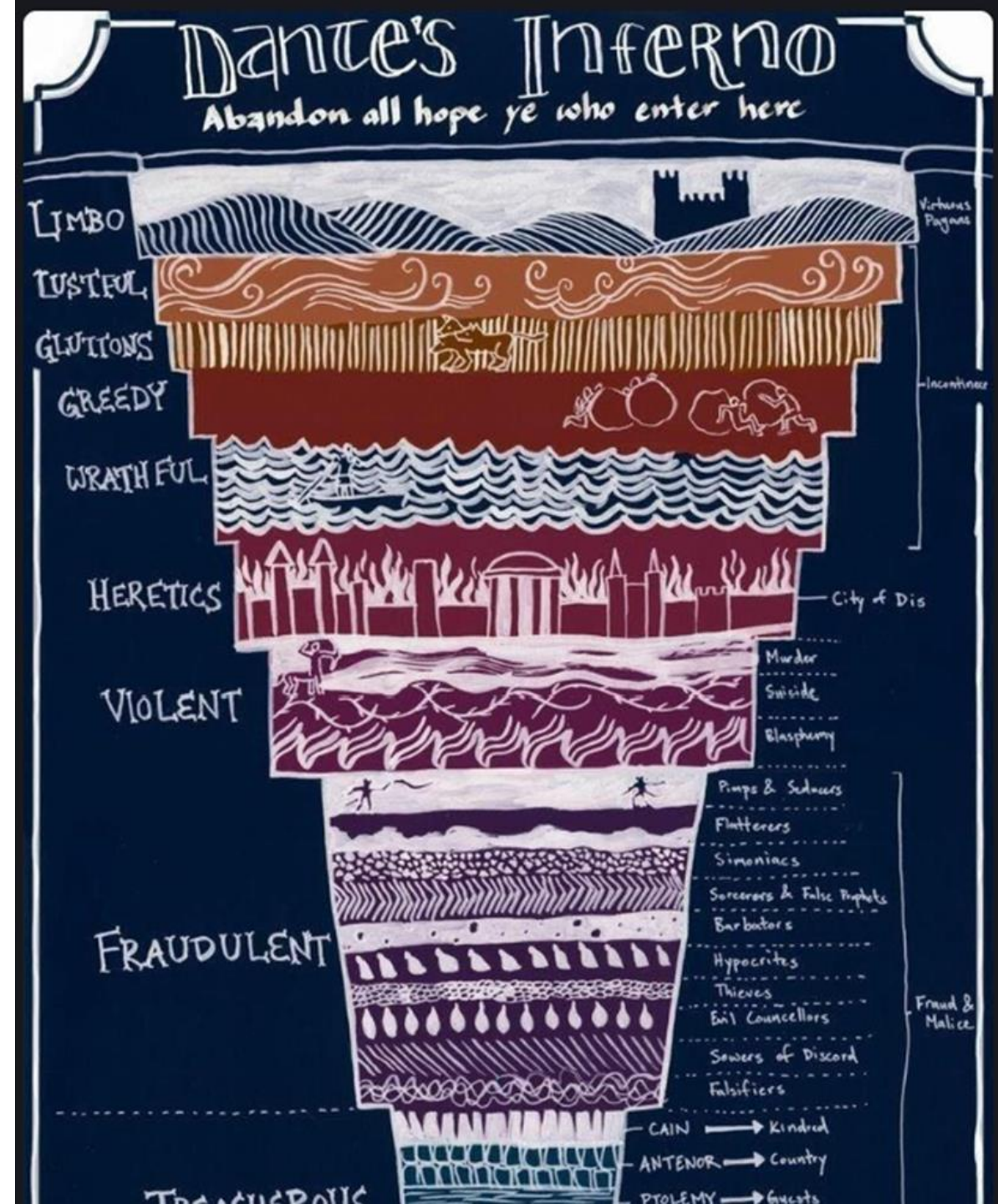
- **Author:** Dante Alighieri
 - Italian poet and philosopher
 - **Summary:** An epic poem following Dante's journey through Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise, representing the soul's journey to God.
 - **Quote:** "In His will is our peace." (*Paradiso*)
-

THE AUTHORITATIVE TRANSLATIONS—NOW IN ONE VOLUME

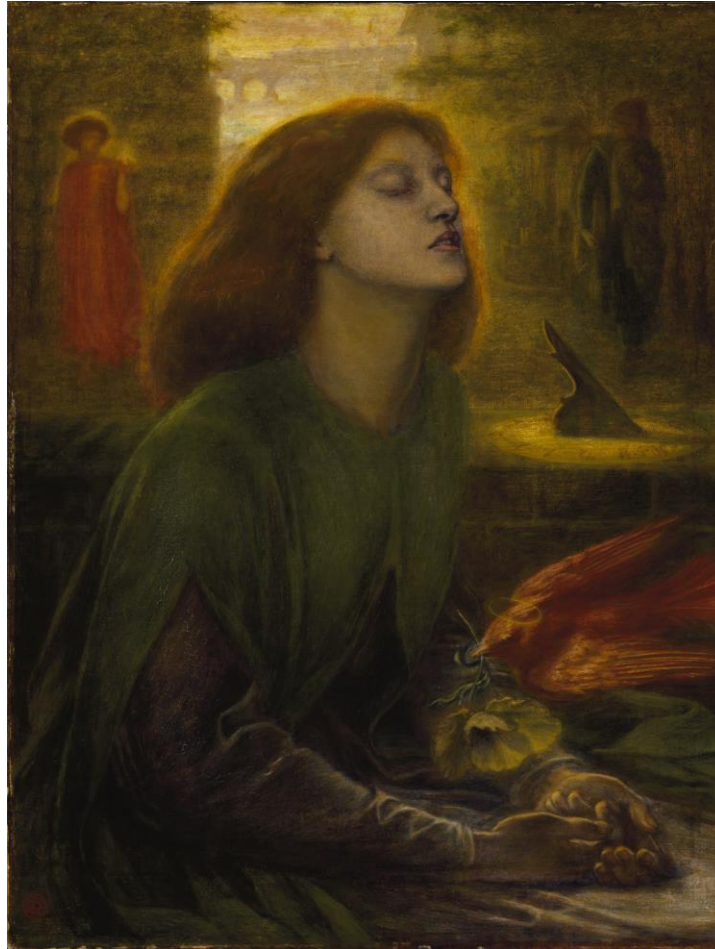


The Cosmic Journey

- Hell (Inferno)
 - Confronting sin
- Purgatory (Purgatorio)
 - Growth and purification
- Paradise (Paradiso)
 - Ultimate destiny



Dante's Guides



- Virgil
 - Roman Poet (author of the Aeneid)
 - Represents human reason, intellect, and moral reason
 - Guides Dante through Hell and Purgatory
 - Virtuous pagan, cannot enter Paradise
- Beatrice
 - Real-life acquaintance of Dante
 - Represents Divine Love, grace, and theology
 - Guides Dante into Paradise

The Pilgrim's Progress (1678)

- **Author:** John Bunyan
 - English Puritan preacher
 - Written while in prison for his faith
- **Summary:** An allegorical tale of Christian's journey from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City, representing the soul's path to salvation.
- **Quote:** “To go back is nothing but death; to go forward is fear of death, and life everlasting beyond it. I will yet go forward.”

Pilgrim's Progress



John Bunyan

The Journey

1. City of Destruction
(Christian's starting point)
2. The Slough of Despond
(where Christian gets stuck in mire)
3. The Wicket Gate (narrow entrance to the path)
4. The Interpreter's House
(instruction before the journey)
5. The Place of Deliverance
(the Cross where his burden falls off)
6. Hill Difficulty (steep, challenging climb)
7. House Beautiful (rest stop with the maidens)
8. Valley of Humiliation
(where Christian fights Apollyon)



The Journey

9. Valley of the Shadow of Death (darkest, most dangerous passage)
10. Vanity Fair (town where worldly goods are sold)
11. Doubting Castle (Giant Despair's stronghold)
12. Delectable Mountains (where shepherds give guidance)
13. Enchanted Ground (where pilgrims fall asleep)
14. Beulah Land (pleasant country in sight of the Celestial City)
15. River of Death (final crossing)
16. Celestial City (final destination)



People Christian Interacts With

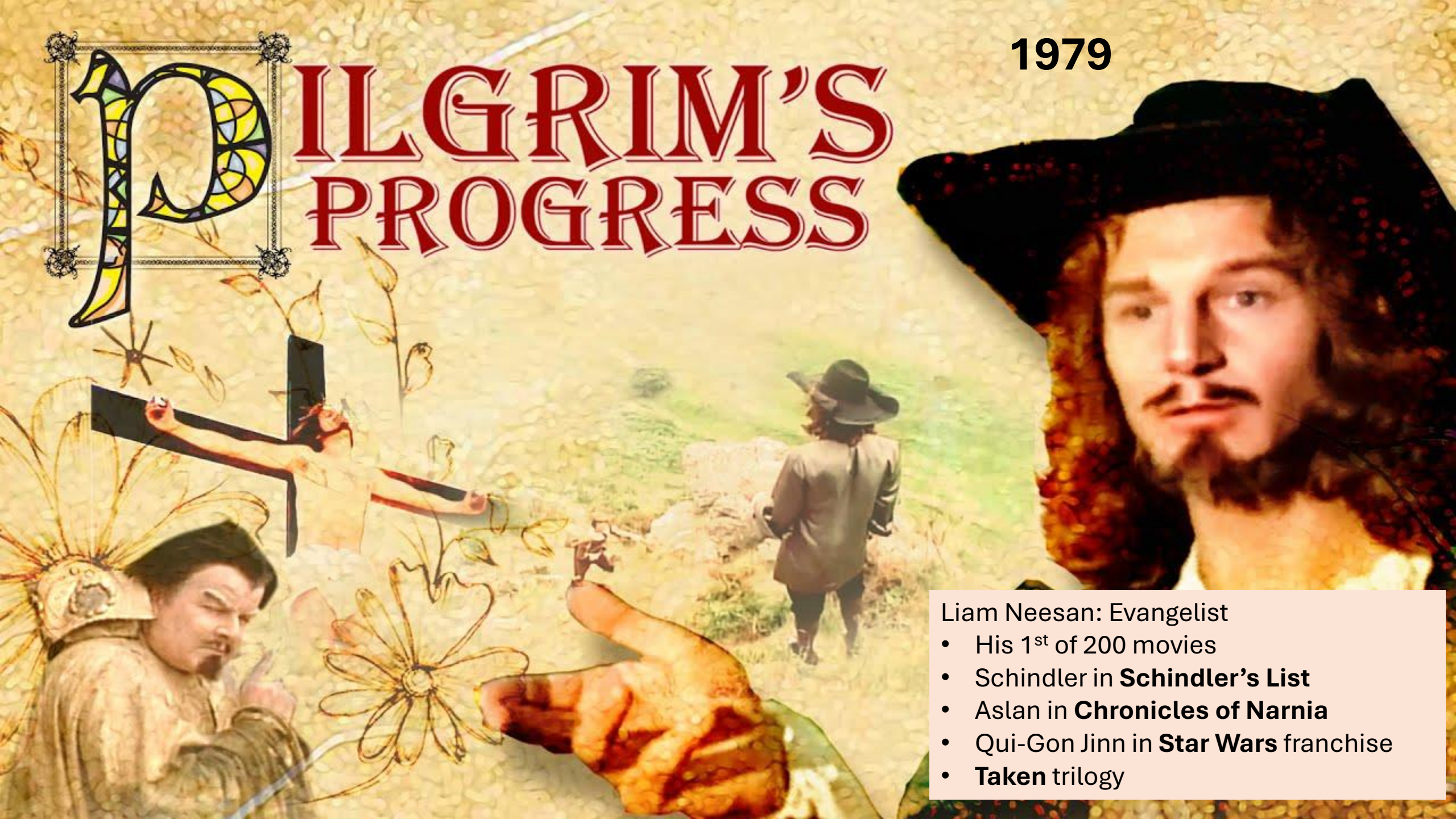
- **Evangelist** - points Christian toward the Wicket Gate
- **Obstinate and Pliable** - neighbors who try to bring Christian back
- **Help** - rescues Christian from Slough of Despond
- **Mr. Worldly Wiseman** - offers alternative path avoiding the cross
- **Good-will** - keeper of the Wicket Gate
- **The Interpreter** - shows Christian instructive visions
- **Discretion, Prudence, Piety, and Charity** - maidens at House Beautiful
- **Apollyon** - the fiend Christian battles in Valley of Humiliation

People Christian Interacts With

- **Faithful** - fellow pilgrim who joins Christian
- **Talkative** - companion who talks well but lives poorly
- **Judge Hate-good and Jury** - condemn Faithful at Vanity Fair
- **Hopeful** - becomes Christian's companion after Faithful's martyrdom
- **By-ends** - pilgrim who serves religion for personal gain
- **Giant Despair** - imprisons pilgrims in Doubting Castle
- **The Shepherds (Knowledge, Experience, Watchful, Sincere)** - guide pilgrims on Delectable Mountains
- **Ignorance** - self-confident pilgrim taking a shortcut
- **The Shining Ones** - angels who escort pilgrims to Celestial City

1979

PILGRIM'S PROGRESS



Liam Neeson: Evangelist

- His 1st of 200 movies
- Schindler in **Schindler's List**
- Aslan in **Chronicles of Narnia**
- Qui-Gon Jinn in **Star Wars** franchise
- **Taken** trilogy



PILGRIM'S PROGRESS

— or —
JOURNEY TO HEAVEN

2008





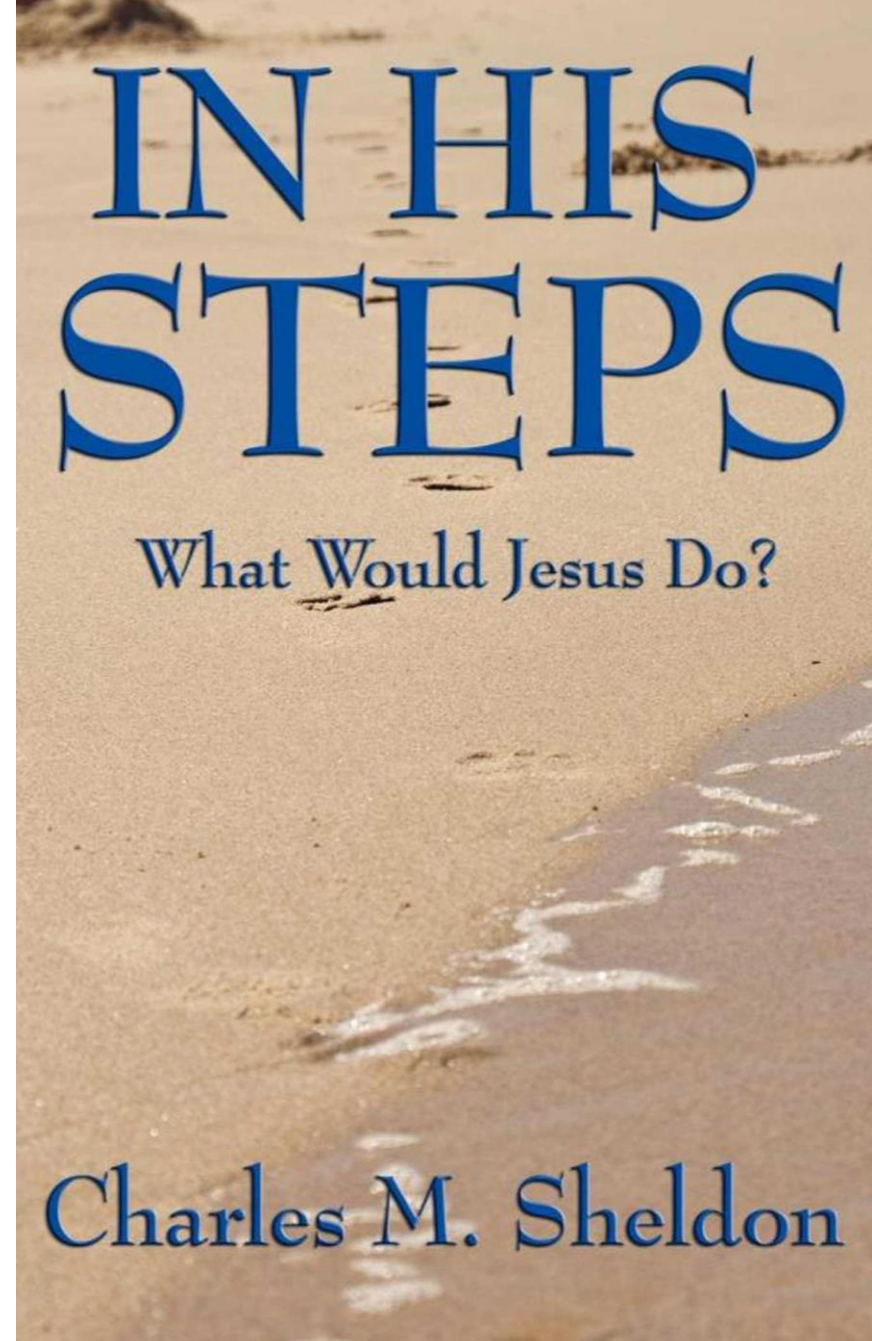
2019





In His Steps (1896)

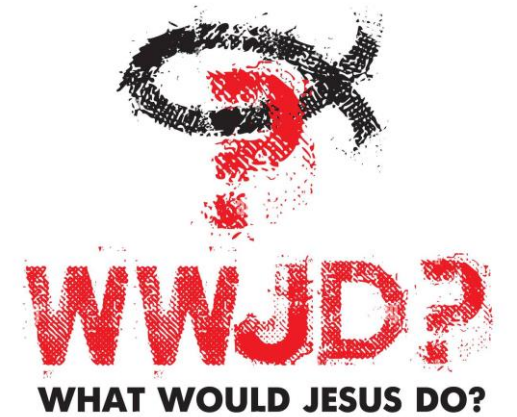
- **Author:** Charles Sheldon
 - American Congregational minister
- **Summary:** A novel challenging readers to live by asking "What Would Jesus Do?" in every decision and circumstance.
- **Quote:** "What would Jesus do? He turned and asked himself this question, and it opened up a world of possibilities."



Key Characters

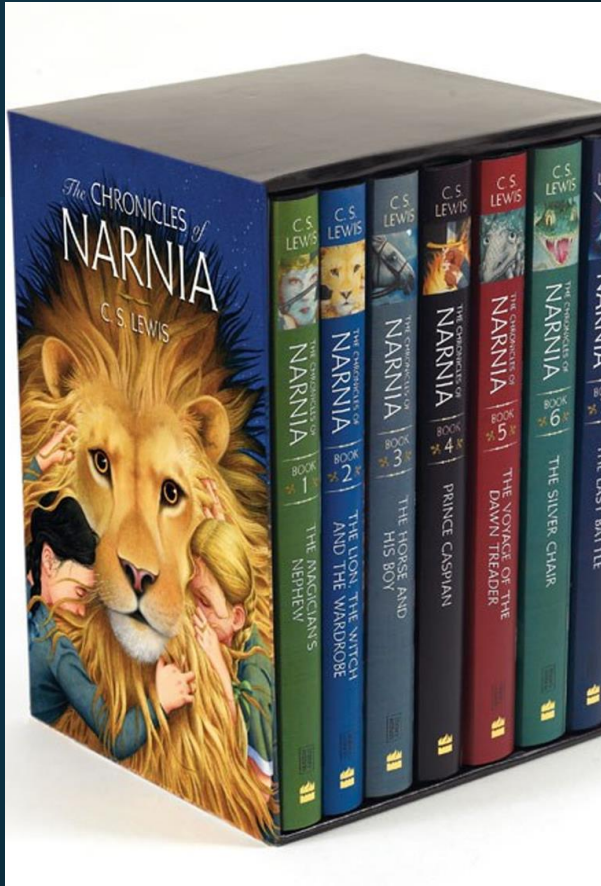
- Homeless man
- Pastor
- Owner of city newspaper
- Successful businessman
- Hieress
- Opera singer







Next Week: Faith, Reason, and Wonder



1950-1956



1954-1955

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.	<i>Luther's 95 Theses</i>	<i>Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion</i>	<i>Campbell's The Christian System</i>
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.	<i>Tozer's The Knowledge of the Holy</i>	<i>Packer's Knowing God</i>	<i>Aquinas' Summa Theologica (selections)</i>
3	July 27	The Journey of Conversion and Confession	Examine authentic spiritual experience from autobiography's father to America's greatest theologian.	<i>Augustine's Confessions</i>	<i>Edwards' Religious Affections</i>	
4	Aug. 3	The Cost of True Discipleship	Challenge comfortable Christianity through voices that demand everything in following Christ.	<i>Bonhoeffer's The Cost of Discipleship</i>	<i>Platt's Radical</i>	<i>Chan's Crazy Love</i>
5	Aug. 10	The Pursuit of God's Presence	Discover that God desires intimate fellowship with ordinary believers across three centuries of seeking.	<i>Tozer's The Pursuit of God</i>	<i>Brother Lawrence's The Practice of the Presence of God</i>	<i>Thomas à Kempis' The Imitation of Christ</i>
6	Aug. 24	The Reality of Spiritual Warfare	Explore the spiritual battle for human souls through wit and fire-and-brimstone warnings.	<i>Lewis' The Screwtape Letters</i>	<i>Edwards' Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God</i>	<i>Peretti's This Present Darkness</i>
7	Aug. 31	Defending the Faith	Witness the golden age of Christian apologetics demonstrating Christianity's intellectual credibility.	<i>Chesterton's Orthodoxy</i>	<i>Chesterton's The Everlasting Man</i>	<i>Lewis' Mere Christianity</i>
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.	<i>Augustine's The City of God</i>	<i>Chesterton's Orthodoxy (selections)</i>	<i>Colson's How Now Shall We Live</i>
9	Sept. 14	The Pilgrim's Journey	Experience the Christian life as a journey toward God through cosmic vision, everyman allegory, and practical action.	<i>Bunyan's The Pilgrim's Progress</i>	<i>Dante's Divine Comedy (selections)</i>	<i>Sheldon's In His Steps</i>
10	Sept. 21	Faith, Reason, and Wonder	See how Christianity engages both mind and imagination through rational foundation and imaginative power.	<i>Lewis' Chronicles of Narnia (selections)</i>	<i>Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings (selections)</i>	<i>Aquinas' Summa Theologica (selections)</i>
11	Sept. 28	Purpose and Meaning in Life	Compare contemporary approaches to purpose with insights from earlier authors on life's fundamental question.	<i>Warren's The Purpose Driven Life</i>	<i>Selections from various authors</i>	
12	Oct. 5	The Unity of Christian Truth	Demonstrate the remarkable unity of Christian truth across 1,600 years of faithful witnesses.	<i>Synthesis of major themes</i>	<i>Brief readings from multiple authors</i>	