

A LETTER FROM DR. SEAN LUCAS

December 12, 2019

My dear Friends:

One of the great ministries that we have at IPC is our Bookstore ministry. Debbie McCallen does a great job making sure our store is well-stocked with thoughtful Christian books, excellent study Bibles, children's books, and commentaries. I try to get in there once or twice a week to see what is new; I'd encourage you to do the same.

Perhaps you've heard this too: I once had a teacher in college who observed that the two factors that will influence our growth as human beings are the friends that we have and the books that we read. If that's the case generally speaking, surely it is the case as disciples of Jesus. That doesn't mean that the only books we should read are Christian books; but it does mean that we should read and be thoughtful about what we read.

So, each year I try to share with you a few of the books that I enjoyed over this past year. With a few weeks to go, I've completed 47 books—I know this because I keep a journal of completed books that goes back to 2013. It is fun periodically to look back on the book journal—I can remember things that were happening in my life when I was reading a particular book. Too, it is fun to see trends and favorite authors show up again and again. Out of the books that I finished this year, here are five that I'd commend to you:

Nicholas Wolterstorff, *In This World of Wonders*. This is a memoir from one of the most important Christian philosophers of our generation. As Wolterstorff told his story, he evoked the prairie lands of Minnesota where he grew up and gave a sense of the exciting world he experienced as a student at Calvin College in the 1950s. He also unpacked several of his key works, not only his ideas, but the situation out of which he wrote.

Bill Bryson, *One Summer: America 1927*. One of our church members gave this to me and it was fascinating. Bryson is always good—but the way he showed how Charles Lindbergh, Babe Ruth, boxing, and politics shaped the nation was fascinating. I ended up reading A. Scott Berg's prize-winning biography on Lindbergh also as a result.

Jay Stringer, *Unwanted*. Stringer was trained by Dan Allender as a therapist; this book deals very practically with unwanted sexual desires and acting-out. I especially appreciated the way he mined early family formation as a means for understanding why, despite best efforts, so many struggle and fail to make progress in this area. One of the best books that I've read in this area.

John Wolverton, *A Christian and a Democrat*. This was a religious biography of FDR and it was fascinating. Even though I'm an American religious historian by training, I confess that the inter-nicene battles within Episcopalianism are not often on my radar. Wolverton places FDR within that Episcopal world, demonstrates how it shaped him, and showed how FDR's faith continued to work out as he led our country during WW2. Fascinating.

Harry Lee Poe, *Becoming C. S. Lewis*. This is the first of a projected three-volume biography on Lewis. You might think, "Do I really need to read another Lewis biography?" This one is worth your time. Poe works hard to show how Lewis's early reading and his educational training with William Kirkpatrick ("Old Knock," Lewis called him) shaped his trajectory as a scholar and unwittingly paved the way for his conversion. I'm looking forward to volume two already.

There was one other book that I highly prized, but it is a little inside baseball: Harold Senkbeil, *The Care of Souls*. Directed to pastors, I found this book to be extremely reorienting in terms of my calling and task. If I ever teach a pastoral theology class at a seminary again, this will definitely be one of the books that I assign.

I hope there is something on this list that you might enjoy. And I would love to hear from you what books you enjoyed this past year. *Tolle lege!*

In the grip of God's grace,



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