

## Thirteen Thrilling Reads for Growing Theologically

### Big Pictures Sweeps

Choung, James. [\*True Story: A Christianity Worth Believing In\*](#). Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books.

Get past the old clichés and simplistic formulas. And discover a new way of understanding and presenting the Christian faith that really matters in a broken world.

Gladding, Sean. [\*The Story of God, the Story of Us: Getting Lost and Found in the Bible\*](#). Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books 2010.

In this book, you can travel with Sean Gladding between the lines of the Scriptures to listen in on the conversations of people wrestling with the Story of God for the first time. Whether sitting around a campfire in Babylon, reclining at a table in Asia Minor or huddled together by candlelight in Rome, you'll encounter a tale that is at once familiar and surprising. The Story of God, the Story of Us can be read alone but is especially rich shared with a group. Sean Gladding presents an account of the Bible that pays attention to its audiences as well as its message. He introduces you to people who may remind you of yourself or your family, friends and coworkers. As much as the Bible is a story about God, it's also a story about you—and all of us—as we encounter God in a new way.

Reeves, Michael. [\*Delighting in the Trinity: An Introduction to the Christian Faith\*](#). Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012.

Find an introduction to Christianity and the Christian life that is from start to finish rooted in our triune God—Father, Son and Spirit. Not only do we understand the person and work of Christ through the Trinity, but also prayer, the church and every aspect of our faith. With wit and clarity, Reeves draws from church history down to the present referencing a wide range of notable teachers and preachers. Here is a rich and enjoyable portrayal of the basic beliefs of Christianity that opens up the profound and life-changing truths of our faith.

Roberts, Vaughan. [\*God's Big Picture: Tracing the Story Line of the Bible\*](#). Downers Grove: IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004.

Does the Bible sometimes seem like a confusing jumble of books, authors, and stories? Robert's excellent overview takes a wide-angle view of Scripture. Showing how the various parts of the Bible consolidate into one united theme the kingdom of God. With this encouraging tool guiding you, you'll be reading God's Word with new confidence and understanding.

### For Those Wanting a Deeper Dive

Packer, J.I. *Knowing God*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993.

Stemming from Packer's profound theological knowledge, *Knowing God* brings together two important facets of the Christian faith—knowing about God and also knowing God through the context of a close relationship with the person of Jesus Christ. Written in an engaging and practical tone, this thought-provoking work seeks to transform and enrich the Christian understanding of God.

Milne, Bruce. [\*Know the Truth: A Handbook of Christian Belief\*](#). 3<sup>rd</sup>. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010.

"You will know the truth," said Jesus, "and the truth will set you free." Christians have already begun to know God and his truth. This handbook assists in that liberating knowledge, as it opens up the great themes of God's Word and shows how they fit together. Each chapter deals with one aspect of biblical truth and encourages further study with Scripture references to look up, questions for discussion, and books for additional reading.

Wakabayashi, Allen M. [\*Kingdom Come: How Jesus Wants to Change the World\*](#). Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2003.

Christianity is not merely about isolated going to heaven. It's about God transforming the entire world and making things right. Sicknesses will be healed, sins will be forgiven, injustice will be eradicated, and all creation will be redeemed. But this is not merely a distant future. It's happening now through what Jesus came to establish—the kingdom of God. Allen Wakabayashi reawakens you to the world-changing reality of the kingdom of God.

#### How Theology Shapes our Discipleship

Fraser, Elouis Renich. [\*Confessions of a Beginning Theologian\*](#). Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1998.

In this poignant, strikingly honest account, theologian Elouise Renich reveals her inner journey to overcome fear—fear of being wrong, doing wrong, being misunderstood and ignored—to confront her past and learn to befriend the Bible. Her story will inspire and encourage other "beginners"—at whatever stage in their personal and theological journeys—to learn to read theological texts more sympathetically, to develop theological imagination and to find their own voices as authentic human beings before God.

Johnson, Keith L. [\*Theology as Discipleship\*](#). Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015.

For many people, the word "theology" evokes something dry, academic, irrelevant and disconnected from the everyday concerns of life. We surely would not say that about God, so why is our talk about God any different? In this engaging and accessible introduction, Keith Johnson takes a fresh look at theology. He presents the discipline of theology as one of the ways we participate in the life of the triune God.

Seamands, Stephen. [\*Ministry in the Image of God: The Trinitarian Shape of Christian Service\*](#). Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2006.

Though as Christians we all affirm the doctrine of the Trinity, many of us might struggle to explain how understanding the Trinity could actually shape our ministry. Stephen Seamands demonstrates how a fully orbbed theology of the Trinity transforms our perception and practice of vocational ministry. Theological concepts like relationality and perichoresis have direct relevance to pastoral life and work, especially in unfolding a Trinitarian approach to relationships, service and mission. A thoroughly Trinitarian outlook provides the fuel for our ministry "of Jesus Christ, to the Father, through the Holy Spirit, on behalf of the church and the world."

White, John. *[The Fight: A Practical Handbook to Christian Living](#)*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1976.

There is joy and triumph in the Christian life. But the victory can come through struggle. John White knows this balance and gives us the encouragement to persevere. Here is a guide through the basic areas of Christian living we wrestle with throughout our lives: faith, prayer, temptation, evangelism, guidance, Bible study, fellowship, work. In this very personal book he offers new Christians sound first steps and older Christians refreshing insights into the struggles and the joys of freedom in Christ.

### Theology in Small Groups Settings

Aldred, Tyler. *[Deeply Rooted: A Disciple's Journey through the Apostle's Creed](#)*. Madison, WI: InterVarsity Christian Fellowship/USA.

The Deeply Rooted Discipleship guide is a great tool to give disciples a well-rounded foundation in the beliefs and practices of Christianity. Built upon the core tenants of the Apostles' Creed, this 10 week guide is especially suited for small communities who desire to grow deeper in their faith and learn how to translate that into active engagement in God's kingdom.

Smith, James Bryan. *[The Good and Beautiful God: Falling Love with the God Jesus Knows](#)*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2009.

We all have ideas that we tell ourselves about God and how he works in our lives. Some are true—but many are false. James Bryan Smith believes those thoughts determine not only who we are, but how we live. In fact, Smith declares, the most important thing about a person is what they think about God. The path to spiritual transformation begins here.