

## Ten Great Books by Dead Guys

In these days when so many churchgoers go from one “latest greatest fad” to another, I am sometimes asked to recommend books. When I do, I usually get somewhat confused looks back, because I rarely recommend books with the word “purpose” in the title or a book about end times or books about magic little prayers that will bring prosperity. All of those books may be somewhat helpful (or not), but I worry as a Pastor about the tendency we have to jump on the latest bandwagon.

That’s why I personally spend about half my reading time in classic books. There’s something about reading classic works! It helps me feel anchored in historic Christianity, involved in a faith that was around nearly 2,000 years before I was born, and will still be expanding around the globe after I die.

With winter coming up, you may have some more time indoors than you usually do. So let me recommend some gloriously irrelevant books that may very well help you become the most relevant person around. It goes without saying that you should try to find an edition in updated, readable English.

### **Ten books I have read and have greatly profited from:**

**Pilgrim’s Progress by John Bunyan (1628-1688).** Written from jail to encourage a church that made him its pastor even though he was imprisoned, Pilgrim’s Progress is my favorite book. As the pages unfold, the reader will see the things he or she faces in the Christian life: the Slough of Despond, the Giant named Despair, passing through Vanity Fair. By the end of the book the reader will realize the Christian life is probably more about perseverance than it is about purpose.

**The Confessions by Augustine (354-430).** This classic was one of the first spiritual autobiographies ever written. Can Augustine, who lived in North Africa 1600 years ago, relate to people today? Absolutely! He didn’t become a Christian until he was in his mid 30’s, had a live in girlfriend and a teenage son out of wedlock. He had tried in vain to find meaning in life. The peace he found in Christ made him declare: “you made us for yourself, O God, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.”

**With Christ in the School of Prayer by Andrew Murray (1828-1917).** In thirty days Andrew Murray, who spent most of his ministry years in South Africa, will teach you how to pray. Reading this book shows how shallow many of our contemporary books on prayer really are.

**The Normal Christian Life by Watchman Nee (1903-1972).** A Chinese Christian who was responsible for thousands coming to Christ after his conversion in 1920. He spent the last twenty years of his life imprisoned for the faith. We have come to expect the “normal” Christian life to be a life of mediocrity. Nee argues in this classic that the normal Christian life should be more like the courageous faith seen in the Bible.

**Precious Remedies against Satan's Devices by Thomas Brooks (1608-1680).** If you don't believe Satan is real, this book will be worthless to you. But if you understand that Satan is very real and actively seeking your harm, this book will give you the tools you need so that you will be ready to do spiritual warfare with him.

**Preface to Romans by Martin Luther (1483-1546).** The fuller work was Luther's commentary on Romans. The preface has been instrumental in the conversion of many great Christians, including John Wesley. You can read it under Luther's name at [www.ccel.org](http://www.ccel.org), a great Christian Classics site.

**At the Master's Feet by Sadhu Sundar Singh (1889-1929).** This can also be read at [www.ccel.org](http://www.ccel.org). Sundar was an Indian Christian who lived the kind of beautiful life that Francis of Assisi had lived. This small book is a great testimony to the freedom that we can find when we leave the things of this world behind.

**Almost Anything by C.S. Lewis (1898-1963).** Having read over ten of Lewis' works, I remain amazed at the gift he had of communicating the faith to a world that had grown skeptical. His words remain as relevant as when he wrote them! Since so many current Christian writers quote Lewis generously, why not put their books down and go right to the source? Mere Christianity is a great place to start. Of course you may want to delight the child inside by reading the Chronicles of Narnia before the "Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe" comes out!

**The fictional works of George MacDonald (1824-1905), updated by Michael Phillips.** MacDonald had a huge impact on writers like C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien. I have found great joy in reading books like The Curate of Glaston, Malcolm, and the Poet and the Pauper. Characters you will never forget emerge, like Sir Gibbie and Thomas Wingfold. You know it must be good if a Campbell is encouraging you to read a MacDonald!

**The Godly Man's Picture by Thomas Watson (1620-1686).** This Puritan Classic is one of my favorites. It helps the Christian evaluate himself to see if he really is trying to be a godly man. A great book for those trying to be "Promise Keepers."

I hope some of these books warm up your winter as they have for me in the past!

Danny Campbell <><