



Annual Book Review 2005

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Ecclesiastes 12:12 - But beyond this, my son, be warned: the writing of many books is endless, and excessive devotion to books is wearying to the body.

I love those words from Solomon. "Excessive devotion to books is wearying to the body." Those words are true; however, books are also invigorating to the mind.

I offer to you this third annual installment of "Recommended Reading." I have selected six excellent books from my list of recent readings. If you are looking for some brain food to take with you on a trip/vacation this summer, you might enjoy one of these.

I have listed them in ascending order of "difficulty."

This Little Church Went to Market by Gary E. Gilley (Xulon Press, 144 pgs). With the "market-driven," "seeker friendly" church-growth philosophy now taking off like wildfire in churches across our nation, Gilley offers a very accessible analysis of the "seeker friendly" movement.

Gilley analyzes, in light of Scripture, the forces that are shaping the modern church including an entertainment mindset, the market-driven philosophy, and secular psychology.

The second part of the book deals with what is wrong with the modern church- growth movement showing that the seeker church is built on the wrong foundation, presenting the wrong message, and focusing on the wrong need.

If you are looking for a good primer evaluating the market-driven church movement, I recommend this

book.

In, But Not Of: A Guide to Christian Ambition and the Desire to Influence the World by Hugh Hewitt (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 213 pgs). This is a book I wish I had read when I graduated from High School. Others that have read it say the same thing.

Not all Christians are called to be missionaries, pastors, or to serve in other positions of full time ministry. However, all Christians are called to glorify God in the vocation to which God has called them. God places Christians in positions of influence and power and gives them opportunities to wield that influence in the world for Christ.

How can a Christian businessman be "in the world" but not "of the world?" Hewitt answers that question and others like it in a series of 48 short chapters.

Chapter titles include: Tattoos: Don't (one of my personal favorite chapters), Coasting Will Kill You, Avoid Thrill Seeking: Genuine Accomplishment Lasts; Adrenaline Doesn't, and Christians Anger Only Rarely and Only Righteously.

Hewitt deals with the subjects of power, influence, leadership, priorities, habits, attitude, actions, knowledge, discipline, and work ethic. It is an enjoyable book filled with world wise wisdom, but not worldly wisdom.

Their God is Too Small by Bruce A. Ware (Crossway, 129 pgs). After the last seven articles in this column, how could I not include a recommendation for this book? This is an easy read on the subject of open theism. If you want a good book to put on your shelf which will give an accessible treatment of the errors

and authors of open theism, this is the book.

If you are looking for a book that is more theological and offers a treatment of greater depth, I would recommend *Whatever Happened to the Reformation* edited by Gary L.W. Johnson and R. Fowler White (P&R Publishing).

Decision Making and the Will of God by Garry Friesen (Multnomah, 526 pages). No, the page number is not a typo. It really is 526 pages. This book has been around for 25 years and is the best I have seen on the subject of "knowing the will of God."

It is only within the last 100 years that Christians have fallen prey to a notion (known as the traditional view) that God has an individual and specific will for every believer. The traditional view says that we are to find that will for all the little decisions that we make in life and to miss it is to settle for God's "second best." Have you ever heard someone say that?

Who should I marry? What college should I attend? What job should I take? What should I name my child, my dog, or my hamster? What if I make the wrong decision?

Is God giving us guidance, trying to talk to us but unable because we don't know how to listen to Him? Are we supposed to divine the will of God using signs, circumstances, fleeces, and inner promptings?

I have said before and I will say again, this approach that is practiced by so many believers only leads to confusion and aberrant theology. It ends up discounting the role of Scripture in the life of the believer and leads people into a subjective malaise of personal revelation and confused thinking.

The book deals with all the verses that are typically jerked from their contexts to offer support for the idea that God is in the business of giving personal revelations, individual promptings, leadings, and inner feelings to guide His people. Friesen offers an alternative. You'll have to read the book to find out what it is! Well worth your time and attention!

Evangelical Ethics: Issues Facing the Church

Today John Jefferson Davis (P&R Publishing, 228 pgs). In our high tech world, Christians are faced with ethical questions that did not exist a generation ago. How do we apply biblical principles to new ethical questions and recent technological developments?

How about some of the age-old questions as well?

Davis offers some good, solid answers.

I'm not in agreement with his position on some matters (divorce and remarriage for instance) but the book does offer much food for thought and offers a very thorough and fair treatment of all the issues presented.

Davis thoroughly addresses the following topics: Contraception, Reproductive Technologies, Divorce and Remarriage, Homosexuality, Abortion, Infanticide and Euthanasia, Capital Punishment, Civil Disobedience and Revolution, and War and Peace.

I hope you enjoy these books as much as I did. So many books, so little time. Remember, you are a product of the books you read, and in all your reading, don't neglect The Book.

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