



Books I whole-heartedly recommend – July 2017

Some of my friends are asking me a very good question: what books do I recommend? I love this question and my perspective has changed some away from more modern books, and back to the old trustworthy ones. So, with that little intro, here is a list of books I recommend.

Book of Matthew – This book was written by the Jewish man Matthew (part of the Tribe of Levi), the scribe and former tax-collector, a disciple of Jesus. Matthew wrote his historical account of Jesus and His teachings and miracles – under the direct inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Book of Mark – This book was written by the Jewish man John Mark (most often just called Mark), cousin of Barnabas, and worked with and learned from both Peter and Paul. Mark wrote the historical accounts of Jesus and His teachings and miracles through/from Peter's perspective and notes – under the direct inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Book of Luke – This book was written by the Gentile physician Luke after he had carefully discussed and studied the accounts, records and eye-witness testimonies about Jesus and His works and teachings. Luke did the most chronological historic account of Jesus and His teachings and miracles. This book was written as a way of sharing the gospel with a ruler of some sort, named Theophilus, and under the direct inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Book of John – This book was written by the apostle John, brother of James. John was one of Jesus' first disciples – along with Peter and Andrew, as well as presumably his brother, James. John was the last one to write about Jesus' history (AD 90s), teachings, and miracles – under the direct inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Book of Acts – This book was written again by the physician Luke, as he traveled along and/or heard the accounts of the teachings and activities of the apostles and disciples of Jesus. This book was also written as a way of sharing the gospel with a ruler of some sort, named Theophilus, under the direct inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Book of Romans – This book was written by the apostle Paul, the brilliant Jewish man, student/teacher of the Torah (1st five books of the Old Testament, also called the "Pentateuch") and the Haftarah (prophets). Paul was Israel's 2nd chief rabbi, after Jesus – Yeshua HaMashiach (Jesus the Christ). Paul was miraculously saved by God when Jesus spoke to him on the road to Damascus, and Paul was a changed man from then on. Jesus trained him for 17 years to teach Paul how many things in the Law and

Prophets pointed to Jesus' sacrificial death for the sins of many. Paul, in Romans, explains that this whole book is his gospel message – covering everything from salvation to sanctification to eternity and everything in between. Paul indeed wrote this book under the direct inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Books of 1st and 2nd Corinthians - Both of these books were written by Paul. And they are Paul trying to reason with the new believers of the pagan city of Corinth of how to live godly in a crooked world. Corinth had many temples to the “gods” of Egypt, Greece and Rome. Corinth's temples were the instigators of rampant sexual immorality. And the trade-guilds ran the city and tried hard to starve out anyone who followed Jesus – a harsh form of persecution against the gospel of Jesus, to try to stop the preaching that caused conviction/remorse for the sins that were so prevalent there. Both of these books were written under the direct inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Book of Galatians – This book was written by Paul as well. Paul was pleading with the new followers of Christ in Asia-minor to not follow another “gospel” that is not a gospel at all. Myths about “gods” and “messiahs” were prevalent there too, as in most ancient pagan cities. The main topic of this book is that we cannot earn our salvation through “good” works, and yet we must walk in holiness as taught by the Holy Spirit and not the desires for sin that our flesh wants and the world teaches. This book was indeed written under the direct inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Book of Ephesians – This book was written by Paul too. Paul here is talking to the people of Ephesus, a group that Jesus Himself talked to directly as well – for they are representative of the one and only “apostolic” church age, the 1st of the 7-stages of the church age. Paul and John (just to name two) were often having to strongly correct the false teachings that kept creeping into this church in the pagan city of Ephesus (home of some major myths of “gods” and their temples) – myths that kept leading the followers of Christ back to the comfortable sins of those around them. This book covers salvation by grace, walking in the pure light of obedience to Jesus, how to maintain purity and unity among the brethren, as well as the topic of what spiritual warfare is and how to stand in Christ, through the Word of God (Bible) and prayer. This book indeed too, was written under the direct inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Book of Philippians – This book was written by Paul too. Paul here is talking to the people of Philippi – another town in what's now called Asia-Minor or Turkey. The members of this church sent funds again and again to help Paul preach the gospel in various places. In this book, Paul addresses such topics as prayer, suffering with Christ, following Christ's example, to watch out for false teachers, citizenship in Heaven for honest disciples of Christ, as well as focusing on the things that are pure, honest, and of Godly character. This book indeed was written under the direct inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Book of Colossians – This book was written by Paul as well. Paul here is writing to the people of Colosse, a city just miles away from Laodicea. In this letter, Paul had to emphasize Jesus' deity as well as teach on avoiding pagan myths and legends, how to avoid following man's lists of rules, and to instead set our mind and heart on Christ and following Him and His Word fully – including as husband and wives and families. This book was written under the direct inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Books of 1st and 2nd Thessalonians – These books were written to the people who followed Christ in the city of Thessalonica – a city in Asia-minor/ Turkey. Paul pleads with these people to walk pure in Christ, show the honest and holy love of Christ to others, as well as to not get confused about when the Lord's

return will be. Both of these books have key notes about the “rapture” and how not to be deceived as though we’ve supposedly missed it. 2nd Thessalonians even gives us a little chronology in chapter 2. 2nd Thessalonians concludes with the warning to stay diligent and faithful in holiness and sharing and teaching and explaining the gospel and Word of God to all who will listen. These books were written under the direct inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Books of 1st and 2nd Timothy – These books were written by Paul directly to Timothy, his most prominent son in the faith. Paul reminds him on such things as conducting himself as an example of godly conduct, love, spirit, faith and purity, as well as teaching on how to identify a false teacher by what he teaches and how he lives, as well as how to keep preaching despite being surrounded by a world who seems to be hardening their hearts in sins. Both of these books were written under the direct inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Book of Titus – This book was written again by Paul, and again directly to a person – Titus, another of Paul’s spiritual sons. In partnership with what Paul taught about the Biblical structure of God’s church in 1st Corinthians 12:28, Ephesians 4:11-12 and 1st Timothy 3, the book of Titus has some solid and carefully explained teaching on how both the gathering of believers should be working together as well as how their leaders must live to keep God’s blessing on their lives as honorable leaders and Bible teachers. This book was written under the direct inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Book of Philemon – This book was written by Paul to Philemon about another son in the faith, Onesimus. Onesimus had run away from being a slave of Philemon and somehow, by God’s coordination, he found Paul and seemingly became saved and then was growing in following Christ while studying with Paul and having helped him with the work of the ministry. Paul was sending Onesimus back to his slave-owner, Philemon, and asking that Philemon would accept him as a brother and not mistreat him (as though he might have deserved it) as a runaway slave. There is much good teaching in this small letter from Paul to one of his fellow laborers, Philemon. This book was written under the direct inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Book of Hebrews – This book was written by an unnamed author, who I believe is Paul because of clues in the text. For whatever reason, Paul himself or some very close companion of Paul, either didn’t need to identify themselves – because of familiarity, or naming the writer/person was needing to be avoided for some unstated or unclear reason. Either way, the scholarship and teaching and knowledge of the Torah and Prophets has Paul’s name all over it. So, despite not quite knowing whoever wrote it, this book covers many things concerning the Hebrews/Jewish people – everything from Jesus being the High Priest, to the subject of not intentionally walking in sin so as not to trample on Jesus’ sacrifice, as well as the topic of covenants and running the race that God has for each individual – to be diligent to do the work of God that He has for them in this life. Far too much rich content to review here, but Hebrews 11 and 12 are monumental passages in the foundation and life of all honest followers of Christ. This book was written under the direct inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Book of James – This book was written by James, the half-brother of Jesus (meaning son of Joseph and Mary). This is a short little book packed with lots of strong teaching – some people call it the “proverbs” of the New Testament. It’s not just wise sayings, but it is simple practical teaching of how to live and follow Christ in an age where sin creeps in so easily and undetected, because God’s Word is not used by many Christians to define sin. This book was written under the direct inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Books of 1st and 2nd Peter – These two books are written by the older apostle Peter, in AD 60s. He has grown and matured over the years, and God directing his words gives powerful, challenging and encouraging words concerning how to persevere through trials, how not to live for the temporary trinkets and sin-pleasures of this life, and how to remember and remind others that all things we see are going to burn up with fervent heat – nothing we hold onto will last, except souls and the works we do – good or bad. Peter asks the solid question following – what sort of persons ought we to be in holy conduct? Excellent question for any age – since sin is the same from age to age, since the literal Adam and Eve. The other key foundation piece that needs to be noted here is 2nd Peter 1:5-11 – explaining the progression and/or key maturity levels that all honest followers of Christ are growing in – truly that is a foundational passage. These books were written under the direct inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Books of 1st, 2nd, and 3rd John – These books were written by the older apostle John. In AD 90s, when John wrote these epistles/letters, John was the last surviving apostle and yet is still preaching boldly, despite many trials and much persecution to shut him up. John lays it out very clearly that God sees everything around us in only two categories – righteousness and active sin. There is no gray area in God's sight. These are profound and condensed books with so much teaching on holiness, stages of spiritual growth, how to identify false teachers, and more. These books were written under the direct inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Book of Jude – This book was written by Jude, the half-brother of Jesus, and it is compact and has rich and deep teachings about false teachers and what drives them. It also teaches us how to spot them and emphasizes that we indeed must, lest we fall to the same sins they excuse and revel in. This book was written under the direct inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Book of Revelation – This book is the conclusion of the New Testament – last book written/given by God to His apostles and prophets. This book was given by Jesus and His angels to John to teach to the honest followers of Christ (aka churches). This book is the chronology of end-times events. For those who study this book in order and in context, the end times events not only make sense, but they can use it to help them navigate through the many introductions of the newest “antichrist”. Jesus starts this book with letters to the 7 churches (literal churches, types of churches and chronological order of the “church age”). Those 7 letters from Jesus to the 7-churches need to be read often by all, as does the whole book – with a blessing at the beginning and end, as well as 2 warnings not to intentionally add to or take away from it at the end. This book was written under the direct inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

We live in an age of false teachers everywhere. In times like these, there is only one set of books to trust – the Bible: Old and New Testament. I emphasized the New Testament, but the New Testament is built on the Old Testament – neither are obsolete, but many prophecies of the Old Testament are fulfilled and shown fulfilled in the New Testament. The Old Testament shows the deep and purely holy character of God that is taught so richly in the New Testament, and exemplified in Jesus Himself.

This list of books (Old Testament included, and “lost books excluded”) are the only Books that can be trusted, and need to be used to judge how trustworthy every other book is. But to sort through the innumerable works written peddling God's Word for profit, you have to know what God's Word actually says. And the only way to know that – is to read it and re-read it and re-read it, and re-read it.... :)

Praying this encourages you to dust off your Bible or MP3 Bible and make that your fact-checker again, or encourages you because you already do that. :) - Watching, Preaching, Praying, your growing bro, SH