



The 'Check It Out' List

Books, films, and podcasts for nurturing & challenging your faith as a college student

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Non-Fiction Books:

Blue Like Jazz by Donald Miller



Subtitled "non-religious thoughts on Christian spirituality," Blue Like Jazz is a memoir style collection of essays tracking the ongoing spiritual journey of Donald Miller, an earnest, disenfranchised evangelical who looks for meaning and purpose and beauty in Portland, Oregon.

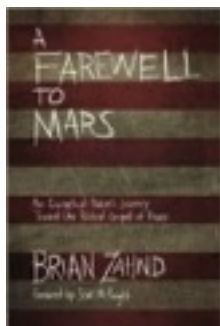
Donald Miller was the speaker at the 2007 College Conference at Montreat, and "Blue Like Jazz" was recently made into a movie.

Love Wins by Rob Bell

A firestorm of controversy erupted with the release of this book in 2012. In Love Wins, well known Christian teacher and author Rob Bell, then pastor at Mars Hill Bible Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan, took a unabashed look at the traditional assumptions we make about Christianity's answers to perhaps the hardest and most serious question of life: what is heaven, what is hell, and who goes where? Some say 'Love Wins' raises more questions than answers, but ought to get anyone thinking deeper about the ultimate fate of everyone who ever lived.

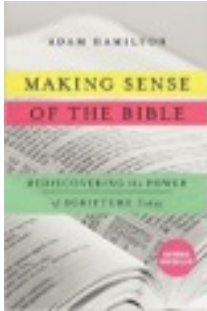


A Farewell to Mars by Brian Zahnd



In this new book, Brian Zahnd, pastor of the non-denominational Word of Life Church in St. Joseph, Missouri, explores what it means for Jesus Christ to be the prince of peace, the one who says "blessed are the peacemakers," and the one who comes with a way of forgiveness, reconciliation, and nonviolence.

Making Sense of the Bible by Adam Hamilton



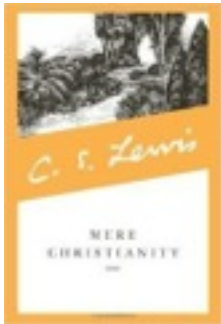
As pastor of the United Methodist Church of the Resurrection just outside Kansas City, Adam Hamilton has been fielding tough questions about Scripture his entire career. In this easy to read, well written book, Hamilton introduces us to some of the basic principles at work when we read and interpret the Bible. Hamilton isn't afraid to address the most controversial issues in scripture either, whether it's evolution, homosexuality, slavery, divorce and marriage and the role of women.

Girl Meets God by Lauren Winner

From the amazon description: "The child of a Jewish father and a lapsed Southern Baptist mother, Lauren F. Winner chose to become an Orthodox Jew. But even as she was observing Sabbath rituals and studying Jewish law, Lauren was increasingly drawn to Christianity. Courageously leaving what she loved, she eventually converted. In *Girl Meets God*, this appealing woman takes us through a year in her Christian life as she attempts to reconcile both sides of her religious identity."



Mere Christianity by C.S. Lewis



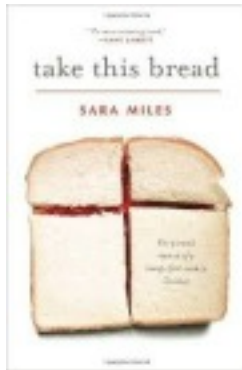
This book is a classic that any Christian should read, whether they agree with Lewis' arguments or not. With essays that first begun in as BBC radio addresses during World War II, C.S. Lewis outlines his basic argument for making sense of the Christian faith—not any one particular tradition of the Christian faith, but the 'mere' Christianity that various Christian traditions together hold in common.

Traveling Mercies by Anne Lamott

With a refreshing honesty and hilarious irreverence, writer and novelist Ann Lamott traces her own spiritual journey in this memoir style collection of essays on the Christian faith. Ann Lamott is in many ways an unlikely convert—as she writes, "My coming to faith did not start with a great leap, but rather a series of staggers."



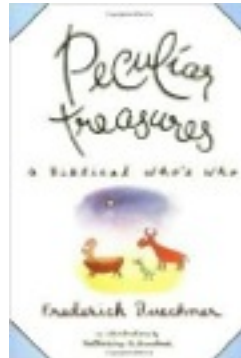
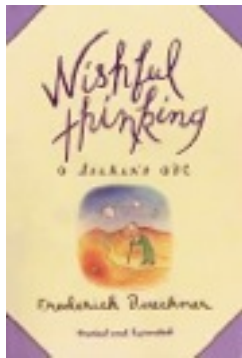
Take this Bread by Sara Miles



From the amazon description: "Early one morning, for no earthly reason, Sara Miles, raised an atheist, wandered into a church, received communion, and found herself transformed—embracing a faith she'd once scorned. A lesbian left-wing journalist who'd covered revolutions around the world, Miles didn't discover a religion that was about angels or good behavior or piety; her faith centered on real hunger, real food, and real bodies. Before long, she turned the bread she ate at communion into tons of groceries, piled on the church's altar to be given away. Within a few years, she and the people she served had started nearly a dozen food pantries in the poorest parts of their city."

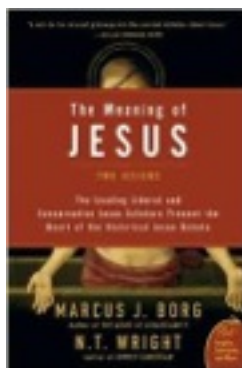
Wishful Thinking Peculiar Treasures

Whistling in the Dark by Frederick Buechner



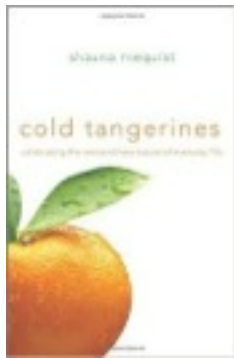
Frederick Buechner is a celebrated Presbyterian pastor and author. These three books together make up his dictionary-style "lexical trilogy," where he playfully and thoughtfully defines some of the most difficult concepts of the Christian faith, tells the story of Biblical characters and reflects on some of life's toughest questions.

The Meaning of Jesus by N.T. Wright and Marcus Borg



In this thought provoking book, two Christian New Testament scholars—the liberal and progressive-minded Marcus Borg and the traditional, orthodox-oriented N.T. Wright together explore the historical figure of Jesus: what modern scholarship can tell us about who Jesus was, how he lived, what he taught, what he cared about, and what he means for the world, theologically. Wright and Borg respectfully respond to one another through a series of essays, each facing a different aspect of Jesus' life, ministry and mission. This book is a must read for anyone interested in the historical study of Jesus.

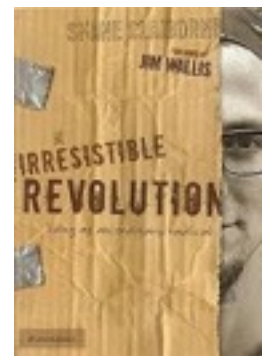
Cold Tangerines by Shauna Neiquist



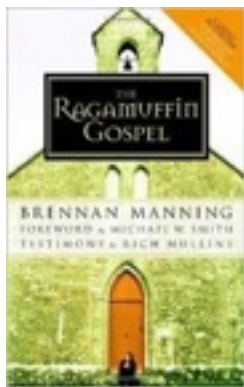
From the amazon description: "Cold Tangerines is a collection of stories that celebrate the extraordinary moments hidden in your everyday life. It is about God, and about life, and about the thousands of daily ways in which an awareness of God changes and infuses everything. It is about spiritual life, and about all the things that are called nonspiritual life that might be spiritual after all."

The Irresistible Revolution by Shane Claiborne

Shane Claiborne is a member of the simple life community in Philadelphia, community of believers that seek to radically live out their faith in Jesus together in community. Shane Claiborne takes seriously what it means to follow Jesus as a way of life. In the Irresistible Revolution, Claiborne shares his story, and inspires others to claim the Jesus as a radical way of life that ordinary people can follow.



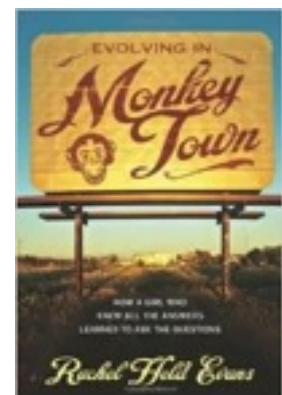
The Ragamuffin Gospel by Brennan Manning



Brennan Manning was a former priest and recovering alcoholic who spoke eloquently about the good news of God's grace and love. In the ragamuffin gospel, Manning masterfully testifies to what Jesus has to offer for ragamuffins: for the broken, the beat-up and the downtrodden.

Evolving in Monkey Town By Rachel Held Evans

In this book, popular blogger on faith and culture Rachel Held Evans recalls her upbringing in Dayton, Tennessee, where the theory of evolution was famously put on trial 80 years ago. Growing up as a creationist, denying the theory of evolution, Rachel Held Evans recalls how she came to see the relationship between science and faith in a whole new way; finding it possible to both accept the scientific consensus on the origin of life and be a follower of Christ.



Fiction Books:

Wise Blood by Flannery O'Connor

Flannery O'Connor is one of the most celebrated Southern writers of the 20th Century. Her unique style of Southern Gothic literature often explores grotesques characters. Always lying beneath the surface is her Catholic perspective, which often surfaces with themes of sin and redemption.

Wise Blood is perhaps O'Connor's most famous novel: "focused on the story of Hazel Motes, a twenty-two-year-old caught in an unending struggle against his innate, desperate fate, this tale of redemption, retribution, false prophets, blindness, blindings, and wisdoms gives us one of the most riveting characters in twentieth-century American fiction."



Everything that Rises Must Converge by Flannery O'Connor



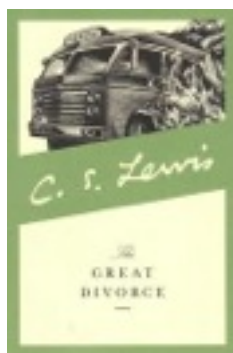
A Collection of short Stories: "Flannery O'Connor was working on Everything That Rises Must Converge at the time of her death. This collection is an exquisite legacy from a genius of the American short story, in which she scrutinizes territory familiar to her readers: race, faith, and morality. The stories encompass the comic and the tragic, the beautiful and the grotesque; each carries her highly individual stamp and could have been written by no one else."

The Screwtape Letters by C.S. Lewis

In this epistolary novel, C.S. Lewis explores the way evil works with delightful satire. Written from the perspective of Screwtape, a "senior devil," these letters are addressed to Wormwood, "a junior devil," who is learning how to tempt a human being. Through the words of Screwtape, Lewis shows us the way evil and sin manipulate us and fool us into thinking the world is all about us, and not about God.



The Great Divorce by C.S. Lewis



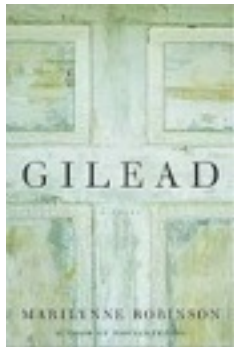
Set in a sprawling city of ever abandoned homes named hell, and at the gates of heaven, "The Great Divorce" creatively explores the question of salvation in the Christian faith through uncommon imagery of what heaven and hell might look like.

Silence by Shasaku Endo

Written by the late Catholic Japanese author Shasaku Endo, "Silence" is a historical novel that follows two Jesuit missionaries to Japan through great suffering and persecution. Throughout the book, God's ongoing silence during the missionary's suffering is deafening, raising one of the greatest questions of the Christian faith: where is God when we suffer? Silence explores and responds to this question with beautiful poignancy.



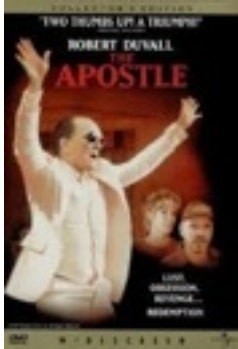
Gilead by Marilynne Robinson



A self avowed "liberal calvinist," Marilynne Robinson writes carefully, thoughtfully and wonderfully in this award winning novel about a congregationalist pastor: " a story about fathers and sons and the spiritual battles that still rage at America's heart. Writing in the tradition of Emily Dickinson and Walt Whitman, Marilynne Robinson's beautiful, spare, and spiritual prose allows "even the faithless reader to feel the possibility of transcendent order"

Films:

The Apostle (1997)



Written, Directed and Starring Robert Duval

“After his happy life spins out of control, a preacher from Texas changes his name, goes to Louisiana and starts preaching on the radio.”The Apostle is a dark tale of sin, brokenness and redemption.

Son of Man (2006)

Written and Directed by Mark Dornford-May
Starring Andile Kosi

This film retells the story of the life of Jesus Christ as told in the New Testament, only set in modern day, war-torn Africa. This film brings the Gospel to life in a modern setting, by asking, “what might have the story of Jesus been like if he lived today, rather than 2,000 years ago?”



Leap of Faith (1992)



Directed by Richard Pearce
Written by Janus Cercone
Starring Steve Martin and Debra Winger

“Fake faith healer Jonas Nightingale is stranded in a small town where he finds he can't fool all the people all the time.”

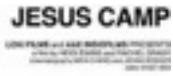
Hell House (2001)

Directed by George Ratliff

This documentary looks at an annual “Hell House” performed over Halloween by the youth group at Pentecostal church in the suburb of Texas. This documentary provides a fair and unbiased look at Pentecostalism and evangelical Christian subculture.



Jesus Camp (2006)



Directed by Heidi Ewing and Rachel Grady

Jesus Camp is a documentary that follows a children's summer camp run by Becky Fisher, a pentecostal children's minister, whose evangelical Christianity often seems to get tangled up in republican politics.



Saved (2004)

Directed by Brian Dannelly
Written by Brian Dannelly and Michael Urban
Starring Jena Malone, Mandy Moore, Patrick Fugit and Macaulay Culkin

Following a young girl attending a private Christian high school who gets pregnant after trying to convert her gay boyfriend, this comedy explores not only themes of redemption but also issues of judgement and exclusion in Christian context.



Calvary (2014)



Written & Directed by John Michael McDonagh
Starring Brendan Gleeson, Chris O'Dowd, Kelly Reilly

After he is threatened during a confession, a good-natured Irish priest must battle the dark forces closing in around him.

Podcasts:



Fourth Presbyterian Church of Chicago
Sermons from Shannon Kershner, senior pastor



Hear the Word
Weekly Lectionary Readings from the PC(USA)



Day One
Outstanding Preaching from Mainline Protestant Churches



The Liturgists Podcast
The Intersection of Faith, Science and Art with Michael Gungor, Lisa Paino and Mike McHargue



The UKirk Nashville Podcast
Weekly Sermons and Lessons from the UKirk Community at Vanderbilt & Belmont Universities