

Earl's Suggested Reading List | Friends of the Library Lecture | 4/24/12

I'll share my list of great books with you. After the Bible, these following books and authors have had the most influence on my own intellectual and spiritual journey.

- *Pensées* by Blaise Pascal. The most mentally alive writer I know of.
- *Institutes of the Christian Religion* by John Calvin. An impressive and exciting grasp of the large outline of the gospel's meaning.
- *Lectures on Romans* by Martin Luther. As fresh today as in the sixteenth century.
- Karl Barth. Begin with *Dogmatics in Outline*. I deeply appreciate his wholeness and his serious intention to really hear the biblical text. He is the theologians' theologian.
- Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Begin with *Letters and Papers from Prison*. He called out to me to decide, once and for all, about what matters the most in my life.
- C.S. Lewis. Begin with *The Chronicles of Narnia*. I owe so much to Lewis, especially the wonderful mixture of good surprise added to his marvelous skill at description.
- *The Lord of the Rings* by J.R.R. Tolkien. How can anyone miss out on the journey of Frodo and Sam Gamgee?
- G.K. Chesterton. Begin with *Orthodoxy*. I love his humor and ability to stir up my own imagination.
- *Christian Letters to a Post-Christian Age* by Dorothy Sayers is brilliant and earthy.
- Helmut Thielicke. Begin with *How the World Began*. I learned about preaching from Thielicke.
- Leo Tolstoy, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Boris Pasternak, Alexander Solzhenitsyn. These writers have stirred me emotionally and spiritually more than all other novelists.
- T.S. Eliot, W.H. Auden, Robert Frost. These poets have given me deep respect for words.
- Mark Twain and Robert Benchley have mastered off-the-wall humor with unique insight into personality.
- Paul Tournier possesses psychological wisdom and evenhandedness. Try to find his book *Secrets*.

The best books I've read are:

- My favorite novels are *Crime and Punishment* by Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Les Misérables* by Victor Hugo, and *Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain.
- The most impressive recent novels are *The Winds of War* by Herman Wouk and *Peace Like a River* by Leif Enger.
- The most helpful book about the Christian faith is Barth's *Dogmatics in Outline*.
- The most persuasive case for the Christian life is C.S. Lewis's *Screwtape Letters*.
- The most impressive biographies are *Karl Barth* by Eberhard Busch and *Williams Borden* by Mrs. Howard Taylor.