



Adriel Sanchez

MY TOP TEN BOOKS

See that smile? That's for real! What a joy it has been to partner with *Core Christianity* in its mission to help every believer live a courageous, hope-filled faith knowing that the gospel is nothing less than "the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes" (Romans 1:16). Adriel's infectious enthusiasm for that mission is as winsome as that smile—and as authentic. We're glad to share his book recommendations as further window into our good friend's passion for helping Christians hold on to the core of our beliefs.

I'm one of those people who has a hard time finishing a book! I don't know about you, but I tend to get a few chapters in and then BAM! Another book comes along that captures my attention and displaces whatever I was previously reading. This means that when I finish a book, it's a pretty big deal. Many books have had a big impact on my life and ministry, and I want to share 10 of them that I believe will encourage you in your walk with the Lord.

1. *The Confessions of Saint Augustine*

My third son is named Aurelius Augustine, after the bishop of Hippo famous for the *Confessions*, his sermons, and his theological writings. I first read Augustine's *Confessions* in college, and I was struck by the fact that this follower of Jesus lived so many centuries ago, but knew and loved the same Jesus I had come to know. This book traces Augustine's life story, and highlights how the faithful prayers of a mother can impact the world forever.

2. *Grounded in the Gospel*, J.I.

Packer and Gary A. Parrett Many Christians today have a truncated view of the gospel. They understand it as the "entryway" to Christianity, but don't recognize how our entire lives should be grounded in and shaped by the gospel message. In this book, Packer and Parrett talk about how to recover gospel centrality with an emphasis on catechesis. The gospel isn't just about how to begin the Christian life, it's the source of our vitality each step of the way into maturity.

3. *Life Together*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer

This small book presents a beautiful and yet realistic view of what Christian community is supposed to look like. One of the big takeaways for me from Bonhoeffer's work was that the church isn't supposed to be the *fellowship of the pious*—as he calls it, but a community of sinners united by the blood of Jesus. This means that we don't have to pretend

we have it all together in church. God welcomes broken sinners, unites them in one family through Jesus.

4. *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus*, Gary Habermas and Michael Licona

The Christian faith hinges on the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and there are a lot of good reasons to believe that the resurrection miracle was a real, historical event, with everlasting implications. Habermas and Licona do an excellent job of walking through the key evidence in a way that will strengthen your faith and give you hope.

5. *A Grief Observed*, C.S. Lewis

This short piece contains C.S. Lewis' meditations after the death of his wife, Joy. To read them is to be invited into his grief, and to wrestle with some of the most common questions we ask in the darker seasons of life. Where is God? Why does he seem silent in the midst of my pain? *A Grief Observed* is a helpful companion in times of grief, and commentary on its depth, all the while not leaving us hopeless.

6. *Losing Susan*, Victor Lee Austin

My wife and I cried through this one together. Austin is a priest whose wife died tragically of brain disease. *Losing Susan* tells their story, from the time of their meeting and falling in love, until the Lord took Susan home to be with him. In between, Austin gives an honest depiction of the suffering faced even by God's children. I found this book sobering, and refreshing (because it didn't hide from difficulty).

7. *Rejoicing in Lament*, J. Todd Billings

Billings is a theologian who was diagnosed with incurable cancer just before turning 40. This book is a beautiful example of how theology and Scripture can help us during suffering. Billings recognizes that the Bible doesn't always give us cookie-cutter answers, but that doesn't mean it leaves us with nothing.

God gives us the language of lament in the Psalms.

8. *The Compelling Community*, Mark Dever and Jamie Dunlop

The church of Jesus Christ isn't an affinity group. God brings people from all different backgrounds together around the gospel of his Son, and this diverse community is a powerful witness to the world. Dever and Dunlop contrast gospel revealing community, with what they call *gospel-plus* community. In gospel revealing community, the makeup of the church exhibits the power of the gospel to bring together different people. The community itself says something about the gospel's power. In gospel-plus community, the church tends to revolve less around the gospel message, and more around our particular affinities (similar life experience, or similar taste in music, etc.). This book provides a biblical vision for what church community ought to look like.

9. *The Gospel Comes with a House Key*, Rosaria Butterfield

This book underscores the relationship between community, hospitality, and evangelism. Rosaria Butterfield was in a lesbian relationship when God began to soften her heart through the hospitality of a Christian family. Over time, the Lord used the faithful witness of this family to bring her to faith, and in *The Gospel Comes with a House Key*, Rosaria gives practical wisdom for living a life of Christ-centered hospitality.

10. *Ordinary*, Michael Horton

Pastors aren't the only ones who are burning out at high rates. Sadly, many believers in Jesus Christ are exhausted by trying to live the extraordinary Christian life. We need to understand what it means to walk with Jesus in faithful service to our families, and the church. *Ordinary* will help us do just that, *sustainable faith in a radical, restless world*.