

# 20 CHRISTIAN BOOKS

That Will  
Ruin Your Life

(FOR THE BETTER)

Recklessly  
Alive

**“The man who does not read books has no advantage over the man that cannot read them.”  
-Mark Twain**

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Make no mistake about it, when you choose to truly follow Jesus life as you know it is going to change dramatically. Not in a cringe-worthy way like that amateur production of Romeo & Juliet on ice your mom made you go see in the 7th grade (wait, was that just me?) No, this dramatic change will be **beautiful** and **unbelievable**.

It might not happen fast than a Hot Pocket, but slowly your old way of living will seem empty and shallow. *At least that's how it went for me.*

Over the course of a year, I went from getting wasted in a downtown bar every weekend to leading worship on the plains of Zimbabwe. I went from forgetting my own name to learning the names of 200 students in our Kids ministry and youth group. **I went from wanting to commit suicide to finding a purpose for my life and hope for the future.**

How did it happen you ask? Well, I found a church I connected with for starters and I chose to continuously put myself out there and meet new people. Moreover, I chose to the church like it was my job and taught myself to [fall in love with the bible](#). After that, consistently burying myself in good Christian books was the single greatest catalyst in my transformation--*and watching God change your life is the best thing that could ever happen to you.*

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*Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect. -Romans 12:2 (NLT)*

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If you want to be **recklessly alive** you have to change the way you think. If you want to know God's purpose for your life you have to learn to see the world in a different way!

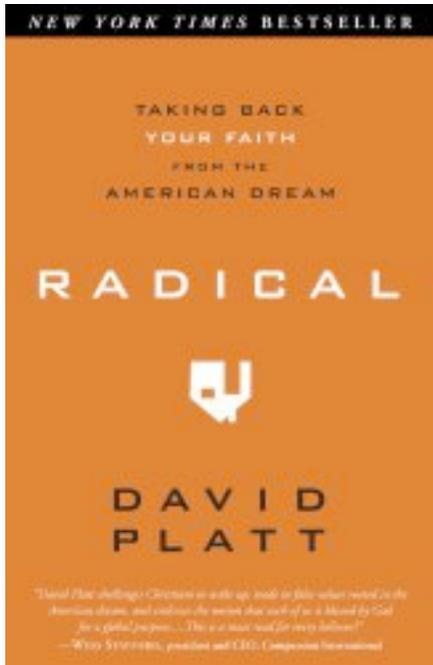
So... cancel your Netflix and commit to improving who you are. Spend a little time each day allowing God to transform you. Get audiobooks to listen to during your commute. Keep a book in your bag or in your car for when you have time to wait. Ask a friend or mentor to read a book with you.

If you're where I was 5 years ago, I had no idea where to start. So, because I love you, people, today I share:

## **20 Christian Books that Ruined My Life (for the better)**

Scroll to the end for the printable list.

*Love, Sam.*



## 1.) Radical: Taking Back Your Faith from the American Dream

This is easily the most impactful book I've read in 2015. The book contrasts stories of overseas pastors risking their lives to hear and share the gospel with American mega-churches are worth more than 260 billion dollars in land and buildings. I absolutely loved this book and the lasting effects it has had on my life. Radical has ruined the way I see American churches and our deep-rooted "American dreams."

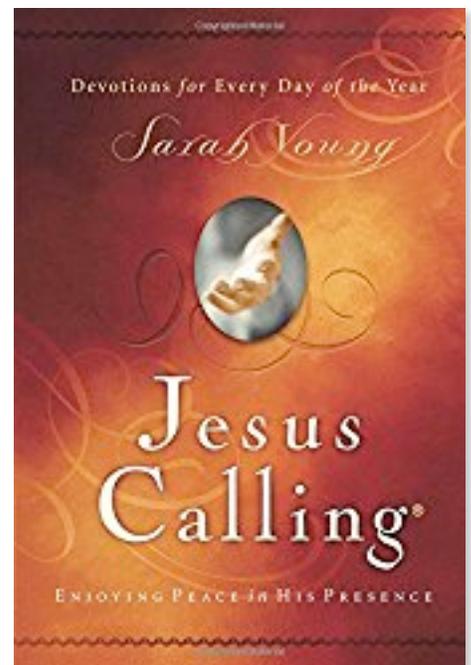
"Radical obedience to Christ is not easy... It's not comfort, not health, not wealth, and not prosperity in this world. Radical obedience to Christ risks losing all these things. But in the end, such risk finds its reward

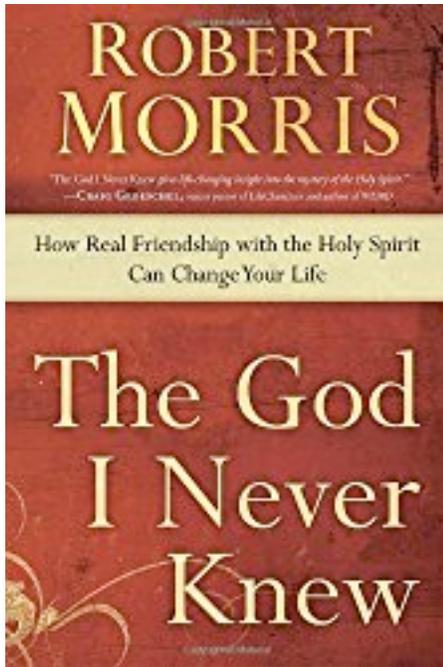
in Christ. And he is more than enough for us."

## 2.) Jesus Calling: Enjoying Peace in His Presence

This has become the essential devotional for many Christians, myself included. The reading is very short but day after day calls us to a greater peace by trusting our incredible Heavenly Father. Each day ends with 2-3 short bible verses for further thought and reflection.

"Sometimes My blessings come to you in mysterious ways: through pain and trouble. At such times you can know My goodness only through your trust in Me. Understanding will fail you, but trust will keep you close to Me."





### 3.)The God I Never Knew

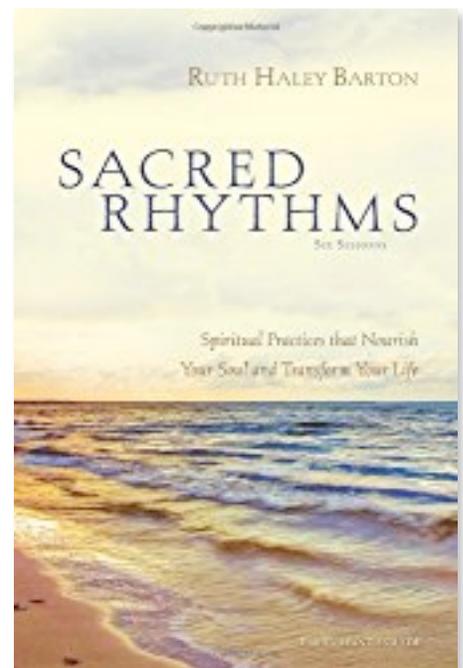
This book has made me completely rethink the Holy Spirit and its role in the trinity alongside God the Father and God the Son. Morris does an incredible job of breaking down bible verses that explain our friendship with the Holy Spirit. I LOVED studying this book with a group but it could just as easily be read and reflected on by yourself.

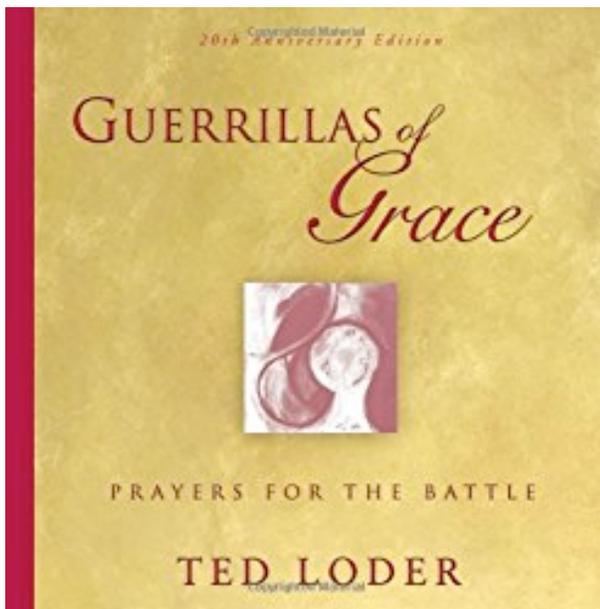
“When we cultivate a friendship with the Holy Spirit and yield ourselves to His influence, we can cease feeling like wretched people. Only then can we stop doing the bad things we don’t want to do and succeed at doing the good things we want to do.”

### 4.) Sacred Rhythms Participant’s Guide: Spiritual Practices that Nourish Your Soul and Transform Your Life

Ruth Haley Barton is a name that everyone should know. I attended a workshop she gave last summer that completely changed how I listen and wait for God. This book goes through a bunch of awesome spiritual practices that you can work with and try for yourself. Ruth Haley Barton is an incredible teacher and has ruined the way I thought I heard God (for the better).

“Most of us are more tired than we know at the soul level. We are teetering on the brink of dangerous exhaustion, and we cannot do anything else until we have gotten some rest...we can’t really engage [any spiritual disciplines] until solitude becomes a place of rest for us rather than another place for human striving and hard work.”





## 5.) Guerrillas Of Grace: Prayers For The Battle

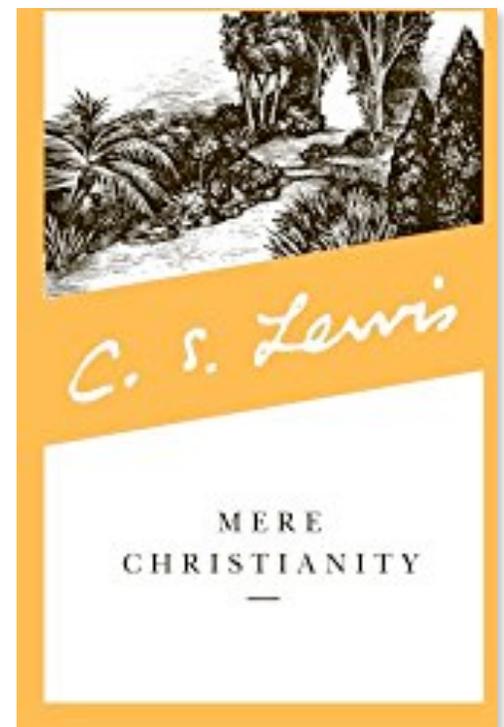
This book is an incredible compilation of prayers that often perfectly fit my current circumstances whether that is joy, anxiety, sadness (or some combination of all of those). There are so many ways to pray, I journal a lot of my prayers or I talk them out loud while driving in my car. Yet, Loder often has written what I want to say in a way that cuts straight to my heart. I can't say enough good things about this book.

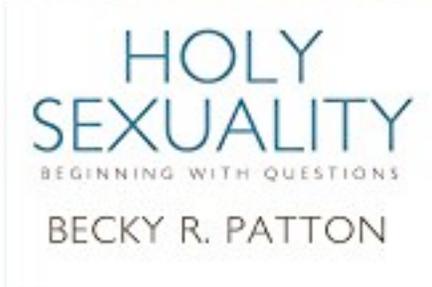
“Now, I ask you to gather me, for I realized the storms of time have scattered me, the furies of the year past have driven me, many sorrows have scarred me, many accomplishments have disappointed me, much activity has wearied me, and fear has spooked me into a hundred hiding places.”

## 6.) Mere Christianity

Originally a series of radio broadcasts written by Lewis and aired on BBC radio, Mere Christianity clearly articulates the proof of God and Jesus better than any other book I have ever read. There is a reason this book is on almost everyone's “must-read Christian book list.” It is a classic and a fantastic read.

“[To have Faith in Christ] means, of course, trying to do all that He says. There would be no sense in saying you trusted a person if you would not take his advice. Thus if you have really handed yourself over to Him, it must follow that you are trying to obey Him. But trying in a new way, a less worried way. Not doing these things in order to be saved, but because He has begun to save you already. Not hoping to get to Heaven as a reward for your actions, but inevitably wanting to act in a certain way because a first faint gleam of Heaven is already inside you.”





## 7.) Holy Sexuality: Beginning with Questions

I attended a workshop by Becky Patton in Minnesota and left feeling empowered and encouraged about the man God created me to be. The truth is churches almost never talk about sex with youth or with adults, yet it permeates our culture in music, movies and in the media. This book is an outstanding resource and source of information about how God created sex to be beautiful and how it has become hijacked by our culture and shamed by the church.

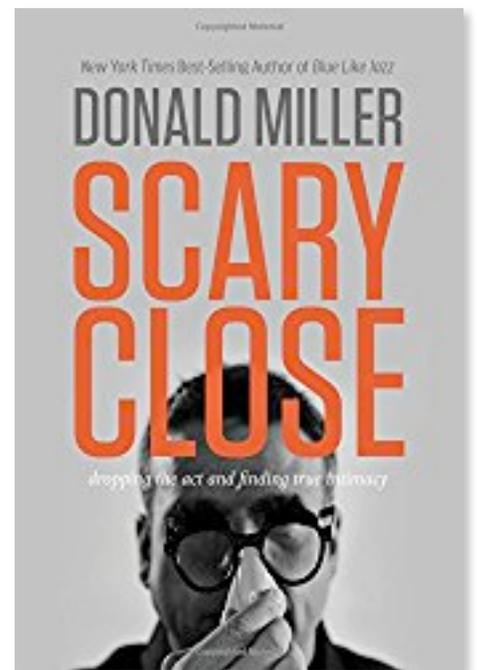
“As you explore the topic of Holy Sexuality, you have the opportunity to recognize how something incredibly beautiful has unfortunately become

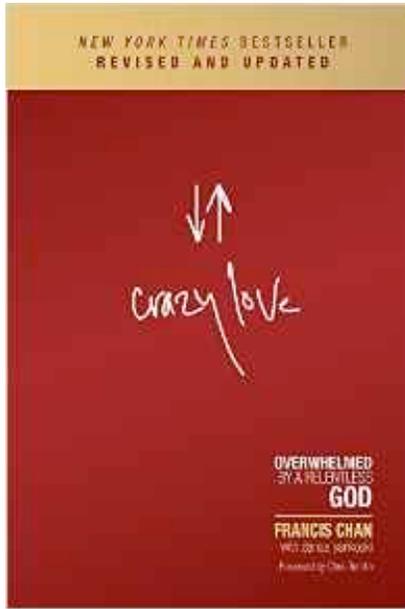
incredibly distorted. Yet, a beautiful core is waiting to be remembered and rediscovered within every man and woman.”

## 8.) Scary Close: Dropping the Act and Finding True Intimacy

Just so you know, I’m a little bit of a Donald Miller superfan. I love the authentic and conversational style to his writing and when I’m reading his books I feel like I am sitting in my living room with an old friend. This book, Miller focuses on his engagement and marriage and his many struggles to let women in. Marrying later in life than many, Donald shares everything he has learned about being “good” at relationships and allowing himself to be truly seen and loved.

“It costs personal fear to be authentic but the reward is integrity, and by that I mean a soul fully integrated, no difference between his act and his actual person. Having integrity is about being the same person on the inside that we are on the outside, and if we don’t have integrity, life becomes exhausting.” -Donald Miller





## 9.) Crazy Love by Francis Chan

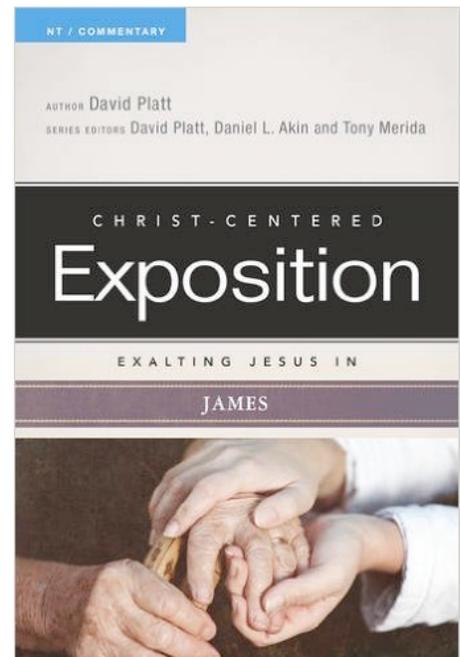
This was the first (and probably) most influential book I have ever read. For the first time in my life, I started to see following Jesus in a totally different light. I love listening to Francis, I think he's an incredible teacher and this book is him at his best. Crazy Love ruined the way I saw

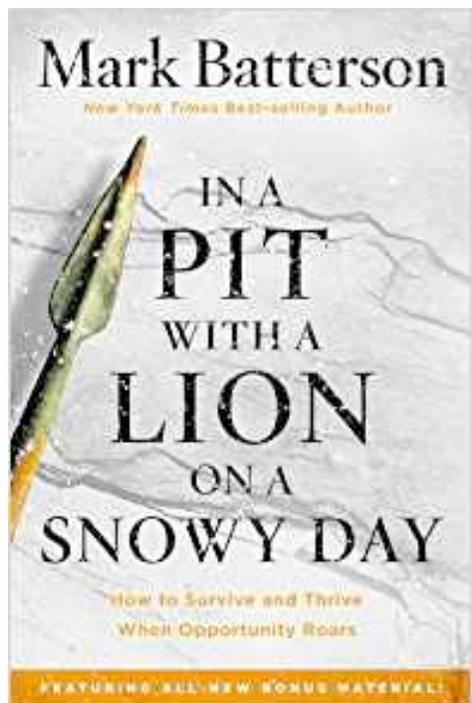
“But God doesn't call us to be comfortable. He calls us to trust Him so completely that we are unafraid to put ourselves in situations where we will be in trouble if He doesn't come through.”

## 10.) Christ-Centered Exposition - Bible Companion Series

I love learning about the word of God but it hasn't always been that way. This series is an amazing companion to the bible. It gives so much depth and insight to the books and brings the bible to life. Plus, they bring everything back to Jesus! Seriously, I am in the process of buying all of these. They are just incredible.

“Edited by David Platt, Daniel L. Akin, and Tony Merida, this new commentary series, projected to be 48 volumes, takes a Christ-centered approach to expositing each book of the Bible. Rather than a verse-by-verse approach, the authors have crafted chapters that explain and apply key passages in their assigned Bible books. Readers will learn to see Christ in all aspects of Scripture, and they will be encouraged by the devotional nature of each exposition.”





## 10.) In a Pit With a Lion on a Snowy Day - Mark Patterson

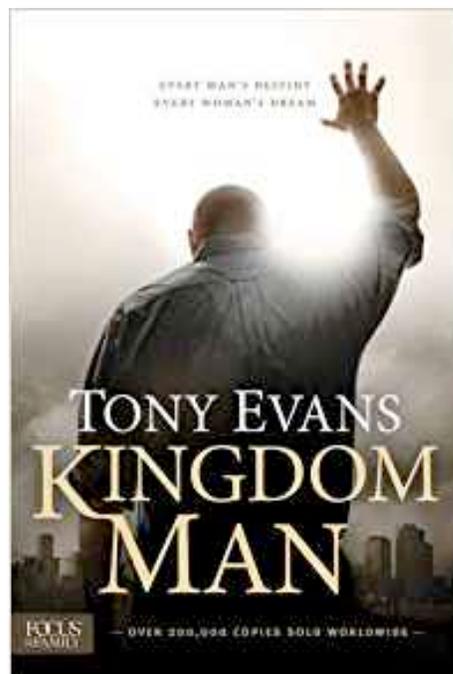
Another confession, I after Donald Miller, Mark Batterson is one of my absolute favorites. Mark shares equally about his failures and his successes.

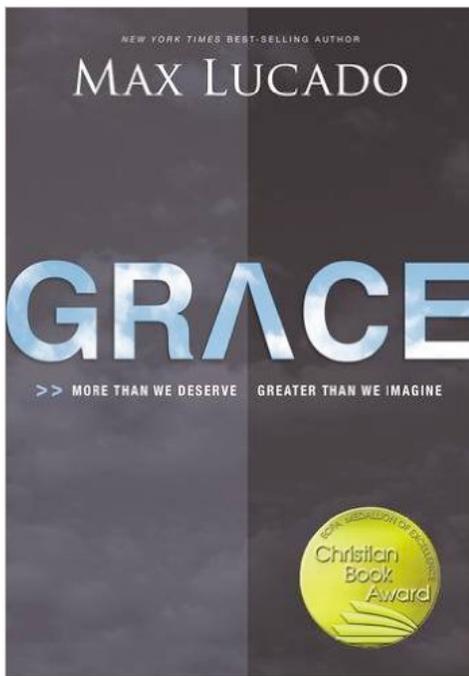
“As I look back on my own life, I recognize this simple truth: The greatest opportunities were the scariest lions. Part of me has wanted to play it safe, but I’ve learned that taking no risks is the greatest risk of all.”

## 12.) Kingdom Man by Tony Evans

I have been on a long journey of discovering what it means to be a real man in this world of bulging biceps, loud belching, and everything else our culture tells us about masculinity. This book was a game changer for me. It brought me to life in a way no other book on being a Godly man has. [To read more about my masculine journey check out my post [6 Essential Qualities of a Real Man](#)]

“A kingdom man may be defined as a man who positions himself and operates according to the comprehensive rule of God over every area of his life. And every area of life should feel the impact of a kingdom man’s presence.”





### 13.) Grace by Max Lucado

I have wandered to some not great places in my life —far, far from the beautiful life God intended me to live. If you’ve been there or you’re there right now, start with this beautiful book on God’s incredible love and forgiveness for us. Max weaves beautiful stories with God’s truth that brought tears to my eyes on multiple occasions.

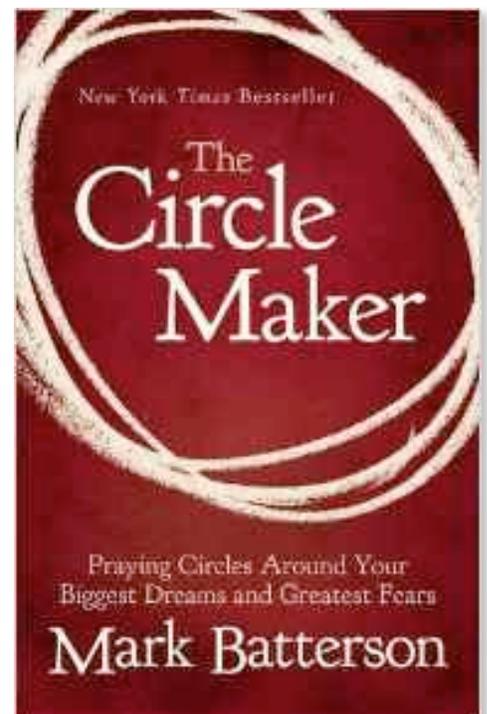
“To live as God’s child is to know, at this very instant, that you are loved by your Maker not because you try to please him and succeed, or fail to please him and apologize, but because he wants to be your Father. Nothing more. All your efforts to

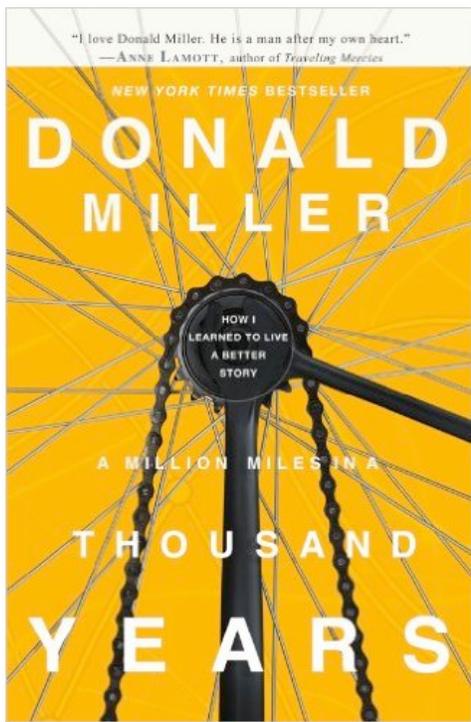
win his affection are unnecessary. All your fears of losing his affection are needless. You can no more make him want you than you can convince him to abandon you. The adoption is irreversible. You have a place at his table.”

### 14.) The Circle Maker by Mark Batterson

Prayer is something that I am immediately not very good at (as you know if you’d read my post [30 Ways to Up Your Prayer Game](#).) This book really convicted me on my lack of prayer—especially for the big things in life. This is a book I plan to re-read on a regular basis as I develop new habits of talking to God and laying my life at his feet.

“Bold prayers honor God, and God honors bold prayers. God isn’t offended by your biggest dreams or boldest prayers. He is offended by anything less. If your prayers aren’t impossible to you, they are insulting to God.”





## 15.) A Million Miles in a Thousand Years by Donald Miller

Ask me what my favorite book is... go ahead, ask! Yeah okay, I don't actually know. But if you're one of those terrible people who forces people to have one favorite everything this is the answer you'll get from me. As movie producers come to try and turn Don's book into a movie, they keep editing his life to tell a better story. That's when Don realizes he could be telling a better story with his life (and hint, so could we.) I happen to think this book is brilliant and I hope you do too.

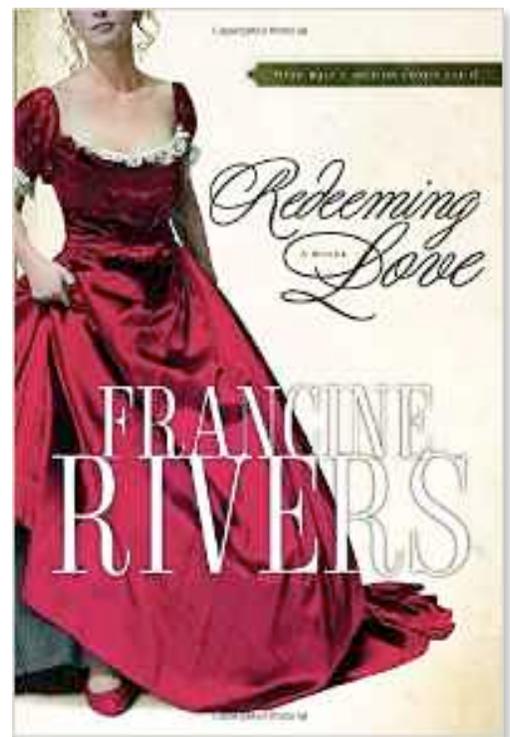
“And once you live a good story, you get a taste for a kind of meaning in life, and you can't go back to

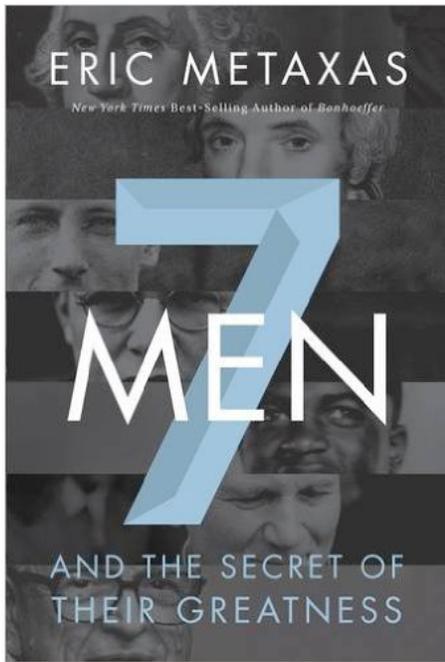
being normal; you can't go back to meaningless scenes stitched together by the forgettable thread of wasted time.”

## 16.) Redeeming Love by Francine Rivers

One summer I asked some of my favorite people what their favorite book is and I read that book, regardless of what it was. This book was on that list. You better believe I wouldn't have picked up this book with the red, flowy dress on my own. Yet I found myself completely enthralled with this fictional account of the book of Hosea. Seriously, couldn't love this book more.

“No, you won't. And I won't be enough for you, Amanda. I don't want to be the center of your life. I want to be part of it. I want to be your husband, not your god. People can't always be there for you, no matter how much they want to be. And that includes me.”





## 17.) 7 Men and the Secret To Their Greatness by Eric Metaxas

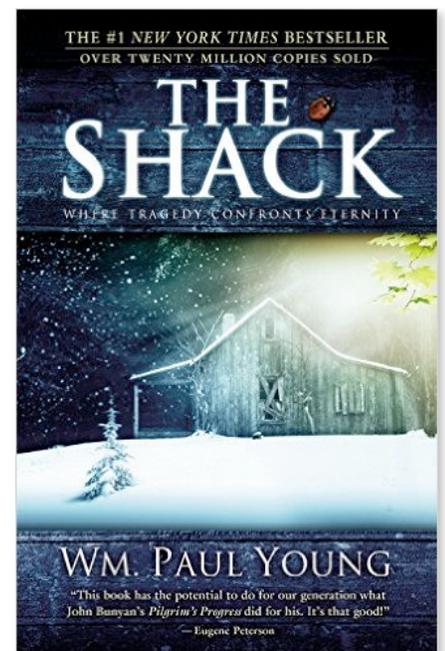
This one time at the age of 28 I got mono and missed almost an entire month of work... good times. I did, however, fly through a TON of books (including this one). I read it in a day and a half (and grieved a little when it was over). The book is seven, short biographies of astonishing men of God who put their lives on the line for God and the world. There is also a book with 7 Women (but I haven't read that one yet!)

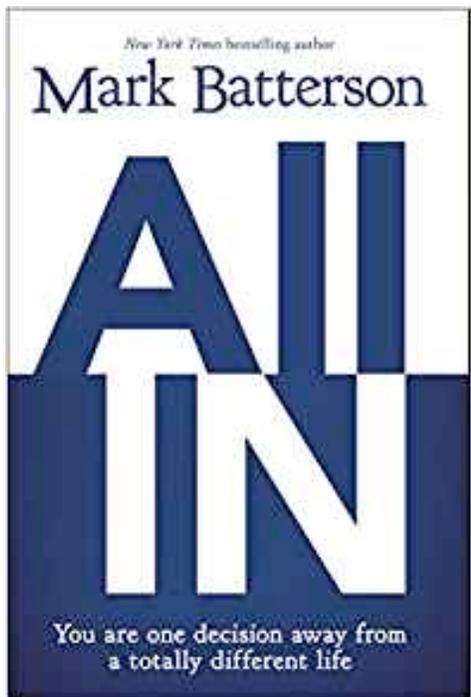
“So what is “heart”? It's courage, but courage to do what? The courage to do the right thing when all else tells you not to do it. The courage to rise above your surroundings and circumstances. The courage to be God's idea of a real man and to give of yourself for others when it costs you to do so and when everything tells you to look out for yourself first.”

## 18.) The Shack by Wm. Paul Young

This seems to be one of those books Christians like to get really angry at but it was life-changing for me. To be honest, I didn't spend a lot of time dissecting the theology —it's fiction people. Yet I read it at a time when I was new to faith and it completely ruined my distorted image of God from the angry white, bearded man into the loving, compassionate, joyful God he really is.

“All I want from you is to trust me with what little you can, and grow in loving people around you with the same love I share with you. It's not your job to change them, or to convince them. You are free to love without an agenda.”





## 19.) All In by Mark Batterson

Okay, okay... I know this is my 3rd Mark Batterson book on this list but I just can't help myself. The follow-up to *The Circle Maker*, this is another inspiring and truth-filled gem that will have you rethinking your whole life. Mark has encouraged me to start dreaming and putting all my chips on the table to serve God. This book ruined the comfortable, quiet vision I had for my life and encouraged me to walk on the water.

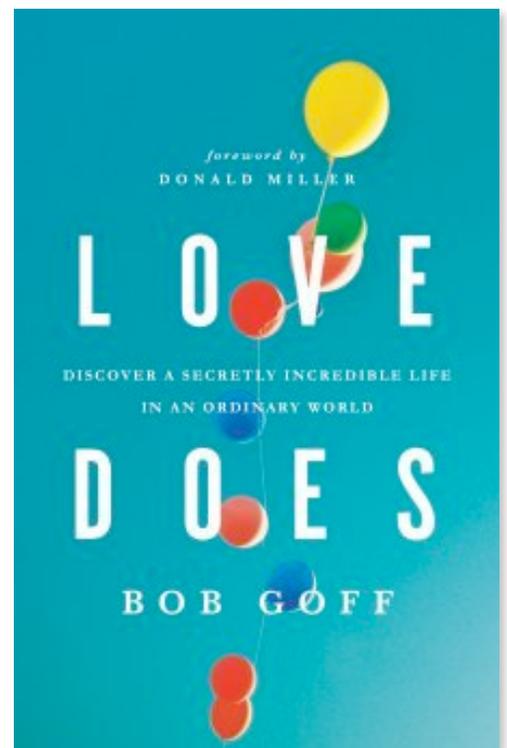
“Jesus didn't die to keep us safe. He died to make us dangerous. Faithfulness is not holding the fort. It's storming the gates of hell. The will of God is not an insurance plan. It's a daring plan. The

complete surrender of your life to the cause of Christ isn't radical. It's normal. It's time to quit living as if the purpose of life is to arrive safely at death. It's time to go all in and all out for the All in All!”

## 20.) Love Does by Bob Goff

This is another book I love to read over and over again. Sometimes I think Christians just take themselves too seriously. Life is meant to be loved and enjoyed to the fullest. This book was a huge inspiration to me to go big, to dream big and to live a life that is fully and recklessly alive.

“Failure is just part of the process, and it's not just okay; it's better than okay. God doesn't want failure to shut us down. God didn't make it a three-strikes-and-you're-out sort of thing. It's more about how God helps us dust ourselves off so we can swing for the fences again. And all of this without keeping a meticulous record of our screw-ups.”



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- 2.) Jesus Calling: Enjoying Peace in His Presence by Sarah Young
- 3.) The God I Never Knew by Robert Morris
- 4.) Sacred Rhythms: Spiritual Practices that Nourish Your Soul and Transform Your Life by Ruth Haley Barton
- 5.) Guerrillas Of Grace: Prayers For The Battle by Ted Loder
- 6.) Mere Christianity by C.S. Lewis
- 7.) Holy Sexuality: Beginning with Questions by Becky Patton
- 8.) Scary Close: Dropping the Act and Finding True Intimacy by Donald Miller
- 9.) Crazy Love by Francis Chan
- 10.) In a Pit With a Lion on a Snowy Day by Mark Batterson
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