

Here is another list of recommended books. Like last year's list, these are not necessarily anyone's all-time favorites, but they are all excellent reads. These are what one might call serious books for the non-serious reader. All are well-written and very readable. All deal thoughtfully with life issues. All of these books followed me around for days –stayed on my mind long after the last page. Some are from living authors, others are from writers of the past. Any would make a fine gift. Enjoy!

1. *Fidelity*, Wendell Berry (1993). This collection of five short stories is from noted agrarian poet, essayist, novelist, and Kentuckian, Wendell Berry. You might find superior stories from various authors, but in my mind this is best ever small collection from a single author. Berry's writing is a genuine work of art. No one can elicit the agrarian moods and rhythms of birth, life, love, and death like Berry. After you read *Fidelity*, try *A Place in Time* (2013) by Berry.
2. *Eyes to See*, Volumes I and II, Bret Lott (2008). These are collections of classic short stories written from the perspective of a Christian worldview. Lott is a Christian writer from Charleston, SC. He has compiled an excellent collection of stories from Flannery O'Connor, G. K. Chesterton, Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, and others. For someone who wants to read some classic literature, but can't seem to get going with *The Brothers Karamazov* or *The Aeneid*, this is a great place to get your literary feet wet.
3. *The Man Who was Thursday*, G. K. Chesterton (1907). Chesterton's most famous and best novel. It is a zany, plot-twisting, bewildering, story about a policeman who infiltrates a secret organization of anarchists. This book has been described as a cross between a political nightmare and a metaphysical thriller. I think it is one of the most misinterpreted stories ever written. You will understand it only if you have "eyes to see" (i.e. Bret Lott books above) that look for God and accept the mysteries of His providence.
4. *Peace Like a River*, Leif Enger (2002). I have friends who say this is one of the most deeply satisfying Christian novels they have ever read. I would agree with them. The story takes place in 1960's Minnesota and explores themes of tragedy, suffering, healing, miracles, faith and family.

Depending on one's perspective, one might differ with some points of theology that are implied, but this is a well-written, embracing, and haunting story.

5. *The Remains of the Day*, Kazuo Ishiguro (1990). This book was made into a movie starring Anthony Hopkins and Emma Thompson –one of the very few occasions in which a great movie was made of a great book. Rarely do movies do justice to great books! This is a character rich fictional biography of a perfect English butler --a thought provoking exploration of how one man assumed he lived his life well only to see in hindsight that he was self-deceived. How can a man grow old without regrets?
6. *Memento Mori*, Muriel Sparks (1959). An entertaining and funny, yet terrifying story about a group of elderly citizens who answer the phone to hear a mysterious voice say "remember you must die," and then hang up. The Scottish novelist weaves her Christian faith into this tale of how past secrets and the guilt of past sins are exposed as death draws nigh. Her prose is sparse and economical. She says more in 200 pages than most writers say in a life time of novels.
7. *True Grit*, Charles Portis (1968). This is simply a great little story. It is also an example of how you can't judge a book by its movie (or movies). The main character, Mattie, is a young Presbyterian lady, who embarks on a wild-west journey to find justice for her murdered father. This is western tale, but it is more so a tale of a young woman's coming of age in the midst of tragedy and suffering. She hired Rooster Cogburn because she thought he possessed true grit, but in the end she was the one who embodied the truest grit. Mattie is quite apt to quote Scripture at opportune times and even offers a nice little discourse on the doctrine of election!