

Choose-a-Book List

For our April class, you will choose a book to read that is focused on your specific context. Some students will immediately have an idea of what book they want to read—maybe it’s been on your list for a long time and you’re excited to have the excuse to read it, or maybe there is a topic you’ve been wanting to learn more about. For others, you might feel overwhelmed or underwhelmed by options. This book list is nowhere near exhaustive; rather, it is a handful of books to spark your imagination about the kinds of books that are out there. Feel free to also talk with on the class instructors to narrow down an area of interest as you research book options.

These books are not necessarily endorsed or recommended by your instructors. If you have ideas of books that can be added to the list for future classes, please [email them to Emily](#). Thanks!

Paulus Widjaja, *Character Formation and Social Transformation: an Appeal to the Indonesian Churches Amidst the So-called Chinese Problem* (VDM Verlag Dr. Müller, 2010)

Widjaja is an Indonesian Mennonite theologian who has done extensive work in peacebuilding. In this book, Widjaja suggests that the stories of table fellowship in Luke are a model for how Christians in Indonesia can work at reconciliation in the midst of ethnic strife.

Sara Wenger Shenk, *Tongue-tied: Learning the Lost Art of Talking About Faith* (Harrisonburg, VA: Herald Press, 2021).

“In Tongue-tied, theologian and former seminary president Sara Wenger Shenk investigates the reasons that people who claim the name of Christ are so reluctant to talk about him. Recovering an authentic vocabulary of faith—and learning to speak in trustworthy, captivating ways—is an urgent task for followers of Jesus today.”

Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1989).

An English Anglican priest, Newbigin served as a missionary to India from the 1930’s to 1970’s. Upon returning to the UK, Newbigin began writing on the need for the Western church to see its own missionary situation and begin operating as a mission church to the West.

Darrell Guder, ed., *Missional Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998).

A collection of essays that brought to the forefront the idea of ‘missional church,’ that there is no such thing as mission contexts and non-mission contexts, but it is the very nature of the church to be sent.

Alan Hirsch & Michael Frost, *The Shaping of Things to Come* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc, 2003).

What does it mean to find church right where you are? Hirsch and Frost are Australian missiologists who challenge the reader to adventurously reimagine church in the neighborhood.

Alan Kreider, *The Patient Ferment of the Early Church*, (Ada, MI: Baker Academic, 2016).

Kreider is a Mennonite historian and through an in-depth study, he looks at how the early church's emphasis on discipleship, common life, and patience were instrumental in its growth.

Marty Troyer, *The Gospel Next Door: Following Jesus Right Where You Are* (Harrisonburg, VA: Herald Press, 2018)

"As Christians, we pray for God's kingdom to come 'on earth as it is in heaven.' But what does that even mean? Would we recognize God's kingdom if it moved in next door? Learn to see God's work in your neighborhood, city, and the world—and learn how to join it. With stories from his own city of Houston, Texas, author Marty Troyer introduces a theology of place that empowers us to truly see the work of God where we live, work, and play."

Greg Boyle, *Tattoos on the Heart: The Power of Boundless Compassion* (Free Press, 2011)

"Greg Boyle is a Jesuit priest and founder of Homeboy Industries, the largest gang intervention program in the country. What does it mean to find kinship with everyone, even those most discarded by society? What does it mean to hold to awe, even in the midst of heartbreak?"

David W. Shenk, *Christian. Muslim. Friend: Twelve Paths to Real Relationship* (Harrisonburg, VA: Herald Press, 2014)

"Can Christians and Muslims be friends? Real friends? Even in an era of intense religious conflict, David Shenk says yes. In Christian. Muslim. Friend., Shenk lays out twelve ways that Christians can form authentic relationships with Muslims—characterized by respect, hospitality, and candid dialogue—while still bearing witness to the Christ-centered commitments of their faith."

Mike & Sally Breen, *Family on Mission* (3dm International, 2018)

"This book is about our journey in leading a family on mission, as well as looking deeply at how Jesus built his family on mission in the Gospels, as well as practical strategies for growing as a family on mission, imitating Jesus as his disciples."

Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2009).

A Gambian missiologist, Sanneh claims that what sets Christianity apart and has allowed it to flourish is its willingness to be translated. Christianity did not cling to a sacred language or culture, but has constantly been willing to let itself be local.

Stephen Witmer, *A Big Gospel in Small Places: Why Ministry in Forgotten Communities Matters* (IVP, 2019)

"In recent years, Christian ministries have increasingly prioritized urban areas. Big cities and suburbs are considered more strategic, more influential, and more desirable places to live and work.... But the gospel of Jesus is often unstrategic. In this book, pastor Stephen Witmer lays out an integrated theological vision for small-place ministry."

Ashley Hales, *Finding Holy in the Suburbs: Living Faithfully in the Land of Too Much* (IVP, 2018)

“What does it look like to live a full Christian life in the suburbs? Suburbs reflect our good, God-given desire for a place to call home. And suburbs also reflect our own brokenness. This book is an invitation to look deeply into your soul as a suburbanite and discover what it means to live holy there.”

Hugh Halter & Matt Smay, *The Tangible Kingdom: Creating Incarnational Community* (Jossey-Bass, 2008)

*“Written for those who are trying to nurture authentic faith communities and for those who have struggled to retain their faith, *The Tangible Kingdom* offers theological answers and real-life stories that demonstrate how the best ancient church practices can re-emerge in today's culture, through any church of any size.”*

Elizabeth O'Connor, *Call to Commitment: An Attempt to Embody the Essence of the Church* (Church of the Saviour, 2020)

*“A firsthand account of the founding and flourishing of *The Church of the Savior* in Washington, DC in the mid-20th century. O'Conner shares the stories of missional experiments and neighborhood ministry that helped breathe new life into the local church.”*