

“The Impact of Reading.”

Off The Top of My Head. April 5, 2007. By Dave Gibson.

Today each one of us is a compilation of the things that we have experienced and the way we have responded to the things that we have experienced. The thing experienced is important and the way we respond is more important. Someone has said that we are primarily shaped by the people in our lives, the places we live, and the books we read. (This final clause “the books we read” may be less true for the younger, more electronic, generation.)

Outside of the Word of God the following books have had the most profound impact on my life of anything that I have read—at least in recent memory and I have a poor memory. Please understand that much of the impact of these books has to do with profound and compelling writing, and much of the impact has to do with how I am wired and what I have experienced in my life. I say that because many of these books may not be helpful or interesting to you since we do not have the same wiring and backgrounds.

That said, here is the list with a few comments:

Spiritual growth books :

- *Knowing God* by J. I. Packer. (Understanding God as He really exists.)
- *The Rest of God* by Mark Buchanan. (Sabbath rest.)
- *Your God is Too Safe* by Mark Buchanan. (Understanding God as He really is.)
- *The Holy Wild* by Mark Buchanan. (Living in pursuit of God and His will.)
- *The Glorious Pursuit* by Gary L. Thomas. (The attributes of Christ.)
- *A Hunger For Healing* by J. Keith Miller. (Heart-level dealing with sin.)
- *Psalms 23: The Song of a Passionate Heart* by David Roper. (Dealing with depression.)
- These books have shaped me profoundly. They have shaped me because they have helped me to understand in a deeper and more accurate way Who God really is. We can only draw near to God in the measure that we understand how He actually exists. If we attempt to draw near to God as we want Him to be we are actually drawing away from God.

Leadership and change books :

- *The Making of a Leader* by Bobby Clinton. (Stages in God’s development of a leader.)
- *The Leader’s Journey* by Jim Herrington. (Acting as the primary change agent in all my settings.)
- *Transitions: Making Sense of Life’s Changes* by William Bridges. (The three stages of every change process.)
- *Deep Change* by Robert Quinn. (Acting as the primary agent of change in all my settings.)
- *A Resilient Life* by Gordon MacDonald. (Running when you want to walk.)

- *Ordering Your Private World* by Gordon MacDonald. (Recalibrating my inner life to live for the glory of God.)
- These books have continually pointed me to the central truth that my focus must be on my personal responsibility and choices rather than how other people are misbehaving or on how the world is an unfair place. Taking a victim mentality only leads to a life of mediocrity. The more I take personal responsibility for my life the more fulfilling my life will be.

Geographic and “upbringing” books :

- *This House of Sky* by Ivan Doig.
- *Sea Runners* by Ivan Doig.
- *Dancing at the Rascal Fair* by Ivan Doig.
- This list of books may be the least helpful or interesting to others. We are all shaped profoundly by the places we grew up and the geographic “imprint” on our souls. I grew up in the West and in the mountains and in the forest and in the rural areas. Doig writes with incredible skill about the kinds of places that imprinted my soul when I was growing up.

Worship books:

- *Music Through the Eyes of Faith* by Harold M. Best. (How should Christians think about music?)
- *Unceasing Worship* by Harold M. Best. (Worship as pouring out my life to God.)
- These two books have had profound effect on me. Best has insights into music and worship that are remarkable. If every believer would read these two books with an open heart the “worship wars” in America would be cut by 90%.

Marriage book:

- *Love and Respect* by Emerson Eggeriches. (A profound expansion of Eph 5.)
- One of the best marriage books I have ever read. Really a “must read” for people who are married or will one day get married.

Bible study book:

- *Living By The Book* by Howard Hendricks. (The “bible” on studying the Bible.)
- Howard Hendricks in the top five of my personal hero list. His work on Bible study is unparalleled.

Napoleon is reported to have said, “Armies don’t rule people. Ideas rule people.” One of the reasons that our lives are “unruly” is because we are not reading the right books!