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Q&A#51 Ten Stimulating Bible-Related Books

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Today's question: "What are the ten most stimulating Bible-related books that you have read?"

1. James B. Jordan, 'Through New Eyes' - <https://amzn.to/2plfUrN>
2. Meredith Kline, 'Images of the Spirit' - <https://amzn.to/2xISQxG>
3. Peter Leithart, 'A House For My Name' - <https://amzn.to/2xz8Hlf>
4. N.T. Wright, 'Jesus and the Victory of God' - <https://amzn.to/2NZFn82>
5. N.T. Wright, 'Romans' - <https://amzn.to/2QCD49w>
6. Richard B. Hays, 'Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul' - <https://amzn.to/2D9N8nF>
- and 'Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels' - <https://amzn.to/2DmSrAD>
7. Robert Alter, 'The Art of Biblical Narrative' - <https://amzn.to/2D9NU43>
8. Peter Leithart, '1&2 Kings' - <https://amzn.to/2NTtDE1>
9. John Barclay, 'Paul and the Gift' - <https://amzn.to/2DmTQXV>
10. Craig Keener, 'The Gospel of John' - <https://amzn.to/2D9OD5h>

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<https://curiouscat.me/zugzwanged>.

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My new Soundcloud account is here: <https://soundcloud.com/alastairadversaria>. You can also listen to the audio of these episodes on iTunes:
<https://itunes.apple.com/gb/podcast/alastairs-adversaria/id1416351035?mt=2>.

Transcript

Welcome back. Today's question is, what are the ten most stimulating Bible-related books that you have read? I've got a pile over here that I'll go through fairly quickly. The first one, no surprises, is *Through New Eyes*.

And I chose this book because more than any other single book, it has changed the way that I read the Bible. It's taught me about the significance of biblical symbolism, typology, the patterns and the structures within the biblical text, and has helped me to read every single passage. Many books, they will teach you how to read a certain set of passages that they treat, but there are a few books, this being one of them, that will help you to read everything differently.

And so I'd highly recommend this. Anyone who wants to get into reading their Bible in depth, read this book. It will challenge you, it will perplex you at times, it will frustrate and irritate you maybe, but stick with it.

It's worth it, and it will help you to read the Bible if you do so. The second book is *Images of the Spirit* by Meredith Klein. This is a very short book, but one that really packs a punch.

And Meredith Klein is a very perceptive and illuminating reader of the text, someone who in many respects in this particular book is reminiscent of James Jordan and has been an influence upon him. So I'd recommend this book very much. Peter Lighthouse's *A House for My Name* is a reading of the Old Testament, and it goes through exploring the themes and piecing things together.

And this is one of the books that I constantly return to and recommend to others as an overview of the biblical narrative in the Old Testament, just to get a sense of its coherence and its direction. And as a book for putting pieces together, there aren't many books better than this. I can't think of any at the moment.

For my reading of the Gospels, perhaps no other book has been so influential as *Jesus and the Victory of God* by N.T. Wright. I highly recommend this one and the whole series that it's part of. At a certain point I stopped reading much N.T. Wright, but this book has left an impact greater upon my thought.

And really, that's the criteria that I've chosen to select these books by. There are many great Bible-related books that I've read, and I read so much that it's hard to choose. And so I decided to choose those books that have made the deepest impact upon me.

And there are many ways in which I've moved from the positions of these books and differed with them and argued with them, but they've left the impact, an impact unlike any other. And this book is just superb. If you want to see the story of the Gospels come alive, I recommend this book.

Also, N.T. Wright's Romans commentary within this series, it's the second within this volume, again, it helped me to read the Book of Romans in a different way, to see how some of it all fitted together, how it was part of the story of Israel in particular, and how significant that larger redemptive historical narrative was. Whereas formerly I'd been focused fairly narrowly upon the question of individual salvation, he helped me to see the bigger picture within the text of Romans. I'd come to an understanding of that bigger picture from other quarters, but he made me look at Romans in a new way.

And I've really found that commentary helpful, even though I've moved away from his position in a great many respects. It's been in a way that I've moved through it. I've not, I can't go back after having read that commentary.

These two books by Richard Hayes are both incredible. They helped me to be alert to the echoes of scripture, which is one of the things I've written a book on. And Richard Hayes was perhaps the first person to really alert me to those things at length.

And echoes of scripture in the letters of Paul was the first one I read. And this came out just a couple of years ago. And I found this really good as well, but it's not left the same impact because this was the one that hit me at the right time.

So I would recommend these books for anyone who wants to see the way in which Paul and the New Testament more generally use the Old Testament and are rooted in the Old Testament and how the Old Testament gives life to our reading of the New Testament. And the interaction between Old and New Testament has always been a significant theme of my thought. It's something that I've found in the work of Peter Lighthouse and James Jordan.

That relationship, which is often neglected, is very prominent within their thought. And for working out that relationship and the exact shape it takes, there are few better than Richard Hayes. So I'd recommend his work.

On a similar line, Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*. For the literary aspects of the text, Robert Alter was one of the people to first give me the tools to think about type scenes and things like that in a careful way. And although he's not got the same sort of typological emphases that you find within James Jordan or Peter Lighthouse, he is incredibly helpful for thinking about the literary aspects of things.

And that's one of the areas in which our reading of scripture can really be strengthened. If we think about the literary structures, and that's something that you find within Lighthouse, Jordan, Hayes and Alter as well. And so I'd recommend that book.

For a commentary on the Old Testament, Peter Lighthouse's *First and Second Kings* commentary is just superb. It's perhaps one of my favourite commentaries ever. I love this commentary so much.

It's in the Brazos Theological series and it is a different sort of commentary. It's reflections upon different sections, the sections of the books sequentially. And it doesn't get into a verse by verse analysis, but it explores the deep themes and it shows the theological applicability of these texts and these texts as they can be preached.

This is a commentary I often return to as an example of how to use the Bible well and relate it to current debates in a way that's faithful to the text, but also in a way that is profoundly illuminating theologically and of contemporary concerns. It's something I've tried to do within my posts for the Political Theology blog. This book by John Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, really helped me to sort out my thinking on things like the new perspective.

I'd been very influenced by Wright and Dunne and others like that, and I continue to be in certain respects, but Barclay helped me to challenge certain of the limitations of their proposals and to get a clearer perspective upon the Pauline corpus. And so I'd recommend this for anyone who's found the new perspective helpful, but wants to think beyond that paradigm a bit and to see what some of the limitations of it can be. This is a superb book.

And finally, I thought I would give Craig Keener's commentaries a mention. I've just chosen the Gospel of John commentaries, but it could be any one of Keener's books. He's perhaps the biblical commentator I've spent the most time with in terms of a commentary writer.

I invested in his recent commentary on the Book of Acts, a four-volume commentary and quite an expensive one as well, but I was not reluctant to spend that money because I found Keener to be such a helpful companion when reading scripture in the past. And so I give him an honourable mention, even if he's not someone who's written one particular book that's made a huge impact upon my thinking. He's made an impact cumulatively over the course of my engagement with his various commentaries and works on the New Testament.

So I highly commend Keener's works. And that's 10. I'll leave the links for these different books in the show notes.

Thank you very much for listening. If you have any further questions, please leave them in my Curious Cat account. If you'd like to support this and future videos, please do so using my Patreon account, and I'll leave the links for both of those below.

Lord willing, I'll be back again tomorrow with a further question and answer. God bless, and thank you for listening.