



The Areopagus

May / Jun 2015

UPDATE



Excerpts from...

The Celebration of Discipline The Path to Spiritual Growth

by Richard Foster

(HarperSanFrancisco, 1978)

[NOTE: For many Americans, summertime is all about vacations, outdoor activities and (perhaps) a more relaxed schedule. Many students look at it as a time to turn off their mind for eight or ten weeks and disconnect from the relentless pressures and regimented schedule of normal academic life. Church attendance tends to drop precipitously during the summer months, and many people, if they read at all, gravitate toward something light and breezy. This is a shame, because summer can also be an opportune time for spiritual growth. A suggestion: If you've never read **Richard Foster's modern classic, Celebration of Discipline**, or conscientiously sought to incorporate the traditional spiritual disciplines into your lifestyle, dedicate this summer to exploring the rich heritage of contemplative Christian spirituality. By the arrival of fall, you might find that God has used these practices to significantly enlighten, enrich, and transform your life. — *Jefrey Breshears*]

"Fresh out of seminary, I was ready to conquer the world.... After three months or so I had given my first congregation everything I knew, and it had done them no good. I had nothing left to give. I was spiritually bankrupt and I knew it.

"My problem was more than having something to say from Sunday to Sunday. My problem was that what I did say had no power to help people. I had no substance, no depth....

"This lack of any real spiritual density led me, almost instinctively, to the Devotional Masters of the Christian faith – Augustine, Francis of Assisi, Julian of Norwich, and many others.... I had encountered many of these writers in academic settings. But that was a detached, cerebral kind of reading. Now I read with different eyes.... These 'saints,' as we sometimes call them, knew God in a way that I clearly did not. They experienced Jesus as the defining reality of their lives. They possessed a flaming vision of God that blinded them to all competing loyalties. They experienced life built on the Rock....

"The second influence came from an individual in our congregation, Dallas Willard. A philosopher by profession, Dallas was well versed in the classics, and, at the same time, had an uncanny perception into contemporary life.... Dallas taught us right in the midst of our struggles, our hurts, our fears. He had descended with the mind into the heart and taught out of that deep center....

"Superficiality is the curse of our age. The obsession with instant gratification is primarily a spiritual problem. The desperate need today is not for more intelligent people, or gifted people, but for deep people. The classical disciplines of the spiritual life call us to move beyond surface living into the depths. They invite us to explore the inner caverns of the spiritual realm. They urge us to be the answer to a hollow world....

"God has given us the spiritual disciplines as a means of receiving his grace. The disciplines allow us to place ourselves before God so that he can transform us.... The purpose of these disciplines is spiritual growth."

The Areopagus Calendar

Upcoming Seminars

— Beginning in September —

What Every Christian Should Know About Apologetics



A course for those who want to broaden and deepen their understanding of the Christian faith so as to more effectively explain and defend *what* they believe and *why* they believe it

Tuesdays, 7 PM
Perimeter Church

and

Wednesdays, 7 PM
Johnson Ferry Baptist Church



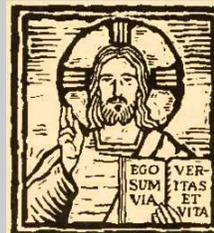
Christianity Thru the Centuries: From Constantine to Augustine c. 300-450 A.D.

A systematic, in-depth study of early Christian history

Dr. Jefrey Breshears

Sundays – 11:15 AM
(Beginning August 16)

Johnson Ferry Baptist Church



— A new Areopagus series beginning in June —

The Areopagus

Books & Culture

Presentations and discussions of significant books, issues and events related to theology, philosophy, history, science, spirituality, culture, and the arts

... Come listen, learn, and join the discussion ...

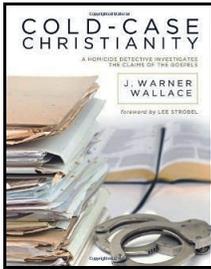
— Thursday, June 4th —

COLD-CASE CHRISTIANITY

How a Homicide Detective Investigates the Claims of the Gospel

by J. Warner Wallace

A review and discussion by Eric Smith



Written by a homicide detective and a former atheist, *Cold-Case Christianity* examines the claims of the New Testament using the techniques and skills of a skeptical criminal investigator.

“*Cold-Case Christianity* is simply the most clever and compelling defense I’ve ever read for the reliability of the New Testament. Case closed.”

— Gregory Koukle, author of *Tactics*

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— Thursday, July 9th —

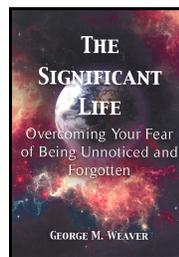
THE SIGNIFICANT LIFE

Overcoming Your Fear of Being Unnoticed and Forgotten

by George M. Weaver

A review and discussion by George Weaver

“Everyone of us wants to believe that we matter in some way, that we are important to someone, that our lives count somehow. This quite natural desire can work itself out in self-centered and destructive ways. George Weaver argues persuasively that our true significance lies in the fact that whoever we are... we are important to God.” — William Lane Craig



Mt. Bethel Community Center
4608 Lower Roswell Rd. / Marietta
7:30 PM

Frontline Apologetics

Responding to Honest Questions by Spiritual Seekers, Critical Challenges by Religious Skeptics, and Absurd Comments by Argumentative Contrarians

“I’m spiritual but not religious”

On airplanes, I dread the conversation with the person who finds out I am a minister and wants to use the flight time to explain to me that he is “spiritual but not religious.” Such a person will always share this as if it is some kind of daring insight, unique to him, bold in its rebellion against the religious status quo.

Next thing you know, he’s telling me that he finds God in the sunsets. These people always find God in the sunsets. And in walks on the beach. Sometimes I think these people never leave the beach or the mountains, what with all the communing with God they do on hilltops, hiking trails and... did I mention the beach at sunset yet?

Like people who go to church don’t see God in the sunset! Like we are these monastic little hermits who never leave the church building. How lucky we are to have these geniuses inform us that God is in nature. As if we don’t hear that in the psalms, the creation stories and throughout our deep tradition.

Being privately spiritual but not religious just doesn’t interest me. There is nothing challenging about having deep thoughts all by oneself. What is interesting is doing this work in community, where other people might call you on stuff, or heaven forbid, disagree with you. Where life with God gets rich and provocative is when you dig deeply into a tradition that you did not invent all for yourself.

Thank you for sharing, Mr. Spiritual-But-Not-Religious sunset person. You are now comfortably in the norm for self-centered American culture, right smack in the bland majority of people who find ancient religions dull but find themselves uniquely fascinating. Can I switch seats now and sit next to someone who has been shaped by a mighty cloud of witnesses instead? Can I spend my time talking to someone brave enough to encounter God in a real human community? Because when this flight gets choppy, that’s who I want by my side, holding my hand, saying a prayer and simply putting up with me, just like we try to do in church.

You can’t make this stuff up. There are limits to self-made religion.

— Lillian Daniel, author of *When Spiritual but Not Religious Is Not Enough: Seeing God in Surprising Places – Even the Church!*

[www. TheAreopagus.org](http://www.TheAreopagus.org)