

Wednesday morning group book suggestion list for 2025-2026

Program Year Suggestions:

All We Can Save: Truth, Courage, and Solutions for the Climate Crisis

Edited by Ayana Elizabeth Johnson and Katharine K. Wilkinson

2021 publication

8 sections; 59 essays

448 pages

This book illuminates the expertise and insights of dozens of diverse women leading on climate in the United States—scientists, journalists, farmers, lawyers, teachers, activists, innovators, wonks, and designers, across generations, geographies, and race—and aims to advance a more representative, nuanced, and solution-oriented public conversation on the climate crisis.

The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness

By Jonathan Haidt

2024 publication

4 parts; 12 chapters

400 pages

This book is a generation-defining investigation into the collapse of youth mental health in the era of smartphones, social media, and big tech—and a plan for a healthier, freer childhood. Haidt diagnoses the “collective action problems” that trap us, and then proposes four simple rules that might set us free. He describes steps that parents, teachers, schools, tech companies, and governments can take to end the epidemic of mental illness and restore a more humane childhood.

Cherished Belonging: The Healing Power of Love in Divided Times

By Gregory Boyle

2024 publication

9 chapters

224 pages

Boyle calls back to Christianity’s origins as a spiritual movement of equality, emancipation, and peace. Early Christianity was a way of life—not a set of beliefs. Boyle’s vision of community is a space for people to join together and heal one another in a new collective living, a world dedicated to kindness as a constant and radical act of defiance.

Children of Abraham: Judaism, Christianity, Islam

By Francis Edward Peters

2018 publication

8 chapters

256 pages

He began writing about all three faiths in the 1970s, long before it was fashionable to treat Islam in the context of Judaism and Christianity, or to align all three for a family portrait. In this

updated edition, he lays out the similarities and differences of the three religious siblings with great clarity and succinctness and with that same remarkable objectivity that is the hallmark of all the author's work.

Damned Nation: Hell in America from the Revolution to Reconstruction

By Kathryn Gin Lum

2014 publication

3 parts; 6 chapters

330 pages

Gin Lum shows that beneath early Americans' vaunted millennial optimism lurked a pervasive anxiety: that rather than being favored by God, they and their nation might be the object of divine wrath. As time-honored social hierarchies crumbled before revival fire, economic unease, and political chaos, "saved" and "damned" became as crucial distinctions as race, class, and gender. The threat of damnation became an impetus for or deterrent from all kinds of behaviors, from reading novels to owning slaves.

Desire of the Everlasting Hills: The World Before and After Jesus

By Thomas Cahill

2001 publication

7 chapters

353 pages

Cahill shows us Jesus from his birth to his execution through the eyes of those who knew him and in the context of his time—a time when the Jews were struggling to maintain their beliefs under overlords who imposed their worldview on their subjects. Here is Jesus the loving friend, itinerate preacher, and quiet revolutionary, whose words and actions inspired his followers to journey throughout the Roman world and speak the truth he instilled—in the face of the greatest defeat: Jesus' crucifixion as a common criminal.

Ethnic America

By Thomas Sowell

1981 publication

6 parts; 11 chapters

353 pages

This classic work by the distinguished economist traces the history of nine American ethnic groups -- the Irish, Germans, Jews, Italians, Chinese, African-Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Mexicans.

Everything Is Tuberculosis: The History and Persistence of Our Deadliest Infection

By John Green

2025 publication

23 chapters (could be done in 3-4 weeks)

208 pages

In 2019, John Green met Henry Reider, a young tuberculosis patient at Lakka Government Hospital in Sierra Leone. Green became a vocal advocate for increased access to treatment and

wider awareness of the healthcare inequities that allow this curable, preventable infectious disease to also be the deadliest, killing over a million people every year. This book is Henry's story, woven through with the scientific and social histories of how tuberculosis has shaped our world—and how our choices will shape the future of tuberculosis.

The Genuine Jesus and the Counterfeit Christs: New Testament and Apocryphal Gospels

By Simon J. Gathercole

October 2025 publication

160 pages

This book shows that the canonical Gospels share key elements of theological content—content that consistently aligns with what the apostles taught about Jesus. Specifically, what distinguishes Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John is that they faithfully represent Jesus's messiahship, his saving death and resurrection, and his fulfilment of Scripture. This stands in sharp contrast to the apocryphal Gospels, which either represent such teaching incompletely, ignore it, or actively reject it.

How We Learn to Be Brave: Decisive Moments in Life and Faith

By Mariann Edgar Budde

2023 publication

7 chapters

224 pages

Bishop Budde explores the full range of decisive moments, from the most visible and dramatic (the decision to go), to the internal and personal (the decision to stay), to brave choices made with an eye toward the future (the decision to start), those born of suffering (the decision to accept that which we did not choose), and those that come unexpectedly (the decision to step up to the plate).

Miracles and Wonder: The Historical Mystery of Jesus

By Elaine Pagels

2025 publication

7 chapters

336 pages

The book reads like a historical mystery, with each chapter addressing a fascinating question and answering it based on the gospels Jesus's followers left behind. We realize that some of the most compelling details of Jesus's life are the explanations his disciples created to paper over inconvenient facts. So Jesus wasn't illegitimate, his mother conceived by God; Jesus's body wasn't humiliatingly left to rot and tossed into a common grave—no, he rose from the dead and was seen whole by his followers; Jesus isn't a failed messiah, his kingdom is a metaphor: he lives in us. These necessary fabrications were the very details and promises that electrified their listeners and helped his followers' numbers grow.

On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century

By Timothy Snyder

2017 publication

20 chapters (could be read in 2-3 weeks)

128 pages

The Founding Fathers tried to protect us from the threat they knew, the tyranny that overcame ancient democracy. Today, our political order faces new threats, not unlike the totalitarianism of the twentieth century. We are no wiser than the Europeans who saw democracy yield to fascism, Nazism, or communism. Our one advantage is that we might learn from their experience. *On Tyranny* is a call to arms and a guide to resistance, with invaluable ideas for how we can preserve our freedoms in the uncertain years to come.

One Day, Everyone Will Have Always Been Against This

By Omar El Akkad

2025 publication

10 chapters

208 pages

As an immigrant who came to the West, El Akkad believed that it promised freedom. A place of justice for all. But in the past twenty years, reporting on the War on Terror, Ferguson, climate change, Black Lives Matter protests, and more, and watching the unmitigated slaughter in Gaza, El Akkad has come to the conclusion that much of what the West promises is a lie.

Prayer in the Night: For Those Who Work or Watch or Weep

By Tish Harrison Warren

2021 publication

4 parts; 13 chapters

280 pages

This book is an exploration of the real struggles of everyday life, framed around a nighttime prayer of Compline. There are discussion questions to jumpstart group conversations, and practices that offer practical, achievable ways to put the author's wisdom into action.

The Social Conquest of Earth

By Edward O. Wilson

2013 publication

6 parts; 27 chapters

352 pages

Wilson draws on his remarkable knowledge of biology and social behavior to demonstrate that group selection, not kin selection, is the premier driving force of human evolution.

Demonstrating that the sources of morality, religion, and the creative arts are fundamentally biological in nature, the renowned Harvard University biologist presents us with the clearest explanation ever produced as to the origin of the human condition and why it resulted in our domination of the Earth's biosphere.

You Don't Have to Be Wrong for Me to Be Right: Finding Faith Without Fanaticism

By Brad Hirschfield

2009 publication

10 chapters

288 pages

Hirschfield was a former activist in the West Bank. He was committed to reconstructing the Jewish state within its biblical borders. Now he is devoted to teaching inclusiveness, celebrating diversity, and delivering a message of acceptance.

You Only Get What You're Organized to Take: Lessons from the Movement to End Poverty

By Liz Theoharis and Noam Sandweiss-Beck

2025 publication

7 chapters

272 pages

Rev. Dr. Liz Theoharis explores the largely untold history of poor people's movements in the United States and traces her own journey through some of the most significant anti-poverty struggles of the past thirty years.

Summer Suggestions:

The Anthropocene Reviewed: Essays on a Human-Centered Planet

By John Green

2021 publication

44 essays

304 pages

The Anthropocene is the current geologic age, in which humans have profoundly reshaped the planet and its biodiversity. In this remarkable symphony of essays adapted and expanded from his groundbreaking podcast, John Green reviews different facets of the human-centered planet on a five-star scale—from the QWERTY keyboard and sunsets to Canada geese and Penguins of Madagascar.

Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants

By Robin Wall Kimmerer

2015 publication

5 sections; 31 sub-sections

408 pages

Kimmerer shows how other living beings—asters and goldenrod, strawberries and squash, salamanders, algae, and sweetgrass—offer us gifts and lessons, even if we've forgotten how to hear their voices. In reflections that range from the creation of Turtle Island to the forces that threaten its flourishing today, she circles toward a central argument: that the awakening of ecological consciousness requires the acknowledgment and celebration of our reciprocal relationship with the rest of the living world.

The God of Wild Places: Rediscovering the Divine in the Untamed Outdoors

By Tony Jones

2024 publication

10 chapters

160 pages

This book contains the author's own experiences, recent research in evolutionary psychology, and ancient wisdom from various spiritual and philosophical traditions to fashion lessons about solitude, the predator-prey relationship, the importance of place, risk, failure, and death, and the chaotic presence of God.

Wander: A Memoir of Letting go and Walking 2,000 Miles to a Meaningful Life

By Ryan Benz

2023 publication

24 chapters

226 pages

Many people only ever dream of leaving it all behind to follow their heart. In "Wander," Ryan Benz shares the story of how he upended his 'successful' life and turned that dream into a reality. "Wander" illuminates the impact wandering can have on a person's life and is a meditation on purpose, authenticity, and intentionality. While walking over two thousand miles from Georgia to Maine, Benz explores the nature of adventure, self-discovery, and what it means to follow your heart.