

Soul Food Suggested Titles for 2024-2025

1. [*Aging as a Spiritual Practice: A Contemplative Guide to Growing Older and Wiser*](#), by Lewis Richmond. Everything changes. This fundamental Buddhist tenet is the basis for a new inner road map that emerges in the later years, charting an understanding that can bring new possibilities and a wealth of appreciation and gratitude for the life journey itself. Zen Buddhist priest Lewis Richmond guides readers through stages of aging and the processes of adapting to change. Breath by breath, moment by moment, Richmond's teachings inspire limitless opportunities for a joy that transcends age. 256 pages. Avery, 2012.
2. [*The Beauty of What Remains: How Our Greatest Fear Becomes Our Greatest Gift*](#), by Steve Leder. Steve Leder, rabbi of one of the largest synagogues in the world, describes the many ways death teaches us how to live and love more deeply by showing us not only what is gone but also the beauty of what remains. *The Beauty of What Remains* takes us on a journey through the experience of loss that is fundamental to everyone. Enriched by Rabbi Leder's irreverence, vulnerability, and wicked sense of humor, this heartfelt narrative is filled with laughter and tears, and deepened by his own learning, through the death of his father, that in loss we gain more than we ever imagined. 240 pages. Avery, 2023.
3. [*The Book of Nature: The Astonishing Beauty of God's First Sacred Text*](#), by Barbara Mahany. Throughout millennia and across the monotheistic religions, the natural was often revered as a sacred text. By the Middle Ages, this text was given a name, "The Book of Nature," the first, best entry point for encounter with the divine. The very act of "reading" the world, of focusing our attention on each twinkling star and unfurling blossom, humbles us and draws us into sacred encounter. In the face of tumultuous times in our culture and with the earth under the threat of climate change, Mahany uses insights from science, the wisdom of others, and her own spiritual foundations, and invites us to examine how wondrously and generously the natural world awaits our attention and devotion. 191 pages. Broadleaf Books, 2023.
4. [*Braving the Wilderness: The Quest for True Belonging and the Courage to Stand Alone*](#), by Brené Brown. "True belonging doesn't require us to change who we are. It requires us to be who we are." Social scientist Brené Brown, PhD, MSW, has sparked a global conversation about the experiences that bring meaning to our lives—experiences of courage, vulnerability, love, belonging, shame, and empathy. In *Braving the Wilderness*, Brown redefines what it means to truly belong in an age of increased polarization. With her trademark mix of research, storytelling, and honesty, Brown will again change the cultural conversation while mapping a clear path to true belonging. 208 pages. Random House. 2019.
5. [*The False White Gospel: Rejecting Christian Nationalism, Reclaiming True Faith, and Refounding Democracy*](#), by Jim Wallis. The current political discourse calls us to call out genuine faith — specifically the "Christian" in White Christian Nationalism—inviting all who can be persuaded to reject and help dismantle a false gospel that propagates white supremacy and autocracy. We need—to raise up the faith of all of us, and help those who are oblivious, stuck, and captive to the ideology and idolatry of White Christian Nationalism that is leading us to such great danger. Wallis turns our attention to six iconic texts at the heart of what genuine biblical faith means and what Jesus, in the gospels, has called us to do. 304 pages. St. Martin's Press. 2024.
6. [*Glory Happening: Finding the Divine in Everyday Places*](#), by Kaitlin B. Curtice. Curtice, a young Native American Christian Mystic, invites us through stories and prayers to look closely at everyday life and the simple beauty found in our experiences. She believes that every moment counts. She draws us to live deeply with the expectation that "something good will find us at the end of each day." As we share our stories and prayers with others, the glory grows and "community is created around the reality that God is truly in our midst." 128 pages. Paraclete Press, 2017.

7. [*God's Ghostwriters: Enslaved Christians and the Making of the Bible*](#), by Candida Moss. Hidden behind the named and sainted individuals we think of who wrote the New Testament (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul) are a cluster of unnamed, enslaved coauthors and collaborators. These essential workers were responsible for producing the earliest manuscripts of the scriptures: making the parchment on which the texts were written, taking dictation, and refining the words of the apostles. As the Christian message grew in influence, enslaved missionaries undertook the arduous journey across the sea and along highways to Rome, Spain, and North Africa—and into the pages of history. In concepts rarely explored before, Moss examines the impact that enslaved contributors made to our faith, the gospel, and the beginnings of the church. 336 pages. Little, Brown and Company, 2024.
8. [*The Grace in Aging: Awaken as You Grow Older*](#), by Kathleen Dowling Singh. Through wisdom from teachers of many spiritual backgrounds, Singh guides us to use the experience of aging as a spiritual way “... Transforming the predictable sufferings of aging into profound opportunities for growth in clarity, love, compassion and peace.” Our sufferings and attachments become paths of growth for ourselves and others. Offers many examples, questions and wisdom in straightforward language. 304 pages. Wisdom Publications, 2014.
9. [*In the Company of Grace: a Veterinarian's Memoir of Trauma and Healing*](#) by Jody Lulich. The son of a Black mother and white father, Jody Lulich experiences deep trauma as a child but grows to become a successful veterinarian with an endowed chair at the University of Minnesota. His care for helpless, voiceless animals provide opportunities to Lulich to heal himself as well. Completing his writing during the murder and aftermath of George Floyd, *In the Company of Grace* offer ways of finding courage in compassion and strength in healing—and power in finally confronting the darkness of youth. 232 pages. University of Minnesota Press, 2023.
10. [*Islam: A Short History*](#), by Karen Armstrong. 2000. Both feared and misunderstood, Islam haunts the popular imagination as an extreme faith that promotes terrorism, authoritarian government, female oppression, and civil war. In a vital revision of this narrow view of Islam and a distillation of years of thinking and writing about the subject, Karen Armstrong's short history demonstrates that the world's fastest-growing faith is a much more complex phenomenon than its modern fundamentalist strain might suggest. 227 pages. Modern Library 2002.
11. [*Muhammad: A Prophet for Our Time*](#), by Karen Armstrong. *Muhammad* presents a fascinating portrait of the founder of a religion that continues to change the course of world history. Muhammad's story is more relevant than ever because it offers crucial insight into the true origins of an increasingly radicalized Islam. Countering those who dismiss Islam as fanatical and violent, Armstrong offers a clear, accessible, and balanced portrait of the central figure of one of the world's great religions. 256 pages. Harper One, 2007.
12. [*Night Flyer: Harriet Tubman and the Faith Dreams of a Free People*](#), by Tiya Miles. Despite being barely five feet tall, unable to read, and suffering from a brain injury, Harriet Tubman managed to escape from her own enslavement, return again and again to lead others north to freedom without loss of life, speak out powerfully against slavery, and then become the first American woman in history to lead a military raid, freeing some seven hundred people. With tenderness and imaginative genius, Miles explores Tubman's story offering us powerful inspiration for our own time of troubles. 336 pages. Penguin Press, 2024.
13. [*No Cure for Being Human: \(And Other Truths I Need to Hear\)*](#) by [Kate Bowler](#). Kate Bowler believed that life was a series of unlimited choices, only to find that she was stuck in a cancerous body at age 35. With dry wit and unflinching honesty, she grapples with her cancer diagnosis, her ambition, and her faith and searches for some kind of peace with her limitations in a culture that says that anything is possible. In facing down cancer she searches for hope without cheap optimism, and truth with room for mystery. 224 pages. Random House, 2021.
14. [*Red State Christians: A Journey into White Christian Nationalism and the Wreckage It Leaves Behind*](#), by Angela Denker. An honest look at the Christians who gave the presidency to the unlikely candidate of all time. Veteran journalist Angela Denker (sportswriter turned ELCA

pastor) spent a year traveling across the United States, interviewing the Evangelical Christian voters who supported the Trump presidency and exploring how their voting block continues to influence the landscape of modern conservative politics. She paints an empathetic but frank assessment of their opinions and theological perspectives. In the expanded edition, Denker reflects on the lasting impact of the Trump presidency and the Christian white nationalism it emboldened. A must-read for those hoping to truly understand what Trumpism means for the 2020s and beyond. Angela Denker is pastor of Visitation and Public Theology at Lake Nokomis Lutheran Church in Minneapolis. Originally written in 2019 and updated in 2022. 319 pages. Broadleaf Books. 2022. (Make sure to find the updated version, 2022.)

15. [***The Sabbath World: Glimpses of a Different Order of Time***](#), by Judith Shulevitz. Shulevitz explores the Jewish and Christian day of rest, from its origins in the ancient world to its complicated observance in the modern one. Braiding ideas together with memories, Shulevitz delves into the legends, history, and philosophy that have grown up around a custom that has lessons for all of us, not just the religious. The shared day of nonwork has built communities, sustained cultures, and connected us to the memory of our ancestors and to our better selves, but it has also aroused as much resentment as love. *The Sabbath World* tells this surprising story together with an account of Shulevitz's own struggle to keep this difficult, rewarding day. 288 pages. Random House, 2011.
16. [***Sacred Nature: Restoring Our Ancient Bond with the Natural World***](#), Karen Armstrong. Best-selling historian of religion Karen Armstrong powerfully re-sacralizes nature for modern times. Drawing on her vast knowledge of the world's religious traditions, she vividly describes nature's central place in spirituality across the centuries. In bringing this age-old wisdom to life, Armstrong shows modern readers how to rediscover nature's potency and form a connection to something greater than ourselves. 224 pages, Knopf, 2022.
17. [***Soil: The Story of a Black Mother's Garden***](#), by Camille T. Dungy. When Camille Dungy moves to a predominantly white community in Fort Collins, Colorado, the community held strict restrictions about what residents could and could not plant in their gardens. She begins a seven-year odyssey to diversify her garden with herbs, flowers, and vegetables. In *Soil*, she sees her planting work as a metaphor and treatise for how homogeneity threatens the future of our planet, and why cultivating diverse and intersectional language in our national discourse about the environment is the best means of protecting it. 317 pages. Simon & Schuster, 2023.
18. [***Somehow: Thoughts on Love***](#), by Anne Lamotte. In *Somehow: Thoughts on Love*, Lamott explores the transformative power that love has in our lives: how it surprises us, forces us to confront uncomfortable truths, reminds us of our humanity, and guides us forward. "Love just won't be pinned down," she says. "It is in our very atmosphere" and lies at the heart of who we are. In this, her twentieth book, Lamott draws from her own life and experience to delineate the intimate and elemental ways that love buttresses us in the face of despair as it galvanizes us to believe that tomorrow will be better than today. 208 pages. Riverhead Books, 2024.
19. [***The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together***](#) by Heather McGhee. When Heather McGhee's explored the American economy—and the mystery of why it so often fails the American public, she kept finding that a root problem: racism in our politics and policymaking. But not just in the most obvious indignities for people of color. Racism has costs for white people, too. McGhee embarks on a deeply personal journey across the country, tallying what we lose when we buy into the zero-sum paradigm—the idea that progress for some of us must come at the expense of others. *The Sum of Us* is not only a brilliant analysis of how we arrived here but also a heartfelt message, delivered with startling empathy, from a black woman to a multiracial America. It leaves us with a new vision for a future in which we finally realize that life can be more than a zero-sum game. 464 pages. One World, 2022.
20. [***This is My Body: Embracing the Messiness of Faith and Motherhood***](#), by Hannah Shanks. Just hours after learning she is pregnant, Hannah Shanks hears the words at the communion table, "This is my body; this is my blood" in a whole new perspective. In *This is My Body*, she shares a

journey of discovery and reclamation, of finding familiar paths in unfamiliar territory and new facets to ancient rituals. Part personal narrative and part unearthing of scripture passages from a woman's point of view, it draws women and men closer to the God we profess, a God who is in all things, a God who is present in all genders and beyond them. Readers discover that God can be seen through the eyes, bodies, and experiences of women just as God has long been viewed from a male perspective. Using the communion liturgy and elements of the common table (where all are welcome) as a framework, the book offers much material for reflection on this central act of Christianity. 144 pages. Fresh Air Books, 2018.

21. [*Transforming: The Bible and the Lives of Transgendered Christians*](#), by Austen Hartke. Hartke offers a biblically based, educational, and affirming resource to shed light and wisdom on the modern gender landscape. *Transforming: The Bible and the Lives of Transgender Christians* provides access into an underrepresented and misunderstood community and will change the way readers think about transgender people, faith, and the future of Christianity. By introducing transgender issues and language and providing stories of both biblical characters and real-life narratives from transgender Christians living today, Hartke helps readers visualize a more inclusive Christianity, equipping them with the confidence and tools to change both the church and the world. 273 pages. Westminster, 2023.
22. [*We Survived the End of the World: Lessons from Native America on Apocalypse and Hope*](#), by Steven Charleston. Pandemics and war, social turmoil and corrupt governments, natural disasters and environmental collapse—it's hard not to watch the signs of the times and feel afraid. But we can journey through that fear to find hope. With the warnings of a prophet and the lively voice of a storyteller, Choctaw elder and author Charleston uses the voices of Indigenous prophets and sacred stories to help us live through the dread of apocalyptic times with courage and dignity. 207 pages. Broadleaf Books, 2023.
23. [*What's So Amazing About Grace?*](#) by Philip Yancey. Recently revised and updated, Yancey offers true portraits of grace's life-changing power. His powerful stories, rich theology, and practical suggestions evoke deep questions and learning, and challenge us to become living answers to a world that desperately needs to know, *What's So Amazing About Grace?* 352 pages. Zondervan. 2023. (Look for the updated, revised, 2023 version.)
24. [*When Time Is Short: Finding Our Way in the Anthropocene*](#), by Timothy Beal. *When Time is Short* considers the real possibility that our response to climate crisis is too late in coming, and while acknowledging the risk, helps us imagine a different relationship to the natural world. Beal re-reads key texts of scripture to anchor us in humbler conceptions of humans as earth creatures, bound in ecological interdependence with the world, subjected to its larger reality. Acknowledging that any real hope must first face and grieve the realities of climate crisis, Beal makes space for us to imagine new possibilities and rediscover ancient ones. What matters most when time becomes short, he reminds us, is always what matters most. 168 pages. Beacon Press. 2023.