# BOOKS I HAVE READ: BIG IDEAS AND AN ADVENTURE OF FAITH

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A fascinating biography of an influential Christian for children and children-at-heart.
**Category:** Observations

When I first became a Christian, I was handed a small tract called becoming a Christian by a man called John Stott. I remember very little about it now, but I do recall that it tied together all of the threads of the things I had learned at Sunday school into a cohesive and compelling whole. Over the next few years, I bumped into the name John Stott through Bible commentaries and excellent books on Christian ethics.

Stott was clearly a great writer, but in my world of conservative, independent evangelicalism he was viewed as being slightly dodgy. After all, he was an Anglican and he had dared to disagree with the Doctor (Dr Martin Lloyd-Jones).

It was later in life, when a few (not all) of my rough edges had been knocked off and when I'd met some really inspiring Anglicans that I began to take Stott really seriously. Books such as The Cross of Christ and Issues Facing Christians Today really helped and inspired me. He was instrumental in setting up the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity and the Langham Partnership. Not only that, but he was the one who held together the various factions at the 1974 Lausanne Convention and who edited the Lausanne Covenant, probably the most important Evangelical document of the 20th century. John Stott packed enough into his life for five or six other people. It is no wonder than Time Magazine named him among the 100 most influential people in the world and that the Spectator has just produced an article about him.

I mention John Stott because I have recently read Big Ideas and an Adventure of Faith an authorised biography of Stott for "children and children at heart". Despite the fact that I'm not exactly the target audience, I rather enjoyed the book and learned a good deal about someone who I had only admired from afar.

The book is a hardback of around 140 pages and will set you back about ten pounds on Amazon. The book is attractively laid out, with a fair number of photographs and side bars containing "fascinating facts". The book is aimed at children, so it is not a difficult read for adults. Given it's quarter of a century since I last read a book to my own kids, I'm not able to judge whether or not the text is suitable for the target audience.

Given who it is aimed at, the book is focussed on Stott's life rather than his publications and achievements, and it is all the better for that. It was fascinating to learn of his pacifism, his hospitality and generosity and (of course) his love of ornithology. Lausanne, Langham and the LICC do get a mention, as do his books, but the focus is very much on the man and who he was, rather than on what he did. From my point of view, this is what I needed.

All this being said, I do have some slight reservations. The world of privilege that John Stott grew up in is as foreign to me as if the book had been written about someone in France. This sense of distance is reinforced by him being referred to throughout as "Uncle John". I know that many people did refer to him in this way, but as someone who did not know him, I find this usage pushes me away from the subject, rather than draws me in. This may just be my working class hang-ups.

So who should read this book? Well, I'd suggest that anyone who is looking for a short introduction to one of the twentieth century's most influential Christians would do well to get hold of a copy. I'd also encourage Christian parents to think about reading the book with their kids. There are enough funny anecdotes to keep them involved and there is plenty of material for fruitful conversations.

I'm glad that I read it.

*Disclaimer: the publishers provided me with an electronic copy of this book in exchange for a fair review. I have not allowed this generosity to shape what I have written.*