



Reading Choices That Honor God

*“Now” - said a good book unto me -
“Open my pages and you shall see
Jewels of wisdom and treasures fine,
Gold and silver in every line,
And you may claim them if you but will
Open my pages and take your fill.”*

The first stanza of this poem by Edgar Guest, “A Book”, is an invitation to enjoy one of the greatest pleasures God has for us: reading.

It is easy to find time to read for pleasure in elementary school and after college. During middle school, high school and college, so much reading material is required, it is hard to find the time and motivation to read anything else. Even then, finding just a few minutes a day for pleasure reading can go a long way over time.

As parents, we know it is important to read to our children. Reading to our children is one of the most pleasant activities to share with them. The benefits include encouraging, listening skills, concentration, imagination, literacy skills and language development - including vocabulary and language patterns. For young children, the illustrations encourage prediction and interpretation. Books also help children relate books to their own experiences. For this reason it is important to be careful helping your children choose appropriate reading material.

I believe it is important to read to our children no matter how old they are. The American Academy of Pediatrics, www.aap.org, strongly recommends reading to children as young as 6 months. It is never too early or too late to read with your child. As a graduate student, one of my professors would stop teaching 15 minutes before class was dismissed to read aloud to us. It seemed so odd at first, but we began to look forward to ending the four hour class with a story read by her. I do not remember the book, but I remember sitting there engulfed in the story.

Reading to young children is easy. Choose a topic that interests your child. Read with enthusiasm. Change your tone of voice; use squeaking, whistling or low sounds with your voice. Use different character voices for each new character. Involve your child in the story by asking questions, making predictions and discussing the events. Play with the ending of the story by predicting or changing the end of the story. Ask, “What would happen if...?” The illustrations are wonderful tools to use for making predictions.

As children get older they need to realize, the more they practice, the better they become and the more they will enjoy reading on their own. An article by Michael K. Meyerhoff insists that to be successful in school and virtually any future vocation, it

is necessary to possess strong literary skills. He writes, “The process is so difficult and unpleasant for some, they view reading as a dreadful chore instead of a cherished activity.” Reading aloud to older children reaps benefits as well. You may read books that are too difficult for them to read on their own. Vocabulary and fluency skills may be discussed and modeled.

This summer, I read to my reluctant 19 year old. Every morning, we read a wonderful devotion called Addicted to God by Jim Burns. I was surprised that he asked to take it with him to college a few weeks ago. When reading to an older teen, I found it is easier to keep their attention if the passages are short. We had several wonderful, short, discussions about what I read. But, the most interesting benefit was when I found him reading to his younger brother. It is contagious.

Choosing good material is the next challenge. There is a wonderful book in its fourth addition called Honey for a Child’s Heart : The Imaginative Use of Books in Family Life by Gladys Hunt. It is a reference book that includes tips on how to choose good books for your child as well as book suggestions. She also wrote Honey for a Teen’s Heart: Using books to Communicate With Teens, which will help your teens enjoy the reading habit and become lovers of good books. But with any



recommendation, remember you need to evaluate a book's contents for your self.

Of course, the best book to read aloud to a child of any age, is the Bible. The adventures included in the stories and the parables come to life as you read them aloud. One of my pastors read the resurrection story in the gospel of John. He read with such expression and an occasional humorous commentary. He made it seem like we knew John and could relate to him personally. Reading aloud brings

insights that another reader might overlook.

Gene Edward Veith wrote a book entitled *Reading Between the Lines: a Christian Guide to Literature*. He believes that for a Christian, the habit of reading is critical in today's world. "As television turns our society into an increasingly image-dominated culture, Christians must continue to be people of the Word. When we read, we cultivate a sustained attention span, an active imagination, a capacity for logical analysis and critical thinking,

and a richer inner life." "Christians, to maintain their Word-centered perspective in an image driven world, must be readers."

So as a Christian reader, when I look for books to read myself or to read aloud to my children or my class, I like anything that has God's Word and messages sprinkled throughout His pages. Honor Him through your reading choices and He will bless you!

~ *Julie Stacy*

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