

Reading Talk

Some Reading, Caly?

by Janelle Bradshaw

It's been raining for days now. Not a normal experience for us Marylanders. Although the sun has finally come out this morning, all this soggy-ness makes me want to curl up on the warm, dry couch with a good book. Add some hot tea, and it's perfect.

I pitched the idea of some reading time to Caly, but I didn't receive the answer I was hoping for. The rain doesn't seem to have the same effect on her as on me. She is still looking for some undivided attention. The good book and tea will have to wait until she is in bed for the night...and the dishes are washed...the house straightened...Mikey's shirts ironed....

With the busyness of life, reading is hard to squeeze in. And it's easy to lose sight of its importance. But it is important. I love the way John Piper puts it: "If you want to stay alive to what is great and glorious and beautiful and eternal, you will have to fight for time to look through the eyes of others who were in touch with God." This requires reading and reading requires effort. But this effort yields beautiful rewards.

So, welcome to reading week here at girltalk. We are gonna chat about this delightful pastime for the next few days.

An Intenser Relish

by Nicole Whitacre

During those stretches when life is mostly about surviving to the next nap, books (that you haven't been assigned) can quickly start collecting dust.

But there is one book we cannot afford to lay aside--that greatest of all books, The Bible. When we talk about reading, there are really two categories: the Bible, and everything else. While the great works of men certainly reflect our Lord's creativity, the Bible contains the very Words of God. Wow. That's why the psalmist appropriately gushes, "More to be desired are they than gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb" (Psalm 19:10).

And that's why Horatius Bonar warns: "See that your relish for the Bible be above every other enjoyment, and the moment you begin to feel greater relish for any other book, lay it down till you have sought deliverance from such a snare, and obtained from the Holy Spirit an intenser relish, a keener appetite for the Word of God (Jer 15:16)."

Yesterday we received a sweet email about a woman with a keen appetite for the Word of God. Jayne writes that, "My Dad's favorite memory of his mother is of her kneading bread on the kitchen counter with her Bible open, dusted by the flour. She had 11 children and made all the family bread from scratch each day. Money was in very short supply but her love of the Word was plentiful. Working within her limitations of strength, time & duty, she found a way to fill her days with reading the Word."

Similarly, Donald Whitney points to the example of another woman whose "longings for the things of God reached as high as ever" even when "her time and energy had new and severe limits."

So if you find yourself living between naps, and your relish for God's Word has diminished, then pray as the Psalmist did: "Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law" (Psalm 119:18). Then dust off your Bible and *read*.

A Reading Plan

by Carolyn Mahaney

Surely we'd all agree--reading is a good thing. Yet many of us despair that we don't have time to read. But is that true?

Well, if I may be so bold, I would propose that our problem is not a lack of time for reading, but a lack of planning. And here is my justification for such an assertion. Two separate authors have recommended reading plans that I think even the busiest person would have to say, "I can do that."

Donald Whitney encourages busy people to "find the time to read one page of a book each day." He expands:

"It might mean sneaking a page during a visit to the bathroom, sitting in the car an extra two minutes at the end of the morning or evening commute, or standing by the bed to read a moment before crashing into the pillow at night. By reading one page per day you

can read 365 pages in a year, or the equivalent of two full-length books. That may not sound like much, but it's far better than not reading at all."

John Piper lets us in on his findings:

"One of the most helpful discoveries I have made is how much can be read in disciplined blocks of twenty minutes a day. Suppose that you read slowly, say about 250 words a minute (as I do). This means that in twenty minutes you can read about five thousand words. An average book has about four hundred words to a page. So you could read about twelve-and-a-half pages in twenty minutes. Suppose you discipline yourself to read a certain author or topic twenty minutes a day, six days a week, for a year. That would be 312 times 12.5 pages for a total of 3,900 pages. Assume that an average book is 250 pages long. This means you could read fifteen books like that in one year."

Reading one page a day or reading 20 minutes a day. Now that's a plan anyone can do! Wouldn't you agree?

Books Wanted

by Carolyn Mahaney

Did you know that reading is a way to express our love to God? In Matthew 22:37 we are commanded to love the Lord our God with all our minds. As we read books that cause us to think big thoughts about God, to know Him more, and to better understand His purposes, we are doing just that--we are loving God with all our minds.

And what's more, reading can provoke change and cultivate our affections for God. When I consider two books I am currently perusing, I have been convicted of sinful judging by the one, and have been more deeply affected by my Savior's death on the cross with the other. Needless to say, that makes reading a worthwhile endeavor.

But if you are not yet convinced of its importance, listen to Mr. Spurgeon go off about books in response to this verse: "When you [Timothy] come bring the cloak which I [Paul] left at Troas with Carpus, and the books, especially the parchments" (2 Timothy 4:13).

"He is inspired, and yet he wants books! He has seen the Lord, and yet he wants books! He has had wider experience than most men,

and yet he wants books! He had been caught up in the third heaven, and had heard things unlawful for a man to utter, yet he wants books! He has written a major part of the New Testament, and yet he wants books! The apostle says to Timothy and so he says to every Christian, 'Give thyself to reading.' The man who never reads will never be read; he who never quotes will never be quoted. He who will not use the thoughts of other men's brains proves he has no brains of his own."

Well, I don't want to be accused of having no brains of my own, so I'm going to keep reading. Seriously, Mr. Spurgeon was right: If Paul wanted books, we should all want them! So, let's pull that book our pastors have encouraged us to read off the bookshelf, and let's start reading--even if it's only for twenty minutes daily or one page per day.

Reading Help

by Janelle Bradshaw

Happy 4th, everyone! It's nice and hot here in Maryland and the grills are firing up all over the place in celebration of our country's independence.

For some of you this holiday may afford a little extra time for reading. I know for me, I often skip a very important step when I sit down with a good book. I don't ask for help to read. Don't worry, I graduated from first grade and I can read on my own. I'm talking about a different kind of help. The help that only the Holy Spirit can provide.

In 2 Timothy 2:7 we are exhorted to "Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything." Our thinking alone isn't sufficient. You see, *we think* but *the Lord gives*. We must depend upon the Lord in all things; reading is no exception. In order to grow in knowledge and affection for my Savior, I need His divine help as I read--help that He is ready and eager to give to those who ask. So before you open a book, pray that "the Lord will give you understanding in everything."

Reading Together

by Nicole Whitacre

One day, during our engagement, Steve and I took a walk around a local pond, bordered by shops and park benches. We came across some dear friends of my parents, Robin and Clara. They were sitting close together on

a bench, reading a book. Reading aloud to each other—they told us—was something they had enjoyed for over twenty years of marriage.

Inspired by their example, we resolved that reading together would be a part of our marriage. So, we brought a book to read to each other on our honeymoon—*Moby Dick* (I know it seems like an oddly unromantic choice, but we were staying at Nantucket so it made sense at the time). One of my favorite mental snapshots from our trip is sitting on a chilly beach and relishing language together. On our long drive home I read to Steve from some of my favorite books by P.G. Woodhouse about a man named Wooster and his butler Jeeves.

Reading aloud to each other hasn't been quite as consistent as we would have liked. Life fills up fast. But recently we started up again. We just finished *Ivanhoe* (swords for him, romance for me). Some day we hope we'll fill a shelf—maybe even a couple of shelves with the books we've read, me and him.

I'm not suggesting every couple should read together. (Janelle recently told me that when she and Mike tried it out, he fell asleep!) However, it's great to have some activity or hobby you enjoy doing as a couple. If you don't already have one, why not give reading together a try?

P.S. It's raining buckets here in Virginia again. The house is quiet and dark. Perfect for curling up with a good book and a cup of red bush tea!

A Great Gift

by Kristin Chesemore

From an early age my mom sought to instill in me a love for reading. This was no easy task, for unlike Nicole, this love did not come naturally. I was even put in the "Slow Readers Group" in 1st grade, which did nothing to enhance my enthusiasm. During the summer months, when school was out, my passions were directed towards playing outside rather than reading.

But Mom was tenaciously committed to the priority of books for her children. She had a providential conversation with a family friend who said his parents made him and his siblings read for an hour a day when they were growing up. Now, he said, they all have an appetite for reading. This clinched it for Mom. Her kids were going to read an hour a day, whether they liked it or not!

Recently, on the Together for the Gospel blog, Ligon Duncan quoted Thomas Chalmers: “Perhaps the great gift any father can bestow upon his children, apart from the covenant blessings of parish life and a comprehension of the doctrines of grace, is a passion for reading. It is cheap, it consoles, it distracts, it excites, it gives a knowledge of the world, and it offers experience of a wide kind. Indeed, it is nothing less than a moral illumination.”

Reading still doesn't come easy for me. However, I still spend time each day enjoying “experiences of a wide kind.” I'm so grateful for my mom's perseverance with me. She gave me a gift of worth I'll never be able to adequately measure.

Today, I'm teaching my oldest son Andrew to read. If he was in school, he wouldn't be in the slow reading group! Unlike his mother, he enjoys books and reading comes easy for him. I expect the ability and love to read might come more slowly for Liam. But regardless of their desires or abilities, I want to give all my boys the great gift of a passion for reading.*

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