

EXCELSIOR NEWSLETTER

Excelsior Classical Covenantal Community

April 2008

www.excelsiorclassical.org

“Reading Is Key” by Marlin Detweiler

A couple weeks ago I had the opportunity to speak at Dominion Classical Christian Academy, Atlanta. They asked me to talk on the importance of reading. In one sense it might seem silly to speak on such a topic--everyone knows the importance of reading. In another sense, we are part of a culture and society that doesn't value reading nearly as much as our ancestors did.

“When children learn to read well, with expression, they will translate that ability into being better writers and better speakers.”

It was not an easy topic for me to speak on either. In fact, Laurie gave me one of those looks that only a wife can give her husband when she found out the topic on which I was to speak. You know, the look that says, “You've got to be kidding.” She's the real reader in our family. It's not that I don't read. I read a lot. I just don't choose to do it for enjoyment with my leisure time the way many well-read folks do. I wish I enjoyed reading more. So, I got to thinking about it in preparation and learned some things I thought worth sharing here.

It seems that readers generally fall into two categories--slow and fast. Slow readers, of which I am one, are good technical readers. They comprehend details well. Reading is

Moms' Night In / Prayer

Monday, April 14th, 7:00 p.m.
at the Moellers' House

End of Year Program

Friday, May 16th
Ballard Park

Details will be sent out soon.
Teachers – be prepared to have a presentation from your class.
Please let Misty Snyder know what you plan to do for the program.



not a natural first choice, leisure activity for them. They find reading more tiresome. On the other hand, fast readers don't comprehend as well. They don't like technical reading but love to read for pleasure.

Yet, fast or slow, reading is falling on hard times, and we ought to be concerned. The National Endowment for the Arts did a study entitled, "To Read or Not to Read: A Question of National Consequence." In it they found:

- * Only 30% of 13-year-olds read for pleasure on a regular basis

- * The average American between the ages of 15 and 24 spends only seven minutes a day reading and half never read for pleasure

- * 38% of employers find high school graduates deficient in reading comprehension

- * Corporate employers spend \$3.1 billion for remedial courses; state employers spend \$221 million annually

In other words, fast or slow, pleasure or technical, (and yes, I'm assuming no normal person reads leases or contracts or owner's manuals for pleasure) reading is important, necessary and not taught or inculcated as it should be. Reading is a key ingredient to life.

Consequently, we must train our children to read well and inculcate a love of reading in them. Teaching them to read well is not hard. A good phonics program is the significant ingredient. I'm partial to the Veritas Press Phonics Museum. Inculcating a love for reading isn't much harder, but requires more of us.

I have many fond memories of visits to Douglas Wilson's home. But one of my fondest was when, having finished dinner, his upper teenage children suggested he read to us from Patrick McManus's book entitled *They Shoot Canoes, Don't*

They? McManus is known for his outdoor humor. While the details might not be exactly right, I remember a scene that included a deer that was being hunted that ended up riding a bicycle out of control down a steep mountain road. I expect the Wilsons had read the book several times. Yet, to share their family's routine experience of reading out loud together was a real treat. Even more so was the deep belly laughter that got in Doug's way as he tried to keep reading the scene as it developed.

I learned something that night. I learned that reading to your children was very, very important. And that's not all. I learned that it didn't need to stop (in fact shouldn't stop) when the kids got a bit older.

Reading together is a bit like watching a movie or going to a sporting event together—a shared experience. Yet, it's even better. The active role the reader plays, putting feeling into the story, is good practice for the reader and listener. When children learn to read well, with expression, they will translate that ability into being better writers and better speakers. And, of course, there is the delight of being together to simply enjoy the occasion.

My father was an accountant. He was a slow technical reader. However, I have very fond memories of similar interaction, but with numbers. For the fun of it, he taught me long multiplication and division at a very young age. I loved it, and I still love numbers.

So, is it nature or nurture that made Doug's kids love reading and me to love math problems in a similar way? The answer is probably that it is some of both. And to the extent that we can contribute to the delight and wonder that God has given our children, we must do our part. Start the habit of reading to them when they are young.

Keep it up when they are older. You'll be amazed at the scope of the benefits.

This article is reprinted with permission. It appeared in the April issue of Veritas Press's magazine.

Teachers – it is very important that students receive their completed assignments back in a timely manner. It is difficult, at best, for the student (and the parent) to know where there are errors without your input. Also, these papers are often needed to study for upcoming tests. Please be diligent. Posting or sending email messages to parents is a good way of communicating where you are in the process of grading the assignments.

ACCS Conference June 26–28

Recovering Truth, Goodness, and Beauty
June 26–28, 2008

Renaissance Austin Hotel
Austin, Texas

This is a **wonderful** opportunity to learn all you can about classical education! We've attended this conference as a group in the past and have been so blessed. This year's theme is *Recovering Truth, Goodness, and Beauty*.

Here's a list of some of the topics to be discussed:

Where is the Beauty and Goodness in Logic?

Protecting Truth, Goodness, and Beauty

Trends with Classical Christian Graduates

A Place for Everything and Everything in Its Place

Living (and Teaching) Wisely in a Media-Saturated Culture

Lateral Latin: Integrating Latin throughout the Curriculum

Academic Rigor without Burnout

Defending the Truth Beautifully: Mock Trial

Chanting and Singing in the Grammar School

Here are the expenses involved:

Registration cost - \$160 if we register before April 30th

Hotel - \$149 per room - up to 4 people in one room

Flights – in the \$200 range from Jackson

Would someone that is planning to attend like to organize a group of interested parents? Please contact Penny Moeller - 841-7871.

Preparing for April...

April Headmasters

April 4th - Scott Duley

April 11th - Larry Ramsey

April 18th - Alan Becker

April 25th - Denvil Crowe

April Clean-Up

April 4th - Fradenburg family

April 11th - Ramsey family

April 18th - Moeller family

April 25th - Crowe family

Announcements:

FOR SALE:

Kawai upright new piano
black, glossy
\$4,000 or best offer
Alice Robertson
489-1580
419-1555

Field Trip

The 3rd-6th grade science class is preparing for a field trip to the Memphis Zoo sometime after April 15th. Details will be forthcoming. All Excelsior families are welcome to attend as well. Please contact Susanne Dye if you have any questions.

Lunch:

April 4th - Denver's

April 11th - Chick-fil-a

April 18th - Wendy's

April 25th - Pizza Dr.

Please leave your completed order form and money in the box labeled "LUNCH" in the foyer of Bldg A. a week before the lunch you're ordering.

