

A Gift That Keeps On Giving

During this Christmastime, I would like to take this opportunity to challenge you to think about giving your children gifts that will further enhance your investment in their Christian school education. I would like to suggest that you consider giving books this Christmas. The

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temptation is to yield to the highly effective marketing strategies of the countless retailers that vie for our Christmas gift dollars. And then we ponder how soon so many of those “treasured toys” lie idle and unused.

Our culture through high technology has drawn us away from reading, offering instead a nearly unlimited menu of questionable leisure choices ranging from humiliating and degrading “comedy” to graphic and sordid drama. I will simply leave that topic right there since this is a treatise to encourage reading, not to focus on the degrading aspects of much of the entertainment media.

Too often we fail to recognize the extent to which we as parents model life to our children. If we do not read, our children will not read. According to *Reading at Risk*, a report issued by the National Endowment of the Arts, “This comprehensive survey of American literary reading presents a detailed but bleak assessment of the decline of reading’s role in the nation’s culture. For the first time in modern history, less than half of the adult population now reads literature, and these trends reflect a larger decline in other sorts of reading” (Gioia 2004, vii).

James Emery White, the president of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, recounts a personal story in his book *A Mind for God*. He describes a recent family vacation to Disney World in Orlando, Florida. One afternoon after returning from the theme park, they sat in the hotel atrium—the entire family—reading. He gives this account:

My oldest daughter was tearing through the latest installment of Harry Potter in order to pass it on to her siblings; my other daughter was soldiering her way through Dostoevsky’s *The Brothers Karamazov*; my oldest son was reading—again—Tolkien’s trilogy *The Lord of the Rings*; and my youngest son was laughing uproariously over some unfortunate event conceived by Lemony Snicket.

I had my own stack of books beside me, as if they were a mound of pastries from which I had yet to choose which one to eat first. A history by David McCullough, I believe, finally won. My wife, bless her soul, was actually reading one of her husband’s books. Martyrs still exist.

A woman walked over to our table, openly marveling at seeing six people—and particularly four children—*reading*. She said it was a wonderful sight and wondered how we did it. I remember thinking that we didn’t do anything—we genuinely enjoyed reading. But there was something that caused my children to love a book. It started by doing what my mother did—talking about books like they were truly a pleasure. Then, throughout their lives, we modeled a life that read. (2006, 41–42; italics in original)

Might this not be a great year to consider gifts that will enhance and enrich the lives of your family? Your read of the above-mentioned *A Mind for God* (2006) will help you develop a strong philosophical basis for a personal discipline of reading. And the following three websites could greatly assist you in reviewing and selecting books as gifts for your own children:

www.bookhive.org

www.preschooleducation.com/breview.shtml

www.christianbook.com

May you and your family be richly blessed during this Christmas season as you celebrate the birth of our Savior!

References

Gioia, Dana. 2004. Preface to *Reading at risk: A survey of literary reading in America*, by Tom Bradshaw. Washington, DC: National Endowment for the Arts.

White, James Emery. 2006. *A mind for God*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.



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