



“Pay attention to reading” theologians tell young seminary students. Reading for the pastor is important toward enabling thoughts, preparation and sermon writing not to mention faithfulness to God’s Word, doctrine, and practice as ministers of the Gospel.

A recent article was published on reading books and how the trend away from books toward blogs, posts etc., is moving our society away from the “joy of reading.” The author of this article (printed in a newspaper) made the point that “unlike the ephemera (*things of short existence*) of today’s articles and blogs, “great books inhabit the mind forever.” A profound thought indeed! Reading, a great gift itself, is important for the layperson as well as the pastor. Think of the benefits of reading God’s Word that gives to us Christ Himself! We will come back to that point later.

The author of those profound words above also related a story about his experience when he owned a small bookstore years ago. He was visiting with a grandmother who brought two young children into his store. Their conversation was of course about reading and when the grandmother looked over and saw her grandchildren interested in the books on the shelves, she commented, “You know, I don’t really care what they’re reading as long as they’re reading.” Reflecting on this comment, the author wished he had said, “that’s like saying, ‘I don’t care what they’re eating as long as they’re eating.’” Let that thought sink in a minute.

Not only is it important for children to read what is good for them, so too it is good for adults, for all to read what is good for the soul. Certainly, as we read, there are many things from which to choose. The point is not to ban all books, to censor everything that might have a bad word, or to rule out everything that is contrary to our own opinion. As Christians, and Christian parents, we are to be involved in our children’s education, and bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (**Ephesians 6:4**). We should pay attention to the reading materials of our children and our own also. Some material is not appropriate for children and some is not appropriate for adults. This is not to say that only the Bible is appropriate as there are other good choices too. For example, pastors read theological commentaries from other theologians and denominations to know their belief. To defend the faith correctly, it is important to know what others teach while understanding God’s Word to be the final authority which reveals Christ as the Savior. Yet, some reading material should be avoided all together, especially for children, which poisons the mind. Remember the quote earlier, of just being glad “someone is reading as opposed to what they’re reading”, so that we keep every thought captive in obedience to Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5).

“Paying attention to your reading” is as important for pastors as it is for all believers. Pay attention to what you and your children are reading and guide them especially to God’s Word, the most important of all reading. **“These are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His Name” St. John 20:31.** The sacred writer reveals the Divine Purpose of God’s Word; that we would know Christ, the Savior, and have life (eternal life) in His Name. What more important reading for any age is there? The importance of such reading is clear. God’s Word is the source of forgiveness, life, and salvation through Christ our Savior. God loves you and calls you by His Word into saving faith in Baptism, the water and Word connected to give you grace in Christ.

Pay attention to what you read (content) and that you read God’s Word; it strengthens faith and draws you ever closer to the Savior, Jesus Christ who gave His life for you. The priority is always God’s Word both for you and your children. Reading is a joy, which can be for entertainment, education, relaxation, and many other good reasons. But the most important reading for all ages is God’s Word rich in His Grace and abundant in His Mercy revealed to us through Christ our Savior. His life, ministry, suffering, death, burial and resurrection is God’s grace given through His Holy Word as it bestows the gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation! To God be all the glory!

In Christ,

Pastor Ahrendt