



April 1, 2023

Positive Reading Choices



CHARACTER BUILDING OR ADDICTION

It started out so innocent. Alison and her brother Nelson were out of school for the summer, and once a week they went to the library to read and bring home books to read for the rest of the week. At first they selected reading material that was inspirational and educational. They were learning about history, health, and nature.

Then one day Nelson picked up a science-fiction book about space, aliens, and heroes, and Alison picked up a fiction book about fairies, castles, and white knights.

Soon all they were reading were fictional books. When they would pick up a book on history or nature, they found it was no longer fun or interesting to read. They also found that they were no longer eager to read their Bibles, Sabbath School lessons, or their inspirational character-building books. They even lost interest in attending church. They weren't sure why, but they knew something was wrong.

Alison and Nelson decided to speak to their youth pastor and asked if he knew what was wrong with their spiritual life. After much discussion Pastor Mike recommended they do an experiment. He suggested they stop going to the library and reading the types of books they were reading. He suggested they give their minds a chance to recover from the overstimulating and sensational books they had been reading. After the pastor prayed with them, Alison and Nelson agreed to take on the challenge.

A few weeks later Pastor Mike spoke to Alison and Nelson again and gave them each an autobiography about a leading neurosurgeon and suggested they read it and then let him know how it went.

Alison and Nelson were surprised that they enjoyed the book. They asked Pastor Mike why it was that they once again seemed to enjoy true stories. Pastor Mike explained that when we overstimulate the brain with fiction we lose the desire to read wholesome literature that has moral and spiritual value. He shared Matthew 6:24 with them: "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon." In other words, we cannot expect to love God if we fill our minds and thoughts with literature from books that do not draw us closer to Him. How important it is that we prayerfully evaluate each decision and carefully choose to store in the mind only worthwhile information that will help us grow closer to Jesus!

—Kathleen D. Sowards

Sabbath

FOR STUDY

- » **Memory Text:** "Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things" (Philippians 4:8).
- » **Our Beliefs, no. 11, Growing in Christ:** "By His death on the cross Jesus triumphed over the forces of evil. . . . Jesus' victory gives us victory over the evil forces that still seek to control us, as we walk with Him in peace, joy, and assurance of His love."
- » Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 60-63

Sunday

RESPONDING

- » Read Romans 12:1, 2.
- » You see your friend reading and ask, "What are you reading?"
- » Your friend begins to tell you about the book and concludes his description with "It's the most exciting book I've ever read—wanna borrow it when I'm finished?"
- » What do you think? Sound like something you'd like to read?
- » You find out that the story your friend is reading has no character-building or educational value lesson. What do you tell your friend? Do you really think it matters what you read?

Monday

BIBLE ANSWERS ON GROWING IN CHRIST

- » Read 2 Peter 3:18; Psalm 1:1, 2; Ephesians 6:12, 13.
- » Keeping our eyes and thoughts on Jesus is our only safeguard against temptation and sin. We should not allow anything that is empty of true meaning and value to distract us from what really matters. Getting to know Jesus, building a relationship with Him, and using our time to help others learn of His love are things that matter most in life.
- » How could certain types of reading materials hinder your relationship with God?
- » What types of books can build your character and help you toward a closer relationship with Jesus?
- » Fill in the blanks. The text is from the New King James Version.

"_____ therefore, having girded your waist with _____, having put on the breastplate of _____, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the _____; above all, taking the shield of _____ with which you will be able to _____ the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of _____, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the _____; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being _____ to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints" (Ephesians 6:14-18).

Tuesday
REFLECTING

- » Some read only when they are required to read a book for school. But good reading can change your life! How does a Christian young person who loves to read choose books that are good? Does it matter?
- » We’re supposed to fill our minds with things that will bring us closer to Jesus. Some books cannot do that. In fact, many books would separate us from Jesus. Reading—just like watching TV or movies, or listening to music—affects us. What we take into our brain shapes our way of thinking. What information will you allow into your mind that will impact your future decisions?
- » “Those who would not fall a prey to Satan’s devices must guard well the avenues of the soul; they must avoid reading, seeing, or hearing that which will suggest impure thoughts” (Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home*, p. 403).

Wednesday
BIBLE INSIGHTS

- » Match the verse to the correct reference.

Galatians 5:19-23
Philippians 4:8

2 Corinthians 3:18
Colossians 1:9, 10

Colossians 3:1, 2
Romans 12:1, 2

“ . . . if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate . . . ”	
“ . . . be transformed by the renewing of your mind . . . ”	
“ . . . increasing in the knowledge of God . . . ”	
“ . . . the fruit of the Spirit is . . . ”	
“ . . . being transformed into the same image . . . ”	
“ . . . Set your mind on things above . . . ”	

Thursday
CONNECTING

- » Read Philippians 4:8.
- » Review the memory text.
- » So how do you choose what to read? Is an entertaining story line the most important thing? That’s usually what draws us into a book, but it’s not really the best way to choose your reading material. As a Christian, you need to choose books that will build you up and help you develop a strong character. A good story strengthens your faith in God and helps you to grow in God’s image. Also, when we read only novels and stories for entertainment, we find it harder to focus on serious reading—such as the Bible, or your textbooks at school. Find some quality nonfiction to exercise your brain. Try something different from what you usually read and stretch your mind in a new direction. Reading can introduce you to people who made a difference in the world and stood for the right, foreign countries, unknown scientific discoveries. There’s no limit to learning when you set your mind to it.
- » But try applying biblical standards, especially those found in Philippians 4:8. Ask yourself if the book you are planning to read will fill your mind with the kind of things you want. Does it match the standards of God’s Word? Will reading it make you a better Christian, a more loving friend and family member?
- » Don’t be afraid to read! But don’t be afraid to question your reading, either—and to close the book if you see that it’s leading you away from God rather than closer to Him.
- » “Receive into the soul by faith the incorruptible seed of the word, and it will bring forth a character and a life after the similitude of the character and the life of God” (Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 38).

Friday
APPLYING

- » Read 1 Thessalonians 5:23.
- » In the table below, try to list as many books you have read as you can remember reading in the past year. (Some of you may fill only a couple lines, while some may need extra pages. That’s OK!) Next to each one, check all the boxes that apply to it. Look over your list and think about what you can add to your reading menu to build spiritual muscle—and what you might need to take away.

TITLE	AUTHOR	MADE ME A STRONGER CHRISTIAN	DIDN’T HELP ME AS A CHRISTIAN

