

- #6 Subjects: 1) Reading Program
2) What Is Good Literature
3) The Nonsense and Evil of Instruction Via Phonics *Chapter Books*



Dear Angela,

I will attempt to address your questions about what is a good "reading program," "good literature," and what's wrong with "chapter books." I ask God to help me as I write and you, as you read. Here goes.

Reading Program

The Madsen Method is a reading program in the tradition of how our forefathers taught children to read literately. Christian does not need another program to guide his literate reading development (or his literate spelling and writing development).

Also, since he does not know all 88 phonograms, it is a true assessment that when he "reads" words but without phonogram knowledge, he is "word calling." This means he is simply remembering the *names* of these arrangements of Alphabet Letters, which is like recognizing a picture when he sees it. He can't help the fact that he has this ability and it should not be portrayed to him as either good or bad, no more than having curly hair should be portrayed as being good or bad. He can't help it; he had nothing to do with it. But what he can "do naturally" does not meet the definition of **literate reading**. This is where we address the honesty issue about what a student does and does not "**know**" as well as the honesty issue about what a student can and cannot "**do**" and the reality that **a student can "do" without "knowing."** **We desire his "doing" flows from his "knowing."**

We certainly let our children "read" without knowing about reading, just as we let them "sing" without knowing about singing. But ***training must be given if the child is to add knowledge to his unsolicited, oblivious, no matter how wonderful it may seem, untaught, I-am-this-way ability.*** A child must not think the thing he can do naturally, without knowledge, is praiseworthy. He must see it for what it is ... natural but without *substance*. This helps him humble himself before the truth and agree to add substance. By adding substance, he prepares himself to serve others, whereas if his life flows from doing what comes naturally, he will serve himself but will not have knowledge whereby he can serve another, which is the test of love.

I point this out because Christian does not know the knowledge base of English - the phonograms - he is not ready to read text and answer questions about the text by writing comments. He may be able to answer questions verbally, but I'm certain the "I can't spell and write; I don't speak literately yet, but I can talk some" goal is not one you would set for him.

Have you ever considered the nonsense of *Chapter Books*, as they are called in a Phonics Basal Reader Series?

These books, used to teach reading, history, social science, etc., are *nonsense*. I define *nonsense* as "a charade of learning," "a façade," "an affectation—a "showing off" that deceives as it deprives the reader of skills, facts, and spiritual insight: **COMPREHENSION!**

Let's say a publisher's curriculum writer decides and writes for third graders "what should be said" about George Washington's winter at Valley Forge. This same person decides and writes questions to be answered about his "what should be said." He also takes into consideration what psychiatrists and psychologists have decided about how long a **Chapter** should be, based on "controlling" a third grader's "attention span," as they call it: These professionals present their devices falsely, saying that a child in third grade has an attention span of approximately 10 minutes and they wish to accommodate him to avoid upsetting him. Then, through "controlled response instruction," they condition the child to develop a "10-minute attention response behavior." The theory is evolutionary at the onset because it applies behaviorists' "conditioning theories," does not provide for "improvement through training," and it denies the Divine influence in training, maintaining, "We will mold children so we can control and predict their behavior." How limiting; how perfunctory; how EVIL!

The same curriculum writer must choose from among **1216 words, the average number of sight words Phonics programs ask students to memorize by the end of third grade**. THINK OF IT! The curriculum writer is expected to square away within 10 minutes his condensation of the event, using words that are limited to 1216 *hopefully memorized* words! Then, he must ask questions *of his choosing* which a student is expected to answer using the text's limited *hopefully memorized* word choices! This is all a **Chapter Book** requires from a student; if he can do the "all," he is called a "good student." No more is asked or taught or expected. He has survived!

Curricula that contain the "read a chapter/answer the questions" format are plenteous. They were and are designed to keep students channeled in school for 12 years. They do not intend to educate, but to "conform." They promote "conditioned response" robotic-ness. They should be avoided like the plague! I'll share more on this, if you wish.

The study of subjects via chapter books promotes narrowness of mind and soul! The connections of life are never made. Our forefathers never talked of such a practice! They wanted their children to "read" all words, in a literate way, soon, and they knew how to teach them to reach this goal. For curricula, they studied the scriptures and some good books about the lives of great persons. This is another e-mail. Christian may want to be like other children, but he isn't wise to want this. To want to do "what other students and curricula do" is so like a child who is bent toward measuring himself by others.

I believe there is an optimal way to guide a child to attain knowledge through literate reading, once he has learned to SAY & WRITE the phonetic base of English, the phonograms.

How about this?!

Good Literature: The best "read" around is the Scripture.

It is poetry, narrative, history, "prophetic fantasy," adventure ... parents who want their children to study good literature may stop here and go no further. God's Word contains all the hidden treasures of wisdom and knowledge, all about life and godliness, all definitions and disclosures about all persons, situations, deeds, imaginations ... all of the threads of which life's garment is made.

Let's say you and Christian consider how "The God" personally (Scripture is personal) comforted Job. Look at chapters 38-42.

"Then ***the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind and said...***"

God gave us written revelation! Look at what God calls "comfort." Read. Be amazed. Be taught by God Himself! Examine the questions God asks, questions about Himself and about Job. Draw Divinely stated conclusions rather than join the "what do you think about it" speculative approach (How peculiar it is to ask a mere child what he thinks when we are in the process of introducing him to what God thinks!). ***The book of Job*** is the Creator presenting His case to a righteous man after his great loss and trauma. How many ways does God tell Job He is at work in the universe He created? We, too, are righteous. The wisdom and knowledge found here is

inexhaustible, like God. ***A chapter book with corresponding questions couldn't help but limit the majesty of God, but look at what God teaches on these pages!***

How is Job 39:13-18 an "expression of God's comfort," therefore a basis for Job to be comforted? We recognize that only the Spirit can teach the answers to and meanings of many questions! Together we enter into the Word; we recognize Who the real Teacher is.

I transcribed here **Job 39:13-18** as **literally presented** in the ***New American Standard Study Bible*** from Harvest House Publishers. How does God bring Job face to face with His comfort through a "look at" a mother ostrich? **The answer to this question is not as one would give to a PERFUNCTORY question in a Chapter Book!**

***"The ostriches' wings flap joyously,
With the pinion and plumage of love (or of a stork),
For she abandons her eggs to the earth
And warms them in the dust,
And she forgets that a foot may crush them,
Or that a wild beast may trample them.***

***"She treats her young cruelly, as if they were not hers;
Though her labor be in vain, she is not concerned;
Because God had made her forget wisdom,
And has not given her a share of understanding.***

***"When she lifts herself on high (or lifts herself to flee),
She laughs at horse and rider."***

I think the Spirit alone can imprint the heart as God intends His comfort to be understood through these words. By entering into reading like this, Christian and you (no stronger bond between parent and child can be made) will be taught by God because you will be entering into the Word of God, which is the absolute truth known only by God and revealed only by God. ***"Engaging the Word of God" with their children was our forefathers' practice and they called it "English instruction." By this practice they prepared their children to do the same with their children. They joined Godliness with Literacy!***

We can forsake evolutionary devised, minced data, curricula, presented in bite-sized pieces written by the "unwise" and intended to control those considered "fit to survive," or we can teach as our godly forefathers taught, beginning and ending with the Word of God: We can go to God's Word and let the Teacher do His work in our minds and hearts.

The results in the heart from godless, evolutionary devised, minced data curricula, written by the "unwise" is godless, evolutionary, minced, "unwise" understanding. The results in the heart from godly, purposeful, bank-your-life-on-it, Spirit-directed instruction is godly, purposeful, bank-your-life-on-it, Spirit-directed understanding.

That's it for now. I've enjoyed putting this in writing because I believe its truth guides our choices. I praise you because you depend on God to supply all your needs; you know He alone is trustworthy and praiseworthy. God bless you.

Say "Hi" to Christian and your husband. Joe and I pray for you. Let me know how we can help. Joe has made me supper, bless his heart! I'm off to eat it.

Love and Prayers in Christ,

Sharon M.

P.S. Thanks to Sherry Frattini for editing **Letters to Teachers**, thereby improving my understanding of the inseparable oral/ written English Grammar partnership.

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