

## Readers: The Diamond Miners of Life!

I have enjoyed a lifetime love of books! They surrounded me in my youth. My earliest recollections were being read to and I thoroughly enjoyed it. In my memory, I can still smell the old books, feel the texture of the page, recall the illustrations and see the black print taking me to places I've never been.

So often we don't thank the Lord for the places God, in His wisdom, places us. Through the years I have often been asked, "Where were you reared up?" When a person moves around in youth, one's accent sometimes is a little non-distinguishable. I was born in Little Rock, Arkansas. At nine months we moved to the Washington D.C. area. Then at nine years of age, we moved to Florida. After graduation from high school we moved to Louisiana. I began college there, but in the middle of my college life I moved to Indiana to finish college. It was there I met my precious wife and when we were a very young family we moved to Texas and finally "stayed put." Books gave me stability in life, no matter where we lived. They were a comforting constant. When I look back to my youth, I consider Florida as the most memorable and longest stay of anywhere we lived. I did not like it at first. For one thing, I had to give up my sled – there wasn't much snow in Florida. But now as I look back, the most wonderful years (before I met Barbara) were the years in Florida, specifically the lovely little town in Central Florida called Lakeland. My dad and mom were very busy and so we were often left in the watch-care of my sister, Judy, seven years my senior. So often I was entrusted by my parents to do the right thing, without their constant surveillance. We were living in day when people kept their doors unlocked and open (for one thing we didn't have air conditioning). Perhaps some of you remember these days when folks left their cars unlocked, with the keys still in them. Now, the young people will not believe this, but General Motors had a system that if you opted to drive your car key-less, you could drive downtown (yes, I remember when most business was done downtown), park your car, do your business and drive home and not worry about auto theft.

It was in these more innocent days that I would venture out with my parents' permission and go to Park Trammel Public Library. It was a beautiful old building with high bookshelves and long tables. I would check out books and take the long walk around the lake and back up Johnson Avenue where we lived. One day I checked-out the biography of Robert E. Lee. I laid it aside. But within a couple of days I became very sick. For a couple of years in a row I had perfect attendance, but now my illness was such I was going to be bedridden for a while. I remember feeling very cooped up and when cabin fever was about to get the best of me, I asked permission to sit on the front porch to be nearer the sun and fresh air. I went to the front porch with my biography of Lee and this fifth grader ended up in Virginia. I entered the world of the anti-bellum south and developed a friendship with R.E. Lee that has lasted now for the better part of my life. I learned a valuable lesson that week; books are time machines, wagons or rocket ships. Books have the ability to introduce you to people you have never met, take you to places you have never been, and perform deeds beyond your natural capability. Every summer I encourage our youth to read with a reward for those who read three good books at summer's end. Therefore, let me encourage everybody, especially our youth to read. Here's why:

### **1. You can escape boring mediocrity and go to soaring virtuosity.**

The week I stayed home from school was lonely and immeasurably boring - until I got into my book. What a joy it is to be lost in a book and you can't wait until you finish supper, or wake up to get back to it. Many good things come to those who read. One of the good things is that you become knowledgeable in the subject of which you are reading. Do you know what the main duty of a law student or medical student is? Reading. Other than the courtroom and clinicals, the basic difference in a doctor, lawyer, preacher, teacher, military officer, oilman, or a banker is the reading material. To advance in most any profession, you must read. Readers are leaders! Jesus told John on the isle of Patmos: "*Blessed is he*

*that readeth...*” (Revelation 1:3). We know specifically our Lord was referring to reading the book of The Revelation, but in a real sense, reading people learn their subject and in turn are blessed.

## **2. You will be a contributing conversationalist instead of a critical complainer.**

Many times one reason we don't have anything to talk about (that is worthwhile) is because we have been negligent in our reading. If you don't believe that reading can spice up your conversation, I dare you to read twenty pages of any good book, magazine or periodical. I guarantee in your next casual conversation with a friend, you will be a more interesting person to talk to and if your friend has been reading they will be more interesting. To only talk about health issues, weather, sports scores, or gossip can become a dead end street. It has been said, “Little minds talk about people, good minds talk about things, great minds talk about ideas.” Jeremiah said, “*I will get me unto the great men, and will speak unto them; for they have known the way of the LORD, and the judgment of their God...*” (Jeremiah 5:5).

## **3. You change from self-deprecation to self-confidence.**

Paul said, “*Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth*” (I Corinthians 8:1). The word for puffed up in Greek is: “*phusioo.*” Literally it means, “to inflate.” In this instance, Paul is using the word critically. One who builds up knowledge without love can do a lot of damage. I have often seen this happen even to those in the Lord's work. Many a teacher and preacher have turned the “sword of the spirit” (Ephesians 6:17) into a butcher knife and have hurt rather than healed. But on the other hand, knowledge with love is a very good combination. Solomon, the wise man was declaring his goal in penning the book of Proverbs: “*To give subtlety to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion. A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels: To understand a proverb, and the interpretation; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction*” (Proverbs 1:4-7).

Some people suffer from such low self-esteem that they are the opposite of “puffed up” or inflated; they are emotional flat tires, nearly “rim cut” from the proverbial road of life. Reading wholesome material will inject you with just the right amount of self-assurance so that you will be able to throw your shoulders back and become a positive witness for our Lord. I love these words by Samuel Coleridge Taylor:

*Readers may be divided into four classes:*

1.) *Sponges, who absorb all that they read and return it in nearly the same state, only a little dirtied.*

2.) *Sandglasses, who retain nothing and are content to get through a book for the sake of getting through the time.*

3.) *Strain-bags, who retain merely the dregs of what they read.*

4.) *Mogul diamonds, equally rare and valuable, who profit by what they read, and enable others to profit by it also.*

I would like to say, we need to be mining, as well as marketing, those precious diamonds.

- Pastor Pope -

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