



Why Read A Good Book?

As an old man Paul directed Timothy to “bring the books, but especially the parchments” on his return trip. Luther, who wrote a book or large tract every two weeks from 1519 until the end of his life, said “Printing is the highest and ultimate gift of God.” And d’Aubigné, the Reformation historian, expressed his appreciation for books this way:

These epistles, these books, all these flying sheets were the means of regenerating the age. While dissipation came forth from the throne, and darkness from the altar, these unobserved writings sent over the French nation rays of light and seeds of holiness.

Richard Baxter the Puritan pastor in Kidderminster, England, had a relish for books. He was converted at age 14 through reading Sibbes’ *Bruised Reed* purchased by his father from a pedlar, and “a little piece of Perkins’ Works” which was owned by one of the servants. He gives us the following rationale for the use of sound books:

The writings of divines are nothing else but a preaching of the gospel to the eye, as the voice preaches it to the ear. Vocal preaching has the pre-eminence in moving the affections, and being diversified according to the state of the congregation which attend it. In this way the milk comes warmest from the breast. But Books have the advantage in many other respects.

Baxter lists seven benefits of books over preached sermons:

- You may read an able preacher when you have but a mean one to hear.
- Every congregation cannot hear the most judicious or powerful preachers, but every single person may read the books of the most powerful and judicious.

- Preachers may be silenced or banished, when books may be at hand.
- Books may be kept at a smaller charge than preachers.
- We may choose books which treat that very subject which we desire to hear, but we cannot choose what subject the preacher shall treat.
- Books may be at hand every day and hour, when we cannot have sermons but seldom, and at set times.
- If sermons are forgotten, they are gone, but a book we may read over and over till we remember it; and if we forget it, may again peruse it at our leisure, or at our pleasure.

When buying books remember the following:

1. Buy only the best books since you will only read a few hundred in your lifetime. When possible seek a recommendation first.
2. Don’t excessively fret over the price, since the cost of a book is always small if it impacts your life for good.
3. Buy to preserve the truth for your family or some deserving friends or institution in the future, for they will inherit your library when you die.
4. Never let the reading of books replace the reading of the Bible. Instead of one or the other, do both.
5. Let a good book humble you and not make you proud, by seeking God in what you read.



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