

BCL ep356 Helping Children Read Well the Hard Books with Sara Osborne

How does a child actually learn to read? For some, reading and sounding words comes naturally, with ease and joy, and for others, the process can be an uphill climb, especially when physical and learning challenges are involved. And even when we grow older, reading deeply and joyfully, especially the classics, can be hard if we haven't formed good habits along the way. Join us as we find new ways to encourage and walk next to our own children in our homes and in our schools, while being inspired to pick up great literature ourselves.

All this and more on this episode of Basecamp Live. Mountains, we all face them as we seek to influence the next generation. Get equipped to conquer the challenges, summit the peak, and shape exceptionally thoughtful, compassionate, and flourishing human beings.

We call it ancient future education for raising the next generation. Welcome to Basecamp Live. Now your host, Davies Owens.

Welcome to yet another episode of Basecamp Live. Davies Owens here on the journey with you. We're in the eighth year of coming together each week and discussing how to better raise the next generation in what does at times feel like climbing to the top of Mount Everest.

And so here we are at a Basecamp moment this week. It's a chance to look at what's going on in the culture around us. At times, we will dive into topics specifically on how to parent better from subject matter experts.

We look at what's happening in the world of classical and Christian education. But a lot of folks listen that are in traditional schools, as well as a variety of environments of educating, whether it's homeschools or hybrids, collaboratives, five-day brick and mortar. The great news is that Christian education and classical education are growing so quickly with so many people around the world who are learning and interested in this process together.

And so I always love just to say thank you and a big shout out to various schools that are joining us each week. I want to say a great hello and welcome and shout out to the folks at Gloria Deo Academy in Bulverde, Texas, along with the team there that are teachers and parents, and Joe Fessler, who is the head of school at Gloria Deo Academy. And a shout out as well to James Coward, head of school, along with the parents and teachers and everyone in their community at Trinitas Christian School in Pensacola, Florida.

Thank you for being a part of the Basecamp Live family as well as the Zipcast community. This particular episode is sponsored by some great folks that I'd love for you to know more about. You can always check out our partners page on our website.

Wilson Hill Academy is a great option for those of you who are looking for online classical education or maybe just an extra class for your school that's on with classical teachers, a great

organization, as well as the folks at the Champion Group. They do a Feed the Need event where they help schools raise funding and do so in a wonderful and winsome way. And of course, our partners at the Herzog Foundation, as well as Zipcast, which is, of course, part of our partner resources that we have here in the Basecamp Live Zipcast world.

I just would mention if you're listening and you're not a part of the Zipcast community, there is a wonderful opportunity coming up at the beginning of 2026 for schools to join us in January and February and have a chance to be a part of Zipcast for the remainder of the school year. It's prorated. It's a great time to jump on board.

We have an opportunity to get schools on, but we need to hear from you by the end of November. So reach out to us at [Zipcast.media](https://zipcast.media). Our guest today, Sarah Osborne, is the author of *Reading for the Long Run*, *Leading Struggling Students into the Reading Life*. She currently serves as the Assistant Professor of English and Director of Classical Education at the College of the Ozarks in Point Lookout, Missouri.

She's been there for 13 years and she's also the mother of four classically educated children. Sarah is passionate about teaching and learning and has been transformed by the challenge of educating students with disabilities and differences that make learning and reading exceptionally difficult. You're going to love her story and her wisdom and encouragement.

So without further ado, let's jump into this conversation with Sarah Osborne. Sarah Osborne, welcome to Base Camp Live. Thank you so much.

I would love for you to share a little bit of your own background and story. And how did you get so drawn into this world of reading books? Well, definitely personally drawn in at a young age. I was a book lover.

I still remember my mom ordering books off of the classroom book order so that I could lay down in the trunk of our station wagon and drive across country occupied. I was a book lover at a young age, but specifically in terms of thinking about reading in young students that came obviously with my role as a mother. So yeah, I have four children and when the oldest was about four years old, it was time for my husband and I to start thinking about what her education formally would look like.

And she was pushing, pushing hard for us to teach her something. Obviously, we were hoping to teach her lots of things in the home, but to begin her formal instruction. So I decided the best place to start would be teaching her to read.

And so we picked up Susan Wise Bower's *Ordinary Parents Guide to Teaching Reading*. And step by step, walked through the lessons until this switch just flipped and she took off and was a voracious reader at a young age. And that was a pattern that mostly repeated itself for my second child, also a daughter, who I taught her to learn to read around the age of five.

And so when I had my third child and he was progressing towards the same milestones,

naturally, I thought, well, I've got the hang of this. I've got a book. I know what to do.

Here we go. But it absolutely did not look the same. My son had some vision problems from an early age.

He had two eye muscle surgeries and eye patching and all kinds of therapy as a preschooler. And so we knew right from the start that the process was going to be significantly different. But I don't think either one of us were prepared for exactly how significantly different that would be.

So we wanted the same thing for him that we wanted for our daughters. We wanted to provide this way of interacting with the world around him, this beauty and pleasure and access to information and the great ideas and conversations about important topics. And it just felt like the door was closed.

So that really prompted a lot of wrestling for us. Our children have all gone to a classical Christian school. So the logo-centric model, the great books-oriented curricula, it is reading intensive.

So we started asking questions like, can this child have this kind of education? Are we trying to ask something from him that he can't do? Is that kind? Is it loving to push or is it loving to quit? And really that just prompted a lot of questioning and wrestling for us. Which culminated in this book. I mean, you went all the way to write a book, *Reading for the Long Run, Leading Struggling Students into the Reading Life*, which you published, what, two years ago.

And I think as you're telling that story, I know having been in this movement for almost 25 years, I mean, there's plenty of folks whose children don't have physical challenges like your son was having that are just struggling to read something that's both, it's hard for anybody because we were talking in particular about reading classical literature, not just any book, although today in our culture, any book is in many cases not even deemed easy to do. But I know a lot of times parents have said something like, is this hurting my child? Is this even good? They don't enjoy it. Is this something we ought to be considering other options? So what are some of the other struggles? And I would think especially in even the last post-COVID five years, just with increasing loss of attention span and reading stamina, it just seems like our culture is moving away from reading.

So it seems like all of this just keeps compounding. Absolutely. Definitely compounding.

And I mentioned early on that I myself am an avid reader. I'm an English professor. We live in a home full of books.

My husband and I are both educators. So perhaps we had more motivation than some people do to press on in that journey. But yeah, our culture increasingly is moving away from being text-centered, text-based.

I see that in my college classroom. I see that in the temptation for my younger children. You know, the length of a text that someone reads now is a blog post or a media post or something like that.

So, you know, we are really having to do something unique when we're asking for attention to a longer text and to take the time and the patience to hone the skills to read, you know, especially the classics. Yeah. But it's, you know, you work backwards.

So if you know where you're headed, where you want to get to with the immersion and the great conversation, we have to work backward and there has to be incremental movement for even the young children in our schools. Well, we're going to talk in a bit just about how do we, how do we kind of build those reading muscles, if you will? How do we kind of get on track with that? I'm curious your reaction, speaking of just this cultural moment that we're in. I don't know if you read probably 15 years ago, Nicholas Carr came out with a book called *The Shallows*.

I don't know if you've ever heard of him. He had written an article in the *Atlantic Monthly* just as a journalist about his own kind of post Google coming along, his inability to read. Let me just read this little segment.

I want to get your, this section. I'm curious your opinion, because I think it fits in with what we're talking about. He says in his book, *The Shallows*, someone or something has been tinkering with my brain, remapping the neural circuitry, reprogramming the memory.

I'm not thinking the way I used to think. I feel it most strongly when I'm reading. I used to find it easy to immerse myself in a book or a lengthy article.

My mind would get caught up in the twist of the narrative and the turns of the argument. And I'd spend hours strolling through long stretches of prose. That's rarely the case anymore.

Now my concentration starts to drift after a page or two. I get fidgety. I lose the thread.

I begin looking for something else to do. I feel like I'm always dragging my wayward brain back to the text. The deep reading that used to come so naturally has become a struggle.

This was written in 2008, by the way. Interesting. Well, I find that fascinating on multiple fronts.

Yeah, talk about it. Even in the pages of my book, which I did not hear this quote before I wrote it, I talk about just the building these new pathways. That's what you're doing for a struggling reader.

When you use repetition and consistency, you are building new routes for the brain to take, to access information, even just the process of learning decoding. Certain students may have particular neurological issues that are causing some of the difficulty in retrieving information or thinking quickly. But this is something that affects all of us.

The human brain is the human brain. And, you know, we like to think that we are impervious to

the pressures of culture that are shaping the way we think. But it's not true.

Even those of us who are, quote unquote, accomplished readers, we can lose our skill and we can build it. So it's both discouraging and hopeful, I suppose, at the same time, depending on our response. So it really is like a muscle.

I mean, you just, atrophies, right? Absolutely. And, you know, I use the metaphor of running to frame the discussion in my book because I am a runner and I've trained for a lot of long distance races. I'm actually getting ready to run one on Saturday.

It's fresh in my mind. And, you know, there's just no shortcut. You put in the effort.

You add miles slowly. You do the same thing over and over and over. You wrestle with motivation.

You sometimes bump up against injury and weakness and recovery. You know, you have to have rest as well as activity. All of those principles, they're incredibly helpful, I believe, for helping struggling students with special needs or, you know, differences, disabilities that are really inhibiting the process of learning to read in the context of a classroom especially.

But for all of us, these are just principles of diligence and discipline and self-control. Unsurprisingly, you know, they also lead to character formation. Well, I love the way you're articulating this because I think, again, there is just an undercurrent of questions among parents.

Like, is this really the best use of time? And boy, it seems to be a struggle. I want to get a break in a minute. But before we do, in particular, you know, the classic texts are especially filled with challenges.

Why do you, how would you explain, you know, compared to your beach novel? I mean, a classic text is a weighty for all the reasons you said because it's so rich. And if you can get through it, boy, it does all kinds of wonders on your character and your mind. But yeah, talk a little bit about why are they, why is it especially challenging? Yeah, well, for anyone who has ever tried to read, especially, you know, I mean, the classics are by definition older texts.

Disagreement on what qualifies as a classic out there on a number of years and such. But these are texts that have stood the test of time, so to speak, and have had significant impact on, you know, our cultural and human experience. And so, you know, anytime we are entering into a different culture than our own, whether that's geographically a different place, whether it's, you know, a different time period, whether it's simply a different educational background, the language changes.

And so we find it difficult to wrestle with someone else's perhaps archaic language, perhaps just, you know, verbosity at times, sometimes incredibly long sentences, witness William Faulkner, right? Sometimes we are reading maybe not jargon, but something close to it when

we're reading content specific texts, you know, about scientific inquiry and political discourse and things like that. So all of this takes us outside of our normal everyday linguistic experience and exposure. And it requires us to step into something a bit more unknown, which is a challenge for all of us, regardless of our reading ability.

And it seems like the natural tendency or maybe the modern solutions, well, let's just sort of modernize. I mean, you've got like the message version of the Bible, because you don't want to read all those these and nows in the King James. And I see that with a lot of anthologies or maybe summary type books of, you know, the shorter digestible classic versions.

I'd love to know kind of your thought on whether that's, isn't that a better place to start? Because it's a little easier. I mean, how do you react when people offer that solution? I think the impulse is to democratize texts to make them equally accessible to everyone. Yeah.

But I think perhaps sometimes with that positive motivation, we end up with the negative result of everything's just the same. We're not exposed to cultural nuance and difference. And, you know, God created all of us with gifts and different personalities, and he thought it was a good idea.

And I think it blesses the world, you know, for our differences to show up in beautiful ways. And I just think that we are, we are missing access to the experience of, you know, many beautiful, winsome, extraordinary texts when we try to make them all sound the same. There's certainly a place for, you know, yeah.

But I would say in general, you know, I disagree with the impulse to kind of make everything sound the same. Right. And then you lose so much richness.

I remember for years when I used to do open houses, I'd read the difference in the, an excerpt from Peter Pan and the original, I guess it's Barry's version, the original versus sort of the Disney version of the same, like comparing the two passages. And you've got the Disney version that was just completely vanilla. And then you read the original and it's like three dimensional in terms of the word usage and the expressions.

So it's like totally different. I have to say on that story, when my girls were young and I was homeschooling, I thought, oh, I'm going to get the unabridged classic audio book form. I did not realize that there were some different choice words in the text that are not in the abridged version.

Right. Yeah. Hadn't been Disney-fied.

Yeah. You have to, everything's not, you know, PG and below in some of this, nor is the Bible for that matter. But at any rate, let's take a quick break.

So we'll be right back and continue our conversation. During this short break, I have a special invitation to all school leaders, administrators, and teachers. I want you to imagine for a

moment stepping away from your everyday routine at school and diving deep into the rich foundations of Christian education, surrounded by world-class scholars, seasoned classroom teachers, and administrative experts with years of experience running schools with a lot of wisdom to share.

That's exactly what the Herzog Foundation's Institute is offering. I've had the joy of serving as a training coach for the last few years, leading their two and a half day training on spiritual formation and another one on parent engagement. They offer close to 50 unique training events ranging from board governance to marketing to classroom best practices.

They even offer a training on how to teach the great books. And the best part of all, well, thanks to the generosity of the Herzog Foundation, these training events, including lodging, are completely free for Christian educators. Institutes are located around the country in beautiful locations, including at the Museum of the Bible in Washington, D.C., and the Reagan Library in Santa Barbara.

Don't miss this incredible opportunity. Check out the details at theherzogfoundation.com. I'm here with my friend Joanna Hensley, head of Lower School at Wilson Hill Academy, to tell you about their exciting new program. Maybe you already know about Wilson Hill Academy.

We talk about Wilson Hill all the time on Base Camp Live. They're known for their really effective and helpful online classical Christian education they offer. They have lively courses for students in grades three through twelve.

But what you may not know is that Wilson Hill is now offering a rich early learning program they call Forma for students in K through second grade. I'm here with Joanna. Joanna, tell us more.

Oh, thanks, Davies. Forma is such a wonderful way to begin a lifelong love of learning. You know, we talk often about the cautions of technology.

So let's just go ahead and get this out of the way. Are you encouraging kindergartners to be on Zoom all the time? Is that what this is? Absolutely not, Davies. Forma does not involve putting five-year-olds on Zoom.

Forma is a program that gives to parents valuable guidance from an experienced mentor-teacher who walks them through a carefully curated curriculum for teaching reading, math, nature study, and enrichment, like picture study and music, all within a like-minded, encouraging community. I love what you guys are doing, especially for children in those younger ages. How can folks learn more about what you're doing with Forma? They can visit our website, wilsonhillacademy.com/slash/forma, F-O-R-M-A.

Fantastic. Thanks so much, Joanna. So as we think about reading, we are all wired differently by God.

You told the story of your own children, how different they are from each other. And how do you walk next to that child and really figure out what is it just laziness or maybe there's some real learning challenges or reading challenges or physical challenges? I mean, it seems like really knowing who you're guiding either as a teacher or parent is pretty critical before you drop the entire classic book in front of them and demand that it all be read by evening. So how does one evaluate well? I know you talk about that.

Yeah, I think it's critical to establish an honest assessment of where the child is now. As parents and as teachers, we probably have a vision of where we hope that child will be. You might even have a clear view of where that child's classmates are or siblings are or any other comparative entity.

But it's really not helpful to look at those things as benchmarks or as indicators of how you should proceed. Certainly, keeping your eye on the end goal, there is a place for that. But there's also a real place for just being honest about the challenges that you're facing.

Now, for many parents and even some teachers, right away, we're running up against a problem because we just see the problem as it's manifest and struggling to read. And then we have to work backward and consider why is this child struggling to read? So there are a variety of reading assessments, different reading curricula offer assessments. If your child's in school, there's oftentimes reading assessments given that can pinpoint particular segments of struggle to really help hone the resources that you choose to use to remediate or help that student.

But there's also just some pretty simple strategies. I know for our child, we were encouraged by multiple professionals to simply be attentive and keep a journal. And I would log the date, the time, the environment, what was happening? How was I seeing struggle manifested? What were my child's emotional cues? What was the text we were trying to read? What was the skill we were practicing? As much information as I could.

And just kept this in a notebook in a drawer in the kitchen. And I would just pull it out, you know, whenever something happened that I thought, this is another piece of the puzzle. And it's such an asset then when you, you know, visit an educational psychologist, when you meet at a parent-teacher conference, when you see the eye doctor, when you visit with your pediatrician, when you talk to your school counselor, whoever that person is, who isn't seeing your child in all of his, you know, daily routine the way you do.

It can really go a long way in evaluating what the real problems are. Is this a skill deficiency? Or is this an emotional response? Is there a behavioral problem that needs to be addressed? Is the environment part of the problem? Is there a particular time of day? Is my child rubbing his eyes? Is he getting headaches? Is, you know, there are just a lot of things that we can note as parents and as teachers during the school day, if your child's in school, that are just all part of the investigation of taking an honest assessment. Well, investigation is a really good word.

And certainly throughout the different ages and stages, if you've got a young reader and

they're, you know, early grammar and they're still, they're coming through that just natural process of learning and they're a little slow or they're everything you just said about how do you investigate it. But also you can see there's many seasons where maybe they did pretty well in the lower school. Now it's middle high school.

The reading material is even more challenging. Maybe they're just in a different place, maybe in their own attitude or their motivation. Or quite honestly, you know, the technology is, again, a part of that.

And it's like, well, you know, we let them play on the video game for a couple hours. After they get home, they had a long day at the classical school. Oh, now they're going to need to go read the classical book.

That's hard. I mean, so there's many mitigating factors, it sounds like, in terms of what's really there. And so, again, talk more about that.

How do you really make those points of discernment? Yeah. You know, one of the things that was so important and really was a source of frustration for my husband and I for a while because we felt like professionals that we would interact with, no one was willing to kind of look at the whole picture of our child. We could find someone to think about his eyes.

We could find someone to think about his emotions. We could talk to a teacher to talk about the curricula. But we just really struggled because we felt like this is a child.

He's not made up of compartments. Like, this is an integrated whole. And so, you're absolutely right to point out that, you know, children in different seasons of life, different stages, there are different cultural pressures, certainly social interaction.

I mean, who among us hasn't seen a child struggle through middle school in pretty much every respect, right? Reading included. So, you know, it's a changing terrain. Sometimes we hit the flatlands, sometimes we hit rolling hills, sometimes we're on the mountaintop, and sometimes we're in the canyon.

But I think the key for parents and teachers is not to immediately panic when there's struggle, but to just watch and listen and pay attention. And it's shocking sometimes how much we can learn from that. Yeah.

And that's a good reminder. Just, you know, press on. I mean, it's too easy today with so much pressure on families when these tensions arise to just want to hit a jack.

Like, you know, that's it. This is too much to deal with rather than trying to sort through that. Because again, to your point earlier, you're really potentially going to miss out on some really rich, not just, you know, mental push-ups, if you will, but the formation of rich character.

And so the power of stories and the ability to kind of draw us into something so much richer

than what we would have experienced if we had just stayed at a surface level. So, yeah. So what are some of the, you know, when you think about that process of coming along next to a struggling student, you've talked in your book about just, you know, kind of those steps you take and some of the, you know, again, don't eat the whole elephant or whatever analogy is, you know, start out with maybe shorter text or story rich text or fables.

I mean, what are some of the ways to just kind of help get that confidence level up? Yeah. But again, this will vary with the age of the child. You know, it's going to look different for a first grader than it will for a high schooler.

But to speak to the parents and teachers of the younger children first, because children are so varied in their speed of development, you know, that kind of kindergarten to third grade range is just wide open. You know, they pop up some faster than others, some later on, you know, some follow the exact average. But I think particularly when you have a child who has noticeable reading struggles in that age, even when you are doing things as simple as, you know, learning letters and individual phonemes, phonograms, you know, and you're building words and you're practicing word families.

I can remember doing that for hour after hour, day after day, week after week for years when my son was young. And I'm thinking, okay, we're doing repetition and consistency, but this seems quite elementary for quite a long time. You know, are we just stalling out here and this is a sign that we should give in and give up? And I just want to say a word to those parents and teachers of those young students in particular, because those early years, those were the hardest for my husband and I, because those were the ones where we couldn't see progress very clearly.

If we saw it at all, it was, you know, minute. And that's when we needed people, you know, I call them my team of knowers. Our eye doctor, you know, psychologists and school teachers, like all these people on our team who were, you know, experienced professionals in their fields.

Ideally, this is someone who has walked children like yours down this path before. They are the ones who can look at you and say, no, you're building the skill, you're doing the things, time and maturity, and you're going to see some success. And if I hadn't had people speaking into our situation like that, I'm not sure where we would be.

But I just want to say that, especially to parents and teachers of those young children, because that kind of labor for, you know, months and years is very difficult. And few are the people who are willing to stay that course like that, children included. You have to, you know, provide enough motivation and encouragement to prompt them along in that journey.

It's not just the choice of the parent or the teacher. It's an effort in tandem to move towards the goal. And, Nick, go ahead.

Well, I was just going to say, to confirm that point, I mean, this is one of the great and

wonderful, beautiful things about being in a Christian community, in a classical school community, because you are on this journey together. And so there's a sense in which having those other perspectives from teachers or even other parents saying, yeah, we're struggling with this too. This is not, because I think that's the underlying fear is always, am I hurting my child or am I doing something that's in the long run not going to be beneficial? So I think to have those experts around you makes a lot of sense.

You were going to maybe say something about older students too. Yeah. You know, this might change at a certain age and stage as students move on.

The strategies aren't going to look the same. And, you know, hopefully there will be a point where those, the years of the repetition and the consistency, you know, decoding will finally start coming along. And then, you know, Lord willing, you get to the end of a reading curriculum and you celebrate success.

But I remember asking very quickly after that, now what? No one has a playbook for me now. There's no teacher's guide, but we're not ready to just start reading full length classic texts, you know, after level four of all about reading. So what do I do now? And that's where I think, especially for older students, we really have to exercise a lot of care in the way we deliver the same kinds of strategies.

And let me give you an example of what I mean by that. You know, we're talking about short digestible texts for younger students. It's easy for us to think probably in our minds of what that would look like because there are more of them for younger students and they are often colorfully illustrated.

You can find texts with fewer words on a page. The words are maybe even bigger. There's a lot more available in terms of resources.

But then what do you do when you have a junior high student who's still struggling to read, but doesn't want to feel like a baby, doesn't want to be belittled by the kinds of resources that are being used, but still needs a bridge between that sort of elementary decoding proficiency and moving into longer, more difficult texts? One solution that we came up with for that was the Searcy Institute produced a book called Fables of Aesop. It is a collection of fables, which many younger students are exposed to. But I have found that when younger students read them, the moral is always listed at the end.

And oftentimes the language has been slightly modified so that there aren't so many archaic words, etc. This particular version that Searcy has produced, they're still short texts. They're still grouped thematically.

So we can offer some pre-reading activities to just get the child thinking about the topic that's going to be explored. But they have left it. And I can't remember exactly the time period.

I want to say 1800s that the text comes from, but it's not completely modernized and it does

not give the moral at the end of the fable. And one of the great things about that is that you can lead a student towards reading comprehension and pulling out, kind of checking for that by asking the student to pinpoint the moral of the story. And it just isn't presented in quite as elementary a fashion as that's normally done.

So we actually use those just after school, on breaks, like it's an easy five to ten minute activity. An aide could do in the classroom. A child could work through, a student could work through over a period of time just as a sort of extra activity, not a wholesale curriculum.

Yeah, that's really good. We've done a similar thing with short stories. And that's another wonderful resource for older students because you can find classic short stories, maybe some of the authors that the student is going to be exposed to even.

But just the volume of text is smaller. And so you can begin to increase a student's access to longer words, more complicated sentence structure, but still try to, you know, reign it in a little bit in terms of the burden that you're putting on that child. And to your point, even about being a runner, I mean, you don't start out with a marathon and you get those confidence boosts of, wow, I did it.

I read this book. It was just a shorter version. Now you're ready for the next one.

So why don't we take another quick break and come right back. And again, just appreciate the wisdom and encouragement for, you know, I don't think anybody listening is sort of immune from this at some point. Even if you are a, you know, doctoral scholar, you probably struggle at some point with the greatest classical books out there.

And anybody below in that educational journey, we're all running into these challenges. So we're just going to continue the conversation and love to have just some more words of practical guidance and wisdom as we try to figure out how to read. Well, we'll be right back after the break.

I know as a school parent and administrator that like many of you, when I hear the word fundraising, it can make me feel a little bit uncomfortable, but there's good news. Our friends at the champion group have created something different, a fundraiser that is simple and effective. The good news is there's no selling of cookie dough, wrapping paper, light bulbs, and it's one that actually brings in significant support for our schools.

It's called Feed the Need. And at its core, it's a peer-to-peer fundraiser, but it's so much more than that. The campaign builds toward a powerful service event where students pack and ship 10,000 meals for families in need, both here at home and around the world.

These meals don't just meet a physical need, they open the door for the gospel to be shared. And that's what makes Feed the Need so unique. It's not just a way to raise money.

It is a discipleship experience and giving students a hands-on service project at your school

provides them an opportunity to not only connect your community to a greater mission, but it does provide your school with real financial resources that you need to thrive. Feed the Need is a fundraiser with eternal impact, practical, purposeful, and Christ-centered. To learn more about how your school can be a part of Feed the Need, visit thechampiongroup.com or check out our partners page on the Base Camp Live website.

Every school year tells a story. But the quieter pages often go unread. A science experiment that sparks wonder.

A teacher guiding perseverance. Moments parents long to hear. Zipcast brings those stories to light.

Each 10 to 12 minute episode blends local updates from your school with wisdom from national parenting and education experts that addresses the questions parents long to have answered. Nearly 100 schools are using Zipcast this year, and fall or winter can be the perfect time to begin. Learn more at zipcast.media. Zipcast, encouraging you on the go with what you need to know.

Sarah, one of the more basic things that's probably really important to talk about here in the final moments is really, you know, what's the purpose ultimately of all of this, kind of the telos of education, especially as it relates to bringing students into a rich love of reading. How would you address that? Yeah, well, I guess I would start by saying I think it's critical to address that. And I think, you know, if you're a parent and you have a child at a classical Christian school and you haven't run into that question yet, it's coming for you.

You will get a place where, you know, your child is looking at you saying, why am I doing this? Why do I have to do this particular project? Why do I have to write this paper? Why do I have to memorize this thing? Why do I have to read this text? Right. And frankly, as parents, many of us who didn't have the kind of education we're striving to give to our children, those answers don't always come readily. And I think it warrants some reflection on our part for parents.

And I don't think teachers are immune from this either. You know, as a teacher, I know we can just sort of get into the routine of what we're teaching and kind of move from point to point to point across the semester or the year. And we can even be tempted to lose sight of what the end goal is as we are grading quizzes and papers and giving assignments and correcting behavior, et cetera.

So specifically in terms of reading, my book is called Reading for the Long Run, Leading Students into the Reading Life. And I've had people ask me about why the subtitle says reading life and not just, you know, how to teach struggling students to read. And it was an intentional decision on my part because the only motivation I could find for pushing and sacrificing and committing, prodding, motivating myself and my child, you know, our family, our school, our teachers, was to believe that there's a particular kind of life that we want for our children, a life of human flourishing, of experiencing truth, beauty and goodness.

And regardless of your opinion about old books and classic texts, hopefully as Christians, we can at least agree on the fact that God has revealed himself to us through his word. And at the very, you know, basic, like, I want my child to be able to access that for the rest of his life. It's the most important gift I could give to him, is to learn to read the word of God for himself.

And of course, I also believe that beyond that, I want him to be able to participate in this great conversation. I want him to be able to call on old voices to answer the hard questions about suffering and endurance and hope and life experience. And I just truly believe that that's not a skill that we produce like a factory mechanism, you know, where efficiency is the reigning goal.

It's a way of living. And I think most, hopefully all, classical educators and parents of students in such schools, hopefully we all have caught a vision for a kind of life that we're hoping to prepare our students for far beyond, you know, the graduation stage or the doors of the school entrance. It really is the formation of affections, as Jonathan Edwards talks about, you know, of habits.

And that's the, you know, to your point, it's you're really, you're helping give this gift of reading life. I love that. Reading for life and reading that brings life.

It's a great phrase. It really captures the richness and the depth of it. So, you know, in your pragmatism of my child is crying about their homework, I'll just save them and myself from the heartache.

And we're going to take sort of the modern, modern version of education, which is going to really deny them all of this opportunity that you described so well. So, yeah. Well, and, you know, and I think, again, it ties back into just discerning what's going on in the life of that child.

Is it an internal weakness that he has to grow through? Is it an attitude of motivation? So, just, you know, kind of final thoughts on how we, again, lead our children wisely in our home and in the classroom. Yeah. You know, the running metaphor that I use to talk about the long road to reading for many students is a metaphor that certainly didn't originate with me in terms of doing something hard.

And, in fact, you know, as Christians, we know Paul uses the metaphor repeatedly talking about running the race of the Christian faith. And I think we can think about the telos, you know, in the same way. Like, what kind of life am I wanting to give my child? Well, you know, how do I disciple him or her to that end? And a clear part of Christian discipleship, whether we like it or not, is cross first, then crown.

We encounter suffering while we're on this earth, and it comes in many forms. For some of our students, it comes in the form of disabilities or disorders that make classroom learning in particular exceptionally difficult, but logocentric learning, learning to read, very difficult. We all have different personality makeups, different emotional responses, different family backgrounds.

But a child struggling to learn to read, pushing through that is not just a remedy to a skill problem, but it's actually a conduit for character formation. And character formation results from wrestling with weakness. And this isn't something that's just for adults.

I know that some people might be surprised to find that, you know, I was having conversations with my eight, nine, ten-year-old about, you know, why can't I do this like my friend? Or why do I have to spend so much more time on this than somebody else? Why do I have to use a different curriculum? Why can't I do it as fast as so-and-so? So, you know, his weakness was manifest, but also my own was as well, as I struggled to teach him. I didn't know what to do. I was struggling with impatience, with selfishness.

You know, I went to my child's school for six-and-a-half years, four days a week to teach him to learn to read. And there were many, many, many days that I did not want to. And there were many times when I knew very clearly, I could read it on his face, that my attitude was going to shape his learning that day.

And that's where I think, you know, for parents, for teachers, for the students, we all have to wrestle with human weakness. It is no distinguisher of persons. You know, it affects all of us in different ways from birth to death.

And coming, bumping up against that, we have to answer a question. How are we going to respond? And the choice to say yes to something difficult, the choice to say yes to pushing in to struggle, is the choice to change your character over time. And if the goal of classical education is the formation of a human being, you know, the cultivation of wisdom and virtue, I can't think of a clearer picture of that in my mind than the process I've seen my own child walk through.

That's so beautifully said, Sarah. And what a rich classroom environment when you have children that are all at these different places in that journey of learning to read and to experience the world. And so the conversation gets much more dimensional than just, you know, the few kids that have perfect reading skills.

And so it is a messy process, and yet there's beauty in all of that. And so I love your words of encouragement, because I know many people listening are thinking, Boy, this is getting hard. And yet the joy of a lifetime, back to your idea of, you know, the reading life is such a, it's such a noble desire.

And with that comes all the character and richness that you've talked about. So Sarah, thank you so much. For those who want to dig deeper into your resources and your writings, what's the best way to link up with you and find out about your book? Yeah, certainly, probably the easiest way, the Searcy Institute has a bookshop on their web page, you can find *Reading for the Long Run* there.

I know there's some other small bookshops, if you want to shop local, you can check with your local bookstore and see if they're carrying it. The goal of the book was, it's part memoir, part

sort of practical guide, part just an attempt to cast a vision when you've lost your own. It's the resource that I wish had been there when I was at the beginning of our journey.

I hope that, you know, parents and teachers and by extension, students will find some encouragement and hope there for a really worthy endeavor. That's wonderful. And you've got some other great articles too on the Searcy site.

So there's a lot there that you have contributed to. Well, thank you so much. It's great to talk with you.

And I know your words have been encouraging to many. Thank you so much. Thanks so much.

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