

Why Children's Literature Isn't Just for Kids

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Preacher: Manya Egerton

[0 : 00] I want to be real close. Good morning. When some of you looked at the title for today's talk, you may have thought that you were in the wrong room.

After all, Jim Packer spoke last week. Let me... No! So why this topic? Let me hasten to reassure you.

This is not a talk just for the parents of young children. This is for everyone. This is Learner's Exchange. Before I begin, I want to say that because of time constraints, I will only be talking about picture books.

And I've chosen a few that may be new to you. The classics, the ones you grew up with, are wonderful, but I want to introduce you to some new stories.

So let's get started. As Christians, we understand that our own story is part of the universal story called the biblical narrative, with its chapter 1 in Eden and its final chapter in Revelation.

[1 : 24] All our stories, be they factual or fictional, are part of that larger story. My first question for this morning is this.

How can we help children place their story within the larger story and come to love the divine storyteller?

My answer, or at least part of the answer, is to fill their lives with books. C.S. Lewis defined a book as, and I quote, an ice pick to break the sea frozen inside us.

Unquote. Mary Ruth Wilkinson, a well-known writer and speaker on children's literature, follows Lewis's quote with these words.

We need the pick, the ice pick, of story to see the pattern and meaning in our lives. We need story to discover who we ourselves are and who God is.

[2 : 48] That journey of discovery can begin very young. Why? Because the preschooler's desire to make sense of the world is built into their very DNA.

This desire to know and understand is all-consuming, even if they can't articulate it. Books help answer the why, why, why questions at the center of every young child's consciousness.

Sharing a picture book connects the child with other people and other stories. and the experience is pleasurable.

The pleasure part is important to me. I want to say that at the outset. I do not want you to think that I see books simply as a tool for the moral and spiritual edification of the next generation of believers. We want children, don't we, who will love the Lord their God, their neighbor and their world. And that's about relationship.

[4 : 06] The Australian writer Mem Fox, who isn't, as far as I know, a Christian, wrote this. And I love, I love how she puts it.

And I quote, The fire of literacy is created by the emotional spark between a child, a book, and the person reading.

It isn't achieved by the book alone, nor the child alone, nor the adult who is reading aloud. It's the relationship winding between all three, bringing them together in easy harmony.

What happens when a picture book is read? Well, rather than talking about it, why don't we do this? Let's read a wonderful book I've just discovered. So, get comfortable, don't close your eyes, although you might be tired with daylight savings change.

[5 : 10] Get comfortable, look up at the screen, and listen as Beth reads you a story. And I, yes, I have a book that is appropriate for this morning.

This is what we'd like to be doing, right? So, we start. And, in a cave, in the woods, in his deep, dark lair, through the long, cold winter, sleeps a great, brown bear.

Cuddled in a heap, with his eyes shut tight, he sleeps through the day, he sleeps through the night.

The cold winds howl, and the night sounds growl, but the bear snores on. An itty-bitty mouse, pitter-pat, tiptoe, creep crawls in the cave from the fluff, cold snow.
Mouse squeaks, too damp, too dank, too dark, so he lights wee twigs with a small, hot spark.
[6 : 49] The coals pip-pop, and the wind doesn't stop. But the bear snores on. Two glowing eyes sneak peek in the den.

Mouse cries, Who's there? And a hare hops in. Oh, mouse, says hare, long time no see. So they pop white corn, and they brew black tea.

Mouse sips wee slurps, hare burps big burps, but the bear snores on.

A badger scuttles by, sniffs snuffs in happy air. I smell yummy yums, perhaps we can share.
bear. I've brought honey nuts, badger says with a grin. Let's divvy them up, cozy down, and dig in.
[8 : 02] And they nibble, and they munch with a chew-chomp crunch. But the bear snores on.

A gopher and a mole tunnel up through the floor. Then a wren and a raven flutter in through the door.

Mole mutters, What a night! What a storm! Twitters wren. And everybody clutters in the great bear's den.

They tweet and they ticker. They chat and they chitter. But the bear snores on. In a cave in the woods, a slumbering bear sleeps through the party in his very own lair.

Hare stokes the fire. Mouse season stew. Then a small pepper fleck makes the bear bear.

[9 : 14] A-choo! He blows and he sneezes and the whole crowd freezes. And bear wakes up.

Bear gnarles and he snarls. Bear roars and he rumbles. Bear jumps and he stomps. Bear growls and he grumbles.

You've snuck in my lair and you've had you've all had fun but me? I was sleeping and I have had none.

And he whimpers and he moans and he wails and he groans and the bear blubbers on. Mouse squeaks don't fret don't fuss look see we can pop some more corn we can brew more tea.

Bear gulps bear gobbles he sighs with delight then he spins tall tales through the blustery night when the sun peaks up on a crisp clear dawn bear can't sleep but his friends snore on.

[10 : 54] we'll just leave that up there's more to come well what struck you first this story is good fun pure and simple the whimsical illustrations and especially the playful poetic language had me smiling from page one and every time I read it I smiled I think we sometimes forget how important the cadence of the human voice is to a young child from before birth the child has been listening to the human voice and voices continue to be a critical part of healthy growth and development might I also suggest that sitting close to someone who is beloved listening and responding to delightful sounding words prepares a child to listen to

God's voice in scripture and prayer and delight in him what else is in this story my friend Beth Allen who knows young children well thinks the big scary bear wonderfully represents the fearful things in the lives of children hearing bear snores on a child discovers that things thought to be scary can sometimes turn out to be delightful and what else if fiction is about universal experience what are some of the universal themes embedded within this little story I can see several and probably you can see more but what are the several that

I see danger and safety hospitality generosity and community and perhaps loveliest of all bear snores on nurtures a longing for emotional safety of course no child would ever say that we're the ones as adults who divide life into emotional physical intellectual and spiritual boxes they just receive and enjoy sort of like what happened to you just now I think you're beginning to see where I'm going or I hope you do I want to try to show that there's more to picture books than we might think I'm also hoping to convince you that these books can and should matter not only to children but to you and me as well whether you're 2 20 50 or 100 but before I move on

I want to be very clear I am not claiming that reading my recommended books along with Bible stories will ensure that children will come to know and love Jesus but I do believe that the love of the good and the true can be cultivated by reading good books C.S.

Lewis said it better but C.S. Lewis always says it better doesn't he and this is what C.S. Lewis said the best antidote to evil and falsity in fiction as in life is saturation in the good and the genuine unquote I think I'll read that again it's a good quote the best antidote to evil and falsity in fiction as in life is saturation in the good and the genuine well let's start with dogger over the last 10 years I have bought and given as gifts over 50 copies of this book actually it's probably 60 but I thought my

husband would be too shocked with the amount of money I spent so I didn't say it's over 10 years or maybe 15 years

[15 : 52] I didn't know when I happened upon and bought my first copy of Dogger that its author and illustrator Shirley Hughes had been voted the British public's favorite Kate Greenaway medal winner of all time all I knew was that the story about Dave and his lost stuffed toy touched me deeply it took me longer much longer to realize that Dogger is a wonderful picture of redemption Beth Allen and I wrote an article for the Anglican Planet which was published last December and if you'd like to read it you can do so on the Anglican Planet website it is called My Many Colored Days Books About the Emotional Life of Young Children and in that article we said and I quote our hope is that some of these books will help

Christian parents grandparents and other caregivers nurture the emotional life of little children and in so doing also help them more easily receive the love of their heavenly father all of Shirley Hughes' books are deeply attentive to the inner emotional life of children Alfie Gives a Hand is about courage and kindness and a badly behaved birthday boy Alfie is fearful about going to his first birthday party so he takes along his blanket for comfort he meets a girl even more afraid than he is he courageously puts his blanket aside in order to comfort her when Susan Norman and I met recently to talk about children's books and she knows much more about the subject than I do she reminded me that we can indeed learn courage from the example of others at the age of three her son Mark had pneumonia and had to go to the hospital but because Curious George goes to the hospital had been read to him he was able to anticipate what would happen in the hospital Mark Norman derived real comfort from the imagined hospital visit of Curious George in don't want to go the theme is the fear of abandonment or as we describe it when talking about toddlers separation anxiety I believe that when children are read books especially books like those by Hughes they discover that they are not alone in their fears someone else has imagined them when children hear stories they also discover that they are not alone in their misbehaving to quote my friend Beth yet again the two year old is exhilaratingly independent and it's not always easy for parents to manage the self asserting preschooler but character formation and fun can go together the next three books and they are for school age children as well as preschool children because school age children can misbehave as well are good examples of how the universal themes of rules the breaking of rules and consequences can be wonderfully handled the first is Stanley's party Stanley the dog his misbehaving begins with him breaking the no sitting on the couch rule and ends up with a whole lot of trouble this story and the illustrations are hilarious but there's no getting around the fact that breaking rules brings consequences there are several Stanley books and they're all good and how do dinosaurs say good night the bad behavior is at bedtime this book offers a powerful message about appropriate behavior in a very humorous way and the illustrations of oversized dinosaurs work well with Jane Yolen's whimsically rhyming text the last book in this group library lion is a more nuanced treatment of the theme of rules in fact this beautiful picture book poses the questions what are rules for and when can you break rules it is also about community alienation and reconciliation every child

I've given this book to asks for it to be read over and over and over preferably at one setting I wonder if that's because library lion stirs within the heart a deep yearning for a place to belong and a place to be known I don't have time to talk about books for older children but I do want to quote a writer of fine books for teenagers and a fellow parishioner here at St.

[22 : 22] John's Bev Greenwood I want to quote her on the subject of yearning she said recently and I quote I want to make kids yearn for life with God without weighing books down with a gospel formula formulas for the gospel are easy to find but the yearning is not unquote I contend that a yearning for God and our heavenly home can be stirred by an imagined story the kingdom of God is like a bear's winter party or a library lion maybe George Macdonald used the phrase a wise imagination library lion has a very wise imagination the bible talks about sin and adults understand what that means but what does behaving bad look like from a child's perspective behaving bad which is more than crankiness at bedtime now there are many excellent books for older children that answer this question but since

I've chosen to stick with picture books this morning two come immediately to mind first Lily's purple plastic purse by Kevin Hanks I'm a big fan of Kevin Hanks and I love that his language in this book and all his books is both eloquent and economical in this particular story Lily the mouse is very excited about her new purple purse but her excitement disrupts her class at school and she is

gently but firmly disciplined as one reviewer so beautifully put it there is no fury like a little mouse scorned and eager to punish her teacher

Mr. Slinger her very cool teacher she slips an insulting piece of artwork into his book bag but Lily the mouse has a conscience once she gets home she frets about going to school and facing her teacher Mr.

Slinger it isn't his anger she fears it's not being forgiven some of the universal themes embedded in this story are indeed sin repentance and forgiveness even though those words are never mentioned Harriet you'll drive me wild it's by the Australian writer I've already mentioned Mem Fox it's about a mom whose patient parenting finally breaks and she yells and yells and yells at her daughter Harriet who has been truly driving her wild this poignant story does two things well it shows a parent saying sorry and it helps children understand that when their parents are angry with them it doesn't mean that they're no longer loved the stories of

Lily and Harriet can I believe help children to imagine and then receive the love and the forgiveness of their heavenly father we're created for friendship in Proverbs 17:17 we read a friend loves at all times children's books help the young child understand the nature of friendship a visitor for bear is about the pursuit of friendship in this case a persistently friendly mouse of a very reclusive bear love love love the vocabulary in this book is quite wonderful the action is slapstick and the message is profound life is better when it is shared life is meant to be shared two other books

[27 : 52] I believe broaden the child's understanding of the nature of friendship actually there's lots of them but I only had time and space for two more Angelo is a tender story about the unlikely friendship between an Italian plasterer and a pigeon it is also about mutual care aging and death and in Wilfred Gordon MacDonald Partridge introduced to me by a couple in this church family and another book by Mem Fox the skillful use of language draws the reader into the friendship between the young and the very old aging and the meaning of memory are just two of the themes touched on and

Julie Vivas' illustrations help keep the story from being too saccharine gladys hunt and Barbara Hampton say in a book about children's literature that and I'm quoting our natural tendency if we have a belief system ourselves is to indoctrinate our children tell them what to believe that's good and bad it's good because we are hopefully recounting great truths it's bad because it may only give a Christian veneer a second option is to explore ideas and truths through books asking questions that lead to truth this exploration can begin even with the very young every picture book experience is surrounded by conversation if you've ever read to a small child you know that's the place you can't expect to read a picture book without interruptions and probably the more interruptions the better but children don't simply talk about books the books that they are reading they are motivated to inhabit the text and make sense of it two examples of stories that get children and here somewhat older children asking questions are an orange for

Frankie and the moccasin goalie the first is a child's view of Christmas set in a small American town in the early 20th century readers are invited into young Frankie's world to share his excitement as Christmas draws near they also explore with him the meaning of charity family love loss and forgiveness happiness now I felt I should include one Canadian book about sports so moccasin goalie is my second choice it's about a crippled boy who has to wear moccasins instead of skates when he plays hockey it's certainly about hockey but it is also about friendship disappointment alienation and belonging the environment is a popular theme in children's books these days I like Mary Ruth Wilkinson's approach which is to offer books and here I quote that help make children aware of creation by filling them with great love for all that is beautiful instead of great fear for all that has gone wrong unquote Owl Moon another book that someone else in this church has pointed me to is an excellent example of that kind of book the author it's another book by Jane Yolen she describes her book as and I quote a positive family experience it's about a girl and her father usually stories of a little girl are with her mother it is gentle yet adventurous quiet yet full of sound unquote and you will find several other books about the natural world recommended by other people in this church on my book list now I come to my very favorite grouping which I call profound truths we know that Jesus repeatedly used highly imaginative tales in his teaching the next three books draw us into the story of stories in much the same way often the three trees has been read over the

Edgerton's Christmas dinner this is a folk tale about three trees cut down and used for purposes far from what they themselves had imagined a feeding trough a small fishing boat and a wooden cross

this story is also about confusion disappointment even disillusionment and loss it is about discovering who we are and how God can use each of us in his good purposes the clown of God themes are similar I just gave this to my nephew or George's nephew in Ontario who is an [34 : 48] Anglican priest not to his children I gave it to him this is a heartbreaking beautiful retelling of an ancient legend about an aging juggler I don't want to say too much and ruin the story for you it's also about gift giving vocation and what it means to bring as Mother Teresa describes it something beautiful to Jesus equally poignant is the Christmas miracle of Jonathan Toomey also read at the Edgerton's Christmas table actually I'd read through the whole meal if I had a chance in it a grumpy wood carver agrees to carve several creche figures for a widow and her son this story is an honest portrayal of someone grieving very badly through the marvelous prose and almost hyper realistic illustrations and if you decide to buy a copy don't get the small version get the big version the large pages show off the magnificent illustrations but in it the reader sees a friendship grow between the sorrowing wood carver and the kindly mother and boy the redemptive power of this friendship points the readers beyond to the redemptive love of

Jesus and then there are what are called at least in secular books they're called seasonal books but I think we'd more correctly call them books about festivals in the church year last fall I was introduced to two Christmas stories which instantly went to the top of my favorite book list listen to the silent night has it all reverence and whimsy lively illustrations and a wonderfully rhyming text it is a book that will hold the attention of the youngest of audiences and the oldest too the second book called the third gift is quite unique and I was really thrilled when someone again from this church pointed me to it scripture tells us of the magi giving their gifts to the Christ child in this story the collecting and selling of myrrh is imagined from the perspective of a young boy the illustrator a Russian by birth helps us place the birth of Jesus right where it belongs in the ancient Middle East the restrained language used in the text almost begs the reader to look beyond to the passion of Christ one could almost say that this is a book for Holy Week now I'm not going to spend too much time on Bible stories of course they are critically important but I am reluctant to pick one over another the big picture

Bible which tells the whole story of the biblical narrative is recommended by many at St. John's I'm a visual person and so illustrations matter a lot to me so I'm drawn to Tomo de Paolo's Bible but I'm fond of him as an illustrator I also like the children's Bible in 365 days because the text is just right for the 8 to 12 year old group I don't have a picture of this but it is on my list this is by the text is by Mary Batchelor and it's published by Lion Publishing company and that comes from England but I recommend that very much now Mary Flanagan recommended the Christmas and Easter books written by Mary Joslin the text in both of these is age appropriate for the elementary school listener and the illustrations which are by Helen can almost glow well you've all been listening very politely but I'm sure a few maybe many of you are thinking okay but what has this got to do with me my kids and even my grandkids are all grown up or maybe [40 : 20] I don't even know any little children I'll answer that question first by saying that many of these books especially those in the profound truth category are not they are not just for kids they are quite as deserving of a spot on your bookshelf as the Narnia stories George Herbert or Lucy Shaw poetry or a novel by Flannery O'Connor in fact they speak to us in ways those books do not they have pictures secondly and more seriously if we care about the spiritual health of the next generation of Christian believers I believe we should care deeply about nurturing within them a love of books when young children read and here

I'm quoting two educators and actually these two educators were speaking to research that they had done and I quote when young children read they study pictures for story meaning character setting plot and motivation they study everything unquote the more children have an opportunity to actively engage in their interworking of stories the more ready I believe they will be to actively engage with the biblical narrative if they have learned to enjoy words scripture won't seem strange if a child has not been sitting passively in front of a television or computer screen but imagining other worlds through the picture of a book that child will not have any difficulty imagining and inhabiting the worlds of the Old and New

Testament G.K. Chesterton said and I quote I felt life first as a story and if there is a story there is a storyteller unquote how do we help children to recognize the storyteller storyteller in capital letters if a yearning for the good the true and the eternal has been nurtured through the reading of books then children can I believe more easily recognize the one who is all good all truth and eternal life

that's what we long for don't we a church full of children and adults who don't just know about God but love him in body mind and spirit and want to share that love with our world Catherine Patterson herself a writer of award winning children's books says this and I quote the challenge for those of us who care about our faith and about a hurting world is to tell stories which will carry the words of grace and hope in their bones and sinews and not wear them like fancy dress and I'll read that again the challenge for those of us who care about our faith and about a hurting world is to tell stories which will carry the words of grace and hope in their bone and sinews and not like fancy dress

I hope that I've helped convince you that there are stories which will carry the words of grace and hope in their bones and sinews I would urge you to share these stories with families in this church and here is my evangelistic pitch buy a young family a book or two or three from the list that I'm providing or give them one you love that's not on the list if you need help finding a book or if you need help finding a family let me know I'll put you together but know this by giving good books to families especially young families who are raising their children in a world with I would say many other distractions apart from books know this that when you give a young family books you will be actively and wonderfully contributing to the spiritual health and imagination of the next generation of believers now before I take any questions and we are running out of time

[46 : 56] I want to thank those in this church family who helped made this morning talk possible Jack Tippett put together the power point and I believe working with me has been a manya you're driving me while kind of experience but thank you Jack nonetheless Beth has helped me to enter the world of young children and the knowledge and love of children's books that and I will name them Natasha Krauss Carolyn Heinemarsh Bev Greenwood Marion Maxwell Susan Norman Ruth Flanagan Shannon Daly and Stephan and his way and have has really been what I hope to share so I also want to say that there's a book list at the back of the room for you to take to your next trip to the local bookstore and as the

Kirsteel librarian said be sure they buy lots of children's books because publishers are very reluctant to print them now so I'll take how much longer do we have for questions okay yes yes yes um made a comment about passively sitting on computers and um computers and TVs yes how it's changing how children are raised and could you could you stand up maybe and turn around so people can hear you sorry um made a comment about how um children's um sitting passively in front of TVs and um computers um um starts to change how they um perceive the world

I mean if I'm wording it correctly I want you to comment on what is um what is actually I mean technology is changing right now and we are I think we all have seen the iPad commercials um how the how touch screen becomes sort of an interactive thing that allow and I and I see a lot of kids um with iPads instead of books um in a way they're not passive but in a way they're not pictures pictures that you um as uh as you have described here um would you have comments on uh what is what is that how is how does um um technology like that change um a child's upbringing well I hope um

I I am not an expert and I'm here as somebody who loves picture books but I I did talk to uh several people in the church congregation who are educators and love books and have thought about this and um I think uh that uh that Beth would agree with me that that that um they know the research shows that you know the children shouldn't actually be on on computers or or television before under the age of two because it actually changed it rewires them it changes their you know their their internal sort of their their bodies um Shannon Daly who I spoke to um first of all I'm sure there are ways that that my husband and Jack Tippett would agree that I shouldn't speak about technology but I'm I will take I will take I will take as a given that there are interactive there are wonderfully interactive ways for children to be uh involved you know on things using a computer but the what is in what is in favor of books is that is that it is the children it is the children that in their imagination animate them and Shannon was saying that the problem with much that is maybe not everything but much that is available to entertain children especially as children get older is all the imagining all the editing has been done for them whereas when you when you when a child even an older child reads or has a book read to them it is the theater and they are the actors in a sense they put up the scenes I mean every aspect of the world is created by them so if you had here a panel of educators

I think they would say that there are ways that the human spirit and the human mind comes alive with a book that is not possible even with the best computer I just wanted to say that nothing

nothing underlined replaces the feeling of holding a book in your hand and turning a page of that physical thing Sherry sorry experience I'd love to look into it more but a digital image in the sense that doesn't exist because it's just a series of zeros and ones as opposed to real paint and real paper I think is and maybe Mary Wilkinson would be a great person to speak to that but we have to tactilely interact with our world and I think that also is going to be a little layer of influence yeah one of the articles I read by just a secular periodical about children's books said exactly that yes the battle for the minds of children come from a very interesting place like the college of teachers allowing materials into the classroom now which are to our reckoning immoral how do you look of that in the sense that this battle is unfair

[53 : 33] I think that's a different topic and there are in talking to my friends like Shannon who teaches in high school she teaches English she would have good things to say I think I probably won't comment on that this morning because this is that's we'll talk about that afterwards but I think Shannon would do a better yes this has been delightful thank you so much for reminding us of how much fun it was to read to little people in my case how much I miss that I've been reading to grownups for a little too long maybe my question relates to the images that are used a lot of children's books anthropomorphize animals and they're cute and cuddly and curious George is a three-year-old boy and we all know that but do you have a point of view about using animals or even inanimate objects my son loved an antique car that had a personality and a you know a bully in the rallies and so on this kind of thing in comparison with using children in the stories do you have a point of view about the effectiveness of those or is one better than the other or is there an advantage in using animals

I think if Jesus can call himself many things including vines and the word and light and he's a good shepherd I think that in fact Susan Norman I haven't had a chance to read it but her master's thesis was on education was on Jesus as an adult educator and she has a chapter just on the imagination and I think if Jesus can use the highly imaginative pictures that he did in his teaching then it's okay to have bears and mice and a vast array of other animals I haven't met a child that doesn't that has any problem with that so can be yeah I think this is excellent because it's also introducing them to animals which you might not get on the size of the different kinds of animals but

I know a couple of children in elementary school we live in this world and we have to believe that God can you know he he is present in a world full of computers so I was well aware of that in preparing this but I think that all the more reason that to nurture words and books on the subject of animals Natasha Krause a friend from the evening service who works actually she works in the Talmatura school library but she it was

Stephan and Sherry that recommended owl moon but Natasha Krause recommended other books about animals and the environment and they're on the list that people can have yes if I were to buy the bear snores on for my children does Smith Allen come with it yeah you you should be yeah thank you I just was wanting to say something about using computers and young children and we have their Vancouver Coastal Health has information sheets for children and one of them is called screen time and as Monja said under two no screen time no screen time for because of what's happening with the brain even with children who are school age you know their boundaries have to be set in terms of

TV watching and screen time because we're yes can you include into this if you know smart boards and iPads in the classroom for educational do you know like the smart board that they use instead of a chalk board no it's just like a chalk board but it's a computer screen and you can touch it and you can draw math on it you can put their names and the kids but the teachers use it mostly instead of chalk board yeah I can't I mean I guess I guess it would be like it's not used constantly yeah well it's not used all day no no no but I don't I want to know what it's like and maybe you could help is that kind of screen time how does that really compare to doing video games and watching

[59 : 39] TV I think that's really my question. Yeah, I don't, I think that's different. Because I think our big concern with young children is that if they're spending this kind of time with a screen, they're not interacting.

You know, what young children need to do is be playing, is to be interacting, having an imaginative play with other children doing and getting up and moving around and not sitting for hours on end in front of a screen.

It's just not healthy. We've got a question at the back. Yeah, in September I spent time with my two little great nieces, six and a half year old Nora and four year old Georgia.

And Nora had just started grade one, so she was two weeks into grade one. And when it came to homework time, they had their two desks about eight feet apart.

And little Georgia, I sat with her, and she had a, I guess you would say an iPod. And she was working on her numbers. And so the, I guess you'd call it a smart word.

[60 : 52] The number one would come in and with her fingers she would trace it and do one. And she was going up to thirteen. And, you know, four years old she knew the difference between a six and a nine.

So, so I, and it was keeping her quiet. She wasn't disturbing her sister. I was just kidding. Yeah. We have friends who worked for medical records. She noticed that that there were more people in their thirties getting cataracts.

And we, we were saying that it's probably because of looking at the tween. It's very hard on the eyes to look at tween, you know, all over the place.

Like at your job, at home, looking at the whatever device on the bus, whatever. It's hard on the eyes because the eyes need to be closed and just to vision. The eye muscles are straining.

Anyway, more cataracts coming up in the thirties. Not good. Any, any question about, remarks about, about books maybe? Yes? Stephen?

[62 : 01] I get my books from the medical public library and I don't vet them. So I just read them to the children without reading them first. Sometimes you get into books that have a moral agenda.

That's, that's not something you share. In fact, for example, I have a book on my bookshelf that's, that's quite racist. It's from the fifties. But I still read it to my children.

But I want to know from you, how do you, how do you filter books like that to your children? Does it ever happen to you that you read a book to a child and you haven't read it before and it goes in wrong?

Yeah, I did. I know when our kids were young, there was one, one, I'm not opposed to Roald Dahl, but there was one I started that was quite, it was, yeah, it was kind of over the top. I, I did.

There were some bad Christian books too. Yeah, there were, yeah. And that's, that's another, another topic. A good topic. Yeah, but, but another topic. I, my opinion, and Beth could answer this because she understands child development more.

[63 : 03] I think that, that my second part of the talk about, about, about not just having a Christian veneer or a formula, but by asking questions. I think that, I think those, it depends on where in a child's development.

So I, with the, I think with young children, with very young, I mean, I, I would, I would not be starting them with the questioning part.

I would, I would, if there's a book that is introduced, I would say even, even in my family, I probably would not be introducing in the family books that have a radically different perspective.

Because I know that they're getting that radically different perspective out in the world. And I know that there comes a time in a child's life where they will, they will get, they will go to the library and they will choose their own books.

So, but I certainly, if, if I came upon one, like there's a curious, like there's Harry the dirty dog, he's wonderful. There's Harry the dirty dog goes to the beach and he meets a fat lady.

[64 : 06] Um, I don't edit out the word fat, if that's an example. But for a, for a child that is three, four and five and six maybe, I would not be bringing into the home, uh, books.

Which you can certainly find at the kids bookstore or in the library with a radically different perspective. Because I know they will come upon that. But I want, I want them to recognize first, myself, the good and the true.

And, and I believe that there are, there are absolutes. And I want, but not, not in a formulaic kind of way. And that's the challenge.

Yes. I just wanted to comment on what Sheila's question about the animals. And it occurred to me that, it occurred to me that the choice of using animals in stories requires a child to engage their imagination more than that.

More than if it was a child. So, I think it's, um, it just gets that creative process going more. And it, I think it, it also, um, um, is Jesus used examples of things that were not straightforward in order to get behind, um, barriers and things.

[65 : 18] And so there are stories with children as the chief character. There's, there are those as well. Yes. Um, yes.

Um, last Wednesday I had a wonderful day spending it with my great, then, child. He's three and a half years of age.

He loves Thomas the tenth engine story. He's devoted to listening and talking about the steamtry. And, uh, he has a little gadget.

Uh, it's a book, but with animals and train whistles and all that. And, uh, we just press it. And we created a play between us, staging of the cows that got on his, right on the line, on the railway lines. And he was learning his story. He kept repeating it and going through it. And it was the most imaginative thing that he could have developed from those two hours together.

[66 : 25] You know? So, I, I, it's just, it's just wonderful. Because this, um, this idea of Thomas the tenth engine, it may remain this thing.

All his life, he may become like Dr. Packer. I think that we, maybe one more question and then we need to bring it to a close.

And then I, I have, if you'd like the book list, I have book lists for you. And I hope that my, my book list is just a beginning book list. So my email is there and I've missed a favorite that you would, you would like to add.

Also, if you email me and if you'd like the list on, we had a word document. Sorry, it's on a computer, but I'll send it to you. Lenore? Uh, no, this, this isn't great. And I was just thinking... Just gonna get the book list.

Um, I, I sometimes go on, on retreats and, and having someone, Annette just went out, but it's her. She reads bedtime stories and often that's the highlight of the retreats and her life.

[67 : 25] So, I just really encourage, um, even reading bed, uh, reading these books to adults, you know? It just, uh, it, it, uh, touches us in, uh, in a deep, uh, place, uh, more than a lot of other, uh, writings can do.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.